

NOVEL WRITING BASICS

Heroic Journey

THE QUEST NARRATIVE



STRUCTURED CREATIVITY

“Why can’t we as storytellers ‘be creative’ and simply violate these conventions? Because each of these is a station in that genre’s version of the hero’s journey. And the human psyche takes in and evaluates every narrative it sees or hears according to how closely that narrative comports to the beats and structure of the hero’s journey.” – STEVEN PRESSFIELD



PLOT-BASED STORY

Plot: *things that happen in a restricted period of time.*

Plot Dot: *The 8-point guide to major plot events.*

Something big happens with a major impact on the protagonist

“Create situations of conflict in which characters can only ever get out of if they decide on something, even if they make the wrong choices. These actions better have consequences that present new conflict” –BEN SCHARF





Start on a "big day"

- preparing for an important event
- already facing fears and challenges
- demonstrate the world and culture
- hook with sympathy & kindness
- oppressed or repressed

ORDINARY WORLD

START WITH LACK





Something weird or unexpected happens

- doesn't fit into "normalcy"
- unusual and hard to forget
- points towards an unknown world or conflict
- threatens status quo
- could be an invitation or offer
- possibly puts the character off balance
- might be responsible for bitter failure
- a path opens...

INCITING INCIDENT

CALL TO ADVENTURE





POINT OF **NO**RETURN

1ST PLOT POINT

Can't ignore the weirdness

- steps into the unknown (often forced)
- the way back is lost
- doesn't know the rules or what's happening
- the ordinary world is broken, the new world takes over
- hesitation or refusal

FIRST BATTLE

1ST PINCH POINT

The stakes are real

- dangerous opposition
- the larger forces at play
- the antagonist makes a move
- they survive, maybe thwart antagonist (become a target)
- deepens the mystery (what were they after?)
- show off courage or weakness
- forced to choose sides





MIRROR STAGE



MIDPOINT

Shift from victim to warrior

- deep self-reflection
- identity crisis / shift in perspective (shocking reveal)
- *what have I become?*
- antagonist (or plans) revealed
- committed to the cause (even knowing risks)
- takes an active role, even if not a true believer
- personal vengeance



SECOND BATTLE

2ND PINCH POINT

Heavy Losses

- take (sneaky) action
- everything falls apart
- might meet (unexpected) main antagonist or henchmen
- might face unexpected foe or weapons
- critical failure, personal responsibility
- guilt and remorse
- new information that makes everything much worse



DARK NIGHT OF SOUL

2nd PLOT POINT

All hope is lost

- hero gives up; doesn't see a way forward
- their secret plan or weapon backfired
- the true antagonist or plan is revealed
- loses a piece of their heart or self-identity
- antagonist has taken everything
- the hero is responsible for the villain's success
- serious losses or casualties
- escalating stakes have led to greater losses
- self-pity or self-destructive behavior
- fights or arguments
- an ally gives them a pep-talk



FINAL BATTLE

TRIUMPH-KNOWLEDGE

Risks all, despite likely doom

- slim chance at success
- know enemy's weakness
- their 1 hope is taken, the plan fails
- hero at mercy of villain
- the protagonist alone must persevere
- saved by act of sacrifice, unlikely ally, new knowledge or power, or simply refusal to quit

JOURNEY HOME

EPILOGUE

How far we've come...

- the hero returns home changed
- contrast their earlier self
- reflect on what's been lost
- show the challenges ahead
- bittersweet reflection
- fill in plot holes or open loops (mysteries)
- it could be a NEW home or status quo
- from alone to supported
- from afraid/weak to powerful

(sometimes standing up to former bullies)

