

"What the plot does is to organize the voyage." –Alan Leibowitz

PLOT

The king died. The Queen died.

The king died. The Queen died of grief.

Look at this pair of sentences. What is the difference between them? Yes, the second one shows the reason the Queen died. Plot can be described as a series of related incidents that advance the narrative of the story. Another way of describing plot is to consider it as a series of *significant events* in your story. **Only include important events and actions.** For each one included make sure you answer yes to the question, "Does this event or situation matter?" For each event or action, also ask yourself, "What is at stake here?"

All plots center on *conflict*. Conflict in stories can be of four different kinds:

1. between people
2. between a person and society
3. between a person and nature
4. between different aspects of the self

Remember that all the elements of a novel must be unified: character, setting, plot, dialogue, mood, and voice. Plot has tremendous importance because it is the invisible net, hidden structure that contains the whole story.

ACTION

Action by itself is not plot. Action that changes the story's ending and consequences of the story is plot. For example, a character taking a shower in a story is usually totally unimportant and can be left out. However, in the movie Psycho, the shower scene is very important. Only include scenes that are necessary, and that will affect the ending.

WHAT YOU CAN LEAVE OUT OF STORIES

1. how characters get from one place to another.
2. any explanations.
3. what characters do between scenes
4. elapsed time. Orient the reader to the new time, but don't have the clock ticking in the background.
5. long descriptions

STORY STRUCTURE

One common way of looking at story structure is the story arc. The traditional arc has a beginning, middle and end. This shape shows rising action, a climax, then a much faster falling action, and resolution.

Inciting Incident

Rising Action

Complication

Climax

Resolution (denouement)

ELEVEN ELEMENTS OF A SCENE

Try to include as many of these in a scene as possible:

1. Character
2. POV (Point of View)
3. Setting (Place)
4. Time Barrier (time of day, time of year, or exact date)
5. PURPOSE (why is this scene happening?)
6. Visuals (Sight)
7. Sounds (including dialogue)
8. Smells
9. Tastes
10. Touch (texture of things)
11. Quality of Light (Foggy, dark, bright, cloudy, sunny)