

STORY ARC



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Definition: “the principal plot of an ongoing storyline in the episodes of a narrative; the continuous progression or line of development in a story”¹

In other words, the story arc is the plot of the story. For every story, you need a story arc. Without a story arc you are simply describing a rambling series of unrelated events. The events may be interesting, but without a story arc, there is no direction. The main character has nothing to be, accomplish, do, or become.

STORY INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever noticed that within about the first five minutes of almost every movie or TV show, or the first few pages of a novel, you are introduced to the following?

- The **main character(s)**
- The **setting** of the story (time & location)
- The **main problem or conflict** needing to be solved or overcome

After the first few pages or minutes, you can have a pretty good idea of what the story will be about.

Let’s look closer at each of these parts:

Main Character

The story needs to be about someone, something or someplace. Yes, I did write something or someplace. The main character could be a person, animal, town or even a bush. A town or a bush might be more of a challenge, but I’m sure it can be done with some creativity.

Have students write down the main characters from your favorite book and movie.

¹ “story arc.” *Dictionary.com’s 21st Century Lexicon*. Dictionary.com, LLC. 13 Nov. 2009. <Dictionary.com [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/story arc](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/story%20arc)>.

Setting

Your story needs to happen somewhere in time and space (or outside of them). You get to choose. Is it in the past, present, future or even outside of time? Is it somewhere in the world we know? California, India, a forest, a messy bedroom, the North Pole? Or is it in outer space? Or maybe it's in a place like heaven, or an imaginary world, or even another dimension! It could involve more than one of these also. It's all up to you! Isn't that great?

Have students write down the setting (time and location) of their favorite story.

Problem/Conflict

As mentioned previously, the main character needs something to be, accomplish, do, or become. The main character needs to overcome something. It can be either internal or external, or both.

An ***internal problem*** means the character has something *inside* them that keeps them from accomplishing a goal.

Examples:

- The main character doesn't know how to make friends
- The main character can't stop lying
- The main character is afraid of showing love for someone
- The main character is jealous of his or her friends
- The main character is afraid to fly

An ***external problem*** means the character has conflict with someone else, or something they need to overcome *outside* of themselves in order to accomplish a goal.

Examples:

- The main character must slay the dragon to save the village
- The main character must prove she is innocent of the crime
- The main character must finish building an invention before the mad scientist takes over the world
- The main character must motivate others to give money so an orphanage can be built
- The main character must save enough money to buy a new fishing pole to try and win the fishing contest

A ***problem that is both internal and external*** combines the two types of problems, and both problems must be overcome to reach the goal

Examples:

- The main character must overcome a fear of failure in order to slay the dragon and save the village
- The main character must overcome a dislike of someone so they can work together to build an orphanage
- The main character must overcome a fear of flying in order to ride a winged horse to a distant land and gather healing herbs for his or her dying father

Have students write down the problem(s) of the favorite story they wrote about previously and whether the problem(s) is/are internal, external or both.

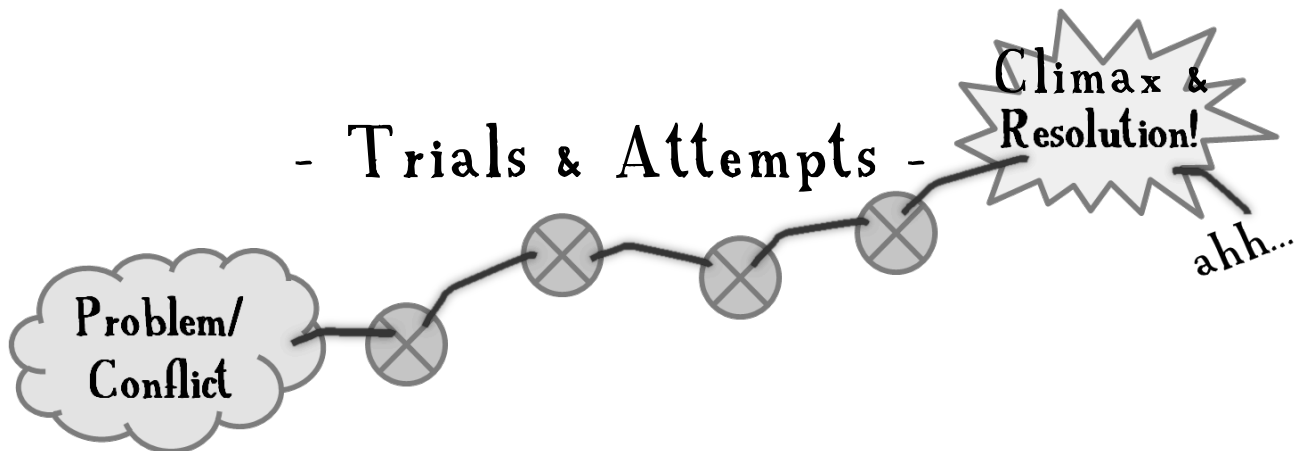
MIDDLE SECTION: TRIALS & ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM(S)

Now that the characters, setting, and problem have been introduced, we move on to the whole middle section of the story, where the characters encounter trials related to the problem(s) and try to solve the problem(s).

The picture below shows the possible story arc, or plot of the story. The middle section is full of trials encountered and attempts made. The main character is often trying to run away from the problem – or solve it. Each of these trials or attempts tries to address or solve the problem(s) in some way, but never quite does it. Sometimes it even makes the problem(s) worse!

RESOLUTION

Usually, the problem(s) reaches its climax, or gets its worst, just before there is a final resolution. Resolutions do not all have to be happy. If the resolution is sad, it becomes a tragedy. Either way, the problem(s) is solved.



You can use the following examples from *The Realm*, or come up with your own examples from stories your students are familiar with:

WARNING: SPOILER ALERT (If you haven't finished reading the book, you will find out about the ending in this section)

Graisia encounters trouble and attempts on her life from Adan over and over again throughout the book. Each time, she escapes, but Adan is still trying to get her. She cannot seem to get rid of him completely.

Adan also continually tries to hold onto his family's power, even as he goes through many difficult times. Each attempt he makes does not seem to solve his problem. The situation escalates, getting only worse and worse. He tries to keep his power by aligning with Mahalan, holding a séance to try and talk to his dead father, kidnapping Graisia, and ultimately, trying to sacrifice Graisia. However, none of these attempts help him get the power he is looking for.

The **climax** and **resolution** of the story come right before the end of the book. The situations for both Adan and Graisia are at their worst. Graisia is tied up on an altar about to be killed by Adan. Adan is under pressure from Yantir, Handro,² Mahalan and even Soliel. His last attempt at gaining enough power is to sacrifice Graisia to Mahalan.

The **resolution** comes as Graisia is miraculously rescued and Adan finally finds a power greater than he has even known. Both of them are now free of the problems introduced at the very beginning of the story.

Have students complete the worksheet in which they will:

- ***Think of 1 or 2 main characters they want to write about and describe them briefly.***
- ***Describe the setting for their story (time, location, etc)***
- ***Choose whether the problem will be internal, external or both.***
- ***Describe the problem(s) for each of their main characters (internal, external or both)***
- ***Answer how these problems will ultimately be resolved in the end of the story.***
- ***Give story arc examples from *The Realm* or 2108 books***

² For the first printing of *The Awakening Begins*, "Handro" was spelled "Jandro." We changed this for future printings so readers wouldn't confuse Jandro and Jarón. Jandro and Handro are pronounced the same, and are the same man.