

PLOT

NCTE/IRA Standards:

Objective: To understand plot and create a meaningful story structure for a screenplay or other literary form.

Procedure: Display and distribute the student pages of the guided learning unit one at a time. The components include:

- A discussion of plot and keys to creating a great plot
- Examples of plot events from *Bandslam*

Allow the students a few minutes to skim each component before reading the text aloud. Reading the text aloud increases the likelihood that all students will be able to understand and participate. Pause appropriately to explain concepts contained in the instructional text, especially concepts that may be unfamiliar. Solicit comments from the students and ask questions to promote their thinking or evaluate their understanding. Elaborate on the instructional text according to the needs of the class.

It may be helpful to spend extra time clarifying or reviewing the following concepts with the help of your Screenwriter's Dictionary:

- The three-act structure of a screenplay/the three sections of a plot (dividing a plot into three sections is more or less arbitrary and not universal, but it is a convention that is widely used and will help students understand plot elements)
- Climax v. Conclusion
- Dénouement

Introductory Activity: As a class, ask students describe the plot of a familiar movie. As the students mention scenes, help them place the scene in one of the three sections of a screenplay, creating a graphic organizer on the board. Guide the students through the activity, if necessary. If a movie has a clear climax, help the students identify it. Ask them to describe what happens in the movie after the climax.

Arrange the students in small groups of 3 or 4. Have each group choose a familiar movie, avoiding duplication of movies. Ask the groups to identify ten or more important plot events in their movie, ordering them within a graphic organizer. Encourage the groups to choose events from different parts of the movie, if possible. One person in the group should be responsible for writing the event descriptions. Give each group an opportunity to name their movie and share their plot events with the class.

Extended Activity: As a class or in small groups, have the students develop a title and brief treatment/synopsis for a movie of their own creation (they may choose to use a treatment/synopsis created in Module 1) They should describe the major conflict in the synopsis. Ask the groups to think of ten or more events that would occur in the movie. The events don't have to be elaborate, just descriptive enough to advance the action. Have them arrange the events in the order they happen and identify the climax of their movie.

Note: Have the students retain the title, synopsis, and plot events they develop because they will be useful in other modules.

Internet Search Extension: Have the students write plot summaries for their favorite movies and compare them with plot summaries found on the web.

Plot

The *plot* of a movie, sometimes called the *story line*, is basically what happens in the film - the action that take place. Some of the plot points from *Bandslam* are listed in the next section.

As you might guess, the plot is very important to a movie. A plot can be funny, scary, romantic, tragic, or a combination of those things. A good plot will keep the audience interested throughout the movie.

Most movies have one major story line and one or more minor story lines. In *Bandslam*, the major story line is about a group of outsiders with musical talent come together to succeed in an unexpected way. A minor story line is about Will, the lead character, overcoming a long-held burden to find enjoyment and accomplishment.

The plot often has a *conflict*, which is a struggle between people, groups, or ideas. In *Bandslam*, one conflict is between two bands – I Can't Go On, I'll Go On, a group of outsiders and the Glory Dogs, the group formed by the "it" clique in school.

A plot or story line usually has three parts or sections:

- The *beginning* sets up the story line and gets the audience interested. This section of the story structure is also called Act I or the *setup*.
- The *middle* is where most of the action happens, the characters say most of their lines, and the conflict is the strongest. This section is also called Act II or the *main conflict*.
- The *end* is where the climax occurs and the plot comes together. The climax is the highest point of the action in the movie. The story line will continue for a short time after the climax to wrap up the events of the movie. This section is also called Act III or the *resolution*.

One of the basic rules that screenwriters follow when developing the plot is "Show, don't tell." The plot or story line should be shown by the action on the screen, not told by the words of the characters. People come to movies to SEE a story unfold. The best screenwriters create scenes that show the action in a powerful way. Dialogue among characters is vital, but showing the story is what makes a movie great.

Keys to Creating a Great Plot

In Act I

- Introduce all or most of the major characters.
- Set up the major story line.
- Reveal the conflict.
- Get the audience emotionally involved.

In Act II

- Have the characters do most of their talking.
- Focus the action on the major story line.
- Introduce any minor story lines.
- Increase the action toward the final part of this section of the movie.

In Act III

- Make a smooth transition by continuing the action of Act II.
- Present a climax that is clear and final.
- Wrap up the events of the story so the audience is satisfied.
- Prepare the audience for a related movie, also called a *sequel*.

Plot Events from *Bandslam*

- Will Burton's mother, Karen, gets a new job in New Jersey.
- At school, Will learns about Bandslam and the Glory Dogs, the school's rock band.
- SA5M (The 5 is silent.) and Will meet in the cafeteria. They end up as project partners in Human Studies class.
- Charlotte recruits Will for the child care program after school.
- At the Overlook, Charlotte and Will get to know each other. He learns more about Bandslam.
- Will meets Charlotte's "band," Omar, and Bug, in a garage.
- Ben tries to get back with Charlotte, his old girlfriend.
- Will recruits Basher as drummer for the band.
- Will gives the band a name, "I Can't Go On, I'll Go On."
- Sam and Will visit CBGB in New York City.
- Will forgets date with Sam.
- Will's class project surprises Sam.
- Ben finds out about Will's past.
- A tragedy dramatically changes Charlotte and affects the band.
- Bandslam takes place, and the outcome is surprising in many ways.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

MOVIE	EVENTS	CLIMAX
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.	
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.	
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