

Plot Structure

Mr. H



What is Plot?

Plot – *noun*: the main storyline of a literary work and the events surrounding the conflict

Narrative Order: the sequence of events

Chronological – In order

Media Res – Midst (Middle) of Things

Flashback – Goes back to the past

Time Lapse – Goes forward to the future



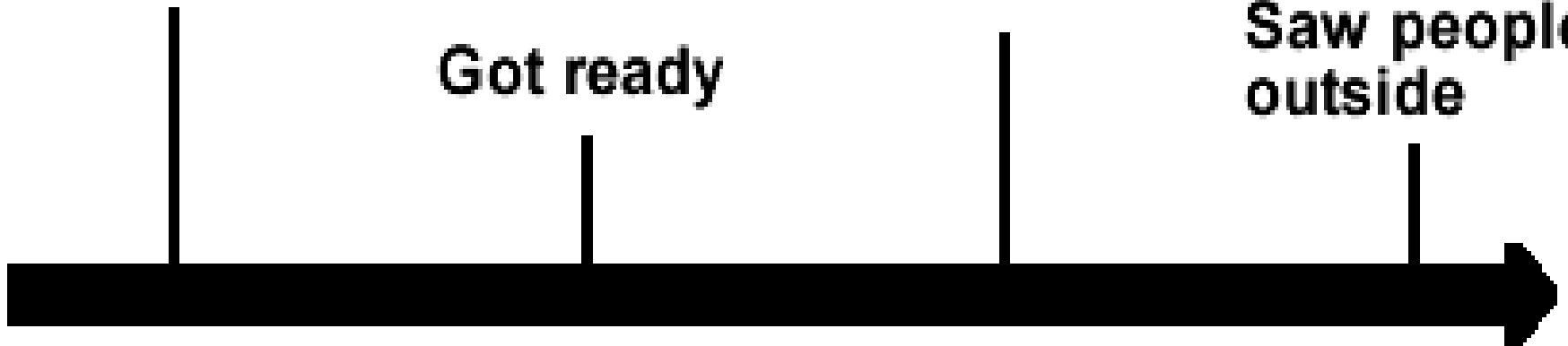
Chronological Order

Woke up late

Got ready

Rode bike
to school

Saw people
outside



NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND VOICE

ONCE A WRITER HAS A CHARACTER AND A PLOT THEY NEED TO DECIDE HOW THE STORY WILL BE TOLD.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE:

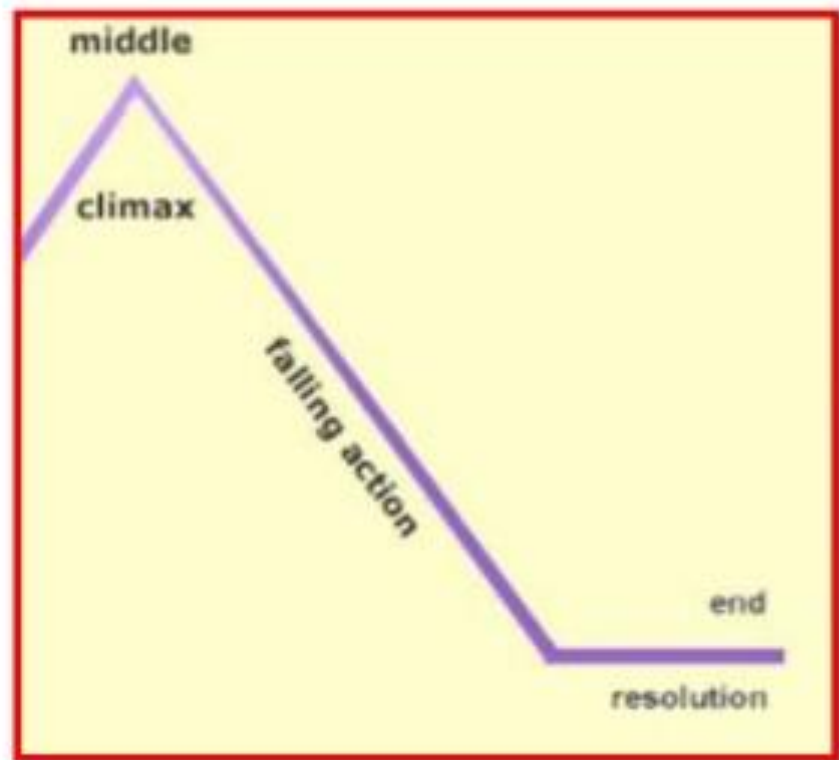
- (1) Some stories are told in **chronological fashion (in order of time)**

ie. **EVENT A → EVENT B → EVENT C → ...**

Tony and Will get a band together from the musicians cast off by the school's music department. They call the band Frizzard, and with effort and determination manage to transform this motley group into a band with grunt and stage presence. Determined to show that they are not losers, Frizzard tries out for the end of year school concert but are turned down. Disappointed but unfazed, the band decides they have just one option; gate crash the concert!....

In Medias Res

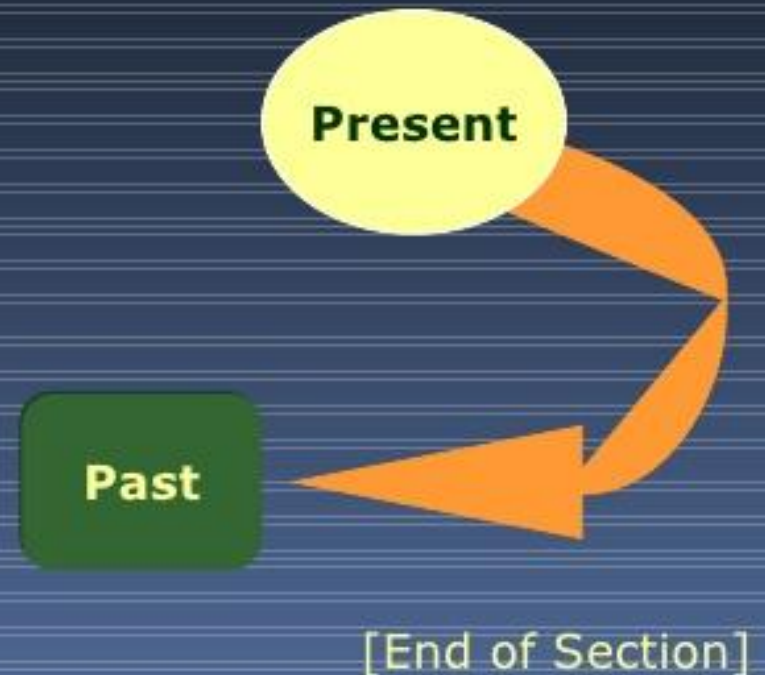
- “in the middle of things”
- Story starts in the middle without exposition



Flashback

Flashback—a scene that interrupts the present action of the plot to flash backward and tell what happened at an earlier time. Flashbacks can ▼

- provide background information ▼
- strengthen our understanding of a character



Flashback

(2) Some stories are told in flashback. For example:

H → A → B → C → D → E → F → G → **H**

Tony and Will are sitting outside the Principal's office, wondering where they went wrong with their band, Frizzard. It is the day after the big end of year school concert where Frizzard gate-crashed the event. As they sit and wait, Tony remembers how getting a band together using rejects from the school's music department seemed like such a good idea at the time.... Tony meets Will after both have been told they haven't made it onto the school's big band list, and they share their frustration and hatch the idea for Frizzard.....(and on to the story of how the band got together, through to gate-crashing the concert, and back to Tony and Will outside the Principal's office).

Flashback

With the previous passage, the telling of the tale begins at the end, *after* the problem has been resolved (by the Principal, anyway). The narrator then relives how they got to that point. The reader knows the end but is made curious about how it came about.

THEN



NOW



Time Lapse





Elements of a **Story** - Review

Setting: Time and place of story.

Protagonist: Main character

Antagonist: The opponent or the enemy of the protagonist

Conflict: Problem in the story.

Plot Diagram – Freytag's Pyramid

Climax

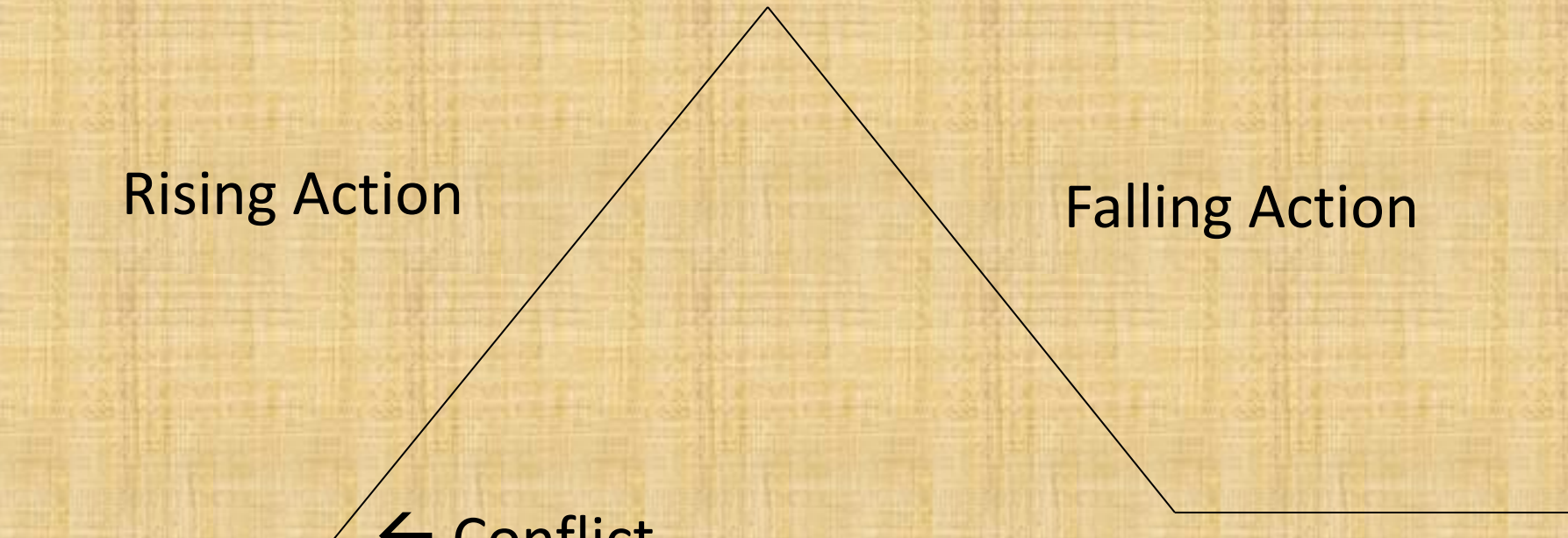
Rising Action

Falling Action

← Conflict

Exposition

Resolution

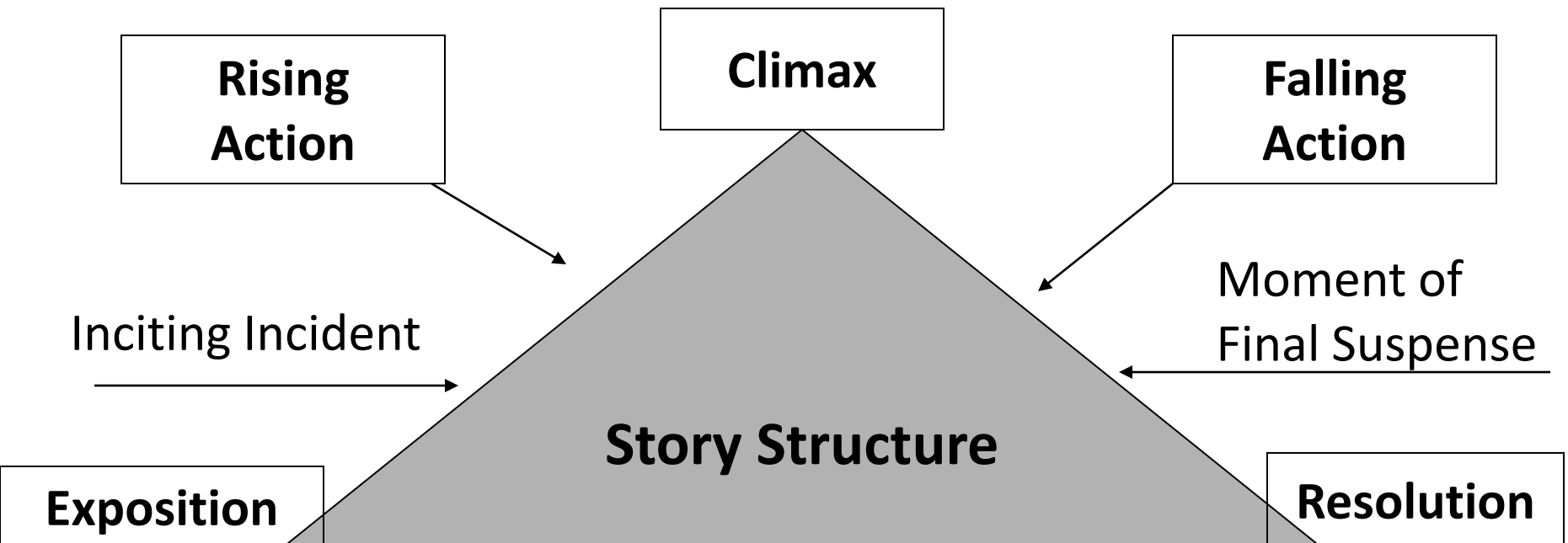


What is **Story** Structure?

Most **stories follow a pattern.**

We will study the most common pattern.

This is a way of identifying **parts of a story.**



Exposition

Events before the plot is set in motion.

- Characters and setting are introduced
- **Exposition** ends when the **conflict** begins.

Example

John has a promising future as an athlete.

Inciting Incident

When the conflict is introduced.

- The **inciting incident** sets the plot in motion.

Example

John injures himself when he is snowboarding

Rising Action

Events leading up to the climax.

After the inciting incident and before the climax.

Examples

- John sits in bed all day.
- He tries to workout again, but re-injures himself
- He gets discouraged, eats a lot, and watches Television (TV) all day

Climax

The turning point in the story.

- Main character may learn something new
- A change takes place
- Now the conflict can be addressed.

Example

John's best friend motivates him after they get into a serious fight

Falling Action

Events after the climax.

Events leading toward the resolution.

Examples

- John learns to focus on school instead
- He passes all his classes with great marks
- He achieves a high GPA and gets a scholarship

Moment of **Final** Suspense

The main character is tested one last time.

- Not every story has this.
- May be the most exciting moment.

Example

John has to score well on his TOEFL or he will not get into a good University

Resolution

Events after the conflict is resolved.

How the story ends.

Example

John gets a great mark on his final test and gets accepted to the University of Toronto

Denouement:

The resolution of the conflict in a plot after the climax. It also refers to the resolution of the action in a story or play after the principal drama is resolved—in other words, tying up the loose ends or wrapping up a story.

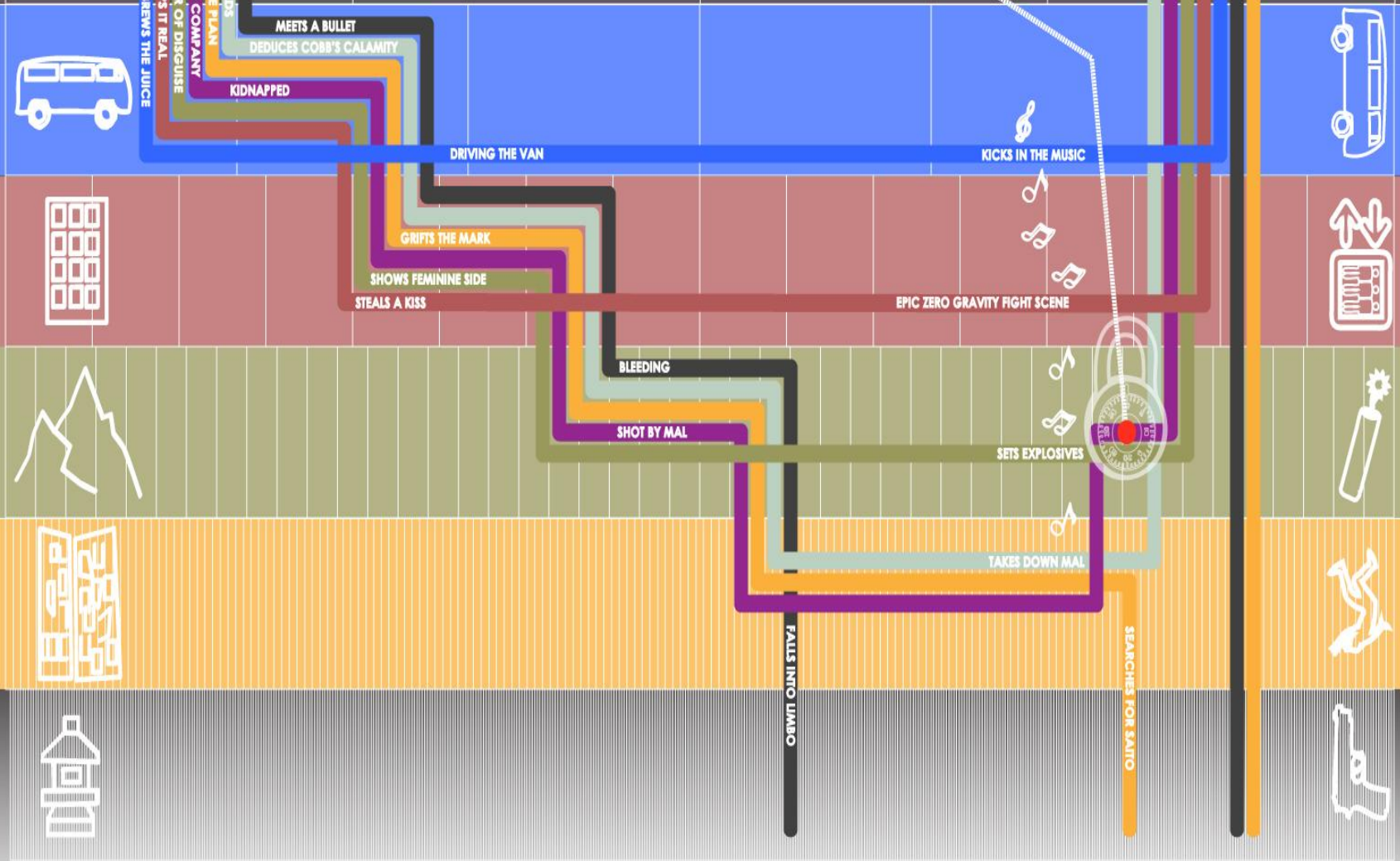
INCEPTION

reality

DEPTH OF DREAM

limbo

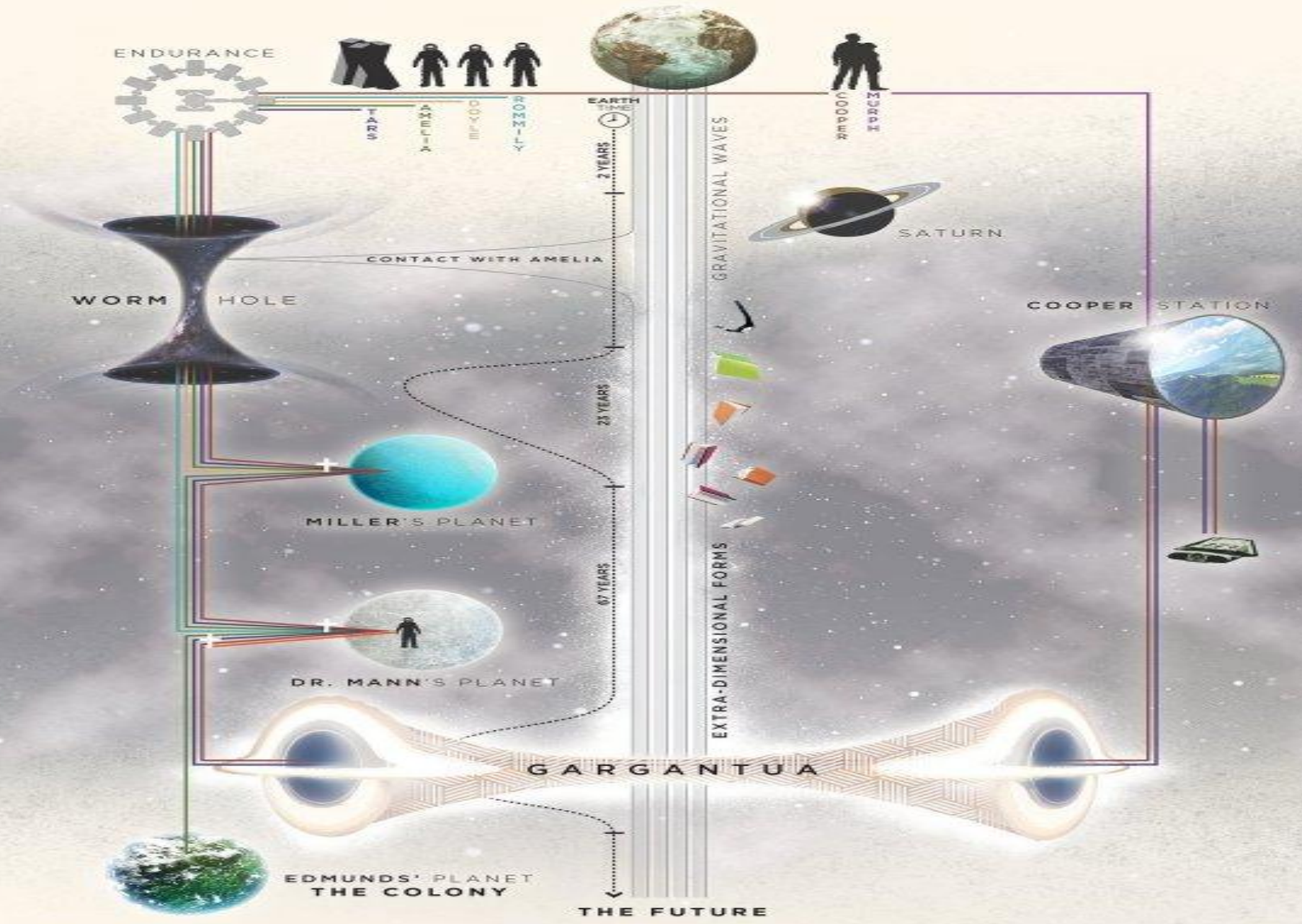
- SAITO TOURIST
- ARIADNE ARCHITECT
- COBB EXTRACTOR
- FISCHER THE MARK
- EAMES FORGER
- ARTHUR POINTMAN
- YUSUF CHEMIST



PERCEPTION OF TIME BECOMES SLOWER AS DREAM DEPTH INCREASES

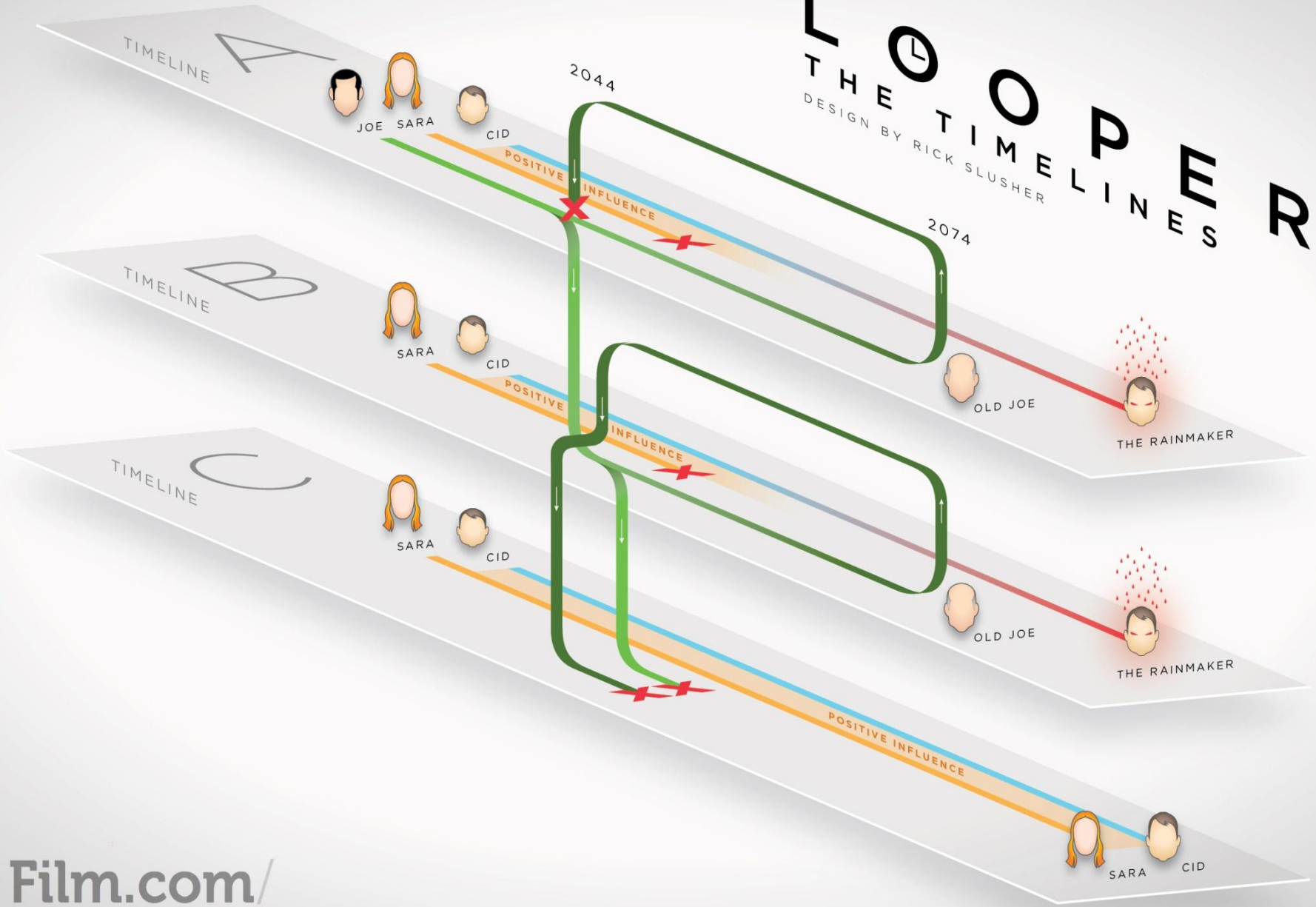
INTERSTELLAR TIMELINE

BY DOGAN CAN GUNDOGDU



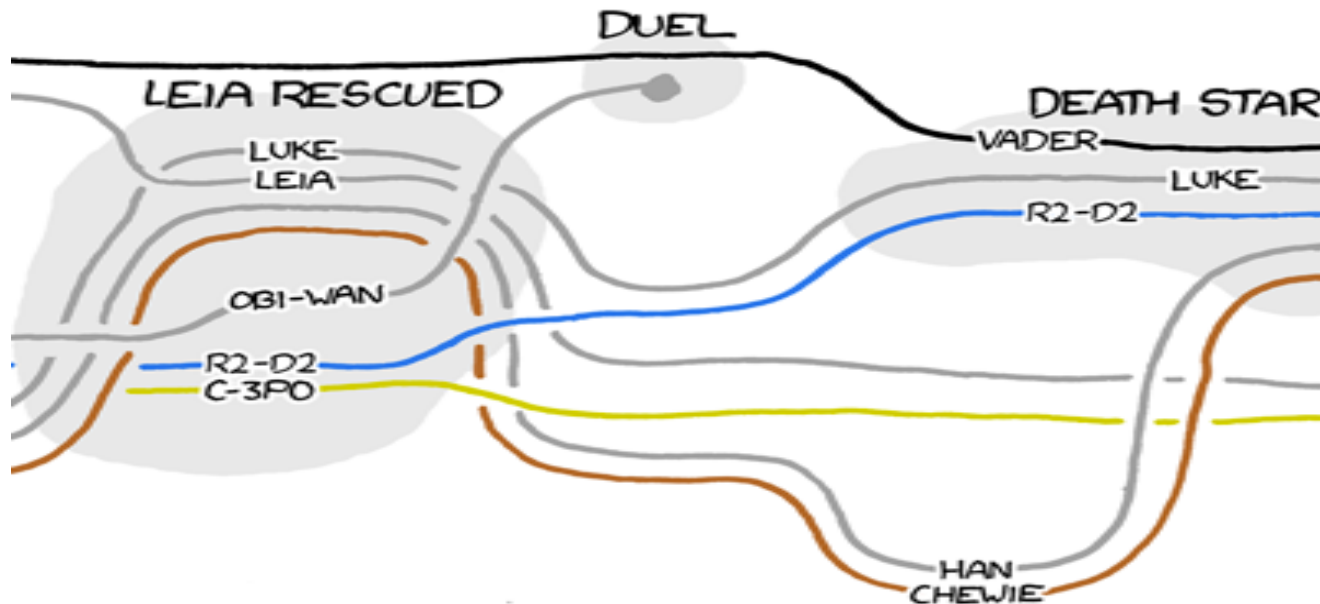
THE TIMELINES

DESIGN BY RICK SLUSHER



Hodgin's Novel Structures

- Hodgin was a writer who tried to explain unique plot structures



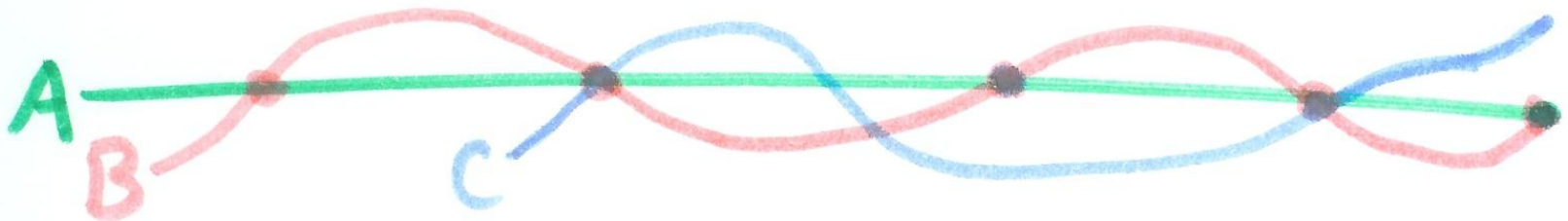
Horizontal Plot

- This follows the characters chronologically.
- It can have a flashback or two, but it typically just goes from the beginning to the end as the plot moves forward



Advanced Chronological

- Here, multiple strands weave together through key scenes and are tied together, by the end:



Advanced Chronological

- The plot of the different characters can also overlap several times, similar to DNA

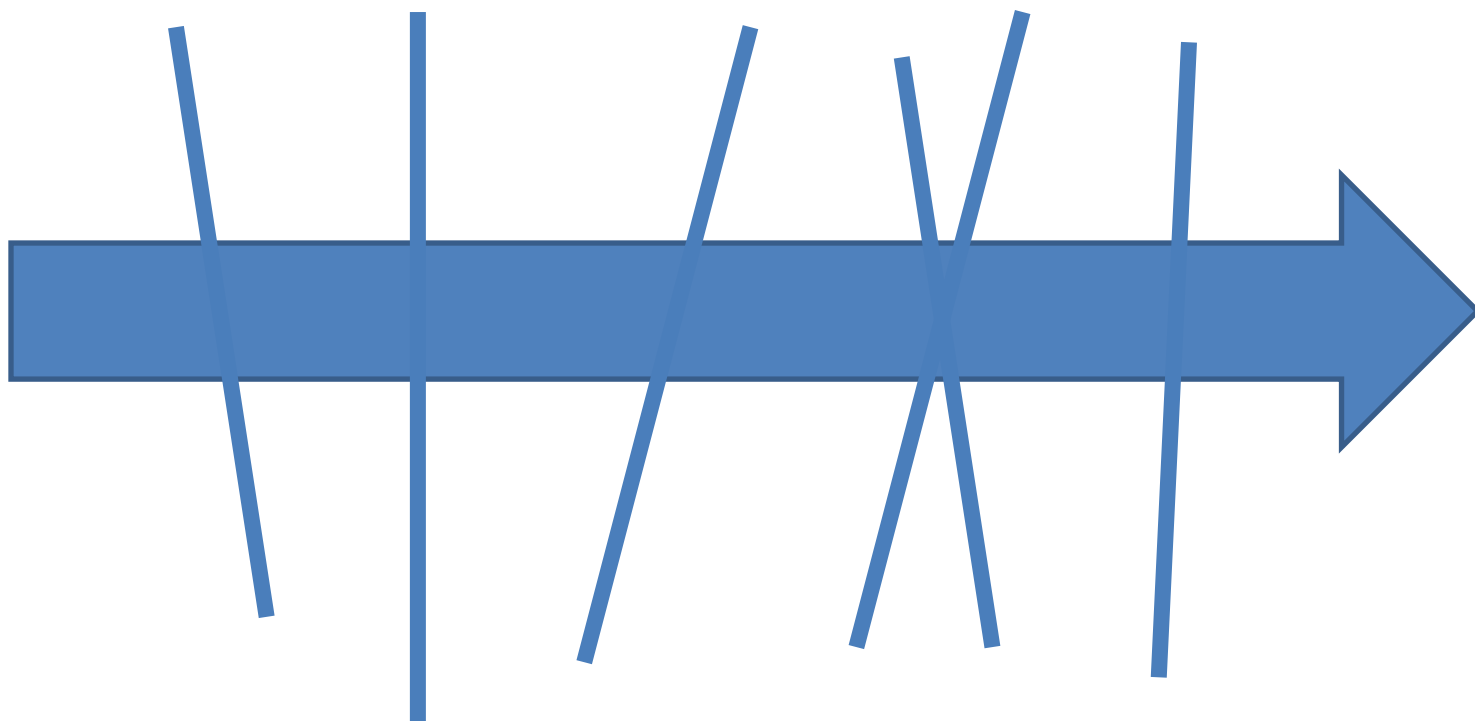


Example

- *Clara Callan* is like this—the letters between two sisters allow for alternating POV but the story moves forward in time—except for our belated discovery that the whole novel is an historical artifact strung together by someone else

Vertical Novel

- The narrator moves from the past to the present constantly in order to make sense of or explain the present situation
- Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* is about her return to Toronto where she grew up and she is then flooded with memories of her unhappy past



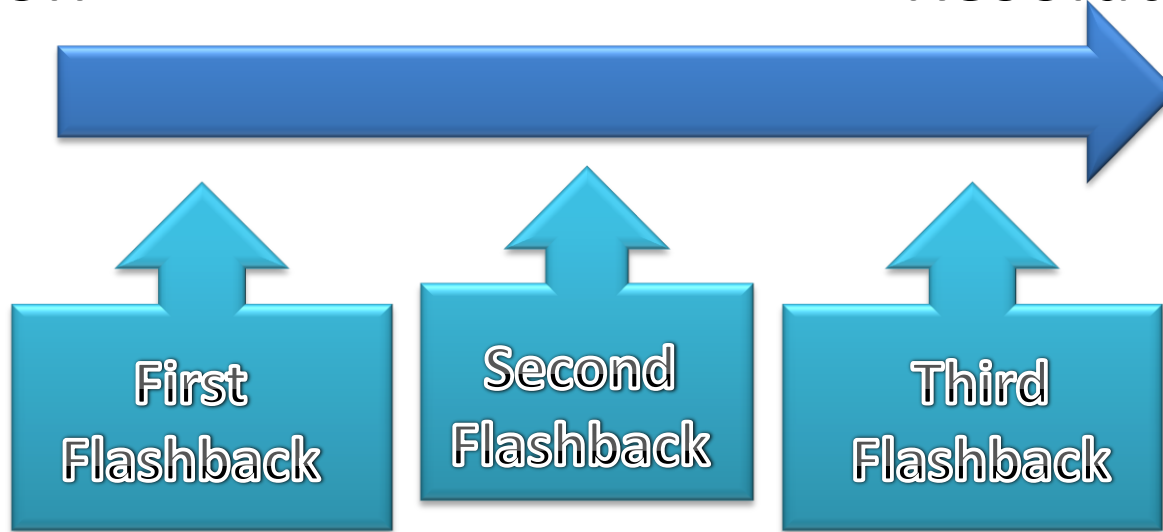
Vertical Plot

Multiple Flashback

- This type of narrative has numerous (many) flashbacks
- In *The Blood of the Martyrs*, a scientist is waiting for execution. Stephen Benet shows us why he is in prison and facing the firing squad
- In *The Blind Assassin*, the present story has multiple, more important flashbacks that build the character and plot

Exposition

Resolution



Multiple Flashback

Other Types

- There are also other atypical / irregular plot structures

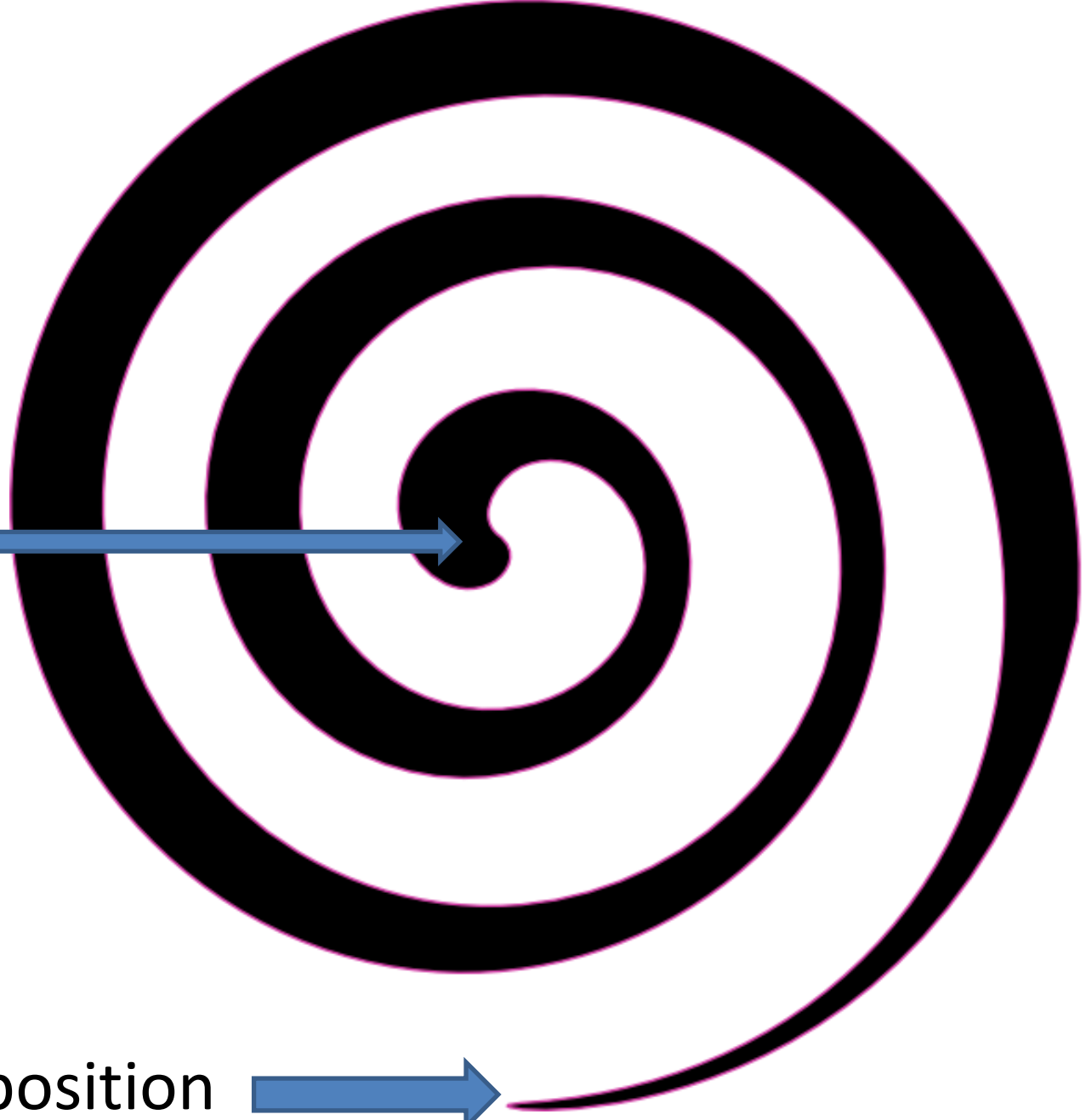
Spiral Plot

- The spiral plot circles around a secret or defining / important moment, delaying its reveal until the very end
- *The Thirteenth Tale* is a good example of a novel with this plot shape
- In *A Wilderness Station*, Monro tells us how the murder took place through letters, recollections and newspaper articles

Crucial Reveal

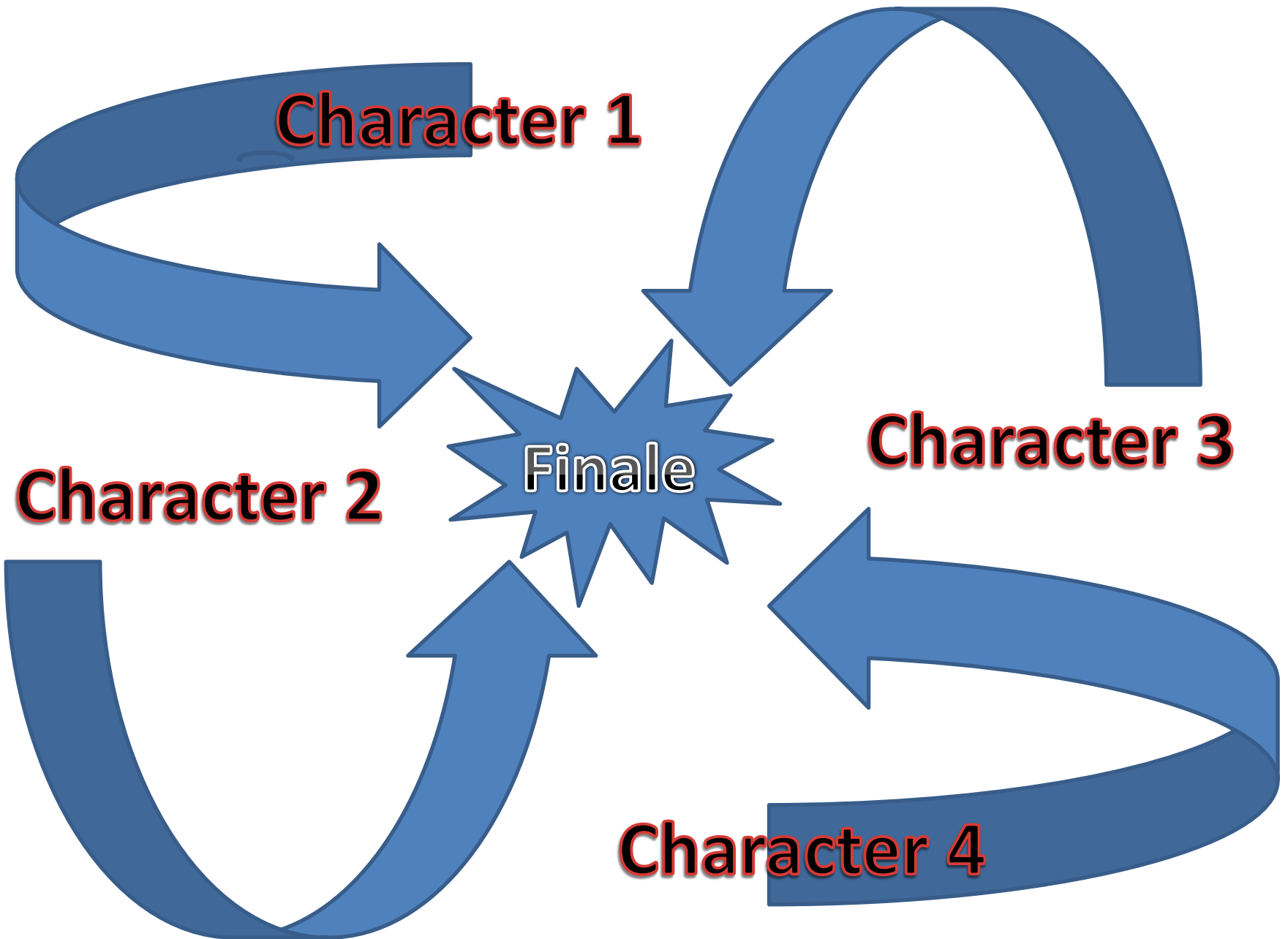


Exposition



Converging Plot

- In a converging novel, disparate (different or dissimilar) stories come together at a central crisis or event.
- Hodgins' own example is Faulkner's *Light in August*, where the convergence occurs upon a burning house.



Story-Within-A-Story

- The main story (B) is bracketed by a shorter story (A). The longer story, often a history of the first, makes sense to the story that frames it
- In both *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *The Piano Man's Daughter* are both examples of this when the protagonists' find out about their mothers' lives

Story-Within-A-Story

A

B

A

