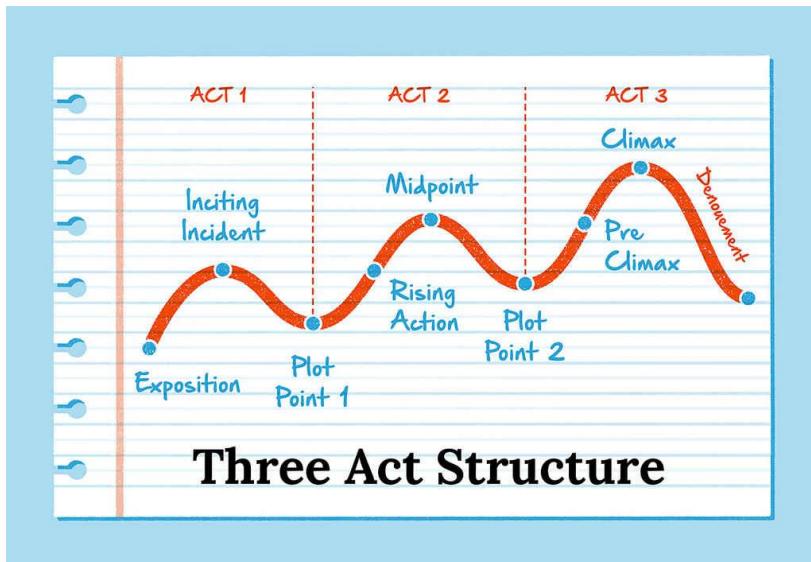


Outlining Resources

Kelly Jensen | Pocono Liars Writers Workshop 10/21/2023

Synopsis and Summary Resources

<https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/story-structure/three-act-structure/>



<https://janefriedman.com/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis/>

Incident (Story Advancement) + Reaction (Color) =
Decision (Story Advancement)

<https://publishingcrawl.com/p/how-to-write-a-1-page-synopsis>

1. Opening image
2. Protagonist Intro
3. Inciting incident
4. Plot point 1
5. Conflicts & character encounters
6. Midpoint
7. Winning seems imminent, but...
8. Black moment
9. Climax
10. Resolution
11. Final image

Outline Examples

Summary or Synopsis

Tell yourself a story. Your story. Stick to the important details—what your characters want, where their plot arc might take them. This can be your outline.

List

- Chapter One – Oliver cooking breakfast for his daughter. Thinking about how much he'll miss her when she goes away to college. Show their relationship. End chapter hook: Oliver loses his job.
- Chapter Two – Nick invited to eat breakfast with his niece. She wants to talk about what's going to happen when she goes away to college (next week). Who will cut the lawn and clear the leaves out of the gutter. End chapter hook: An unannounced guest arrives who will complicate Nick's (new) life.
- Chapter Three – Oliver dropping daughter off at college. Meets Nick. Include a money squeeze event.
- Chapter Four – Same day, Nick's POV. Further explore his social awkwardness (revealing that chapter two isn't just him 'at home') and show his attraction to Oliver nonetheless.
- Chapter Five – Oliver. Business as usual. Show first weeks of being an empty nester with added complication of not having a job.
- Chapter Six – Nick. Business as usual. Nick not coping particularly well. Brother is a serious complication.

Chart

Ch	Date	POV	Summary	Notes
1	8/17	O	Oliver cooking breakfast for his daughter. Thinking about how much he'll miss her when she goes away to college. Show their relationship. End chapter hook: Oliver loses his job.	
2	8/18	N	Nick invited to eat breakfast with his niece. She wants to talk about what's going to happen when she goes away to college (next week). Who will cut the lawn and clear the leaves out of the gutter. End chapter hook: An unannounced guest arrives who will complicate Nick's (new) life.	
3	8/22	O	Oliver dropping daughter off at college. Meets Nick. Include a money squeeze event.	Call from Oliver's ex-wife thanking him for 'making college possible'.
4		N	Further explore his social awkwardness (revealing that chapter	Have Emma share an amusing story about her uncle's unique quirks at

			two isn't just him 'at home') and show his attraction to Oliver nonetheless.	dinner. This will draw Nick into the conversation.
5	9/5	O	Two weeks have passed and Oliver still doesn't have a job.	What is he doing with his time? What is his ultimate plan?
6	9/6	N	Two weeks at home with his brother (unwelcome house guest).	Explore the relationship between the brothers. An event or conversation aimed at 'showing' this.

Calendar

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
8/17 Ch1 Oliver Breakfast	8/18 Ch2 Nick Breakfast				8/22 Ch3 Oliver - College Ch4 Nick	
						8/30
					9/5 Ch5 Oliver at home	9/6 Ch6 Nick at home
						9/13 Ch7 Oliver visits NYCC Ch8 Nick Lunch w/Oliver

Developing Characters

Goal, Motivation, and Conflict

Ask yourself: What does my main character want (goal), why do they want it (motivation), and how do they plan to get it? What is standing in their way (conflict)?

Why I do this first: I pull an astonishing number of plot points and secondary plots from the GMC info I put down. Sometimes I'll get ideas for scenes as well, which I can paste into my outline.

Example: What does Frank want? Ultimately, he wants Tom, but if you fuzz Tom's identity a little, what Frank really wants is a partner. He's lonely. He's never really had a relationship that worked out because for as much as he likes to flirt, Frank has a hard time getting close to people. He's a journalist. He's used to dealing with people as questions and answers. Additionally, he's always carried a torch for his first love (Tom!) which has made it hard for him to settle down with anyone else.

His career goals are a little different and I always consider the romantic arc and personal arc as two separate things when I'm building a story. Hopefully, I can "align" these arcs as we move through the conflict and toward the resolution.

Example: Frank's career is going extremely well, but he's bored. It's all questions and answers and nothing new.

- This "question and answer" feels like a theme for Frank and is something I can use to tie his personal, romantic, and career goals together.

His motivation is directly tied to his goals: He wants these things simply because he yearns to be happy. It's not complicated. The conflict is, in large part, due to himself. Inertia, mostly. As we get into the story and he begins interacting with Tom, the conflict will deepen into fear of what he might lose/have lost, and the question of why.

What's next: So, who is Frank?

Character History

So... my character histories are *long*. Usually a couple thousand words. I start with the background. If their childhood is important, I explore that. This is when I really get to know my character. I'll often add notes to my GMC while writing a history. I'll add plot points to the list I'm going to use for my outline.

I don't start with what my character looks like. I end with that (and sometimes leave it blank until I start writing). I start with who they are. I figure out their relationship with their parents. I figure out their education and career—especially if it's going to be a part of the story. Because I write romance, I also think about their sexuality—to a point—and construct a vague relationship history. I want my characters to feel like real people when I write them, so I put a lot of time into fleshing them out.

I also figure out what their talents and hobbies are and make a list of fears, likes, dislikes, and so on. These things help me give my characters the small quirks that make them individual and sometimes lead to plot points and/or scenes.

None of this history is set in stone. My characters continue to develop on the page—which is half the fun of writing. But because my stories tend to be character-driven, knowing where my heroes come from is really important when it comes to plotting where they will be going.

What's next: A lot of copying and pasting!

The Outline

A lot of this information will end up in my outline. Not the background, obviously, but background can sometimes inspire or inform a scene. Goals, motivations, and conflicts should absolutely help shape your plot, however, and so you will often find the fuel for your outline there.