

## SCREENPLAY/HOLLYWOOD PARADIGM/CLASSICAL STRUCTURE

### 1. Screenplay

Screenplay is a story told in pictures. Its nature is visual.

- Only write what can be *SEEN*. Describe images and actions.

### 2. Screenplay ÷ Act ÷ Sequence ÷ Scene

*Screenplay* consists of three *acts*. An *act* consists of a series of *sequences*. A *sequence* consists of a series of *scenes* united by one theme. A *scene*--a single *event*--is the smallest structural element of a screenplay.

### 3. Conflict

In a screenplay nothing moves forward except through *conflict*.

### 4. Types of conflicts:

(1) *internal*: protagonist with himself (primarily good for a novel; difficult in a visual medium since one cannot SEE internal conflict; *externalize* internal conflict when writing a screenplay)

(2) *external/personal*: with another person (best for love story; theater play)

(3) *external/extra-personal*: with society; with the environment (also called the forces of antagonism)

### 3 Q&A

Q. Why should we study the classical structure (the Hollywood paradigm)?

A.1. Because all of the Hollywood & 90% of the story-telling elsewhere in the world adheres to the classical structure.

A.2. Because the remaining 10% storytellers in the world, who rebel against the classical structure, formulate their stories in relation to the classical structure (by negating and transgressing its rules); all masters of avant-garde or anti-structure started with the classical structure.

## 5. The Classical Structure

1. **Single** protagonist  
(even if it's a couple of people, *Thelma and Louise* for example, the same desire or goal makes them a single protagonist).
2. **Single active** (as opposed to passive) **protagonist**  
(he or she makes decisions and moves the action forward).
3. **Single active protagonist** who *has a desire, goal or dramatic need* and pursues it actively.
4. **Single active protagonist** who has a desire and *the will power* to pursue the desire.
5. **The protagonist must be empathetic**, i.e., we, the audience, must be able to *empathize* with the protagonist.  
("Empathy, noun, the ability to identify oneself mentally with a person...and so understand his/her feelings. *empathic* adj. Do not confuse *empathy* with *sympathy*;" *Oxford American Dictionary*)
6. **The emphasis on the external conflict**  
(though--optimally--in a complex story, there should be a mixture of different types of conflicts external/extra-personal, external/personal and internal, all subordinate to the main conflict of the story).
7. **Continuous time**  
(the chronology of the story is clear; the time progression is linear from A to Z).
8. **Causality**  
(cause--effect connection between consecutive scenes; scene **A** leads to scene **B**; scene **B** leads to scene **C**; scene **C** leads to scene **D**, etc.).
9. **Every scene is indispensable**  
(if you remove or misplace a scene, the story collapses).
10. **Closed ending**  
(all questions answered, all emotions satisfied).
11. **Internally consistent reality**  
(once genre or style--the rules of the narrative--are established, they are not violated, never broken).