

Charting Act One:

Screenwriting elements that will hook the reader/audience

SCREENWRITER'S BIBLE – ACT ONE

- ❑ ACT ONE is the beginning; it sets up your story, grabs the reader's attention and establishes the situation for conflict.
- ❑ ACT ONE must have a "hook" or Opening Scene that hooks the reader/audience.
- ❑ ACT ONE must introduce the Protagonist and Antagonist.
- ❑ ACT ONE introduces the normal world, the status quo.
- ❑ ACT ONE has a Catalyst/Inciting Incident – an event that upsets normal life.
- ❑ ACT ONE ends with the Big Event – this is the event that changes everything.
- ❑ ACT ONE must show a powerful goal for the Protagonist.
- ❑ ACT ONE is a good place for foreshadowing or set-ups .

– The Screenwriter's Bible

STORY - ACT ONE

- ❑ The Inciting Incident should happen as soon as possible but not until the moment is ripe.
- ❑ Ask the question: How much information about the character and the story world does the audience need to know to have a full response to the inciting incident?
- ❑ To discover the best Inciting Incident, ask what's the worse thing that could happen to the protagonist? How could that turn out to be the best possible thing that could happen to him?
- ❑ The Inciting Incident is the Point of no Return for the character.
- ❑ ACT ONE encompasses two sequences and 10-15 scenes.
 - "Story: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting"

EMOTIONAL IMPACT - ACT ONE

- ACT ONE sets up the genre and the mood, which create the anticipation of desired feelings, such as laughter for comedies and tension for thrillers.

- Emotional openings:
 - Hero in Action – introduce Protagonist in the middle of conflict. Creates character bonding and drama. Reveals character's uniqueness and focuses on character empathy.
 - Villain in Action – Action sequence with the Antagonist. Tells reader what the Protagonist is up against.
 - Backstory/Prologue – an exciting event that occurs before the story begins, which creates anticipation of what's to follow. Vertigo, Cliffhanger.
 - Spectacle – over-the-top events that thrills reader and audience. Must be part of the story and not gratuitous.
 - Mystery – an intriguing event that arouses curiosity, making reader wonder what's going on.

□ EMOTIONAL IMPACT/Openings cont ...

- Unique World – introducing the reader to a unique world never before seen.
- Exposition – basic information about the world of your story as long as information is interesting and crucial to the understanding of the plot.
- Breaking the Fourth Wall – Character speaks directly to the reader which creates immediacy and connection. Can be done in Voice-Overs (American Beauty) or having character speak directly into the camera (Ferris Bueller's Day Off)
- Book-ended Flashbacks – starts in present and flashbacks to story. "Once Upon a Time ..." (Titanic)

-
- In ACT ONE, the Inciting Incident must be strong enough to evoke the Central Question. How will the hero resolve this problem?
 - The Big Event is the Point of No Return; the main problem is established, your main character struggles with the dilemma and makes a decision to get involved or ignore it.

- "Writing for Emotional Impact"

SAVE THE CAT - ACT ONE

- ❑ Opening Image (page 1) – gives it's tone, mood, type and scope of the film . Gives us a “before snapshot” of the hero. Is the opposite of the Final Image at the end.
- ❑ Theme Stated (5) – A character (usually NOT the main character) will pose a question or make a statement (usually TO the Main character) that states the theme of the movie. Should NOT obvious, but conversational and MC doesn't get it. This is the thematic premise, a argument posed by the screenwriter.
- ❑ The Set-Up (1-10) – Make or break section that must grab the reader. Sets up the hero, the stakes and the goal of the story. Plant every character tie to the story.
- ❑ The Catalyst (12) – Life-changing events disguised as bad news. It is not what it seems. By the end of the film, it's the thing that leads the hero to happiness.

- “Save the Cat”

SAVE THE CAT - ACT ONE cont ...

- ❑ Debate (pages 12-25) – This is the last chance for the hero to question what he or she must do in response to the catalyst. Should I go? Will it be dangerous? Etc.
- ❑ Break into Act Two (25) – Moment where the hero leaves the old world, the thesis statement, behind and proceeds into a world that is the upside down version of the old. Hero must decide – can't be drafted or forced.

- "Save the Cat"

SAVE THE CAT - ACT ONE of "Die Hard"

- Opening Image (1): A plane lands at LAX, and NYC gun-carrying cop Bruce Willis is being advised by a businessman onboard "how to survive traveling."
- Theme Stated (5): "Survival" is the theme and Bruce's mission.
- Set-Up (1-10): The boss at Nakatomi Plaza wishes his employees a Merry Christmas, including Bonnie Bedelia's character, who is on the verge of divorce from Bruce; Bruce explains to limo driver that his wife had a good job that turned into a great career, but now they're unhappily bicoastal; Bruce and Bonnie get into a fight and a mystery truck arrives at the Plaza.
- Catalyst (12): A dozen robbers posing as terrorists lock down the building and crash the party.

By Marilyn Brant; <http://seekerville.blogspot.com/2010/09/in-honor-of-blake-snyder.html>

SAVE THE CAT - ACT ONE of "Die Hard" Cont ...

- ❑ Debate (12-25): Alerted to the commotion, Bruce grabs his gun and begins to assess the situation--he is spotted by the bad guys.
- ❑ Break into Two (25): Bruce is the "lone defender of the fort"--he tries to get the cops to help by pulling the fire alarm (they think it's a hoax), but he soon realizes he'll have to stop the bad guys alone.

- By Marilyn Brant; <http://seekerville.blogspot.com/2010/09/in-honor-of-blake-snyder.html>

SMALL GROUP WORK

- ▣ Read ACT ONE of your script out loud.
- ▣ Identify Snyder's "Save the Cat" ACT ONE beats.
- ▣ Share results with whole group.