

The Elements and Structure of Drama

- **A cake is made of flour, sugar, eggs, shortening, and other ingredients. What are the main ingredients that, properly mixed, make a film?**
- **Most ‘recipes’ for a film would include :**
 - **plot**
 - **theme**
 - **character**

- A recap of the **plot** is what you get when you ask the question, “What happens in the film?”
- **The plot is organized around units such as:**
 - exposition
 - inciting incident
 - rising action
 - climax
 - falling action

PLOT

exposition

- The 5 W's : who, what, why, when, where. This is the information the audience needs to understand the film.

Exposition is always given to the audience by way of dialogue between characters in the film who impart to them enough background information that the audience feels “let in” on past events. Exposition almost always comes at the beginning of a film.

inciting incident

- The initial (first) action or conflict in a film. This conflict is usually between the protagonist and antagonist, and sets up a rivalry of sorts that will build in intensity as the film goes on.

rising action

- The rising action is a series of conflicts or incidents which happen between the protagonist and the antagonist . these incidents build in intensity and seriousness as the film continues. the rising action is the biggest portion of a film, in other words, the rising action makes up the body of the play.

climax

- the climax is the high point of the film. the events of the rising action build the dramatic tension, the audience interest to a peak - that peak is the climax. at the point of climax the protagonist must face some new or altered emotional or physical situation.

falling action

a.k.a.

denouement

- the denouement is the period of time after the climax where the protagonist comes to terms with the changes brought on by the events of the climax. in a fairy tale the denouement would be “and they all lived happily ever after.”

- If you ask the question, “What’s the film about?” you should expect a different answer: the **theme**.

Theme

A Theme should always be expressed in one sentence

Let’s consider a story familiar to almost everybody
“Little Red Riding Hood.”

What happens in the story? *a little girl is sent to deliver food to her grandmother. Although the little girl is cautioned not to talk to strangers, she speaks to a wolf, and tells the wolf she is on her way to visit her grandmother. When she arrives at grandma’s the speedy wolf has already eaten granny, and is lying in wait in her bed. The wolf proceeds to have Red for dessert. **This is the PLOT.***

What is the story about ? *the story is about a little girl who suffers the consequences for not following directions. **This is the THEME.***

CHARACTER

- Every film has at least one ***Character*** - somebody has to perform the action and speak the words! Most often the screenwriter creates several characters for a film. The characters are carefully constructed to provide contrast and the opportunity for conflict - if the characters were all the same, the film would be extremely boring.
- Most films have a character who is known as the ***Protagonist***. The protagonist is the hero, the person who the audience identifies with and wants to get whatever it is he/she has set out to achieve.
- If there is a ***Protagonist***, you will find an ***Antagonist*** as well. The Antagonist is the person who through intentional action, or through being in the wrong place at the wrong time, finds him/herself standing the the way of what the Protagonist wants.

Freytag's Pyramid – graphs the dramatic structure of the plot

