

Amazon Storybuilder Outline

Act 1

- 1 Opening Image

A visual that represents the struggle & tone of the story. A snapshot of the main character's problem, before the adventure begins.

Amazon Tip: Find a picture that you feel really captures your story and add it to this card.

- 2 What's the set up?

Expand on the "before" snapshot. Present the main character's world as it is, and what is missing in their life.

Amazon Tip: Add a few pictures that depict a typical day in the life of your protagonist.

- 3 State your theme

What your story is about; the message, the truth. Usually, it is spoken to the main character or in their presence, but they don't understand the truth...not until they have some personal experience and context to support it.

Amazon Tip: Not sure what your theme is? Don't worry. Many writers, like Stephen King, focus solely on story in their first drafts. They focus on theme when they rewrite.

- 4 Present the catalyst

The moment where life as it is changes. It is the telegram, the act of catching your loved-one cheating, allowing a monster onboard the ship, meeting the true love of your life, etc. The "before" world is no more, change is underway. In many cases, this is also the first time we meet the antagonist.

Amazon Tip: Small catalysts can lead to big stories. Down on his luck artist, Jack Dawson, was playing a two-bit card game in 'Titanic' when a winning hand served as the catalyst for an epic journey that led him to love, adventure and peril. Can you think of small events in your own life that led to big, life-changing, consequences?

- 5 The Debate

But change is scary and for a moment, or a brief number of moments, the main character doubts the journey they must take. Can I face this challenge? Do I have what it takes? Should I go at all? It is the last chance for the hero to chicken out.

Amazon Tip: Knowing what your protagonist and antagonist fear the most will help you better understand their motives.

Act II

- 8 Break into Act II

The main character makes a choice and the journey begins. We leave the "real" world and enter the upside-down, fantastic, opposite world of Act Two.

- 9 The B story

This is when there's a discussion about the Theme – the nugget of truth. Usually, this discussion is between the main character and the love interest. So, the B Story is usually called the "love story".

Amazon Tip: What your protagonist loves and what your antagonist envies is usually centerstage in the B-story.

- 10 The promise of the premise

This is the fun part of the story. This is when Craig Thompson's relationship with Raina blooms, when Indiana Jones tries to beat the Nazis to the Lost Ark, when the detective finds the most clues and dodges the most bullets. This is when the main character explores the new world and the audience is entertained by the premise they have been promised.

- 11 Midpoint

Dependent upon the story, this moment is when everything is "great" or everything is "awful". The main character either gets everything they think they want ("great") or doesn't get what they think they want at all ("awful"). But not everything we think we want is what we actually need in the end.

- 12 Bad guy closes in

Doubt, jealousy, fear, foes both physical and emotional regroup to defeat the main character's goal, and the main character's "great"/"awful" situation disintegrates.

- 13 All is lost

The opposite moment from the Midpoint: "awful"/"great". The moment that the main character realizes they've lost everything they gained, or everything they

now have has no meaning. The initial goal now looks even more impossible than before. And here, something or someone dies. It can be physical or emotional, but the death of something old makes way for something new to be born.

- 14 Dark night of the soul

The main character hits bottom, and wallows in hopelessness. The Why hast thou forsaken me, Lord? moment. Mourning the loss of what has “died” – the dream, the goal, the mentor character, the love of your life, etc. But, you must fall completely before you can pick yourself back up and try again.

Amazon Tip: What would happen if your protagonist's worst fears were realized?

Act III

- 15 Break into Act III

Thanks to a fresh idea, new inspiration, or last-minute Thematic advice from the B Story (usually the love interest), the main character chooses to try again. Wait -- new idea to defeat evil

- 16 Finale

This time around, the main character incorporates the Theme – the nugget of truth that now makes sense to them – into their fight for the goal because they have experience from the A Story and context from the B Story. Act Three is about Synthesis!

Amazon Tip: Your protagonist and antagonist have been dancing around each other for most of your story. Here is where they most face-off.

- 17 Final image

Opposite of Opening Image, proving, visually, that a change has occurred within the character.

Amazon Tip: Your final image should relate to your opening image. They're the visual bookends for your script.