

ACT I - Set up

Establish the main Character(s) and the world they inhabit.

Then finish this ACT with an **INCITING INCIDENT** (That is, an event or decision that begins your story's problem.)

A boy at primary School, in a class room, in the Uk. in the early 1980s, he is 10 - 11

It is a Monday morning.

Every week on a monday morning before spelling test everyone in the class has to get out their diary book and write a diary of what they did at the weekend.

Every week our main character writes the same thing, it is unimaginaive, repetitive. As he flicks through the pages he sees that it is always the same. It is even boring him,

This week he decides to write what he really does at the weekend. he picks up his pen and it starts flowing out of him. he is for once enjoying writing and the minutes fly by.

Everyone puts then pens down. Every week the teacher chooses one or two of the children to read out their diary. And as the teacher looks around the class he looks at our main character and asks him to stay up and read his diary to the class.

ACT III - Resolution and The End

We are deliberately jumping ahead now.

Write how your story gets resolved?

Be as clear as you can about what happens as the film ends.

Then fold this sheet over and put it aside.

Once you've done this - fold this sheet over and put it aside - but keep the idea of where the story ends in your mind. This will help you work out the middle parts of the story.

So at the end of the story the boy learns the lesson not to repeat yourself and do what the audience wants.

That weekend as a treat he and his family go to see The Empire Strikes Back. When they come out his little brother says it wasn't like Star Wars.

ACT II - FIRST HALF - Main Conflict

Now go back to what you wrote for
(ACT I)

Look over what it says and then
continue the story.

Begin with the main character(s)
trying to sort out the problem they
had at the end of ACT ONE.

Then start plotting obstacles and
complications: people, rivals, secrets,
disagreements, opportunities, good
things or bad things.

By the end of this part (the midpoint)
the main character(s) are in a more
complicated situation than the one
that they found themselves in at the
end of ACT ONE.

The boy is taken back, he doesn't really want to read out what he has written.

He looks at his books and looks at the previous weeks entries. The teacher says "well? Read out what you have written."

The other children start to smirk and laugh.

So he turns to what he has written and starts reading his diary.

Not only does he read it well, but all the other children start to sit up and take notice and are hanging on every word he says. What's more they start laughing with him rather than at him.

When he finishes the teacher is quite shocks and surprised and asked the class how many team points he should give. The class say 10 team points.

It is now break time and everyone wants a piece of our hero.

Bullies thump him and say I really liked your story. Girls come upto him and say they liked his story. Even his friends are treating him differently - letting him choose what game they play. At lunch time the dinner lady puts a curly wurly on his tray.

A star has been born and whilst it seems very strange - he likes his new found fame.

ACT II - SECOND HALF - Main Conflict Contd

Now continue the SECOND HALF of ACT TWO with the main character(s) working to resolve the problem at the end of the FIRST HALF of ACT II.

But now it becomes clear that a solution is not going to be that straight forward.

Because there is a twist in the story that makes things harder for the character(s) to reach the goal you set for ACT THREEs RESOLUTION.

This twist not only makes it harder for the main character(s) - but also more interesting for the audience.

Before the twist the audience new what was going to happen next. But now they are not so sure.

The twist is your best chance to stop the audience from guessing exactly what is going to happen.

For example in The Wizard of Oz - it is revealed that the Wizard isn't a Wizard after all.

This twist has to make the situation the bleakest it could be!

It's the weekend and out main character is at home and he is playing with his toy soldiers. Just as he always does, just as he always does, repeating the same scenarios and incidents.

On Monday morning he goes into school. Diary time comes - he writes and writes. When it is time to read them out the teacher unsurprisingly (maybe even prompted by excitement in the class) picks him.

He reads out his story, everyone sits listening and is eagerly waiting to hear his story, but quickly they realise that his story is too similar to last weeks. As he continues there faces drop, and they start to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed. When he has finished no one says anything. The teacher says thank you and then chooses the next person.

In the playground the bulls just hit him, the girls ignore him and his friends are indifferent to him. At lunchtime the dinner lady piles extra greens on his plate.

ACT III - Climatic Incident and Resolution

Now go back to the piece of paper you wrote for 'ACT III - Resolution and The End' and then folded and put away.

Now you are in the position to 'flesh out' what comes between the end of ACT TWO and the RESOLUTION to the story.

The main character(s) develop a plan which helps them resolve everything in the THIRD ACT of the story.

It can be funny, or it could make us cry or it could make us look at the story in a different way or it can be a celebration.

Resolve everything you can in this last ACT.

But keep it brief. The audience will know the story is over - unless you have a final twist...

Dejected the boy goes home.

He looks at his toy soldiers. He feels that they have let him down.

And then he starts to make changes, he adds in new characters,mc implications, even a twist in the story.

The following Monday he goes into school. When diary time comes he writes his story he is really pleased with what he has written.

But when it comes time to read them out he is not picked. He puts his hand up even to have his story read out but again he is not picked.

So no one gets to hear his story, his place in the sun is gone.

As they all go out at break time the teacher calls him over and says to him.

You know if I was a good teacher I'd now be talking to you about how much everyone enjoyed your story the other week. How vivid the writing was, because you were writing about something that you were emotionally involved with. But I would also be telling you how fickle audiences are. How they say they crave more of the same but when you give them more of the same they turn their noses up and hate you for it. Learn now from this never to repeat yourself - learn that now and you'll learn something worth learning and remembering all your life.

But the problem is I'm not a good teacher. I have my favourites. I'm more interested in Miss Brown in Class 4 and look how poorly I treated the boy with the brilliant sword in the xmas play.

So instead you are going to have to work this all out for yourself. But then maybe in that way the lesson will stick with you far far longer.

AND FINALLY 3 SHORT EXERCISES

1. WRITE 40 WORDS

Reduce your film idea down to 40 words which tell us:

- The characters
- The world they inhabit
- What happens
- What Genre

A school boy, fed up with his unimaginative writing, decides to write an honest account of his weekend. Teacher and pupils alike love his story and he enjoys the adulation. But can he keep his new fan base happy?

2. WHAT IS YOUR STORY ABOUT?

This is the story of....

This is the story of a primary school boy, who is fed up with his unimaginative diary writing. He decides to write an honest account of his weekend. The class teacher and pupils love his story and he enjoys the adulation and even the rewards. But with the next Monday morning approaching fast can he keep his new fan base happy?

3. What is it REALLY about?

(State your theme as a question.)

When audiences ask for more of the same, is that really what they want?