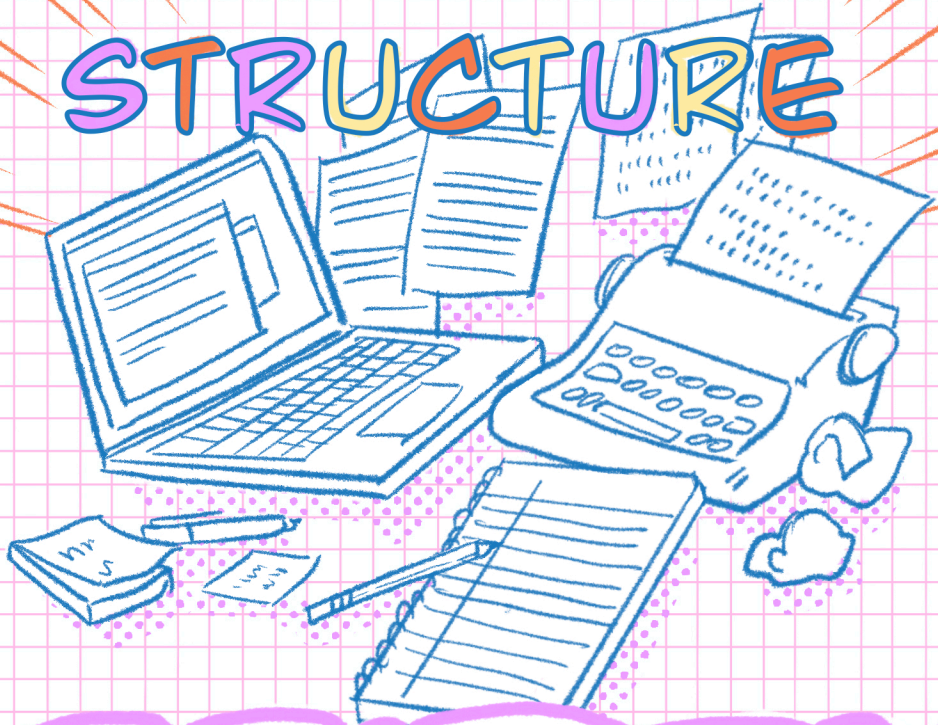


STORY STRUCTURE



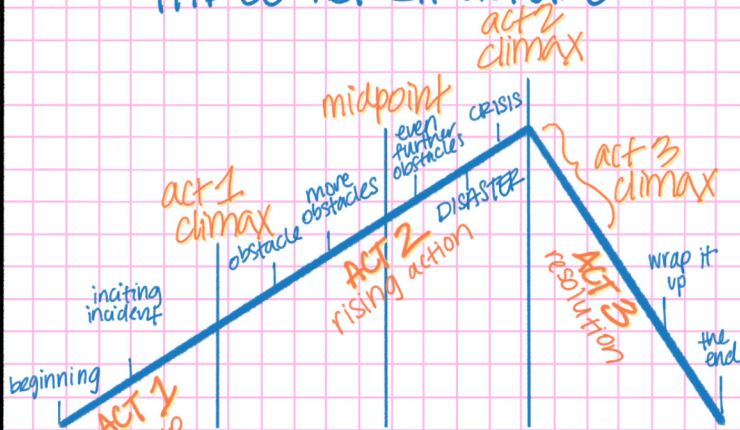
So Easy Even A Writer Could Do It

A Short Tutorial By Hannah Vardit

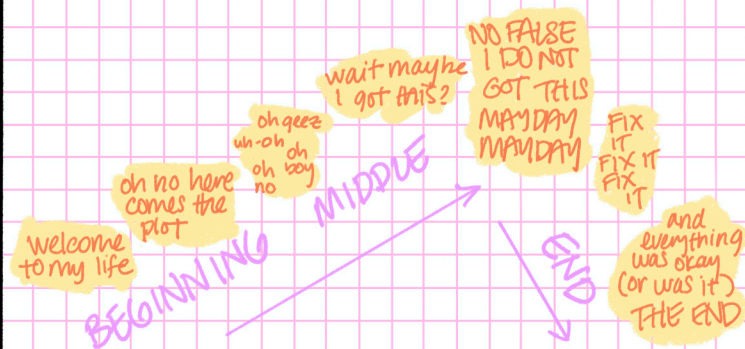
Beginning, Middle, End

We're not going anywhere in this tutorial without first discussing the granddaddy of story structure

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE



Not getting it? Think of it this way:



THIS KIND OF STRUCTURE IS REFERRED TO AS THREE-ACT STRUCTURE, BUT THERE ARE CERTAINLY WAYS TO THINK OF A BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END TYPE STORY THAT DON'T ADHERE SO STRICTLY TO THE RULES OF 3-ACT.

THAT SAID, THE SPECIFICS OF THREE-ACT STRUCTURE CAN BE USEFUL TO REFER BACK TO IF/WHEN YOU GET STUCK IN YOUR WRITING.

THE PROBLEM WITH 3-ACT STRUCTURE IS ALSO ITS STRENGTH: IT'S *FORMULAIC*.

FORMULA IS WHEN A NARRATIVE HAS BEEN DONE SO OFTEN, IT BECOMES PREDICTABLE.

PERSONALLY, I DON'T BELIEVE FORMULAIC STORYTELLING IS GOOD OR BAD, IT'S SIMPLY WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT. THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO REINVENT THE WHEEL! JUST MAKE THE BEST WHEEL YOU CAN.

Formula

Even if you wind up writing something you're not 100% into, you've still written **something**. You can't edit what's not there!



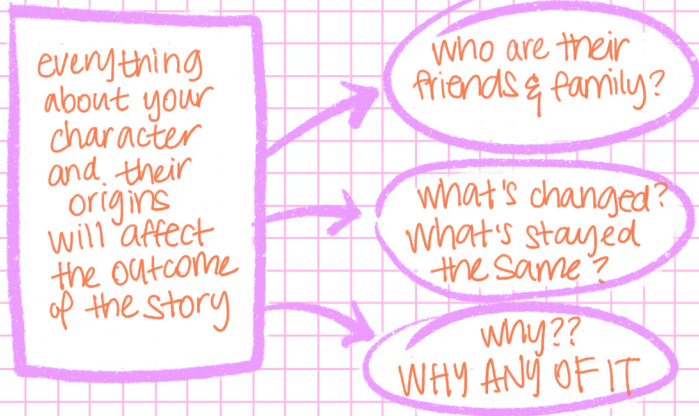
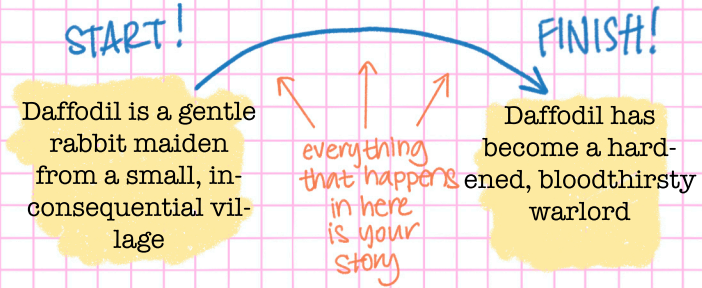
If 3-act isn't working out for you, but you'd still like a structured guide, check out Michael Hauge's "Six-Stage Plot Structure" or Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey."

Character Arcs

WHO IS YOUR
CHARACTER WHEN THE
STORY STARTS?

WHO ARE THEY BY THE
TIME THE STORY ENDS?

PLANNING YOUR STORY
AROUND THE
MOTIVATIONS AND
BEHAVIORS OF A
CHARACTER IS A GOOD
WAY TO CREATE A
CHARACTER-DRIVEN
PLOT.



BUILDING A STORY
AROUND A
CHARACTER'S GOALS IS
ANOTHER WAY TO
CREATE A CHARACTER-
DRIVEN STORY.

PERSONALLY I FIND
THAT USING BOTH
CHARACTER ARCS AND
CHARACTER GOALS IN
CONJUNCTION WITH ONE
ANOTHER MAKES FOR
THE RICHEST
STORYTELLING.

Goal-Based

CHARACTER wants SOMETHING

OBSTACLES: who or what is in the way
of your character achieving
their goal?

WHAT IF... they don't get what they want?
WHAT IF... they do?

STAKES

What would they gain if they succeed?
What would they lose if they fail?

HIGH STAKES

[Licensed character]
saves the universe from
total destruction

save the
universe?
AGAIN?



Just because the situation is
high or low stakes doesn't
necessarily mean your
character will see it that way.

LOW STAKES

If Garrett can't figure
out the door to the
gas tank, he can't
put gas in the car.

If I don't get
gas in my car
my life
is
OVER

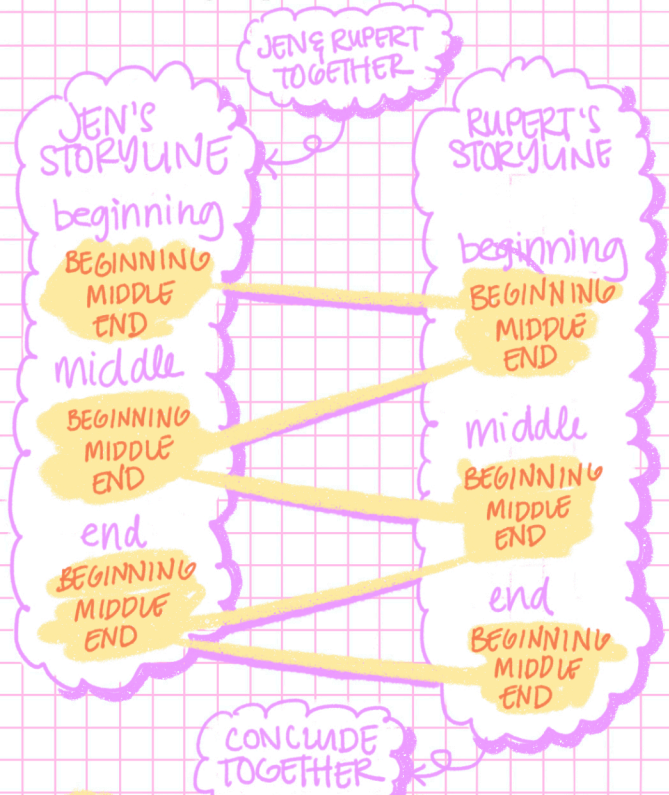


A & B Storylines

IF YOUR STORY IS MOVING
BACK AND FORTH
BETWEEN CHARACTERS,
THEN YOU HAVE TWO
STORYLINES RUNNING
PARALLEL TO ONE
ANOTHER, AKA: A & B
STORYLINE.

WEAVING STORY ARCS
TOGETHER CAN BE
TRICKY. THINK OF
CREATING MINIATURE 3-
ACT STRUCTURES WITHIN
EVERY STORYLINE,
MAKING SURE THAT THEY
FIT INTO THE LARGER
STRUCTURE OF THE
STORY.

You see this structure a lot in sitcoms. A story bounces back and forth between two characters or groups of characters.



You don't always need to open **and** close with your characters together, but I believe it's a good idea to use at least one in order to ground the storylines.

STRUCTURING A STORY
AROUND CONFLICT IS A
VERY PLOT-BASED WAY TO
APPROACH A STORY.

STORY CONFLICT IS (IN MY
MIND) BEST WHEN IT
OCCURS NATURALLY,
EITHER FROM TWO FULLY-
REALIZED CHARACTERS
BUTTING HEADS, OR A
CHARACTER WHO FINDS
THEMSELVES OUT OF
THEIR DEPTH.

BASICALLY: DON'T WORRY
ABOUT CONFLICT. EITHER
IT'S THERE OR IT'S NOT,
AND IT WON'T MAKE OR
BREAK A STORY.

Conflict

i simply do not worry about it.



Troubleshooting

Refer back to 3-Act Structure

According to formula, what should happen next?

SO YOU GOT STUCK. YOU
WROTE YOURSELF INTO A
CORNER. IT HAPPENS.

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM
HERE? HOW DO YOU FIX
IT?

Make a List

Write down 3 ideas. Literally any ideas.

1. They die.
2. Alien invaders come.
3. A big storm hits.

They may not be GOOD ideas, but they're ideas! Brainstorm until you hit on something that resonates with you.

Switch Storylines

Oftentimes, reaching a narrative dead end signals a good place to jump from your A storyline to your B storyline (or vice versa).

