

Plotting

There are many ways to plot your story. We've mentioned using index cards and the linear method. In this class we brought up the traditional 3 act and the not so traditional 4 act play. All stories should have beats or peaks where, a traditional novel has three large beats.

A traditional starts with an Inciting Incident (Opening) then the First Complication (beat). Which should lead naturally to the Second Complication(beat), which in turn leads to the Third Complication (beat). Then the Denouement (Ending).

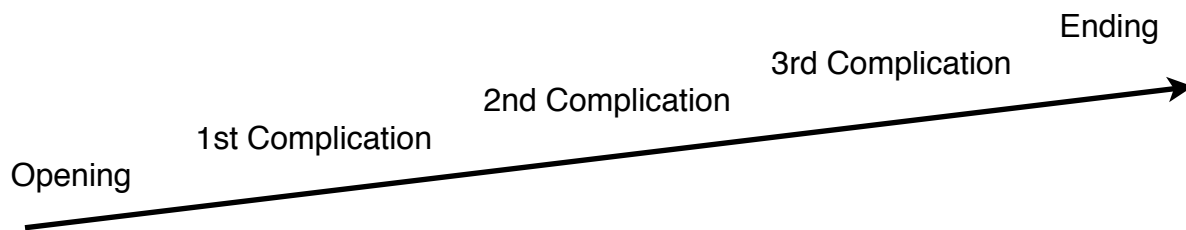
To recap the plot goes like this:

Inciting Incident 1st Complication 2nd Complication 3rd Complication Ending



People generally find this easy to visualize as running down a straight line.

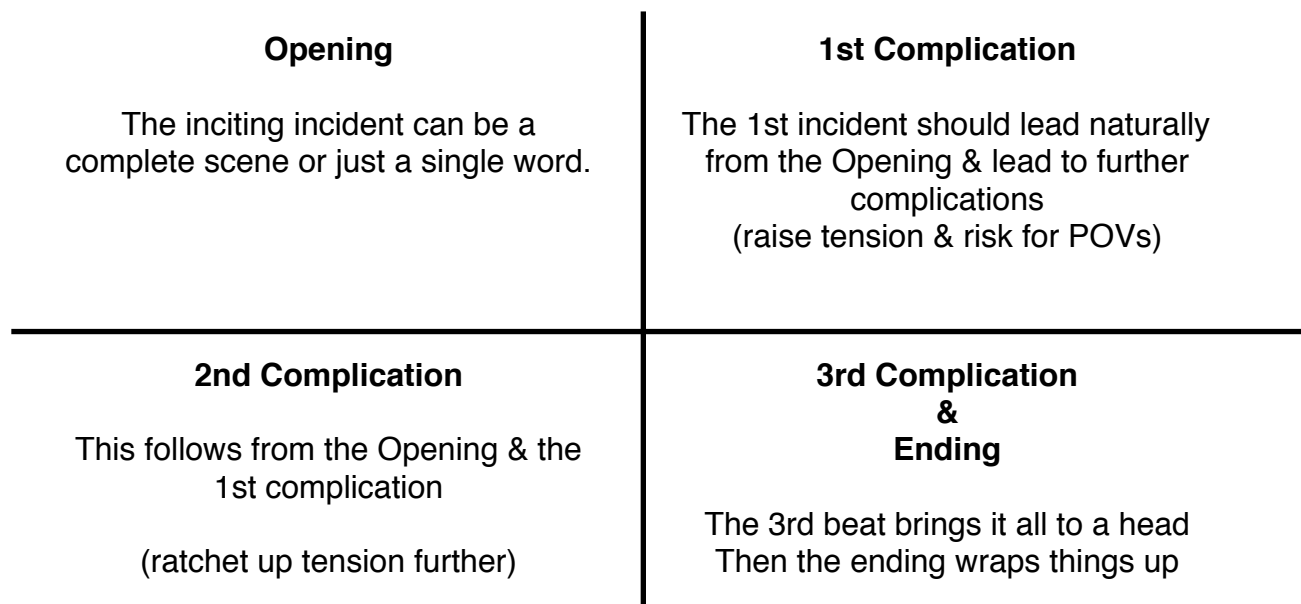
However, if you want a better visual, think of the story this way:



A trick to know your story is working is to write out the plot point of each complication and if you can shuffle them, then it's NOT working. If however, they cannot occur out of sequence then the plot is sound.

Each Complication builds and grows out of those that came before, coupled with the character's *natural character* (remember, character determines destiny).

Another way to plot is with the four quadrants.



Using the 4 Quadrants

Remember:

Plot is as much or as little as you need to see where your story is going.

Opening/Inciting Incident

- Opening line should grab reader
- Opening leads to first complication
- Here you establish main character(s)
- The opening sets the tone for the story
- Here you should create a connection/emotional link between the reader and story

First Complication

- Raise the stakes
- Remember have the scene(s) written so that you have just before the moment that changes every thing
- The moment
- The aftermath of the moment leading to

Second Complication

- Raise the stakes higher
- Remember, the stakes can be emotional, physical, psychological or any combination you want
- If you are writing a circular story the 'curve' starts here

Third Complication & Ending

- Everything comes to a head
- You should leave the reader satisfied, but that doesn't mean you have to tie up all loose ends
- The Ending wraps up and stops, try not to linger
- If a scene is self-explanatory don't assume the reader is stupid and explain it
- Endings are harder than you think
- If a circular story, then the ending should have the feel of the beginning
- REMEMBER, you can have as many beats as you want; a typical novel will have between 3 & 5 beats, but you can have more; less than three are better in short stories

You Try:

Working Title

Opening

First Complication

Second Complication

Third Complication & Ending