

## **Outlining/Plotting**

A critique partner informed me I am a Panster because I wrote my last two books without a roadmap or a plot outline. That got me thinking. I did not want to fly by the seat of my pants anymore, so I investigated plotting/outlining.

After extensive research, I discovered more than I ever wanted to know about the subject. My mind could not digest all the information about outlining, plotting, and story mapping.

### **For outlining and plotting search:**

A Disturbance and Two Doorways  
Dan Harmon's Story Circle  
Dean Koontz's Classic Story Structure  
Fichtean Curve  
Five-Act Structure  
Freytag's Pyramid  
A Hero's Journey  
In Medias Res  
Kishōtenketsu Structure  
Red Herring Structure  
Save the Cat Beat Sheet  
Snowflake Method  
Story Spine  
The 7-Point Story Structure  
The Flashcard Method

## The Three-Act Structure

### Tragic Plot Embryo

For me, the five-act plot structure seemed the simplest method. All story plots have a beginning, middle, and end. But there's more to the plot structure than that.

#### **The five-act plot structure elements:**

1. Exposition/introduction
2. Rising action
3. Climax/turning point
4. Falling action
5. Resolution/denouement

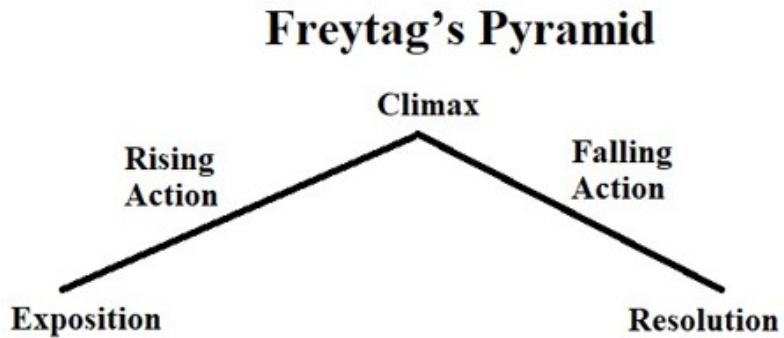
Some well-known authors don't even bother with outlines. However, there are some benefits to having one.

#### **The benefits are:**

- Assist in research
- Facilitate speedier writing
- Provide a sense of direction
- Save time on editing
- Prevent plot holes
- Improves character development
- Accelerates story pacing
- Enables time tracking, which avoids extensive rewrites

## **The Five-Act Plot Structure**

This is what the Freitag Pyramid outline/plot graph looks like. The Freitag Pyramid has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But there's more in between. The rising and falling action ties everything together.



#### **1. Exposition: (Several paragraphs, a chapter, or two.)**

- Introduce the protagonists (who).
- Set the scene (where).
- Set the time period or circumstance (when).
- Introduce the central conflict “exciting force” that causes the character to take action "Inciting Incident" (what).
- Describe the event/incident that sets your entire book's premise in motion.

#### **2. Rising Action: (Can take 20, 30, or 40 chapters.)**

- The main conflict/obstacle begins for the primary character he or she must resolve.
- Every conflict/obstacle is a stepping-stone that leads to the climax of the story.

- This is where the story can take a different path or a secondary conflict/obstacle can arise.
- Introduce secondary characters either to assist or complicate the main character's goal. The conflict could affect a single or multiple characters.
- Build towards the climax, but the focus is on the main character and their new world.
- Placing the main character in difficult situations will build tension and conflict.
- It is acceptable to have questions not answered until the end of the story.

### **3. Climax: (This can take up 1 to 3 chapters.)**

- This is the crucial point when the protagonist deals with the results of the events/conflicts. This is the moment that the reader has been waiting for and is unsure where your story will go next.
- Here everything changes in the story. The main character makes a life-altering decision. This could be a low point for the protagonist.
- Depending on the story, the protagonist does not always decide. (Plot twist.)
- The story can take two different paths: One, the story can build from bad to worse and end with a tragedy. Two, can build from bad to good and end with joy. For good or ill, this is where the characters have a change in fortune.

- This is where all the different subplots and characters converge.

#### **4. Falling Action: (A few paragraphs or a chapter.)**

- These actions occur immediately after the climax, with detailed consequences—good or bad—that the characters must confront.
- This is the time to resolve conflicts and subplots, so your story doesn't feel rushed in the last few chapters.
- As a result of the protagonist's decision, during the falling action, the conflict gives way to resolution. This is where you tie up the loose ends and tension dissipates.

#### **5. Resolution: (This can take a paragraph or more.)**

- The resolution is the end of the story, which tells what happens to the characters after resolving the conflict. You can also introduce a plot twist, before resolving the conflicts the main character and or the antagonist face.
- The tension has peaked, but tension is still high here because the characters have to decide what path to take.
- Some stories have happy conclusions; others have sad endings.
- If there is a series, this is the place to introduce a cliffhanger and leave the reader eager for the next story.

#### **In Summary:**

The plot outline can serve two functions:

- Ensure the story's plot has a smooth meaningful flow.
- Track the characters and the story's timeline.