

UNIT III

Scriptwriting, Screenplays & The TV Studio

Supplemental Text: Screenwriting

Basics of a Screenplay Format

- **Scene:** screenplays are divided into scenes. (This is a technical definition). A scene can be defined as a unit of dramatic action which takes place in a specific location in continuous time.
- **Slug line or scene heading:** eg EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE. NIGHT: This tells us whether the scene is inside or outside, where it is and whether it's day or night. If more information about the location is needed it can go from the general to the specific or vice versa, eg INT. JACK'S CAR. HIGH STREET. DAY.
- **Scene direction:** always written in the present tense, this contains descriptions of the characters' actions and events relevant to the story. Characters' names are usually capitalised, eg JACK notices MARTHA standing at the side of the road. He slams the brakes on and the car screeches to a halt.
- **Character cue:** the name of the character who speaks. Always capitalized and centered above their speech.
- **Actor direction:** in brackets under the character's name, used to describe the way, or to whom, they speak. Mostly redundant, and disliked by actors, but can be useful if the manner of speaking contradicts what appears to be the meaning or if there is potential uncertainty about who is being addressed.
- **Dialogue:** what the characters say. Camera shots and angles should not appear in the screenplay (although some writer/directors writing for themselves will include them).

Reading a Screenplay - Worksheet 1

- With the person sitting next to you please look over the work sheet. Find and label the following:
 - Scene
 - Slug line
 - Scene direction
 - Character Cue
 - Actor Direction
 - Dialogue

Reading a Screenplay - Worksheet 2

- Now that you know how to read a screenplay you and ONE partner will begin to write one.
- Please take a look at worksheet 2. I will read the story out loud and we will discuss it as a class.
- After we have gone over the story, you and your partner will write a short screenplay for it.
- You **MUST** use the proper screenplay format to write this story.

Creating a Screenplay

A girl and her father were driving along a country road on their way home when they saw a young girl hitchhiking. They stopped and picked her up and she got in the back seat. She told the girl and her father that she lived in a house about five miles up the road. She didn't say anything after that but just turned to watch out the window.

When the father saw the house he drove up to it and turned around to tell the girl they had arrived – but she wasn't there. Both he and his daughter were really mystified and decided to knock on the door and tell the people what had happened.

They told him they had once had a daughter who answered the description of the girl they supposedly had picked up, but she had disappeared some years ago and had last been seen hitchhiking on this very road. Today would have been her

Sharing your Screenplay

- Please read and act out your screenplay the best you can.
- Be sure to let the class know your slug line before your characters begin to read!

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Revisiting the Storyboard

Storyboards



- A storyboard is a visual representation of the scenes you plan to shoot.
- Major companies hire professional artist to complete drawn storyboards, but many companies have begun to move towards digital storyboards.
- They different shot types are utilized here.

Storyboarding

A storyboard is a series of thumbnails that show the breakdown of the video, illustrating the key scenes — how the setting will look, who will be present, and what actions will take place.

•**Step 1:** Make a list of the main events of the story in the order they will be told. This is how they will appear on screen. If you're storyboarding for a commercial, establish what scenes will occur and in what order.

- Pick scenes that show the plot developing from start to finish. Turning points are important to show. Any time there's a plot twist or an important change, include it in the storyboard to move the story along.
- You may also want to depict changes in setting. If the story begins in one city and moves to another, make sure that will be clear in your illustrations.

•**Step 2:** Sketch your thumbnails. Start bringing the scenes to life by drawing the sketches you mapped out into the template you designed.

•**Step 3:** Add other important information.

- Next to or below each cell, fill in your description of what's happening in the scene.
- Include dialogue that will take place. Add information about the length of time the shot will take.
- Include what type of shot it is.
- Finally, number the cells so they're easy to reference when you discuss your storyboard with others.

The Storyboard

SHOT# 1



ACTION - Just the landscape at night.

DIALOGUE - The fields on either side of the road were as dark as the night sky.

TECHNIQUES - Camera still.

SHOT# 2



ACTION - Now we can see a car on the horizon.

DIALOGUE - The land was so flat that if you stood a bit you could see the lights of a car like stars on the horizon.

TECHNIQUES - Camera still.

SHOT# 3



ACTION - The car pass from the left to the right and the leaf moves a bit.

DIALOGUE - The fields on either side of the road were as dark as the night sky.

TECHNIQUES - Camera still.

SHOT# 4



ACTION - Show the car lights lighting the dark.

DIALOGUE - The car was like a snowplow, showing darkness to one side, clearing a path of light.

TECHNIQUES - The camera moves at the same velocity as the car.

SHOT# 5

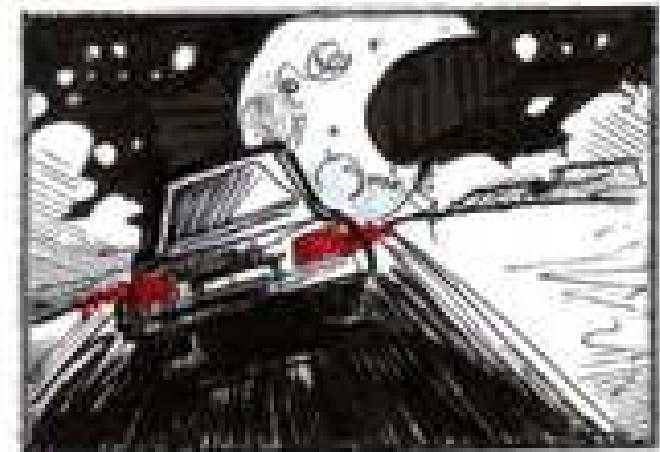


ACTION - Harry trying to be awake.

DIALOGUE - Feeling his thoughts slipping away and his eyelids becoming heavy. He blinked hard and rubbed one leg to keep himself awake.

TECHNIQUES - Camera still. Close up to Harry's face.

SHOT# 6



ACTION - Car going in the direction of the moon.

DIALOGUE - The landscape was so huge and unchanging that the car hardly seemed to move at all, a space craft inching its way to the moon...

TECHNIQUES - The camera moves at the same velocity as the car.

Types of Shots



Extreme Long shot- also known as an establishing shot and contains a large amount of landscape.



Long shot- contains landscape but gives the viewer a more specific idea of setting. A long shot may show the viewers the building where the action will take place.



Mid shot- contains the characters from the waist up and you can see their interaction with other characters.



Close up- contains just one characters face and enables the audience to view the characters feelings and emotions to help them feel empathy.



Extreme Close up- contains one part of a character's face or other object. This technique is quite common in horror films.

Storyboard Activity

- Using the blank storyboard Template given to you and your partner create a storyboard from the short screenplay you wrote last class. It should be consisting of 10 – 15 shots. You must use all 5 types of shots discussed in class.

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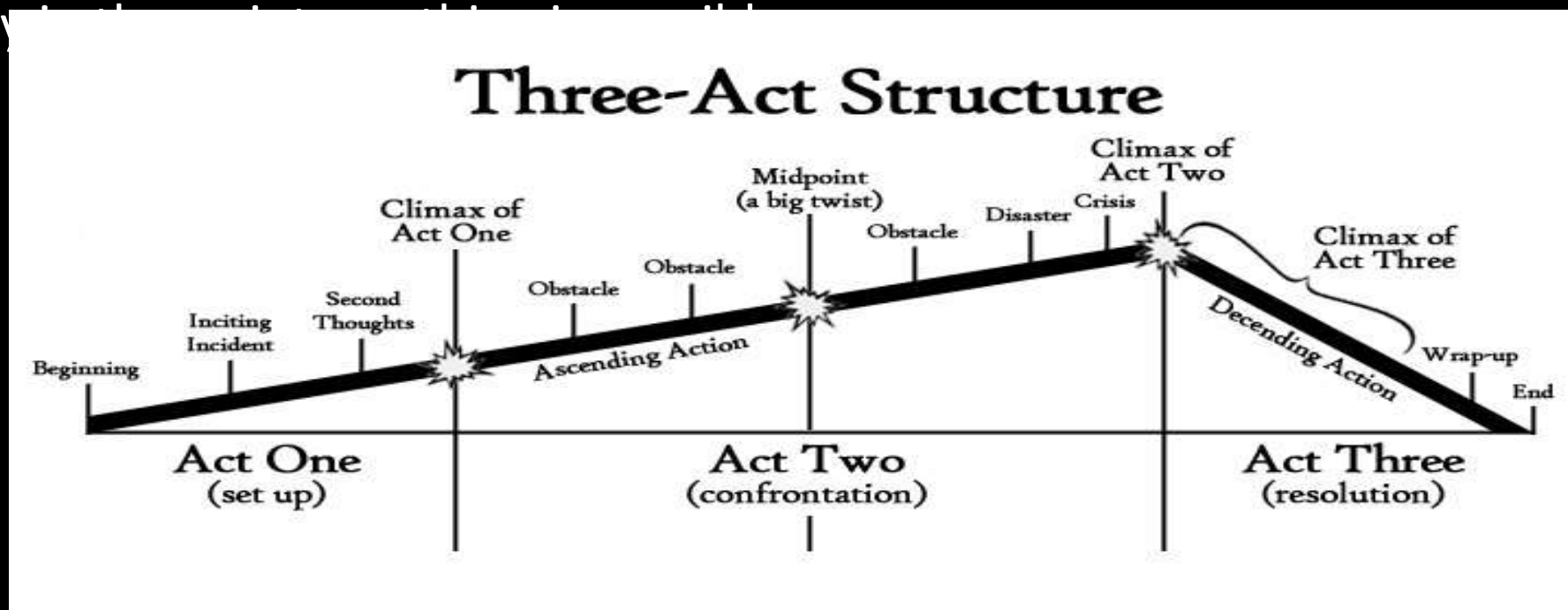
Introduction to Story Structure

Story Structure

- The 3-act structure is an old principle widely adhered to in storytelling today. It can be found in plays, poetry, novels, comic books, short stories, video games, and the movies.
- Though quite simple, the 3-act structure has proven to be a valuable weapon in the arsenal of any screenwriter. Yes, there are alternatives to telling a story. But the 3-act structure is a highly accepted and greatly successful method.
- The 3 acts are labeled as:
 - Act I: Setup
 - Act II: Confrontation
 - Act III: Resolution

What Happens in Act I?

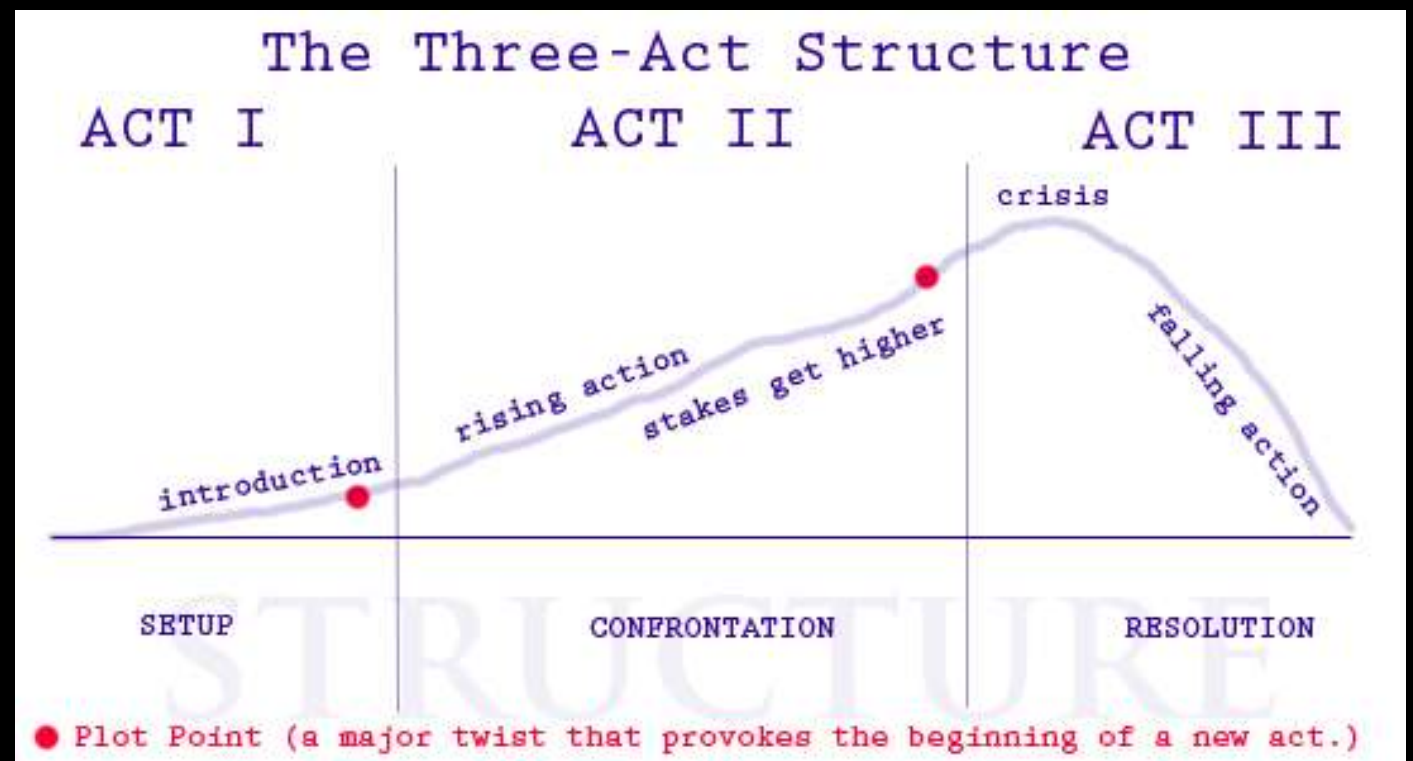
- **Act I (the Setup)** comprises the first quarter of the screenplay. (For a two hour movie, Act I would last approximately 30 minutes.)
- **What is introduced?**
 - **Main character**--the person in the story who has a need/objective to fulfill and whose actions drive the story
 - **Dramatic premise**--what 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.
- In Act I, the writer has the freedom to create any setting and reality that he so wishes. It's in the first pages of the script that he defines the reasoning and logic of the story. This early



What Happens in Act II?

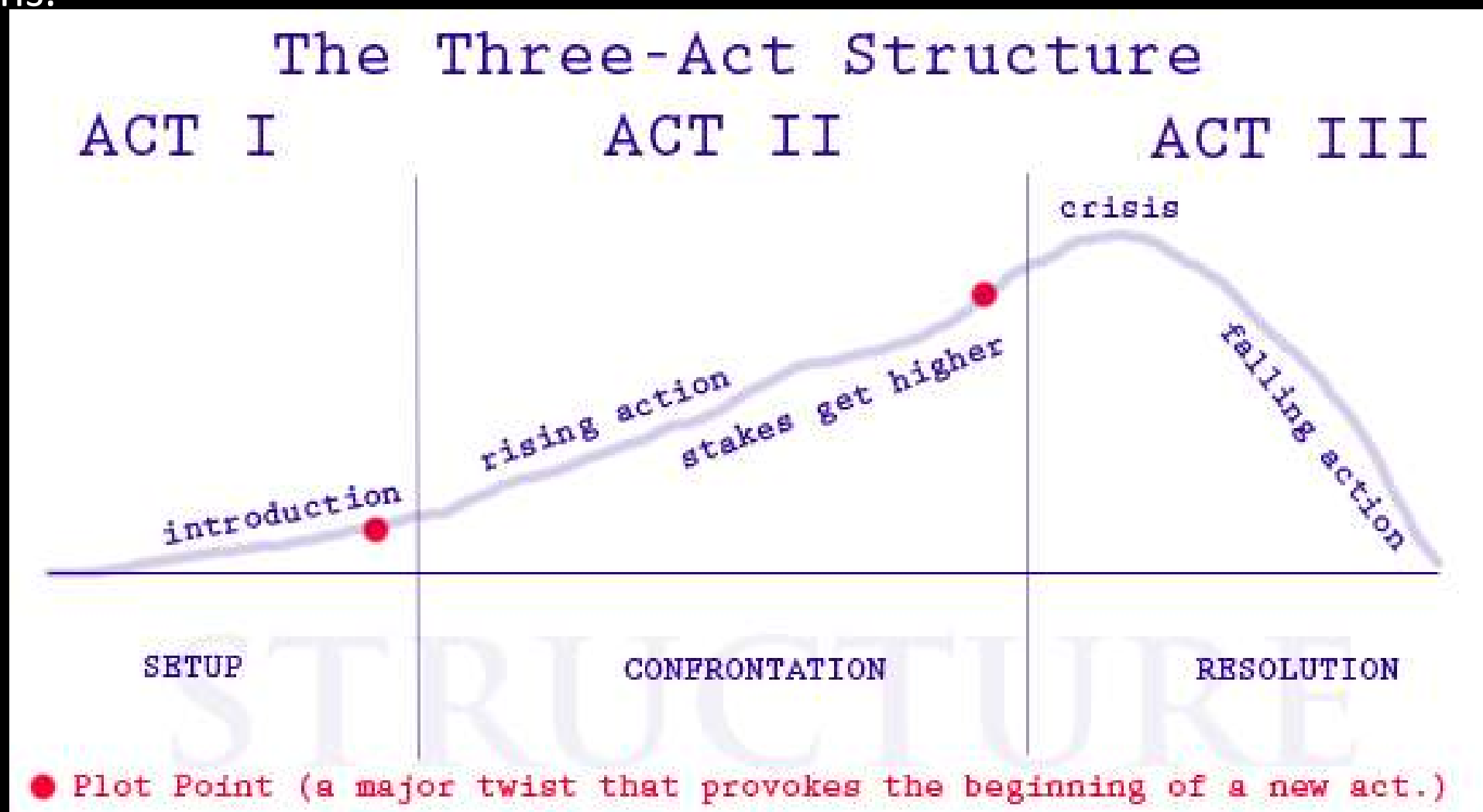
- **Act II** comprises the next two quarters of the film. (For a two hour movie, Act II would last approximately 60 minutes.)
- **What happens in Act II (Confrontation)?**
 - **Obstacles**--In the second act, the main character encounters obstacle after obstacle that prevent him from achieving his dramatic need.
 - **First Culmination(midpoint)**--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.

The "**Plot Point**"--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)?**
 - **Climax:** 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.
 - **Culmination:** The brief period of calm at the end of a film where a state of equilibrium returns.



Analyzing a TV Show

- *Friends* (Season 2 Episode 21 – ‘The one with the bullies’).
- Like many recent US sitcoms *Friends* exemplifies a highly condensed mode of story telling. In 22 minutes of screen time, this episode contains three distinct stories, each of which reaches a resolution.
- Each story is told in five or six scenes and, as there is no room for unnecessary narrative, they provide excellent material for investigating story construction.
- There are three distinct stories in this episode of *Friends*:
 - The bullies
 - Monica’s money
 - Phoebe’s father

Analyzing “Friends”

- Stories tend to have three acts:
 - Act I: set-up
 - Act II: confrontation
 - Act III: resolution
- Concentrate on the ‘bullies’ story and break it down into three acts.
 - Describe the set-up.
 - Describe the confrontation.
 - Describe the resolution.
- What are the two key events or ‘Plot Points’ that separate the acts?
 - In other words, what causes the confrontation?
 - What causes the resolution?

Analyzing “Friends” -Scenes

- Ross and Chandler are moved from their usual seat in the coffee house, Central Perk, by two intimidating men who claim to have been sitting there before them. One of them takes Chandler’s hat and refuses to return it.
- Chandler and Ross return and describe how they were bullied.
- Ross and Chandler meet the bullies again in Central Perk. The bullies claim ownership of the sofa and, after some verbal sparring, suggest that they take their dispute ‘outside’. Chandler and Ross back down and the bullies tell them never to return to the coffee shop.
- Chandler and Ross drink instant cappuccino in Chandler’s apartment, putting a brave face on their enforced exile from Central Perk. Joey offers to escort them later, but Ross becomes infuriated by the situation and argues that they should stand up to the bullies.
- Ross and Chandler ‘bravely’ gulp down their coffee in Central Perk and, having asserted their right to be there, dash out. However, they meet the bullies outside. They all prepare to fight, and, after outlawing them as potential weapons, put their keys and watches in a hat. They take some time to establish rules of engagement and, meanwhile, their stuff is stolen by a couple of opportunist thieves.
- Ross and Chandler return to the coffee house with the bullies, flushed with success at their triumph over the thieves. They have all bonded through the experience and decide that they no longer have a problem with each other.

Story Structure -Short Video

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0yqUmedyOM>

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Analyzing Story Structure in Film

Analyzing Film

- Now that you know the basics of analyzing a film's story structure, you will watch a full length feature film and analyze each of the acts found within the film.
- **Goonies** - The film's premise features a band of pre-teens who live in the "Goon Docks" neighborhood of Astoria, Oregon attempting to save their homes from demolition, and in doing so, discover an old Spanish map that leads them on an adventure to unearth the long-lost fortune of One-Eyed Willie, a legendary 17th-century pirate.
- As you watch the film please fill out the given sheet on story structure.

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Story Types & Building Characters

Do Now

- Please think about one movie for each genre:
Comedy, Horror, Thriller, Drama, Science Fiction

Story Types

Top 10 Main Story Types

- The Romance
- The Unrecognized Virtue
- The Fatal Flaw
- The Debt that Must Be Repaid
- The Spider and the Fly
- The Gift Taken Away
- The Quest
- The Rites of Passage
- The Wanderer
- The Character who cannot be put down.

Sub-Genre Story Types

- Maturation Plot – Coming of Age story
- Redemption plot – moral change in the protagonist
- Punitive Plot – Change from good to bad
- Testing Plot – willpower vs. temptation
- Education Plot – Protagonists view of life/self/people change from negative to positive
- Disillusionment Plot – Protagonists changes from positive to negative.

Classifying Film –Story Types

- Take the next 10 minutes and try and classify a movie you have seen in the past.
- Reread the definitions for the story types before categorizing it. You may find that some movies can fit into more than one category.

Independent Film Project

- Now that we know how most stories are structured, you and your group will begin preproduction for your upcoming project. This project will be worth 2 summative grades, and can fall under any story type of genre.
- For preproduction you will be graded on the following:
 - Completed story structure worksheet.
 - Written Script – properly formatted.
 - A storyboard of all main scenes.
- For the remainder of this class, please brainstorm with your group.
- Fill out the worksheet/packet given in class today part 1 & 2.
 - Brainstorm worksheet for story idea.
 - Brainstorm worksheet for protagonist idea.

UNIT IVII

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Developing Story Structure

Story Structure

- Stories tend to have three acts:
 - Act I: set-up
 - Act II: confrontation
 - Act III: resolution
- Keep in mind the two key events or 'Plot Points' that separate the acts?
 - In other words, what causes the confrontation?
 - What causes the resolution?
- In your groups please continue to work on your independent film project.
- Complete part 3 & 4 of your packet/worksheet labeled Developing a story statement – this should be a paragraph synopsis (without giving away the ending).
- It would be something you would read on the back of a DVD case.
- Part 4 is a statement on how your film will end.
- REMEMBER: it is important to have a clear picture of what you want before you actually break up your 3 acts.
 - When that is completed you may begin to fill out your blank story structure worksheet.

Independent Film Project

- Your group will continue in **preproduction** for your upcoming project. This project will be worth **2 summative** grades, and can fall under any story type of genre.
- **For preproduction you will be graded on the following:**
 - Completed story structure worksheet.
 - Written Script – properly formatted.
 - A storyboard of all main scenes.
- **In this class you will complete your story structure sheet:**
 - Be sure each of your acts follow the requirements of a 3 act film/production.
 - Be sure you can verbally talk about the plot points in your film.
 - **Please feel free to use the handouts given in class when we analyzed story structure in film.**
 - A copy can be found on my webpage

Types of Stories

Story Genres

- **Action**
- **Adventure**
- **Comedy**
- **Crime**
- **Fiction**
- **Fantasy**
- **Historical**
- **Horror**
- **Mystery**
- **Romance**
- **Thriller**

Top 10 Main Story Types

- The Romance
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- The Rites of Passage
- The Wanderer
- The Character who cannot be put down.

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Writing the Script

Independent Film Project

- Your group will continue in **preproduction** for your upcoming project. This project will be worth **2 summative** grades, and can fall under any story type of genre.
- **For preproduction you will be graded on the following:**
 - Completed story structure worksheet.
 - Written Script – properly formatted.
 - A storyboard of all main scenes.
- **In this class you will begin your script (typed or handwritten) –You will have 2 full classes to finalize it.**
 - Be sure that your script contains all of the elements needed as a standard script:
 - Scene
 - Slugline
 - Character cue
 - Actor Direction
 - Dialogue

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Creating a Storyboard

Independent Film Project

Please take today's class to put the finishing touches on your script, and create your storyboard

A storyboard is a series of thumbnails that show the breakdown of the video, illustrating the key scenes — how the setting will look, who will be present, and what actions will take place.

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Independent Film Project

- Production

- Today you will begin filming your short film. Please remember you will only have 4 class periods to do this. Bring whatever medium requirements you will need to complete your production to class.
- You may leave them in the back room.

Independent Film Project

- Post-Production
 - Today you will begin editing your short film.