

Step 2: Tips How To Develop Your Stories¹

All stories move. They rise and fall. Movement and change is what makes a good story good, and if the story isn't moving for too long, there's probably something wrong. (...)

Stories move based on the core value² that the story is about.

For example, a love story's core value is love, of course, which has its opposite in hatred³. If you put a **traditional love story** on a scale⁴ between love and hatred with ignorance⁵ in between and mapped out the values, then you might find that the story goes like this:

1. Exposition: Start In Ignorance. The couple doesn't know each other, but then they meet and . . .

2. Inciting Incident: Loathing⁶. Things go . . . badly. He's a jerk and she hates him. The value goes down.

3. Rising Action:

- Part 1: Attraction. In the midst of their hatred, something changes—he does something kind of noble—and all of that hatred turns into burning attraction.
- Part 2 (midpoint): Problems. Something happens: maybe a rival from her past is introduced into mix, maybe he does something stupid, maybe she gets into danger in some extremely dangerous way, or her family turns out to be crazy. Whatever happens, the couple separates, until . . .
- **Crisis:** Doubt⁷. It begins to look like they'll never get back together. Was it really meant to be? Maybe they're better off, maybe the world is better off, if they're apart⁸.

4. Climax: Proof of love. Nope. They were meant to be and one of them is going to prove it, either by driving across the country, or meeting the other in the airport, or interrupting their wedding to the rival, or saving them while sacrificing⁹ themselves, or some other dramatic way, all to show their love.

4. Denouement: The wedding, the ride off into the sunset, the happy ending, all is well, the end.

(...) Take special note of the **climax**, in this case the *Proof of Love* scene. In a thriller, this wouldn't be a proof of love scene; it would be called a "hero at the mercy of a villain scene"¹⁰. Or if it were a mystery, it would be "detective explains how the murder happened," perhaps putting himself/herself into the crosshairs of the villain¹¹. Or if it were an adventure story, it would be the big, final, life vs. death battle. (...)

In other words, the **climax** is the moment where the **core value of a story is put to the final test**.

Some people say you need more action in a climax, or more conflict. But you only need action in an action story, and **all climaxes are about values in conflict, not conflict for its own sake**¹².

So figure out what value your story is about, then tap into it¹³ and bring that value (and its opposite) into the conflict. (...)

1 The following text is literally taken from Joe Bunting, Climax of a Story: Definition, Examples, and Writing Tips : <https://thewritepractice.com/climax-of-a-story/> (25th January 2021)

2 core value: zentrale Wert

3 hatred: Hass

4 scale: Skala

5 ignorance: Nichtbeachtung

6 loathing: Abscheu

7 doubt: Zweifel

8 to be apart: getrennt sein

9 to sacrifice: sich aufopfern

10 hero at the mercy of a villain scene: Szene, in der der Held dem Schurken ausgeliefert ist

11 to put oneself in the crosshairs of the villain: sich in das Fadenkreuz des Bösewichts stellen

12 values in conflict, not conflict for its own sake: (ethische) Werte, die in einem Konflikt auf die Probe gestellt werden, nicht ein Konflikt um seiner selbst (also Action) Willen

13 tap into it: hier: „mache dir die zentrale Aussage (und damit den Wert) deiner Geschichte zunutze...“

The **climax** is usually very close to **the end of a story**, often the second to last or third to last scene (...)

Example:

The following extract from James' Joyce short story "Eveline"¹⁴ is a perfect example of a very touching climax.

Throughout the short story Eveline struggles with her decision to leave behind her poor living conditions in Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century in order to start a better life in Buenos Ayres with a man who loves her and wants to take her with him to South America. Here is the climax – Eveline and the man who loves her are about to embark¹⁵ on board of a ship to Buenos Ayres- which still makes me shiver when reading it...

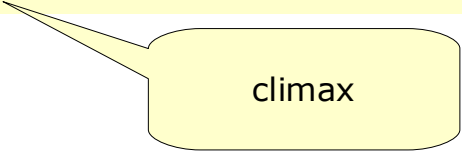
"(...) She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, 6 with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress¹⁶, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea¹⁷ in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer¹⁸.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize¹⁹ her hand:

"Come!"

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart²⁰. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

"Come!"

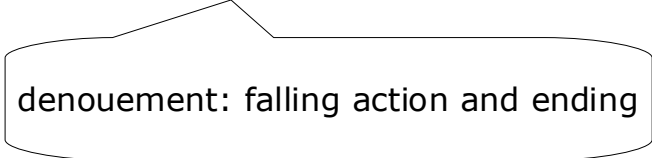


climax

1.No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish.

"Eveline! Evvy!"

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition²¹.



denouement: falling action and ending

¹⁴ James Joyce, Eveline, https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/english/joyce_eveline.pdf (25th January 2021)

¹⁵ to embark: einschiffen

¹⁶ maze of distress: Labyrinth aus nervlicher Anspannung / Pein

¹⁷ her distress awoke a nausea: ihre Pein löste eine Übelkeit in ihr aus

¹⁸ fervent prayer: glühendes, leidenschaftliches Gebet

¹⁹ to seize: drücken

²⁰ all the seas of the world tumbled about her heart: Alle (Fluten der) Weltenmeere stürzten auf sie nieder

²¹ recognition: Wahrnehmung