Glossary

1st Person: a writing style where the story is told by the protagonist, identifiable by its use of "I" and "we" pronouns. We see this style in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Fin*.

2nd Person: a writing style where the story is told to the protagonist, identifiable by its use of "you" pronouns. We see this style in *The Night Circus* and most Choose Your Own Adventure books.

3rd Person: a writing style where the story is told by an uninvolved third party, identifiable by the lack of "I," "we," or "you" pronouns (outside of dialogue). We see this style in *Harry Potter* and *Pride and Prejudice.*

3rd Person Limited: a version of the 3rd person writing style where the perspective is limited to a character's perspective. These stories can follow a single character (like in *Harry* Potter) but more often cycle between two or more Point of View (POV) characters. We see this style in *Game of Thrones* and *The Lord of the Rings.*

3rd Person Omniscient: a version of the 3rd person writing style where the narrator knows all. We see this style in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Dune.*

A Story: the primary plot line for a book or other narrative work. This is the external action where the protagonist goes after what they believe will fix their problem.

B Story: the story that runs parallel to the primary plotline (A Story) and reflects an internal transformation in the protagonist as they become who they need to be to fix their real problem.

Backstory: what happened to the protagonist before the story began.

Beat: term Blake Snyder used to define a plot point.

Beat Sheet: a way of outlining a story by identifying the 15 "beats" (from the BS2) that make up the core of its structure.

BS2 / Blake Snyder Beat Sheet: first introduced in Blake Snyder's book, *Save the Cat!*, this structure uses 15 beats to outline the major movements in a story. Blake originally based the structure on how to write an effective screenplay. Jessica Brody later adapted it for work specifically with novels in her book *Save the Cat! Writes a Novel.* The BS2 is compared to other plot structures in the Appendix.

Call to Adventure: common term used to refer to the spark that sends a story in a new direction. Interchangeable with Catalyst (Day 4) or inciting incident.

Chekhov's gun: a narrative principle first outlined by Anton Checkov that states, "If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." The goal is to ensure that all story elements an author sets up receive a proper payoff before the story ends.

Climax: in most story structures, this is the high-stakes moment at the end of the story when all plot points come into alignment, also known as the Finale. Freytag, however, used this term to refer to the Midpoint Twist when the story goes in a new direction.

Exposition: explaining information to the reader about setting, people, characters, and backstory. Done well, it adds richness and meaning to a story. Done poorly, it can destroy immersion for the reader.

External[a] **Problem**: what the protagonist sees as an issue in their life.

Falling Action: also called resolution, this comes after the Climax or Finale to tie up loose story threads.

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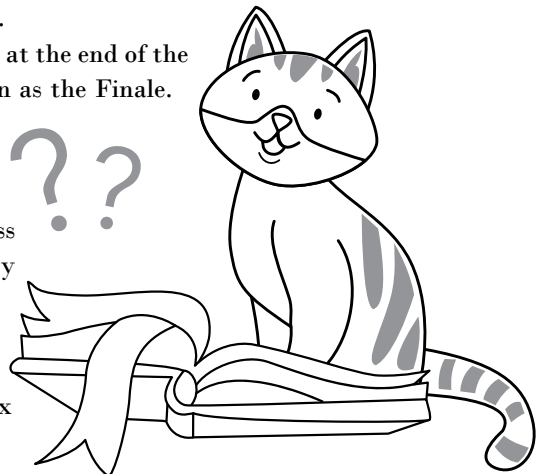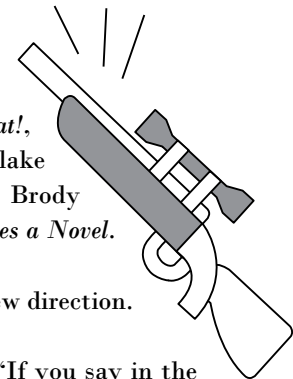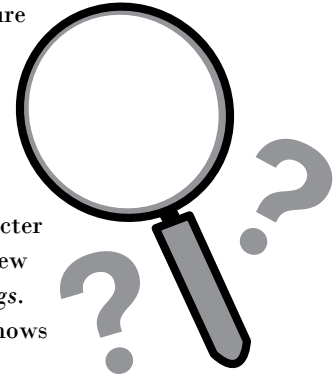
[a] External is in italics because it is optional. When "problem" is used in writing circles without clarifying "internal" or "external," it refers to their external problem.

Fatal Flaw: the character flaw that the protagonist must address. Other terms include Internal Problem or shard of glass.

Fear: the deep, soul crushing fear that our protagonist will do anything to avoid. This fear is backed up by a misbelief that grew out of their backstory. Overcoming this fear will take learning their life lesson.

Five Point Finale: Blake Snyder's approach to the Finale, by breaking it into five points. The five points are Gathering the Team, Executing the Plan, High Tower Surprise, Dig Deep Down, and Execution of the New Plan.
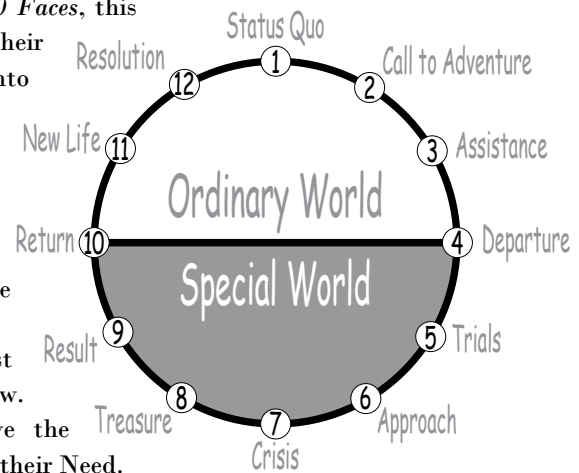
Freytag's Pyramid: one of the oldest documented plot structures, Freytag based his famous pyramid on the central premise of a midpoint twist, which he called the Climax. The Appendix compares Freytag's Pyramid to other plot structures.

Climax
Rising Action
Falling Action
Introduction
Catastrophe
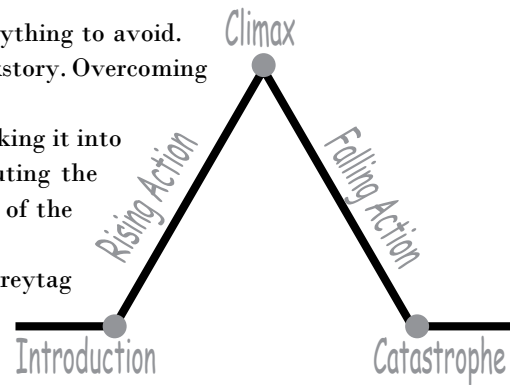
Genre: the category for an artistic work. Can refer to broad categories (Fantasy) or be narrowed down to an ultra-specific subgenre (Young Adult Paranormal Fantasy Romance) and anywhere in between. Genres tend to come with their own unique Tropes and audience expectations.

Goal: what the protagonist believes (usually incorrectly) will solve their problem. Also referred to as their want.

Hero's Journey: popularized by the book *A Hero with 1,000 Faces*, this plot structure is drawn as a circle. The hero leaves their Ordinary World because of a Call to Adventure, goes into the Special World, where he endures trials and tests, then emerges back into the Ordinary World as an improved person. The Appendix compares the Hero's Journey to other plot structures.

Status Quo
Resolution
Call to Adventure
12 1 2
New Life 11 3 Assistance
Ordinary World
Return 10 4 Departure
Special World
Result 9 5 Trials
8 7 6
Treasure Approach
Crisis

Inciting Incident: common term used to refer to the spark that sends a story in a new direction. Interchangeable with Catalyst (discussed on day 4) or Call to Adventure.

Internal Problem: the character flaw that the protagonist must address. Other terms include Shard of Glass or Fatal Flaw.

Life Lesson: the internal transformation that will solve the protagonist's real (internal) problem. Also referred to as their Need.

MacGuffin: a story element that has no impact on the story aside from serving as an item to move the plot along. One example would be the Philosopher's Stone in *Harry Potter*.

Meet Cute: the delightful or amusing first meeting of future romantic partners in a romance story.

Misbelief: the untrue statement the protagonist holds on to as fact because of trauma in their backstory. Because of this misbelief, they have a fear they can only overcome by learning the life lesson that contradicts this misbelief.

Mood: the overall feel of a story.

NaNoWriMo: National Novel Writing Month. Every November, NaNoWriMo challenges participants to write 50,000 words in 30 days. The focus is on getting the story on paper and avoiding the endless loop of restarts and rewrites that keep many people from finishing their stories. NaNoWriMo also hosts "Camp NaNo" twice a year, which is a scaled-down version of the November event.

Need: the internal transformation that will solve the protagonist's real (internal) problem. Also referred to as the Life Lesson.

Resolution: also called Falling Action, this comes after the Climax or Finale to tie up loose story threads.
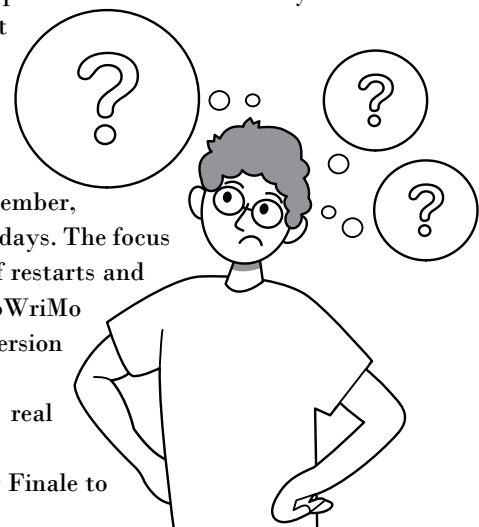
Shard of Glass: the character flaw that the protagonist must address. Other terms include Internal Problem or Fatal Flaw.

Story Triangle: story structure based on Freytag's Pyramid, but with modern language. Usually depicted as an asymmetrical triangle, shifting the Climax to the end, instead of at the Midpoint, as in Freytag's original design.

Style: the way an author structures their book. For example, *Dracula* is written as a series of diary entries. Another stylistic choice would be the point of view (1st, 2nd, or 3rd person).

Theme: the point the author is communicating to his or her audience; usually synonymous with the protagonist's Need.

Three Act Structure: this plot structure breaks a story into three acts. We credit Aristotle with defining the Three Act Structure, but multiple writers have since developed their own versions. Most modern plot structures borrow elements, or lift entirely, from the Three Act Structure. Because so many distinct versions exist, this structure is very flexible and can map to almost any narrative. The appendix compares the Three Act Structure to other plot structures.
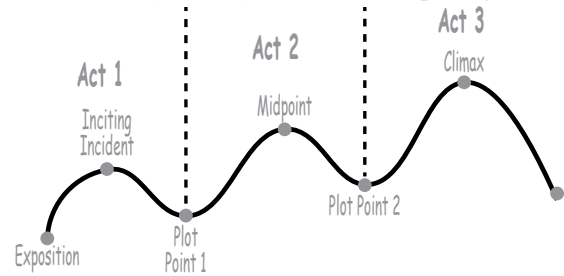
Tone: the attitude an author conveys with their choice of sentence structure, word choice, and punctuation.

Trope: term used to describe commonly occurring literary or rhetorical devices, cliches, and motifs. For example, "enemies to lovers" is a trope found in many Romance genres.

Unreliable Narrator: a technique where the narrator gives wrong information to the reader, either on purpose or by accident. Famous books with unreliable narrators include *Life of Pi*, *Gone Girl*, and *Fight Club*.

Want: what the protagonist believes (usually incorrectly) will solve their problem. Also referred to as their goal.

Add your own terms for quick reference: