



STORY STRUCTURE TEMPLATE

GUSTAV FREYTAG'S NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Introduction

Sometimes it's easier to see the whole entity of a story when you jot down the main events in a sort of structural template. Doing this makes it easier to see the errors of your story, where there might be gaps, and also if you're missing a crucial structural point in the plot of your story.

Having a simple story structure template to follow when planning, outlining, or even just thinking about your story is a simple way to maybe getting the structure right the first time. It's also a smart way to see and get used to how a story should be structured.

In this document you will find two different types of story structures. You can use the one you prefer, or both, whichever option you want.

Instructions

The story structure template that follow below shows an overview of the main parts of a story — based on Gustav Freytag's narrative structure. Your job is to fill in those main parts with notes of events that will happen in your story. But first, I'll give you some guidelines on how to make the story structure work to your advantage as well as tell you what the different parts of the structure means.

The parts of the story structure

These are the parts that you will fill with notes of events that will happen in your story:

Exposition

Inciting Incident

Rising Action

1

2

3

Climax

Falling Action

1

2

Resolution

At the end of the story structure you will also have the opportunity to jot down some notes on how the main character has changed and developed throughout the story.

What the different parts of the story structure means

Below follows a short explanation of what the different parts of this story structure means, followed by a few questions to think about when you jot down the events that will happen in your story.

Exposition — This is where you introduce characters and setting. Ask yourself questions like:

- Which character is most important to the story? Is he/she the one I should introduce first?
- Where does the story take place (what world, country, city, place, house, etc.)? How will I show this (with background details, through dialogue, through a character's thoughts, etc.)?
- What type of scene would fit best into the Exposition (consider the feel and tone I want my story to have)?

Inciting Incident — This is the point of the story that initiates the conflict and makes the main character go into motion and take action. Ask yourself questions like:

- What is the main conflict of the story?
- What kind of event would make my hero/heroine take action?
- Through what kind of scene would I show off the conflict at best (consider the feel and tone I want my story to have)?

Rising Action — These are the buildup events that lead to the Climax. List three of these buildup events. Ask yourself questions like:

- What type of events will lead up to the Climax?
- What type of events will make my hero/heroine's personal journey difficult?
- What type of events will show my hero/heroine what's at stake if he/she does not prevail against the antagonist (or antagonistic force) in the end?

Climax — This is the middle of the story, the turning point where the character's choice is what defines the outcome of the story. Ask yourself questions like:

- What choice will the hero/heroine make? And how does his/her choice affect the story? How does his/her choice affect himself/herself?
- What is at stake for my hero/heroine and/or the world? Do I need to raise the stakes even more? If so, what kind of Climax does my story deserve?
- How will I show that the antagonist (or the antagonistic force) has the upper hand and seems to be winning?
- What type of scene would fit best into the Climax (consider the feel and tone I want my story to have)?

Falling Action — This leads from the Climax to the Resolution, and portrays the hero/heroine's actions to solve the problem of the story. List two events that fit into the Falling Action. Ask yourself questions like:

- What type of events will lead to the Resolution?
- What does my hero/heroine need in order to beat the antagonist (knowledge of something, an item, etc.)? And how will my hero/heroine try to solve the problem and beat the antagonist?

Resolution — This is where the story ends, where the hero/heroine and the antagonist see an end to their problem by either winning or losing. Ask yourself questions like:

- How will the story end (happy, tragic, with the good side winning, with the good side losing, etc.)?
- How will the hero/heroine end the story (stronger mentally and/or physically, with a tragic loss, with a life-long friend, with a new hope, with a new question, etc.)?
- What kind of end does my story deserve?
- What type of scene would fit best into the Resolution (consider the feel and tone I want my story to have)?

Because the main character is important to any story, I've added a question at the end of this structure. Ask yourself: How has the hero/heroine changed and developed throughout the story?

How to use the story structure most effectively

With this story structure it's easiest to work your way from the ending to the beginning by jotting down the big plot points first. I don't know how many times I've heard that you need to know the ending before you can even begin to realize where the story starts.

Therefore, begin with the Resolution. Then, the other two big plot points: Climax and the Exposition (in that order). When those are jotted down you can begin to think about the Inciting Incident before you tackle the Rising Action and the Falling Action.

In conclusion, this is the easiest and most effective order in which to write down the events of your story:

Resolution

Climax

Exposition

Inciting Incident

Rising Action

1

2

3

Falling Action

1

2

Now it's time for you to put these instructions into use. So, without further ado, here is the story structure:

Story Structure Template

Exposition

Inciting Incident

Rising Action

1

2

3

Climax

Falling Action

1

2

3

Resolution

How has the hero/heroine changed and developed throughout the story?

Notes: