

Beginning

- Includes your hook: draw the reader in
- Sets up the world (characters, setting)
- “The way things are”
- Find out our characters’ desires

Energetic Marker: Inciting Incident

- Something happens which signals “the end” of the beginning
- Shift that propels us into the main conflict of the story

The Middle

- A new and strange place
- Main character must find their way in uncharted territory
- A series of events unfold starting with the inciting incident in rising action towards the crisis

Energetic Marker: Crisis

- The crisis is the point where the tension comes to a head.
- Usually, the main character is faced with some insurmountable problem, or they learn something they need in order to succeed in the end
- Often a point of failure or “How will they get out of this one?”

Energetic Marker: Recommitment

- After the crisis, the main character is brought to a lower point
- The action slows
- The main character must reflect on their own weaknesses, learn a lesson, or come up with a new tactic
- This is the point of recommitment, where the main character recommits to their goal, either by finding a new avenue or by redefining the goal
- This will be the beginning of rising action towards the climax

The End

- Build up to the climax and then resolution

Energetic Markers: Climax and Resolution

- **Climax:** The last battle, where the main character either achieves their goal, or not
- **Resolution:** Falling action, a reflection, summary of events, the “new” normal

WAYS TO BUILD TENSION

Foreshadowing: Gives the readers clues about what might happen

Stakes: What does the character want? What is standing in their way? What happens if they don't get what they want? Keeping the stakes high is a good way to build tension. Often, a character will encounter numerous obstacles that build up until the climax.

Using Plot Elements in an Essay or Shorter Writing:

Intro: Hook, inciting incident

Body: Exploration, building tension (What are the stakes? What are the obstacles?), crisis (hitting the wall) and recommitment (finding the lesson, tools, or strength to keep going)

Conclusion: Climax (Using the new perspective or tools in order to beat the odds) and resolution (reflection on the experience, how did the goals change, how did YOU change?)



CHALLENGE

Pick a favorite book, movie, or TV show episode, and plot the main markers on a story map. (Don't spend a lot of time on this, it doesn't have to be thorough). The next time you are working on an outline for an essay, think about how the different components might fit onto the map.

RESOURCES

marthaalderson.com

www.youtube.com/user/marthaalderson/featured

Martha Alderson, also known as the “Plot Whisperer” is the author of numerous books and trainings on the art of plot. She goes in depth with story maps and plot planners in her books and online trainings. You can find some free resources on her website as well as links to her books and video series. Also check out her YouTube channel:

Email your challenge to laurelnakai@gmail.com by May 23