

Video Production.

Mr. Stiles, Fall 2020

Due Monday, 11/9, Value 40 Points

MAPPING THE SCRIPT. –

REVIEW THE SAMPLE TEMPLATE & FILL IN THE PROVIDED BLANK TEMPLATE

Take the summary that you wrote and try and identify these key beats, beginning, plot point one or inciting incident, the midpoint, plot point two, and the end. Put it down on the blank template map that I provided and hold onto it, 'cause we're going to use it in the next section.

Mapping the script structure – Transcript:

- You've got an idea that you're excited about, you've thought about how you're going to explore that idea as a story, you've started defining your characters, getting to know them, but if you were to start writing now, you'd be sitting down to a blank screen and a blinking cursor, and that can be extremely daunting. That's why I'm a really big proponent of, at this stage, taking some time to think about the structure of your script and start mapping out that structure a little bit.
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- When people thought about screenplay structure, most generally, what they're talking about is the classic Hollywood three-act structure, which is basically a theory that says, "This is how you structure a screenplay," and various certain things have to happen at various certain times. The reality is, there's a whole bunch of different theories and ultimately, you're going to find the one that works best for you, but I do think that when you're just starting out, it's really important to have something, some sort of skeleton that you can hang the meat of your story on and use as guideposts along the way, so that when you sit down to write, you don't ever feel lost. That's what I think the very basic core ideas of three-act structure are really useful for.
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- We're going to spend a little time and we're going to talk about that. Remember, we talked about story as being a beginning, a middle, and an end. Another way of saying that is Act I, Act II, Act III, and what you're doing right now is essentially just mapping out the very basic skeleton that you're going to hang your story on. You're going to be thinking and identifying a few things, your start, your end, and, then a couple of key points that are going to be the guideposts to your story.
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- Let's start at the beginning. We're going to call it Act I. Act I is all about setup. We know that stories involve change and a disruption to your character's world. In order to understand what that disruption is and what that change is going to be, we first need to understand what your character's world is like initially. That's the overarching thing of Act I. There's two main points that you're going to want to identify in Act I. The first is the beginning. That seems obvious, but what we mean by that is, where in this character's story or where in these characters' stories are you picking up?
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- To give you an example, my web series, "The Further Adventures of Cupid and Eros," I knew from when I figured out my story that Cupid was going to have been dumped and is having a poor love life. There are lots of different places I could of chosen to pick the story up. I could have started with him getting dumped or it could of been weeks later or months later or what, and any one of those choices would of set the script on a certain path, so the first thing you're going to be thinking of in Act I is, where in the story do you want to start? Where do you want the audience coming in?
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- The second thing is, your first important moment in the script, your first plot point, and that is often called the inciting incident. The inciting incident is the moment where the disruption in your character's world happens. In a detective procedural, it could be when the body is first discovered or it could be when the detective is actually brought on to the case. In a romantic comedy, it could be when the guy is dumped by

the girl that he thought was the girl of his dreams. It could be a lot of things, but you want to know, obviously, what that moment is, so you're going to define in Act I what's that inciting incident, what's the point where your character's world is changed and suddenly, they find themselves faced with a challenge or needing something.

- That inciting incident is going to spin you into the middle of your story, Act II. Act II is the meat, it is the plottiest of the story. This is where most of the things are going to happen. The overarching thing in Act II is that this is the part of the story where your character is trying to achieve their goals and things are standing in their way. That keeps the audience engaged, but do the people get what they wanted the moment after they realized they wanted it? Well, you wouldn't have the story to tell and you'd be done, but also, it's through facing those challenges and obstacles that your character is growing, so it's not just the plot that's changing but your character is changing. Remember, your characters are going to inform all this stuff, so that their POV is going to affect how they might respond to obstacles. Same with the inciting incident that's going to be determined, obviously, by what you know they need, 'cause it's setting that up.

- Now, ideally, each set of challenges leads to another set of challenges, you're raising the stakes as you go, but if all you did was that, if all you were thinking about was stumbling blocks, one after the other, it would be easy to really get lost in Act II, and in fact, a lot of people do, so that's why there's something that I think is really helpful to keep you on track, let you see the forest for the trees, it's your second key point that you want to identify, and it's called the midpoint.

- The midpoint, as you might imagine, is going to end up happening somewhere around the middle of Act II. Basically, what the midpoint is, it's a key moment. It could be a key challenge that comes up or it might actually be overcoming a certain challenge that spins things in a slightly different direction, but that is still related to the overall goal that your characters are trying to achieve.

- I'll give you an example, again from "Cupid and Eros." During our first story arc, when he's trying to pick up this girl in a bar, the first half of Act II is about Cupid trying even to just start talking to this girl, getting up the strength to approach her, not making a fool of himself when he does, and then, our midpoint comes when he discovers that actually, this girl has a fated match and in fact, that guy is there that night and Cupid is supposed to pair them up, so suddenly, his challenges change a little bit, because now, it's not so much about whether he can get this girl, it's, what does he do? Does he still try to get the girl, does he keep her away from her fated match, or does he decide to actually put them together? As you can see, it's not undoing challenges, it's creating new ones that are related to the overall story but spin them in a slightly different direction.

- The other big thing in Act II is, we just call it Plot Point two. Basically, what Plot Point two is, it's the moment that spins things to your big climax. Now, the climax is the moment where the final fate of your story is decided, where you find out if good triumphs over evil, and does the guy get the girl, but the climax is the moment where that is unfolding, where the guy declares his love, the heroine faces down her arch-nemesis. Plot Point two is what sets that up, and it's important to have a sense of that as well, because you want to make sure that whatever that cool, big, final scene or moving scene is that you come up with, you want to make sure that it's earned, that it makes sense with everything that came before, and that it feels inevitable, so by identifying the thing that spins you to the climax, you make sure that there's connective tissue between the two. It'll generally happen towards the end of your second act, it'll spin you toward that climax, and in doing so, into the end, or Act III.

- Act III, what you're doing here and defining here is pretty simple. It is, does the guy get the girl, does the heroine defeat evil, it is how that climax plays out and how does everyone end up in the end, how are people changed or not? In Act III, what you're really defining overall is, how does the story end, what's the final outcome, do they get what they need or not, and how are they changed as a result?

- Again, what you're doing is basically creating a skeleton upon which you're going to hang the rest of the story. It may change, it doesn't have to be set in stone, but these are your guide markers. Your beginning, your inciting incident, your midpoint in Act II, your second plot point that spins you towards your climax, and then your end. There's a good way to visualize this stuff. My method is based on something called The Paradigm, which Sid Fields, who was a screenwriting teacher and guru, developed. I've included a copy of it that you can download. It's a really great tool, 'cause basically, what it allows you to do is, look at the beats you're trying to identify, and you could say, "Well, gee, I know how this ends, "but I have no idea

how I want to begin." and you can just think about it and jot down notes, and then slowly work your way towards the point where you've got the story skeleton filled out.

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- In fact, that's what I'm going to ask you to do for this section. Take the summary that you wrote and try and identify these key beats, beginning, plot point one or inciting incident, the midpoint, plot point two, and the end. Put it down on the story skeleton map that I provided and hold onto it, 'cause we're going to use it in the next section.