

Plotting Worksheet

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CCWC 2017

ACT 1: Introduction

Setup: who is your protagonist, antagonist? Secondary characters? Describe everyday life for each of them.

Opportunity: what is the event that sparks a desire in your protagonist?

New situation: What is your protagonist's relocation? It can be literal or figurative or metaphorical. Jot some notes on how they adjust. Remember this is NOT the end-goal.

Change of plans: Something else happens that messes everything up. A *new* plan has to be made WHICH IS THE OVERARCHING GOAL OF YOUR NOVEL. What happens? How does your protagonist reflect on what happened in **Opportunity** and **New situation?** What is the new plan?

ACT 2: The heart of the story

Progress: In what ways does your main character's plan seem to be working? What trials and errors will he/she encounter along the way?

Point to no return: How are things harder than expected? How can you make them harder? Raise the stakes. What conditions exist that make it impossible for your cast to return to life as usual? How does your protagonist and friends commit to moving forward and not giving up? What motivates that commitment?

Complications and higher stakes: Time for that evil author laugh – make the goal harder to reach. List complications. Don't hold back. (Great subplot moment here!) Raise the stakes again. Why is reaching the goal more important than before?

Major setback: *Donald Maass says things have to keep getting worse if you want compelling story.* Describe what happens to your cast of characters that make it seem all is lost? What is the antagonist's great victory? What raw emotions swirl? How do characters self-assess? What kind of internal and character arc changes have to happen here?

ACT 3: Climax and fall-out

Final Push: It's do or die time, folks. How does your protagonist put every resource he or she has toward the goal? What is he/she willing to give up to win? *Sacrifice is key to reader admiration.*

Climax: win or lose, live or die – describe how the problem resolves...or not. What is the “death” from the final push? Death can be literal or figurative. Your main character may die trying (ultimate sacrifice).

Aftermath: *Please don't rush this part!* Take time to show the fall-out of the climax. Describe how life for everyone involved is different. How do the characters change from the experience? What are the emotional responses?