

Plotting With the Hero's Circle

THE THEMATIC STATEMENT - The universal belief that you want to show off in this story.

Examples of a few themes:

Family isn't blood, it's the people who care most about you.

OR

We try to attain peace not for the whole world but for the people closest to us.

OR

To be brave, one must first be afraid and yet still continue.

YOUR THEMATIC STATEMENT: _____

0 - THE REGULAR WORLD

This is the world your character is comfortable in, and that you, the author, are going to turn upside down. It is also how your story opens and the first chance for your reader to get to know your main character, your tone, the issues, and be intrigued enough to continue reading.

- a) Start with a hook – something that shows off the internal conflict and creates intrigue. *Ex: It wasn't every day one woke up to a house full of dwarves, but on those days, one had to at least pretend to be brave while frantically figuring out how to definitely NOT go on an adventure.*
- b) Set the tone (funny, serious, dramatic) and the genre (Fantasy, sci-fi, etc.)
- c) Show off the world as it is normally, and the character within that world.
- d) Show off the internal GMC and External GMC (or at least a hint towards it).

1 – CALL TO ADVENTURE

Just because adventure calls, doesn't mean your character wants any part of it. They are comfortable. The world is scary. They don't feel prepared enough to embark on the journey. Of course – they're going to go. They just need the right push.

- a) The External GMC affects the main character's world. They must leave.

- b) They refuse the call to adventure because they don't think they have the skills or aren't prepared.
- c) An event or realization pushes them to swallow their fear and leave.

2 - HELP FROM A MENTOR

The Mentor might not be perfect but they will help your main character grow and meet the challenges. They probably aren't at all what they seem either. There might even be more than one mentor who joins the party.

- a) Who are they?
- b) What are they like?
- c) How will they benefit the main character on their quest?

3 – THE UNKNOWN

Your character is entering the unknown and are completely out of their depth. They face their first big obstacle or conflict which leaves them wondering if they are truly ready for all this. This is a low for them – but, they pick themselves up and keep going.

- a) What opponent/obstacle do they meet?
- b) They are alone and lost – how did they get this way?
- c) Remember, make it exciting but not as dire as the final boss. Keep it pretty easy. The hard part is that this is all new!

4 – SHENANIGANS

This is a multi-scene montage of problems, weird situations, making friends (who may or may not join your character), and enemies (who may or may not be monsters). In this part, your character is REACTING to what is happening around them. They don't know enough to make plans BUT they are learning and getting better. This is the fun adventure part of the story, but it can still have some serious bits. Every monster or opponent is getting harder, things are slowly becoming more dire.

- a) What happens during the event?
- b) What they learn or who they meet.
- c) Their reaction to this event.

5 – PREPARING TO FACE FEAR

As your character is having their adventure, they become aware that there is a larger enemy lurking – the BIG BAD who wants to destroy them and the world. Its minions are close and on the prowl. SO... our hero prepares. This is the calm before the storm.

- a) How does your character prepare?
- b) What are they thinking?
- c) How does this apply to your theme?
- d) How does this affect their internal GMC?

6 – MID POINT CLIMAX (AKA the false climax)

Enough prep! The enemy has arrived. Your character is prepared, learned new skills, and has back up. They are ready – or at least they think they are.

Unfortunately, as the scene progresses the hero finds themselves overwhelmed, losing hope, and...

FAILS! Losing self esteem, wishing they were home, then going off to lick their wounds and make a new plan.

OR

WINS! But it turns out it isn't what they thought it would be. In fact, it's a trap. Now they need to come up with a new and better plan.

7 – ROAD OF TRIALS

Similar to SHENANIGANS, this is a multi-scene section that grows more and more tense, bringing our character to the beginning of the climax. Because the stakes are growing, your character now goes from REACTING to problems to becoming ACTIVE. They control their life as best they can and try to anticipate what opponents might do. Which is a good thing because every conflict is harder and more dangerous than the one before it.

- a) What happens during the conflict?
- b) The Reaction to the conflict:
- c) What they learn from the conflict:

8 – ALL HOPE IS LOST

Similar to PREPARING TO FACE FEAR, our character is preparing to face the BIG BAD. If they don't win, it could very well mean the end of their home, their family, and the people they care about.

Our character is ready to not make it through this one. They prepare to make an ultimate sacrifice to save the ones they care about.

- a) How does your character prepare?
- b) How do they feel?
- c) What are they willing to sacrifice? (themselves, their morals, or an object)
- d) What are the stakes if they fail?

To give our character a hope of survival at the climax, we writers need to add some items, ideas, or interesting information to the story prior to this point.

For example:

In THE MENTOR, your character learns, “you can always rely on fresh spring water in the face of evil.

In SHENANIGANS the character fills a water skin at a fresh spring.

In ROAD OF TRIALS – the character notices all the fresh springs have been destroyed as they get closer to their goal.

Take a minute to put three to five items or clues into various points of the plot.

9 – CLIMAX

Internal

First things first, you need to resolve your internal Goal, Motive, and Conflict.

Climax - Step One - The Dark Night Of The Soul

Your character is feeling overwhelmed right now. They are alone (mentally or physically). They question their ability to complete the task before them - they aren't good enough, strong enough, smart enough, a good enough leader, etc.. There is no easy way out and it looks like they will fail

Climax – Step Two – The Heroic Sacrifice and other Lessons

Now have one or more of the following to help your character realize that they DO have what it takes. They CAN make a difference – it may cost them their life, their morals, or the most important object to them. It might be a lesson in theme that finally sinks in or a bit of information that finally ties all the clues together.

Regardless of what it is, it is in this section that they will look deep into themselves and find a way to triumph.

- **Make a Heroic Sacrifice** where they give up something incredibly important (e.g. a very important object, their long held moral stance, or even their life).
- **Discover a Plot Twist.** The plot twist introduces new information that flips everything they thought they knew on its head. For example: The antagonist isn't the real antagonist and can maybe be an ally. The reality destroying gem was switched out a few scenes ago by another character. Etc.
- **Learn a Thematic Lesson.** Maybe your main character has taken on the antagonist alone and failed utterly - but your theme is - Without community, nothing can be accomplished. So they remember back to all the times they succeeded and realize that they need their team and it's time to make amends.

Climax - External

Now your character has their emotions sorted out, they can finally move on to the External Climax.

Climax – Step Three – The Clever Solution

Your character finally puts all the items and information together and is able to see the big picture, forming a plan to beat the BIG BAD.

Climax – Step Four – The Final Struggle

Just because they have the solution, doesn't mean it's going to be easy! This is a prolonged battle of ups and downs. Make your readers sweat!

10 – TIME TO GO HOME

While your character may be bloody, bruised, and missing an arm, they've found their own strength and belief system. They are a new person – so much different than the person they were when they started out. They have new friends, allies, skills, beliefs, and self-confidence. They've seen things they can't unsee and they are scarred from it.

- a) All this leads to worry and more internal conflict.
- b) They are homesick – but will the person they have become be accepted on their return.
- c) They love life – but is there still a place for them in this world.
- d) If they aren't who they used to be – who are they now?

11 – THE FINAL PRIZE

This is the culmination of the Character Arc (Internal GMC)

Your hero had a goal.

They had a motive.

They went through life changing conflict.

But now they realize that after all they've been through... after all they've learned... the prize they sought isn't what they actually thought it would be.

INSTEAD it is understanding the THEME and applying it to their life.

12 – RETURN CHANGED

As your character finally arrives at the place they called (or now call) home we show their growth. We show how or, if they fit in.

- a) Were their fears realized?
- b) How do they show how they have changed to others?

This can be a mirror of the opening scene – this way the reader can directly compare the way the character was and the way the character is now.

LAST STEP

Edit your work! Add in:

- Description (sight, sound, taste/smell, touch)
- Make sure you aren't just telling what is happening but showing it.
 - *EX:*
(telling) Mulric the Gravitational was very very afraid as he looked at the monster.

(showing) Mulric couldn't breathe. He wanted to squeeze his eyes shut and not see the monster in front of him. Or rather, he didn't want to smell the rotting meat stench coming off the beast's arm-length teeth as it gnashed them together like clacking bones.
- Make sure your story is understandable by giving it to some test readers and getting their feedback – what they liked, what they thought could use more work, what they were confused by. And remember, it's not you being critiqued, it's the story – and you get to choose what you change and what you don't.
- Check your spelling and punctuation and that you are using literary devices.
- Give it a good title that will make people want to read it.