

Freytag's Pyramid

Also known as a plot chart or plot mountain, invented by Gustav Freytag (1863) to diagram the structure of a five-act tragedy, but also useful for analyzing the plot of other works of literature.

Plot: the sequence of events in a story, usually presented in chronological order

Flashback: when the author presents items out of time order, from before the current action of the story (often from before the exposition)

Climax: the highest point of suspense in the conflict, when the audience is least sure of the outcome of the conflict

Anticlimax: occurs when the audience's expectations have been raised to expect something greater are met with something lesser

Reversal: a change in fortune for the protagonist (things were going well but now they aren't)
Resolution: the solution to the conflict; how it is resolved; can occur at various points in the falling action or in the denouement

Rising Action: also known as **development**, where action and character are developed

Complication: as the plot develops new details, events, or other information complicates the situations of the characters, particularly the protagonist

Falling Action: the events which occur after the climax; in a tragedy, this is where the tragic fall occurs as the protagonist suffers the reversal

Inciting Incident: also called **the inciting moment** or the **inciting force**, the event or idea which introduces the conflict

Conflict: always stated as "something versus something else" or as "this is in conflict with this"; plot is usually centered around conflict

Internal Conflict: also called man v. self; a psychological struggle within a character

External Conflict: many types, including man v. man, man v. nature, and man v. society; a struggle between a character and a force or person outside his or her self.

Protagonist: the central character of the work; usually the one with whom the author wants the audience to side

Antagonist: the character or force in opposition with the protagonist

Moment of Last Suspense: the final moment where the audience still hopes for a happy ending before the catastrophe

Exposition: Introduces characters, setting, and basic situation.

Five Act Tragedy: in the traditional five act drama: act one is the exposition; act two is the rising action; act three contains the climax, a resolution and a reversal; act four is falling action; and act five is the denouement, containing a moment of last suspense and a final resolution in the form of a catastrophe

Denouement: French for "the unraveling of the knot;" where the loose ends of the plot are wrapped up and a satisfying ending is provided; sometimes a synonym for falling action; in tragedy, often called the catastrophe
Catastrophe: the conclusion of a tragedy, an unhappy ending