

THE WRITER COMMUNITY'S  
INTRODUCTION TO

# Story Arc



# 1

## Pacing

How Important is Pacing to your Story Arc?

- Short answer, very important, but it can be tricky.
  - Pacing needs to be gradual. Pace it too quickly and it can be unbelievable for your reader, but pace it too slowly and the reader may lose interest.
- How do you know if your pace is too slow or fast?
  - Ask yourself & your beta readers if there were any spots where it felt like the story “dragged” if they say yes, then you need to pick up the pace
  - Analyze what information you’re giving your reader and WHY. If you don’t know then you may not need it.
  - As for too-fast pacing, ask yourself and your beta readers if there were any parts that they felt confused over. Sometimes when your pacing is too quick you will miss key information.

# 1

## Pacing

- Execution is key. If your story isn't paced right, it may be more of a straight line than an ARC. If you are not a planner, it's okay. You can outline this ARC during the editing phase, but make sure that your story is showing a clear & even progression.
- Tools that help pacing? Having a structure:
  - Three Act Structure
  - Hero's Journey
  - Save the Cat! Beat Sheet
- There are more, but these are the three we are going to talk about most clearly.
- If you have a structure, you can clearly see how your story is progressing and so can your reader.
- Your pace can also help set your tone, but you need to be mindful of how you use it.

# 2

## *Three Act Story Structure*

What is it and why is it Important?

- The original concept comes from Save the cat! Pretty much what all successful movies and books follow this formula
- Act 1 - Set-up
  - Beginning
  - Inciting incident
  - Second thoughts
  - Climax of act one
- Act 2 - Confrontation
  - Obstacle
  - Obstacle
  - Mid-point (big twist)
  - Obstacle
  - Disaster
  - Crisis
  - Climax of act two

# 2

## *Three Act Story Structure*

- Act 3 - Resolution
  - Climax of act three
  - Obstacle
  - Wrap-up
- Can follow this rigidly or loosely
  - Some people have 4 or 5 acts
- Don't have to follow it in the outlining phase
  - It is really great in the editing phase if you are a pantsier to make sure your story is paced properly
- If you don't follow it at all, need to at least make sure:
  - Your pacing is good
  - You have an event or inciting incident
  - You have a climax
  - You have a resolution

# 3

## *The Hero's Journey*

Another Way to Structure your Story

- This original concept is from Joseph Campbell's *Monomyth* and adapted by Chris Vogler
  - Ordinary World
  - Call To Adventure
  - Refusal Of The Call
  - Meeting The Mentor
  - Crossing The Threshold
  - Tests, Allies, Enemies
  - Approach To The Inmost Cave
  - Ordeal
  - Reward (Seizing The Sword)
  - The Road Back
  - Resurrection
  - Return With The Elixir

# 3

## *The Hero's Journey*

You can use the three act structure and the hero's journey together

- Act 1 = Ordinary World until Cross The Threshold
- Act 2 = Tests, Allies, Enemies until Reward
- Act 3 - The Road Back until Return With The Elixir

# 4

## *Finding your Story's Themes*

- The theme is the underlying idea an author is trying to convey to an audience.
- Examples of themes:
  - Forgiveness (of self or others)
  - Love (includes self-love, family love, romantic love)
  - Acceptance (of self, circumstances, or reality)
  - Faith (in oneself, others, the world, or God)
  - Fear (overcoming it, conquering it, finding courage)
  - Trust (in oneself, others, the unknown)
  - Survival (including the will to live)
  - Selflessness (including sacrifice, altruism, heroism, overcoming greed)

# 4

## *Finding your Story's Themes*

- Examples of Themes:
  - Responsibility (including duty, standing up for cause, accepting one's destiny)
  - Redemption (including atonement, accepting blame, remorse, salvation)
- Why are themes important to a story?
  - A story without major ideas for the character and reader to experience, think through, and learn from is not a story
- There are two ways of finding your story's themes
  - Trying to define them in the beginning
  - Letting them reveal themselves as you write the story

# 4

## *Finding your Story's Themes*

- Starting with the theme
  - Helps keep you on track with your story
  - It's good practice to the ask yourself **WHY** you want to tell this story? What impact will it have on the reader?
  - Themes help you build the world around your characters and shape the decisions they make (Lara live)
- Letting the theme reveal itself
  - Themes often reveal themselves to you as you write - give yourself the freedom
  - Just make sure you give yourself some kind of structure. as long as you have the structure, the themes will be able to reveal themselves organically as you write

DID YOU FIND THIS USEFUL?

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