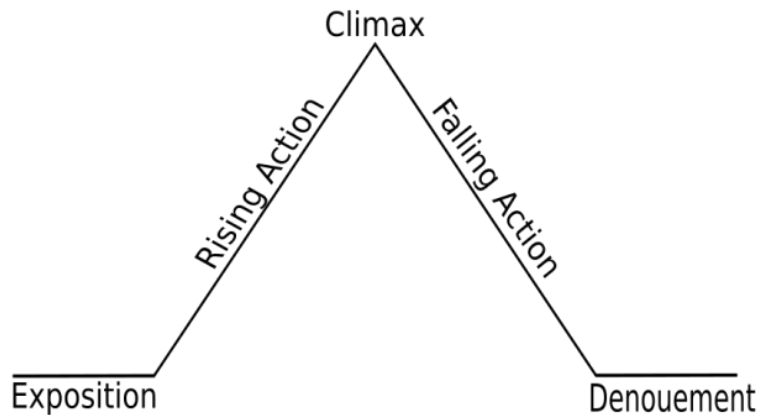


Plot and Structure: The Narrative Arc



WHAT IS PLOT AND STRUCTURE?

Plot is the series of events that make up your story, including the order in which they occur and how they relate to each other.

Structure is the overall design or layout of your story.

While plot is specific to your story and the particular events that make up that story, structure is more abstract, and deals with the mechanics of the story—how the chapters/scenes are broken up, what is the conflict, what is the climax, what is the resolution, etc.

You can think of plot and structure like the DNA of your story. Every story takes on a plot, and every piece of writing has a structure. Where plot is (perhaps) unique to your story, you can use an understanding of common structures and devices to develop better stories and hone your craft.

EXPLOSTION	The opening of the story, including a reader's introduction to characters and settings. (Who? What? and When?)
RISING ACTION	A series of events, usually beginning with an inciting incident, that complicates matters for your characters, and results in increased drama or suspense.
CLIMAX	The big showdown where your characters encounter their opposition, and either win or lose.
FALLING ACTION	A series of events that unfold after as a result of the climax and lead to the end of the story. Ties up loose ends.
DENOUEMENT	The end of the story, in which the problems are resolved (or not resolved, depending on the story.) Also called the resolution, catastrophe, or revelation.

Archetypal Narrative Arcs

Archetypal narrative arcs are patterns that countless story follow, with variations.

OVERCOMING THE MONSTER	The main character must stop the person or force threatening them.
RAGS TO RICHES	The main character begins poor, comes into money (and/or fame, power, and love), loses it, and becomes a better person because of it.
THE QUEST	The main character takes an epic journey to find something, someone, or some place, running into obstacles on the way.
VOYAGE AND RETURN	The main character visits a new world and returns home with a new perspective.
COMEDY	The main character experiences an escalating sequence of confusing but comedic events, which are ultimately resolved into a happy ending
TRAGEDY	The main character has a flaw or makes a mistake that results in their downfall.
REBIRTH	The main character experiences an event that makes them a better person.

Narrative Arc in Class Activity:

ARCHETYPAL NARRATIVE ARC	
EXPLOSION	WHO: WHERE: WHEN:
RISING ACTION	INCITING INCIDENT: SERIES OF EVENTS:
CLIMAX	
FALLING ACTION	
DENOUEMENT	

Narrative Arc in Class Activity: *In a Heartbeat* by Beth David & Esteban Bravo

ARCHETYPAL NARRATIVE ARC	
EXPLOSION	WHO: WHERE: WHEN:
RISING ACTION	INCITING INCIDENT: SERIES OF EVENTS:
CLIMAX	
FALLING ACTION	
DENOUEMENT	

Empty Narrative Arc Table

ARCHETYPAL NARRATIVE ARC	
EXPLOSION	WHO: WHERE: WHEN:
RISING ACTION	INCITING INCIDENT: SERIES OF EVENTS:
CLIMAX	
FALLING ACTION	
DENOUEMENT	

Narrative Arc Story Board

ARCHETYPAL NARRATIVE ARC	EXPOSITION	RAISING ACTION
CLIMAX	FALLING ACTION	DENOUEMENT