

A person with blonde hair, wearing a black hoodie, black leggings, and a black backpack, is hiking away from the camera on a dirt path in a forest. The path is surrounded by dense green foliage and tall trees. The lighting is soft, suggesting a forest setting.

# *Adventure Storytelling*

## FOR SCREEN

PRESENTED BY

shextreme



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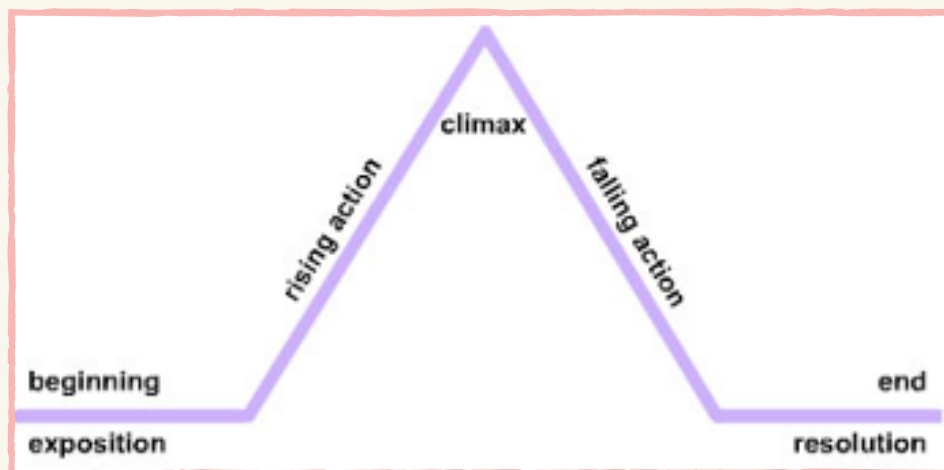
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# Story Structure 1: Plot Diagram



**Exposition** = Introduce your characters, location and establish the problem/challenge

**Rising action** = suspense builds and the problem/challenge increasingly gets worse.  
There are often involves many steps or obstacles in the rising action.

**Climax** = Exciting main turning point of the film sitting on the edge of your seat kinda stuff

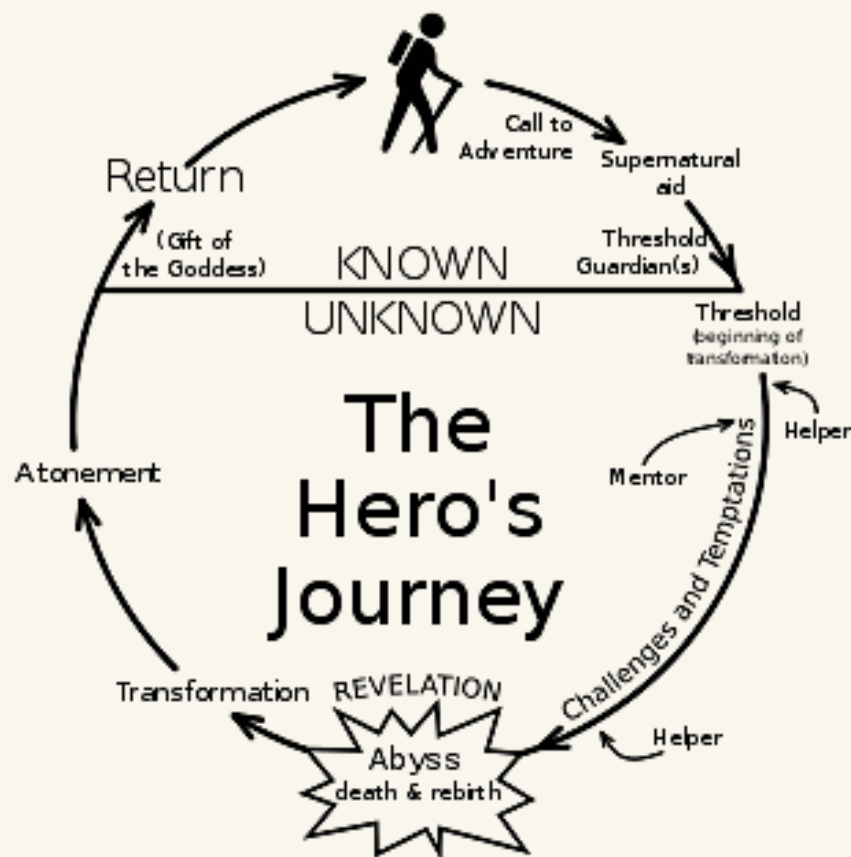
**Falling action** = Events that happen at a slower pace after the climax that lead to the film's end

**Resolution** = the outcome of the film's story. How things end up or get resolved for your characters.





# Story Structure 2: Hero's Journey



The hero's journey is similar to the artist's journey following the call to make their adventure film.

Recommended further reading on storytelling for screen: *Story: Style, Structure, Substance, and the Principles of Screenwriting* by Robert McKee.







# Finding your Story: Inspiration Starters

## Reading

Local newspapers, national press and blogs sharing adventures such as *Love Her Wild*.

## Watching

Watch documentaries online for free on sites such as *Top Documentary Films*.

Go to an adventure film festival to get inspired by adventure film's potential to spark discussions, activate changed perceptions and awareness. *Sheffield Adventure Film Festival* and *Shextreme Film Festival* are super friendly and supportive!

## Talking & Listening

Ask your friends and family, local climbing centre, organisations such as your local surf club or local skateboard park do they know any interesting characters with great stories? Events like *CAMP VC* are also a helpful fun way to discover new stories.

Listening to adventure podcasts are a great free resource to gain stories for adventure films as well. *Tough Girl Challenges* podcast is a wonderful source for inspiration.

## Writing

Keep an Ideas notebook either on paper or notes on your phone. Whatever works best for you. When a creative idea for a film pops up, write it down before it disappears!







# Logline

A logline answers the question: what is your adventure film about?

A logline is a summary snapshot of your adventure film. It introduces your protagonist and the obstacles they must overcome to reach their big goal.

Top 4 ingredients for a logline.

1. **Specify genre. e.g. Adventure film**
2. **Introduce protagonist/s**
3. **Explain Obstacle/s**
4. **The Big Goal**

## Logline Examples

Biographical adventure film (**genre**) *Wild* follows novice hiker Cheryl Strayed (**protagonist**) at one of the lowest points (**obstacle**) on her quest to complete a three month 1,100-mile-long solo trek along the Pacific Crest Trail (**The Big Goal**).

*Frida*: A biography film (**genre**) of artist Frida Kahlo (**protagonist**), who channeled the pain of a crippling injury (**obstacle**) and her tempestuous marriage (**obstacle**) into her passionate creative work (**The Big Goal**).

Your adventure film's Logline:







# Who is your Audience?

Do not market your adventure film to everybody!

Instead, effectively use your resources to find your film's **super niche** audience.

Who is your ideal viewer of your adventure film?

Age:

Active Hobbies:

What sites do they regularly go on?

Who do they follow on social media? Are they part of any social media community groups?

What magazines do they read?

Where do they typically watch films like your film's genre? What sites online? At which film festivals?







# Filming your Story: Screen Techniques

## **Narrative Grammar**

Film has its own language made up of different shots (cinematography) and how you order those shots (editing).

Learn the rules first and then you can have fun bending them and breaking them for creative effect! Without truly understanding narrative grammar for screen, something about your film won't look right to a viewer without them being able to pinpoint why.

For example: if a character is moving forwards in a journey: frame the shot so the character is moving from left to right across the screen.



If the character is instead moving from right to left, a viewer unconsciously reads this as moving backwards rather than thriving forwards in the journey and story.



## **Storyboard**

Use your film's story structure as a blueprint to create a storyboard. Draw some shots to depict each story point. This is so helpful before you go out filming as it focuses your film shoot and ensures you don't miss anything especially if you're filming in a location only once. A storyboard helps you focus on A shots: primary footage which strongly tells your story.





# Filming your Story: Screen Techniques

## **B roll**

While a storyboard helps you focus on A shots, it is still advisable to add B roll footage to your overall shot list. Why? It will help you in the edit giving you more options to transition from one shot to another.

For example, always get establishing wide shots in every location you film in. This helps set the scene for a viewer before going into medium shots of the main characters.

For variety in the edit, film your subject from various different angles. Wide shots, medium shots and close ups. High angles and low angles.

If filming a sit down interview: film the participant coming into shot and sitting down, close ups of hands moving and eyes can also reveal what the interviewee is really thinking.

Where possible: it is great to film reaction shots of people around the main character. Shots of people nodding in agreement, laughing, looking worried etc. help you highlight the emotional tone of the story at that moment.

**Top tip:** remember to record B roll shots for at least 8 – 10 seconds. Giving that extra second allows more space and freedom to edit around in post-production.







# Filming your Story: Screen Techniques

## Think in Threes

When you can't storyboard in advance if the story is very spontaneous filming as you go along, think in threes.

When you capture a brilliant shot, think how can I get three other shots from different angles and distances to give me lots of coverage for the edit? You want to create a sequence of three shots.

Award-winning adventure filmmaker Hannah Maia Taylor-Bird from *Maia Media* swears by this rule! For her adventure film *Megamoon* (2014), she filmed herself and her husband on an adventure honeymoon mountain biking around the world.

"By working with threes in mind I'm trying to be nice to my future self in the editing room - it's about capturing a sequence and beginning to think how the shots might tell the story. So rather than just grab the one shot think of it in terms of wide, medium and tight or alternatively, beginning, middle and end. So for example, in *Megamoon* I'd just had a bike mechanical issue and wanted to illustrate how tired and frustrated I was at having to push my bicycle back to the campsite. Rather than just grabbing the one shot I made a three shot sequence. These were:

1. **A medium** selfie style shot of my tired face as I pushed,
2. **POV** style view of what my tired face was looking at in the previous shot. (That was my hands on my handlebars pushing along with the muddy dirt below).
3. **Long shot** from across the road taken at floor level which adds a lot of context to the whole situation as I can be seen pushing the bike and trailer across the whole screen."





# Submitting your Film to a Festival Advice

Film Judges' technical bug bears when watching hundreds of submissions:

## Your tripod is your new favourite travel companion!

Unless there is a creative narrative reason for a shot to be shaky (such as an earthquake scene or a dramatic fall), keep those shots static. Handheld, shaky wobbly shots not captured on a tripod or monopod often break the spell of the story for the viewer. They suddenly focus more on the technical visual wobble making visible your work as a filmmaker rather than being fully immersed in the film's world. Put your best professional foot forward and reach for the tripod or monopod. It will also save your arms from getting exhausted trying to keep a camera steady in place.

## Testing, Testing, 1, 2, 3!

Your shot, however visually great, is **useless** if you can't hear what the speaker is saying in the shot. Invest time in carrying out sound checks before you start rolling. You can't always fix it in post! Capture sound on multiple devices such as a radio mic attached to a participant's jacket to get a close up clean sound and a boom mic so you have options. Ensure you listen to the live sound you are recording on headphones. Without listening, it is like recording visuals with the camera lens cap on!







# Submitting your Film to a Festival Advice

## How long is a piece of a string?

In the edit, ensure you only keep in shots which move the story forwards. Sometimes judges watch a film 18 minutes in length which would have made a far stronger 10 minutes film. Ask test audiences to view your work before you submit it to a festival. As you are so attached to the footage, sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes to see the material in a new light. Also from a programming perspective short films (3 - 15 minutes) work really well when scheduling the festival programme.

## Micro and Macro Adventures

There is an exciting new inclusive trend towards 'everyday adventure' - the best stories in the adventure category are not always about the highest peak or the biggest journey overseas. What everyday adventures could you film on home soil?

## The Extra Wow Factor

Judges tend to score films more highly when they show judges something they haven't seen before, that surprises them or emotionally moves them.

