

- The EXPOSITION gives information about the characters and their situation.
- The INCITING MOMENT is the event that SETS the action IN MOVEMENT or TRIGGERS IT OFF. It is also called the INITIATING EVENT or CATALYTIC [ˌkætəˈlɪtɪk] EVENT.
- The CLIMAX is the point of highest interest in which tension or emotional response reaches its peak. It is also used as a synonym of CRISIS, the decisive action which will turn the plot in a given direction.
- The word CATASTROPHE [kəˈtæstrəfi], describing the final stages of the plot, resulting from the climax, is mainly used for drama but is sometimes applied to fiction as well.

The period of falling action often contains one or several OBLIGATORY [əˈblɪɡətəri] SCENES, that is to say climactic moments which are expected by the reader because they have been announced or prepared.

But this pattern is far from universal since many stories begin IN MEDIAS RES [ɪnˌmiːdiəsˈreɪz] (in the middle of the action or at a moment of climax) in order to catch the reader's interest. It is an instance of a NARRATIVE [ˈnærətɪv] HOOK to create suspense or arouse interest.

Many modern narratives also avoid the traditional denouement or catastrophe and end in an ambiguous way, or even suggest double endings (as in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 1969).

Most plots contain PERIPETEIA [ˌperɪpəˈtiːə] (a term used by Aristotle to describe reversals of events or situation – especially the protagonist's reversal of fortune) and DISCOVERY (ANAGNORISIS [ænəˈɡnɒrɪsɪs] for Aristotle) of something previously unknown.

Some sequences of events are so predictable in certain types of writing that they follow a FORMULA, or STEREOTYPED plot. This is the case, for instance, in many romances, detective stories or adventure stories. Such plots usually contain a number of STOCK SITUATIONS (incidents or actions which recur in these plots, e.g. the secret rendez-vous, the discovery of a birthmark or paper revealing identity).

In most plots, events (or PROCESS) alternate with state (or STASIS).

### Related words

- a WELL-WROUGHT plot (or WELL-KNIT plot) ≠ a LOOSE plot  
a plausible / convincing plot
- the development of the plot  
the unfolding of the action  
the UNRAVELING of the action  
A story or plot builds towards a particular event or effect.
- the DYNAMICS of the plot (the motives and forces that bring about changes)  
An incident, action... can PRECIPITATE an event, conflict...
- a CLIMAX, an ANTICLIMAX  
adj: climactic, anticlimactic. e.g. a climactic passage  
adv: climactically, anticlimactically

.../...

.../...

Events are brought to a climax.

The tension rises / mounts / gathers.

The tension culminates in a climax.

a key event

The paragraph / chapter... works towards a climax.

- The tension subsides / lessens / slackens.  
a tension-relieving scene
- A scene can be the TURNING POINT in a novel.  
An event can TRIGGER OFF another event.  
A scene, an incident winds up the plot (brings it to an end).  
There can be a narrative TWIST (a sudden change) at the end of the story.  
a turn of fate  
a SURPRISE ENDING / TWIST ENDING  
The fate of the characters hinges on...  
The denouement is contrived by means of...
- suspense  
suspenseful expectation  
Suspense is sustained by... / extended by...  
The reader is left in suspense.  
The suspense is built up by expressions such as...  
The narrator withholds information to create suspense...
- A passage or scene can REVERBERATE the whole text or STORY.  
BE MIMETIC of the whole text or story.
- the OUTWARD action (the events)  
the INWARD ACTION (the characters' feelings)
- The opening paragraph / sentence / chapter...  
The chapter/ narrative opens on / with...
- the closing paragraph  
The chapter closes on...  
The sentence is a classic curtain-line.  
A scene can be the CODA [ˈkəʊdə] of a work (its conclusion, echoing the various themes of the work).  
the resolution of the action / plot / conflict
- A scene/ passage can fall into two / three... parts / moments.  
a smooth transition

The formalists and structuralists distinguish between:

- STORY (or "HISTOIRE" in French): the events of the text as they can be related in chronological order. It is the DEEP STRUCTURE of the text.
- TEXT or DISCOURSE (or "RECIT" in French): the sequence of events in the narration, the discourse in which the story is told. It is the SURFACE STRUCTURE of the text.