

Steps for writing a first act.

Introduce your PROTAGONIST, and establish his normal world.

After (or before) you do this, create an INCITING INCIDENT, one that throws his world out of balance or dramatically changes it.

You may introduce your ANTAGONIST at any time. The antagonist can be one character or different characters at different times. For example, in BUTCH, sometimes Sundance is the antagonist, other times it's the system in the persons of E.H. Harriman and his employees, the posse.

Some examples:

The PROTAGONIST for KID was Robert Evans. For THE GRADUATE it was Benjamin. For BUTCH CASSIDY it was BUTCH. For ANNIE it is Alby Singer.

NORMAL WORLD AND INCITING INCIDENTS:

KID – He was in the women's pants business conducting business on the phone from poolside at a famous Hollywood hotel when he caught the eye of Norma Shearer, one of the biggest movie stars of the time, who offered him a part in his first movie.

GRADUATE – Back home after graduation, Ben is drifting. Mrs. Robinson, the wife of his father's business partner, spots him at his welcome home party and decides to seduce him.

BUTCH – Butch and Sundance are professionals who rob banks. They decide to change and rob the Union Pacific Railroad instead.

ANNIE – When they meet on the tennis court and the relation begins.

CHARACTERS:

A MAIN CHARACTER is anyone important to the story.

You need to create each of your main characters' attributes, i.e., what are they like? In the story, you need to create situations in which one or more of these characteristics is tested, and in addressing the situation, the character reinforces or compromises that aspect of their character. And they must do it at the risk of something substantial to them. Your job is to create the conflicts between the protagonist and antagonist that force them to choose.

With KID they were his qualities as a LEADER and VISIONARY. With GRADUATE it was his HONESTY. With BUTCH it was his INTELLIGENCE and COURAGE. With ANNIE it was Alby's POSSESSIVENESS, EGOCENTRICITY, and SELF-CENTEREDNESS.

When the characters are in conflict you need to know what each of them wants to achieve. You can reveal this to the audience at any time, but you must know what it is in order to write the scene.

MOODS

Moods run on a scale from extremely positive to extremely negative and everywhere in between. The mood of the scene must fluctuate somewhere within these two poles and must not end at the same pole it had in the beginning.

Writing the Story Outline

CLIMAXES

Each act is a set of scenes that build to a climax. Each scene ends in a decision serious to the protagonist. Decisions ending an act are apparently decisive. The risk and consequences of each climax must be greater than that preceding it. The FINAL CLIMAX must answer all the important questions raised in the drama.

EXPOSITION

Use exposition as a way of keeping audience interest. Only let the audience know what they need to know to understand what's going on in any one scene. Don't over explain.

MAIN THEME

Sometime during the writing process, you must decide what the story is about.

WORKING WITH THE 3X5 CARDS

Limit your descriptions to one scene per card. You should describe each of your scenes using just enough information to remind yourself what each scene is about and the action it will contain. I suggest you use a pencil with an eraser and a table to lay out the cards.

DEADLINES:

Single Act of 5-10 scenes, due in hardcopy, Thursday, 19th November at 5PM.

Three Act Story Outline of 15-40 scenes, due in hardcopy, Friday at 5PM. Room 5.51 and due in emails: rpmilner@aol.com and pavelsedlacek@mail.muni.cz