

# Introduction to Story Structure

## What Happens in Act I

**Act I** comprises the first quarter of the screenplay. (For a two hour movie, Act I would last approximately 30 minutes.) ***What happens in Act I (Setup)?***

**Exposition**--The part of a story that introduces the characters, shows some of their interrelationships, and places them within a time and place.

This part of the story introduces the main character, the dramatic premise, and the dramatic situation.

- **Main character**--the person in the story who has a need/objective to fulfill and whose actions drive the story
- **Dramatic premise**--what the story's about
- **Dramatic situation**--the circumstances surrounding the action
- **Inciting Incident**--an event that sets the plot of the film in motion. It occurs approximately halfway through the first act.

The "**Plot Point**"--According to Field, the three acts are separated by two plot points. A plot point, often called a reversal, is an event that thrusts the plot in a new direction, leading into a new act of the screenplay. Later screenplay gurus have built on Field's theory by stating that Plot Point #1, which leads into Act II, is the moment when the hero takes on the problem.

## What Happens in Act II

**Act II** comprises the next two quarters of the film. (For a two hour movie, Act II would last approximately 60 minutes.) ***What happens in Act II (Confrontation)?***

- **Obstacles**--In the second act, the main character encounters obstacle after obstacle that prevent him from achieving his dramatic need.
- **First Culmination**--a point just before the halfway point of the film where the main character seems close to achieving his or her goal/objective. Then, everything falls apart, leading to the midpoint.
  - **Midpoint**--a point approximately halfway through the film where the main character reaches his/her lowest point and seems farthest from fulfilling the dramatic need or objective.

The "**Plot Point**"--According to Field, the three acts are separated by two plot points. A plot point, often called a reversal, is an event that thrusts the plot in a new direction, leading into a new act of the screenplay.

## What Happens in Act III

**Act III** comprises the final quarter of the film. (For a two hour movie, Act III would be the final 30 minutes.) ***What happens in Act III (Resolution)?***

1. **Climax (Second Culmination)**--The point at which the plot reaches its maximum tension and the forces in opposition confront each other at a peak of physical or emotional action.
  2. **Culmination** --The brief period of calm at the end of a film where a state of equilibrium returns.
  3. **Note:** Some movies do have twists at the end instead of a resolution.
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**As you watch this film, please use the attached sheet to begin to analyze the story structure.  
Fill in ALL questions.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Film:** Goonies

**Screenplay Genre:** Adventure / Comedy / Family

**Movie Time:** 114 minutes

The goonies are seven restless kids in a coastal town who, deserted by parents fighting a local real estate takeover bid, discover an old treasure map pointing to famed pirate One-Eyed Willie's galleon. Unfortunately, a family of incompetent thieves are also after the loot, and are not above shoving the hand of one of the little mites into a liquidizer to extort information. And while the pre-pubescent continually scream, their doting parents prove equally odious in a finale of astounding sentimentality.

## Act I

**Please describe a little about the main characters that are introduced in Act I:**

**Mikey:**

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**Chunk:**

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**Data:**

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**Mouth:**

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**Inciting Incident (plot point 1):**

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## Act II

**Please summarize some obstacles they face in Act II. Give at least 2 examples.**

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**Act III**

**Second Culmination (climax):**

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**Resolution (or Third Act Twist)**

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