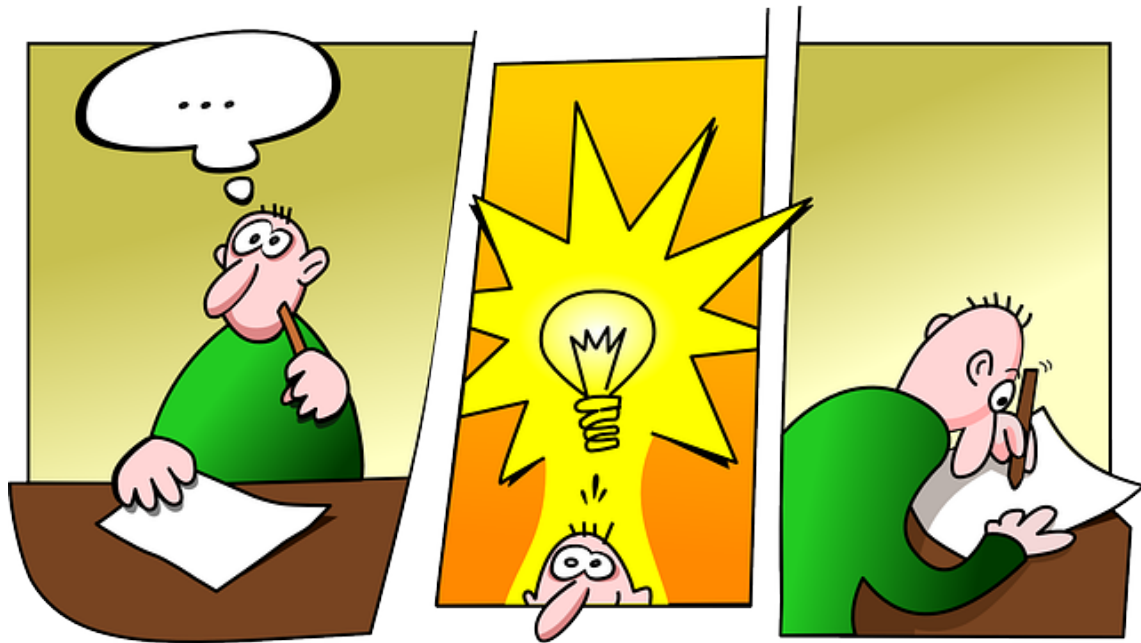


EXPLORING THE ART OF PLOTTING

BY

DiAnn Mills



DIANN MILLS

© DiAnn Mills

Expect An Adventure

www.dianmills.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Four Essential Plot Questions	3
Point of View	4
Plotting Graph	5
Writer Exercise for Plots	6
Exercises - The Antagonistic Setting	8
Checklist for Successful Plotting in Each Scene	9
Recommended Writing Books List	10

The Four Essential Plot Questions

1. What is the POV character's goal or problem?
2. What does the POV character learn that he/she didn't know before?
3. What backstory is revealed? Avoid backstory and character flaws in the first approximately 50 pages.
4. How are the stakes raised?

Point of View

The scene is to be written from the point of view of the one who has the most to lose. You choose and write the scene! Ensure the setting is antagonistic for each POV character.

The setting is a bank and a robbery is about to take place.

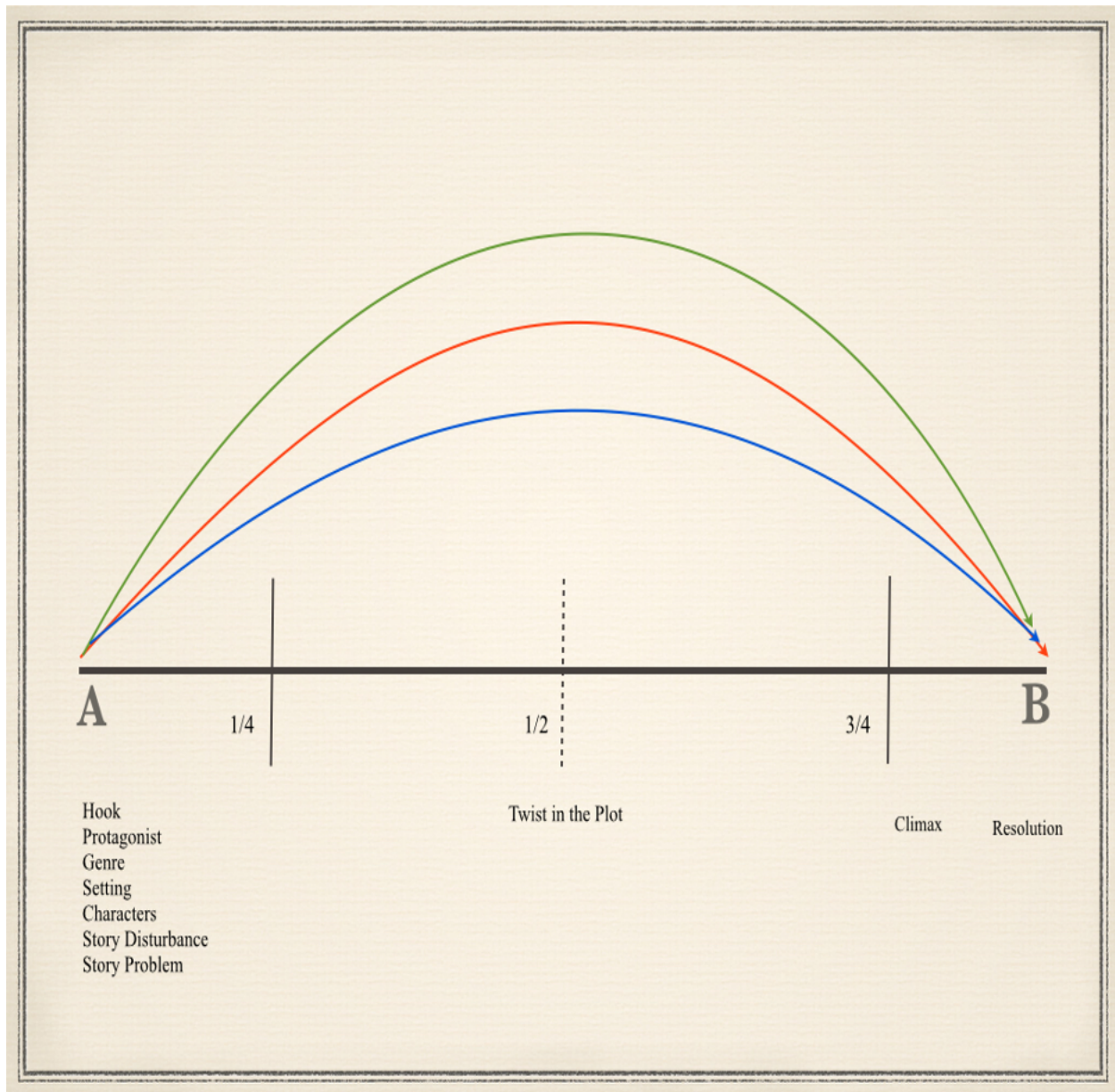
Character A is the robber. He's lost his job and is about to have his home and car repossessed. There's no food in the house, and his wife plans to leave tonight with their two children if he doesn't have the cash to buy groceries.

Character B is the police officer. He has a job to do—protect lives and property. His entire life is wrapped up in his career. A month ago, he was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. He's determined to leave his family a heroic legacy.

Character C is the bank teller. She is disturbed with the amount of errors made lately in her drawer. In fact, if her drawer doesn't balance tonight, she'll lose her job. She's a single mother with two small children and doesn't receive child support.

Character D is a contractor. He has to make a deposit before noon or he'll have several thousand dollars bounce from employee paychecks. He's an alcoholic and needs a drink badly. He's nervous, irritable, and fearful of losing everything he has. A week ago his only son was killed in Afghanistan.

Plotting Graph



Writer Exercise for Plots

A man is hurrying to his car. He's late leaving the office, and he's due to see his son play soccer. Suddenly he feels a tug on his arm. He's swung around and realizes two teenage boys are attempting to snatch his wallet. Ensure the setting is antagonistic for each POV character.

The man is an:

- Off duty cop
- A lawyer
- A pastor
- In the middle of a panic attack

Now write a short scene from your favorite point of view.

**Hint: There isn't a wrong answer.*

Read the following scenario.

What kind of traits would a hero or heroine need to accomplish the goal?

My childhood memories of the beauty of eastern Kentucky played before my eyes. Autumn had wrapped its cloak around the hills, bathing them in scarlet and gold. I smelled the crispness in the air and the promise of a chilly night by the fireplace. I longed to gather apples, nuts, and root vegetables without any worries for tomorrow. Here I'd find healing—here where no one knew me or my sordid past. For I'd spent the last twelve years of my life behind bars for a murder I didn't commit.

Pick one of the four first sentences and write an opening paragraph that reveals genre and the hero or heroine.

1. The town's largest population was in the cemetery.
2. The day left no doubt to how many stripes on the American flag.
3. Until this very moment, I thought I was human.
4. Anything could happen while the dead slept.

Exercises - The Antagonistic Setting

1. List your character's fears and weaknesses.
2. Now incorporate the items in #1 into various setting. List those settings below.
3. How do those settings act against the character?
4. Are any of these settings in unfamiliar territory?
5. How do those settings force the character to deal with his/her shortcomings?
6. Look at your current story. How can you incorporate an antagonistic setting?

Checklist for Successful Plotting in Each Scene

1. Opens directly with the POV character's problem or goal.
2. The scene stays in the POV character's head.
3. There is a distinct reason for the scene.
4. The scene uses the four plot questions.
5. The scene has an antagonistic setting.
6. The scene uses dialogue that is in character and in conflict with another character. It's there to accomplish a purpose. It has energy, excitement, tension, and builds conflict. Gloria Kempton says, "Dialogue's purpose, and there is no exception to this, is to create tension in the present and build suspense for what's to come . . . Effective dialogue always, always delivers tension."
7. The scene uses narrative sparingly.
8. The scene shows what is happening in fresh, unique, unexpected, and believable action.
9. The scene uses inner conflict as well as external.
10. The scene ends with the highest possible stakes.

Recommended Writing Books List

<i>The Emotion Thesaurus</i>	Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi
<i>The Emotional Wound Thesaurus</i>	Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi
<i>Conflict and Suspense</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>Fiction Attack!</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>Plot and Structure</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>The Five Love Languages</i>	Gary Chapman
<i>The Art of Character</i>	David Corbett
<i>Wired for Story</i>	Lisa Chron
<i>On Becoming a Novelist</i>	John Gardner
<i>I know What You are Thinking</i>	Dr. Lillian Glass, Ph.D
<i>Revising Your Novel</i>	Janice Hardy
<i>Dialogue</i>	Gloria Kempton
<i>On Writing</i>	Stephen King
<i>Characters, Emotion & Viewpoint</i>	Nancy Kress
<i>Story Trumps Structure</i>	Steven James
<i>Troubleshooting Your Novel</i>	Steven James
<i>The 12 Pillars of Novel Construction</i>	C.S.Lakin
<i>The Emotional Craft of Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>The Fire in Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing the Breakout Novel</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing 21st Century Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Word Painting</i>	Rebecca McClanahan
<i>Story</i>	Robert McKee

<i>Exploring the Art of Character</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Exploring the Art of Plotting</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Exploring the Art of Emotion & Dialogue</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Writing Cinematically</i>	Deborah Raney
<i>The Power of Body Language</i>	Tonya Reiman
<i>How to Grow a Novel</i>	Sol Stein
<i>Stein on Writing</i>	Sol Stein
<i>Creating Character Arcs</i>	K.M. Weiland
<i>The Moral Premise</i>	Stanley D. Williams