

STORY STRUCTURE METHODS

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STORY STAGE	STAGE PURPOSE	STORY ELEMENT	Aristotle	Five Act Structure	BM/Narrative Structure	III Act Structure	Hero's Journey	Eight Sequences
BEGINNING	Set Up	Character	Imitation	Exposition	Inciting Incident	ACT I	-Ordinary World -Call To Adventure -Refusal Of The Call -Meeting The Mentor -Crossing The Threshold	Sequence 1 Sequence 1 Climax Sequence 2 Act I Climax
MIDDLE	Complications	Conflict	Error	Rising Action	Rising Complications	ACT II	-Tests, Allies, Enemies -Approach To The Inmost Cave -Ordeal -Reward	Sequence 3 Sequence 3 Climax Sequence 4 Mid Point Sequence 5 Sequence 5 Climax Sequence 6 Act II Climax
				Climax	Climax			
END	Resolution	Arc	Catharsis	Falling Action	Resolution	ACT III	-The Road Back -Resurrection -Return with the Elixir	Sequence 7 Sequence 7 Climax Sequence 8 Act III Climax
				Denouement				

Throughout the story, you should

- utilize internal, external, and romantic conflict,
- show your characters reacting to this conflict by forming/modifying their goals, plans, and actions, and as a result
- slowly changing/growing so they
 - overcome their incorrect beliefs,
 - show who they truly are,
 - change in a way that proves your theme and
 - cement this change as a result of the black moment
 - so they can defeat the antagonist in the climax and
 - return to their ordinary world better off than they were at the beginning.

THREE ACT STRUCTURE

ACT I:

- STAGE 1: SET UP
- TP 1: (OPPORTUNITY FORCES CHARACTER INTO ACTION AND STARTS CONFLICT)
 - STAGE 2: PROGRESS
- TP 2: (SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS, LIKELY THE FIRST DEFEAT, RESULTS IN CHANGE OF PLANS OR GOAL)

THREE ACT STRUCTURE	
ACT I (from Set Up/Ordinary World to Opportunity to Progress to First Defeat/Change Of Plans)	
CONFLICT	
Internal: Protagonist vs. Self/Past	The protagonist presents herself in a certain way to hide who she really is. The antagonist and love interest push her to reveal her true self. She provides glimpses, but her Internal Conflict (based on her back story) makes her pull back before revealing too much.
External: Protagonist vs. External Antagonist	The protagonist has a goal before the Inciting Incident. This initial goal is based on her back story. The Inciting Incident pushes her to change her goal. Conflict with the antagonist pulls her away from her goal. As a result, she realizes she must modify her plan and acts accordingly.
Romantic: Protagonist vs. Hero/ine (Love)	The protagonist and hero meet. Sexual attraction pushes them toward each other, but conflict (clue: consider two boxes above) pulls them away from each other. At the same time, however, something compelling (not just attraction) keeps them together.
Character Arc: Protagonist vs Ordinary World (Complacency)	Things in the protagonist's life need fixing, whether she admits it or not. In encountering conflict towards her goal, she has some realization and 1) acknowledges something in her life isn't helping her attain her goal; and 2) acts (pushes) to change this. Eventually, however, her Ordinary World/complacency pulls her back.

ACT II:

- STAGE 3: INCREASED COMPLICATIONS
- TP 3: (GREATER SETBACK RESULTS IN CHARACTER'S FULL COMMITMENT AND TO POINT OF NO RETURN)
 - STAGE 4: FINAL PUSH; PROTAGONIST APPEARS TO BE LOSING
 - TP 4: (MAJOR SET BACK THAT RESULTS IN THE BLACK MOMENT)

THREE ACT STRUCTURE	
ACT II (from Increased Complications to Greater Set Back/Point Of No Return to Final Push to Major Set Back/Black Moment)	
CONFLICT	
Internal: Protagonist vs. Self/Past	The protagonist shows more and more of who she really is, but vacillates. At the black moment, when he believes his fears and need to hide behind a mask were warranted, he will retreat behind that mask.
External: Protagonist vs. External Antagonist	The protagonist has a new plan to achieve her goal. Conflict with the antagonist (Raise the stakes!) pulls her away from her goal. She fully commits to getting her goal (Raise the stakes!) and her actions make it impossible to turn away from it. Afterwards, however, the antagonist ups the conflict until the protagonist suffers a major set back (things seem lost)
Romantic: Protagonist vs. Hero/ine (Love)	The protagonist begins to open up emotionally to her love interest as she realizes her love/feelings for him. However, close to the time of the external plot's black moment, something happens in the romantic relationship that makes the protagonist feel betrayed and makes her pull away from the hero.
Character Arc: Protagonist vs Ordinary World (Complacency)	Same, except the protagonist is meeting greater and greater resistance to her achieving her goal (Raised Stakes!) When the worst thing happens both in the external plot and the romantic relationship, the protagonist retreats back into her shell.

ACT III:

- STAGE 5: REALIZATION/AFTERMATH
 - TP 5: (CLIMAX)

THREE ACT STRUCTURE ACT III (from Realization/Aftermath to Climax to Resolution)	
CONFLICT	
Internal: Protagonist vs. Self/Past	The protagonist comes to some realization that shows why she can permanently give up her mask and be the person she's been trying to be. Her willingness to grow earns her a HEA.
External: Protagonist vs. External Antagonist	The protagonist comes to some realization that allows her to face off with the antagonist and defeat him in the climax. Her life is changed for the better.
Romantic: Protagonist vs. Hero/ine (Love)	When the hero and heroine are apart, the protagonist realizes why she retreated and becomes willing to risk all for love. Her willingness to take risks earns her a HEA.
Character Arc: Protagonist vs Ordinary World (Complacency)	Each time the protagonist acts to achieve her goal, she is met with resistance. At this point, it appears the antagonist is going to win. All looks lost until the protagonist makes a huge realization and acts, reflecting she can change permanently. Because of her journey, the protagonist and her world are changed for the better and she earns her HEA.

EIGHT SEQUENCES

Act I: approx pages 1-100	Act II: 1; approx pages 101-200	Act II: 2; approx pages 201-300	Act III: Pages 301-400
<p><u>Sequence 1:</u> Introduce your character, your character’s world, and the things that need fixing (the beginning of character arc).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Opening image <input type="checkbox"/> Meet the hero or heroine <input type="checkbox"/> Hero/ine’s inner and outer desire <input type="checkbox"/> Hero/ine’s beginning character arc</p> <p>{The components listed below can generally occur within sequence 1 as well— all components are fluid, but do tend to fall as indicated.}</p>	<p><u>Sequence 3:</u> This shows your character’s initial reaction to the special world and obstacles posed by the antagonist; you’re your characters’ strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Threshold Guardian/Guardian at the Gate (possibly) <input type="checkbox"/> Hero/ine’s Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Antagonist’s Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Training Sequence <input type="checkbox"/> Series of Tests <input type="checkbox"/> Picking up new Allies <input type="checkbox"/> Assembling the Team <input type="checkbox"/> Attacks by the Antagonist (whether or not the Hero/ine recognizes as coming from antag. or not) <input type="checkbox"/> Questioning Witnesses, Lining Up and Eliminating Suspects, Following Clues.</p>	<p><u>Sequence 5:</u> This shows how your character reacts as things become increasingly difficult as a result of the antagonist’s actions. Often, the hero or heroine is causing most of the grief for themselves, but at the same time, things are escalating so much that the antagonist is firing back with equal fervor.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The protagonist must recover and revise his/her plan <input type="checkbox"/> Escalating Actions <input type="checkbox"/> Hard Choices and Crossing The Line (may have immoral actions by the main character to get what s/he wants) <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of Key Allies (possibly because of the hero/ine’s obsessive actions, by death or by injury by the antagonist) <input type="checkbox"/> A Ticking Clock (can happen anywhere in the story) <input type="checkbox"/> Reversals and Revelations/Twists.</p>	<p><u>Sequence 7:</u> This shows the final battle between your character and the antagonist; sequences 7 and 8 are often one continuous sequence or separate (1. Getting to the battle; 2. The final battle itself). Either way, the hero/ine makes a new FINAL PLAN based on revelations that occurred in the second act.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thematic Location - often a visual and literal representation of the Hero/ine’s Greatest Nightmare <input type="checkbox"/> The protagonist’s character change <input type="checkbox"/> The antagonist’s character change (if any) <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly ally’s/allies’ character changes and/or gaining of desire <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly a huge final reversal or reveal (twist), or even a whole series of payoffs that you’ve been saving</p>
<p><u>Sequence 1 Climax:</u> (around pg 50)</p> <p>something exciting happens; usually the inciting incident</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inciting Incident/Call to Adventure</p>	<p><u>Sequence 3 Climax:</u> (around pg 150)</p> <p>something exciting happens; usually overcoming some set back; training gone bad, or clue turns out to be false</p>	<p><u>Sequence 5 Climax:</u> (around pg 250)</p> <p>something exciting happens; usually darker failure or revelation that leads to the dark night of the soul.</p>	<p><u>Sequence 7 Climax</u> (around pg 350)</p> <p>something exciting happens; usually, to get to the final battle, your character has one more gate to get through; you can get rid of his/her allies here, which forces him/her to confront the antagonist alone</p>

<p><u>Sequence 2:</u> This normally introduces the mystery and the special world your character will enter; perhaps the character initially resists going:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meet the antagonist (and/or introduce a mystery, then reveal your antagonist at end) <input type="checkbox"/> State theme/what's story about? <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce allies <input type="checkbox"/> Introduce mentor (now or later) <input type="checkbox"/> Love interest <input type="checkbox"/> Set "Plants" you will later "Reveal" <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Hopes/Fears (and Stakes) <input type="checkbox"/> Time Clock (possibly. May not have one or may be revealed later in the story) 	<p><u>Sequence 4:</u> more of the same from sequence 3</p>	<p><u>Sequence 6:</u> more of the same from sequence 5; build up to the dark night of the soul; the moment when all seems lost for the hero/ine</p>	<p><u>Sequence 8:</u> more of the same from sequence 7; this is the ultimate ticking clock, when the protagonist is headed into the villain's turf</p>
<p><u>Act I Climax:</u> Your character is thrust into the special world; usually the central story question is posed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Crossing the Threshold/ Into the Special World 	<p><u>Midpoint:</u> Something completely changes the game because things are now personal for the protagonist. Your hero/ine is locked into the situation or action</p>	<p><u>Act II Climax</u> Often can be a final revelation before the end game: the knowledge of who the opponent really is; the final clue (i.e., it's been his friend all along); the thing/realization that helps your character recover from the black moment.</p>	<p><u>Act III Climax:</u> The final battle. Usually you pay off a lot of your plants, which you set up in the beginning. <u>Resolution:</u> Showing what the hero/ine's new life looks like because of the battle he/she has faced and the changes he/she's undergone; closing image usually mirrors the opening image in some way.</p>