SAVE THE CAT SAVES NANOWRIMO!

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CAVEAT

There is no one right way to plot a novel

Most "Western" books follow the traditional three-act structure

- This is what is most commonly taught and used
- Readers (and writers) are most familiar with this kind of storytelling

Alternative structures do exist

- Explore them if you wish
- Not discussed here

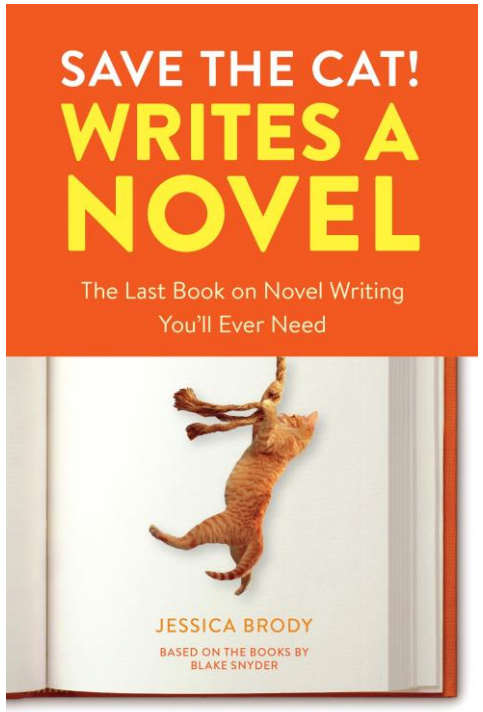


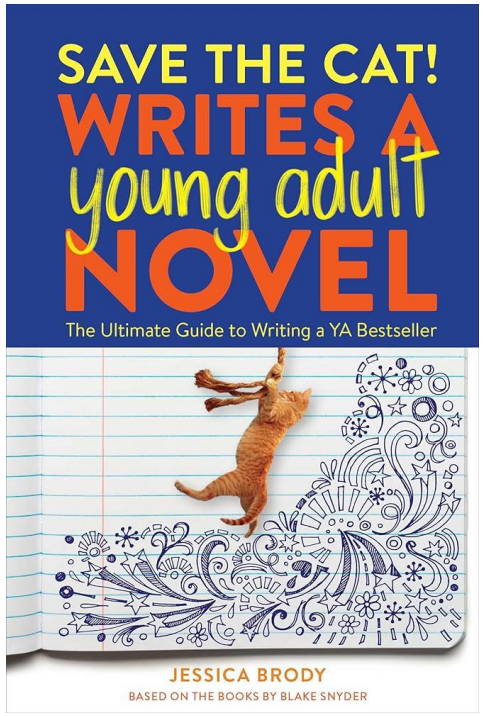
SAVE THE CAT!

- It's a book
- It's a handy tool
- Highly recommended
- Today – How to use if for NaNoWriMo!
  - Useful for Plotters!
  - Useful for Pantsters!
  - Useful for Writer's Block!
  - Useful for Revision!

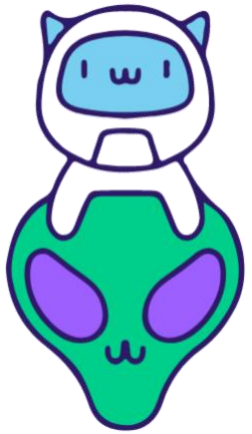








- Let's plot your NaNoWriMo story
  - If you already have one, no worries!
    - Plot a new story
    - Use today to fine-tune your story
  - You're a Pantster
    - Participate as a learning tool
    - Use for revising your NNWM story later



YOU NEED A HERO



- Protagonist, Main Character (MC), The Hero
  - A **problem** – a problem or flaw that needs to be fixed
  - A **want** – a desire or goal that the Hero is pursuing
  - A **need** – or life lesson to be learned
- Problem
  - Hero must be flawed; not perfect
  - This problem should manifest, spread, and infect all aspects of Hero's world (home, relationships, work, recreation, etc.)
- Want
  - May change as story progresses; may not necessarily ever be achieved
  - A conflict or nemesis that is keeping Hero from want is crucial
  - Hero must be proactive in pursuing want
- Real Story and B-Story
  - Real = premise; exciting
  - B = internal story; what novel is really about
    - Forgiveness, love, acceptance, faith, fear, trust, survival, selflessness, responsibility, redemption

WHO IS YOUR HERO?



- Are you sure you know who your Hero is?
  - Person with the most interesting tale to tell; potential for biggest transformation
- Who is the Hero of your NaNoWriMo story?

Problem	Want	Need

THE 15 BEATS – TRANSFORM HERO

- Act 1
  - Opening Image (0-1%)
  - Theme Stated (5%)
  - Setup (1% to 10%)
  - Catalyst (10%)
  - Debate (10% to 20%)
- Act 2
  - Break into 2 (20%)
  - B Story (22%)
  - Fun and Games (20% to 50%)
  - Midpoint (50%)
  - Bad Guys Close In (50% to 75%)
  - All is Lost (75%)
  - Dark Night of the Soul (75% to 80%)
- Act 3
  - Break into 3 (80%)
  - Finale (80% to 99%)
  - Final Image (99% to 100%)





Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

- Opening Image
  - Voldemort has been defeated and a baby has survived his attack
- Theme Stated
  - "Famous before he could walk and talk…" Harry will have to learn the lesson of how to live with being the "chosen one"
- Setup
  - Harry has a horrible home life. He is shy, overlooked, and lonely
- **Catalyst**
  - The letter from Hogwarts arrives
- Debate
  - Harry goes to train station and learns that he is famous



- **Break into 2**
  - Harry boards train, leaving Muggle world behind (act 1) and entering wizarding world (act 2)
- B Story
  - Harry meets his new best friends on the train
    - They will help him accept his status as the Chosen One
- Fun and Games
  - Harry enjoys Hogwarts and we learn about his life there
- **Midpoint**
  - Harry wins first quidditch match (false victory) but learns that Snape was trying to kill him during the game (stakes are raised)
- Bad Guys Close In
  - Harry and friends learn about the Sorcerer's Stone and that Voldemort is after it

- **All is Lost**
  - Harry and friends learn that Voldemort is close to getting his hands on the Stone, which is hidden at Hogwarts
- Dark Night of the Soul
  - Harry and friends seek help, but are unable to find any and are not taken seriously
- **Break into 3**
  - Harry and friends decide to find the Stone themselves to keep it from Voldemort
- Finale
  - Harry overcomes wizarding challenges, learns some truths, and defeats Voldemort
- Final Image
  - Harry returns home at the end of the school year a changed person – more confident, less lonely, and having found a place where he belongs.



YOUR TURN! – ID MAJOR MILESTONES

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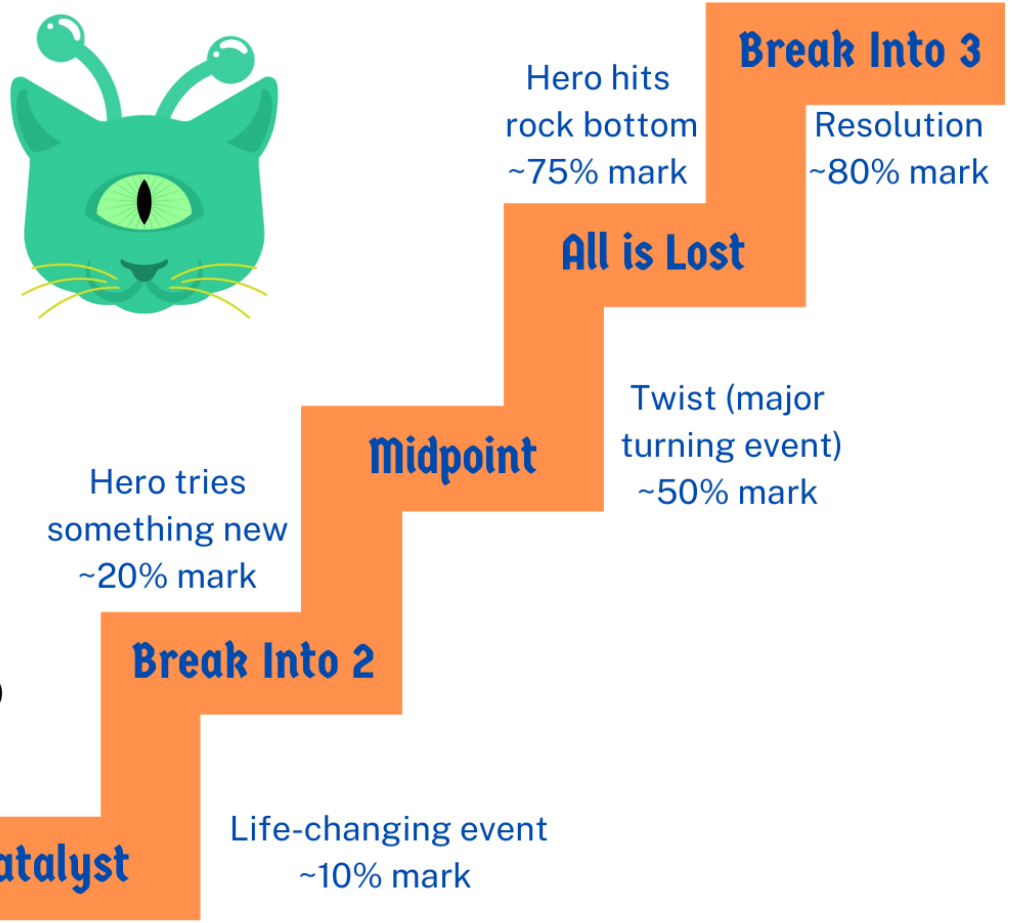

CATALYST



The letter from Hogwarts arrives

BREAK INTO 2



Harry boards train, leaving Muggle world behind (act 1) and entering wizarding world (act 2)

MIDPOINT



False Victory:

Raised Stakes:

Harry wins first quidditch match (false victory) but learns that Snape was trying to kill him during the game (stakes are raised)

ALL IS LOST



Harry and friends learn that Voldemort is close to getting his hands on the Stone, which is hidden at Hogwarts

BREAK INTO 3



Harry and friends decide to find the Stone themselves to keep it from Voldemort

AN ALTERNATIVE PLOT BUILDING DEVICE

- Jot, Bin, Pants
  - This might resonate best with pantsters rather than plotters
    - However, plotters might find this to be a good way to start
- Jot
  - Jot down every single scene that you brainstorm into just a few words onto slips of paper
- Bin
  - Group the scenes into three piles: Beginning, Middle, End
  - Optional Fourth Pile: "Maybe Not" group for scenes that may not be included
- Pants
  - Put your piles in order
  - Let instinct guide you; what feels right, what makes sense
- This is it; there is not further plotting
  - You "pants" your way through the rest of the plot as you write
- More details on this can be found at the NaNoWriMo site under prep resources



NEXT STEPS



- Fill in the rest of the Beats
  - The break the Beats down scene by scene
- Consider buying Save the Cat!
  - It's one of my "must-have" tools
- Explore the free resources provided
  - Danieldelill.com/nano and nanowrimo.org
    - Use the Novel Guide on my site to begin preparing a **scene-by-scene breakdown**
      - Be flexible, you might need to change or add stuff after our next workshop on characters…
  - These are perfect for beginners and great for pros as well!
- Feel free to contact me
  - ddelill@fau.edu

Penultimate Goal of this workshop!