

Narrative Structure

Narratives are **plotted** according to this basic structure:

Exposition—Introducing the characters and the setting. Drawing the audience into the world of the story (whether film, play, TV show, novel). The world is in **stasis**.

Inciting incident—Something happens that sets the story in motion and introduces **conflict**

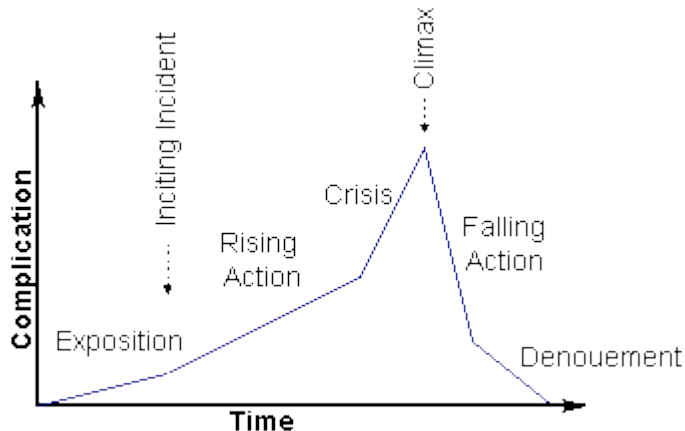
Rising action—a series of incidents that heighten the **conflict** leading to:

Climax—the high point of the story; the **final conflict**

Falling action-- the **conflict** gets resolved

Denouement—the world returns to stasis.

Longer narratives may also have sub-plots, with different relationships with the main plot



CONFLICT is at the heart of storytelling. All stories are about conflict, either Man vs. Man; Man vs. Nature or Man vs. Himself or any combination of these three. Simple stories may have only one conflict; more complicated stories have several. Any individual character may have only one conflict but interesting, complex characters have several. The actor who can identify and play more than one conflict will be more interesting and engaging than the actor who only plays one.

Man vs Man—An individual or group opposes another individual or group. This is the most common conflict in the theater and film.

Man vs Nature-- An individual or group fights for survival against the natural world—wild animals, terrible weather, forbidding landscapes or any combination of these.

Man vs Himself—An individual struggles with mental illness, addiction, a phobia or any other internal conflict. Almost every story has some element of this fundamental conflict. Every actor should look for this conflict in addition to the other two.