

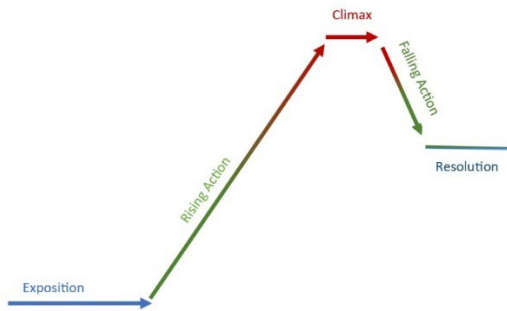
What is Plot Structure?

If you have a favorite TV show, you've probably noticed the episodes follow a pattern. Something big will happen towards the end, but the episode doesn't start there; instead, it starts with some background information, and then a series of events happen that lead up to that big moment. After the big moment, the main character learns some sort of lesson, and the episode ends shortly after.

What you may not know is that all stories – whether they're printed or paper, animated on a screen, or performed on a stage – follow the basic pattern, which we call **plot structure**. The big moment is called a **climax**, which is the most important part of the story. But just like in real life, things happen in stories before and after that big moment. Each of those parts have names and each part of the story has an important job to do.

Part	What is it?	Where is it?	What job does it do?
Exposition	Background information about the people (characters) in the story, things that happened in their past, or the time and place that the story takes place (setting)	Beginning	Tells the reader important information to help them understand the characters, their world, or prepare the reader for what will happen next
Rising Action	The series of events or situations that lead up to the climax	Between the exposition and the climax	Helps the reader understand how the climax happens or builds tension to make the story more interesting
Climax	The most important moment in the story where the main character (protagonist) has to deal with an important problem or make a big decision that changes them or teaches them an important lesson	After the rising action and before the falling action	Shows the most important moment of the story and what the protagonist thinks, feels, and does in a difficult situation. The climax causes the character to change in some way
Falling Action	The protagonist deals with what happens right after the climax, and the story begins to move towards the ending	After the climax and before the resolution	Wraps up loose ends, shows how the protagonist has changed as a person, and prepares the reader for the end of the story
Resolution	Loose ends are tied up, and remaining questions are answered. The reader finds out what happens to the protagonist after all the action in the story	The end	Shows the result of the climax and lets the reader feel like the story is finished

What is a Plot Pyramid or Plot Diagram?



Even though stories are written in words, sometimes it's easier to understand plot structure with a picture like the one to the left.

This picture shows how all the parts come together to make a story and where the dramatic moments are: the **exposition** is the background information, then things start getting interesting as the tension increases in the **rising action**, which leads to the **climax**. After that, the tension decreases as the story moves towards the **falling action** and then **resolution**.

It also shows how long the parts of a story are. You might notice that the **climax** is the shortest part of a story even though it's the most important, and the **falling action** is much shorter than the **rising action**. This can make it easier to figure out where the different parts are in any story you're reading.

Example: Little Red Riding Hood

Exposition →	Rising Action →	Climax →	Falling Action →	Resolution
Little Red Riding Hood (Red) is a little girl who always wears a red hood that her grandmother gave her. Her mother asks her to bring her sick grandmother something to eat and drink.	Red meets the wolf in the woods and tells the wolf where her grandmother lives. Red goes deeper in the woods to pick flowers for her grandmother. The wolf goes to grandma's house and pretends to be Red. Grandma lets the wolf in. He eats her and pretends to be Red's grandmother. Red gets to Grandma's house and is surprised to see the door open. Red sees her grandmother lying in bed, but notices that she doesn't look normal.	Red asks about her ears, eyes, hands, and teeth. The wolf eats Red.	The Huntsman hears the wolf snoring and thinks it's the grandmother, so he decides to check on her. The Huntsman saves Red and Grandma.	Red, the grandmother, and the Huntsman all eat the food and drinks that Red brought around the table together.