

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Working Title | |
|---------------|--|

| Character / Protagonist | Themes and Ideas |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| | |
| Desire | |
| | |
| Conflict | |
| | |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------|---|
| Appeal of Protagonist 1 | 2 from: | External Goal: to win ; to stop; to retrieve ; to escape |
| | Jeopardy | |
| | Pity | |
| Appeal of protagonist 2 | Likeable | Internal Goal |
| | Funny | |
| | Power | |

Part 1 – The Set Up (to 10%)

The opening 10% of your screenplay must draw the reader, and the audience, into the initial setting of the story, must reveal the everyday life your hero has been living, and must establish identification with your hero by making her sympathetic, threatened, likeable, funny and/or powerful.

Turning Point – The Opportunity

Ten percent of the way into your screenplay, your hero must be presented with an opportunity, which will create a new, visible desire, and will start the character on her journey.

Part 2 - The New Situation (to 25%)

For the next 15% of the story, your hero will react to the new situation that resulted from the opportunity. He gets acclimated to the new surroundings, tries to figure out what's going on, or formulates a specific plan for accomplishing his overall goal:

In most movies, the hero enters this new situation willingly, often with a feeling of excitement and anticipation, or at least believing that the new problem he faces can be easily solved. But as the conflict starts to build, he begins to realize he's up against far greater obstacles than he realized, until finally he comes to...

Turning Point – The Change of Plans

Something must happen to your hero one-fourth of the way through your screenplay that will transform the original desire into a specific, visible goal with a clearly defined end point. This is the scene where your story concept is defined, and your hero's outer motivation is revealed.

Outer motivation is my term for the visible finish line the audience is rooting for your hero to achieve by the end of the film. Please don't confuse outer motivation with the inner journey your hero takes. Because much of what we respond to emotionally grows out of the hero's longings, wounds, fears, courage and growth, we often focus on these elements as we develop our stories. But these invisible character components can emerge effectively only if they grow out of a simple, visible desire.

Stage 3 Progress (to 50%)

For the next 25% of your story, your hero's plan seems to be working as he takes action to achieve his goal: Ethan Hunt begins closing in on the villain in *Mission: Impossible 2*; Pat gets involved with the woman of his dreams in *There's Something About Mary*.

This is not to say that this stage is without conflict. But whatever obstacles your hero faces, he is able to avoid or overcome them as he approaches...

Turning Point 3 The Point of No Return

At the exact midpoint of your screenplay, your hero must fully commit to her goal. Up to this point, she had the option of turning back, giving up on her plan, and returning to the life she was living at the beginning of the film. But now your hero must burn her bridges behind her and put both feet in. (And never let it be said that I can't work two hackneyed metaphors into the same sentence).

It is at precisely this moment that Truman crosses the bridge in *The Truman Show*, and that Rose makes love with Jack in *Titanic*. They are taking a much bigger risk than at any previous time in these films. And as a result of passing this point of no return, they must now face...

Stage 4 Complications (to 75%)

For the next 25% of your story, achieving the visible goal becomes far more difficult, and your hero has much more to lose if he fails. After Mitch McDeere begins collecting evidence against *The Firm* at that movie's midpoint, he now must hide what he's doing from both the mob and the FBI (complications), and failure will result in either prison or death (higher stakes). This conflict continues to build until, just as it seems that success is within your hero's grasp, he suffers...

Turning Point 4 – The Major Setback

Around page 90 of your screenplay, something must happen to your hero that makes it seem to the audience that all is lost: Carol dumps Melvin in *As Good As It Gets*; Morpheus is captured in *The Matrix*. If you're writing a romantic comedy like *Working Girl* or *What Women Want*, this is the point where your hero's deception is revealed and the lovers break up. These disastrous events leave your hero with only one option: he must make one, last, all-or-nothing, do-or-die effort as he enters...

Stage 5 The Final Push (to 90%)

Beaten and battered, your hero must now risk everything she has, and give every ounce of strength and courage she possesses, to achieve her ultimate goal: *Thelma & Louise* must outrun the FBI to reach the border; and the Kennedy's must attempt one final negotiation with the Soviets in *13 Days*. During this stage of your script, the conflict is overwhelming, the pace has accelerated, and everything works against your hero, until she reaches...

Turning Point 5 The Climax

Several things must occur at the climax of the film: the hero must face the biggest obstacle of the entire story; she must determine her own fate; and the outer motivation must be resolved once and for all. This is the big moment where our heroes go into the *Twister* and the Jewish factory workers make their escape in *Schindler's List*.

Notice that the climax can occur anywhere from the 90% point to the last couple minutes of the movie. The exact placement will be determined by the amount of time you need for...

Stage 6 The Aftermath (to 100%)

No movie ends precisely with the resolution of the hero's objective. You have to reveal the new life your hero is living now that he's completed his journey. In movies like *Rocky*, *Thelma & Louise* and *The Truman Show*, there is little to show or explain, and the writer's goal is to leave the audience stunned or elated. So the climax occurs near the very end of the film. But in most romantic comedies, mysteries and dramas, the aftermath will include the final five or ten pages of the script.