

## HOLLYWOOD PARADIGM—A **THREE-ACT STORY STRUCTURE**

Screenplay length – 120 pages

Running time - 120 minutes

(in a properly formatted screenplay 1 page = 1 minute of action)

### **ACT I SET-UP (beginning -- pp. 1-30)**

FIRST 10 MIN.--an introduction

WHO? WHERE? WHEN? and WHAT? WHO the main characters are; WHERE and WHEN the story takes place (the SETTING/THE WORLD OF THE STORY); and WHAT the CONFLICT might be (foreshadowing the Conflict of the story).

INCITING INCIDENT--the beginning of the story.

A dramatic incident that throws the life of the Protagonist out of balance and arouses desire in the Protagonist (DRAMATIC NEED) to restore the balance of his/her life. It introduces Conflict and puts the Protagonist to action; The Protagonist has no choice now: s/he HAS TO act or s/he will die. In an attempt to fulfill her/his Dramatic Need (and to restore the balance of her life), s/he encounters numerous obstacles. INCITING INCIDENTS poses the CENTRAL QUESTION: is the Protagonist going to get what s/he wants or not? lose or win?

The INCITING INCIDENT should happen as early as possible--in the first scene, if possible-- but no later than page 30 (end of ACT I).

### **CENTRAL QUESTION**

What is going to happen to the protagonist? Is s/he going to get what s/he wants or not? lose or win? Once the CENTRAL QUESTION has been posed (as a result of the INCITING INCIDENT), the story starts to unfold, and it does not end until the CONFLICT has been resolved and the CENTRAL QUESTION has been answered at the story's CLIMAX or Final Confrontation with the Forces of Antagonism (end of ACT III).

### **PLOT POINT I**

A major CHANGE in the direction of the story; **crossing the point of no return**; an incident or event that hooks into the story and spins it around into another direction (it can also be the Inciting Incident); starts the main body of the story (ACT II).

## **ACT II CONFRONTATION (middle -- pp. 30-90)**

Contains the bulk of the story.

### **PROGRESSIVE COMPLICATIONS**

The Protagonist attempts to restore the balance of her life, and in so doing, she encounters obstacles and must confront the ANTAGONIST or the FORCES OF ANTAGONISM (more than one Antagonist). The Protagonist undertakes action. There is a counter-action (reaction) on the part of the Forces of Antagonism. The Protagonist does not get what she wants. She doubles her energy and undertakes action #2, more forceful and clever. But the Forces of Antagonism strike even harder. The Protagonist fails again. She undertakes action #3, etc. The CONFLICT escalates! The confrontation grows more dramatic! The protagonist must fight. She cannot walk away from the confrontation. She cannot and will not rest until she either wins or loses definitely. There is no other option.

### **PITCH (PINCH) I**

A scene--half way between PLOT POINT I and MIDPOINT--that represents the nature of the first half of Act II.

### **MIDPOINT**

A scene that divides the story into two halves, each half being of a different nature.

### **PITCH (PINCH) II**

A scene--half way between MIDPOINT and PLOT POINT II--that represents the nature of the second half of Act II.

### **PLOT POINT II**

Another major CHANGE in the direction of the story. **Crossing the point of no return.** An incident or event that hooks into the story and spins it around into a new direction. The beginning of the end of the story, the first sign of RESOLUTION.

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## **ACT III RESOLUTION (end – pp. 90-120)**

### **CLIMAX**

The last and final confrontation between the Protagonist and the Forces of Antagonism. It brings about an answer to the Central Question (the Protagonist either wins or loses; lives or dies; fulfills her Dramatic Need or fails to do so). Also called an OBLIGATORY SCENE: the story starts once the Central Question has been asked (see: INCITING INCIDENT), and cannot end until the Central Question has been answered (CLIMAX). Climax must happen as it provides an answer to the Central Questions, resolves the Conflict, and brings the story to its conclusion; in that sense it's OBLIGATORY.

### **LAST SCENE**

The wrap of the story, the actual RESOLUTION. It ties up loose ends and works as a "slow curtain" after the CLIMAX.