



# What Comes Next?

## The Necessary Beats of Plot and Character Arc

Spoiler Alert: I will be using as examples Guardians of the Galaxy and Get Out

# SAVE THE CAT!®

The Last Book On Screenwriting That You'll Ever Need!



**BLAKE SNYDER**

# THE WRITER'S JOURNEY

## MYTHIC STRUCTURE FOR WRITERS

THIRD EDITION

CHRISTOPHER VOGLER



# SAVE THE CAT!®

The Last Book On Screenwriting That You'll Ever Need!

---

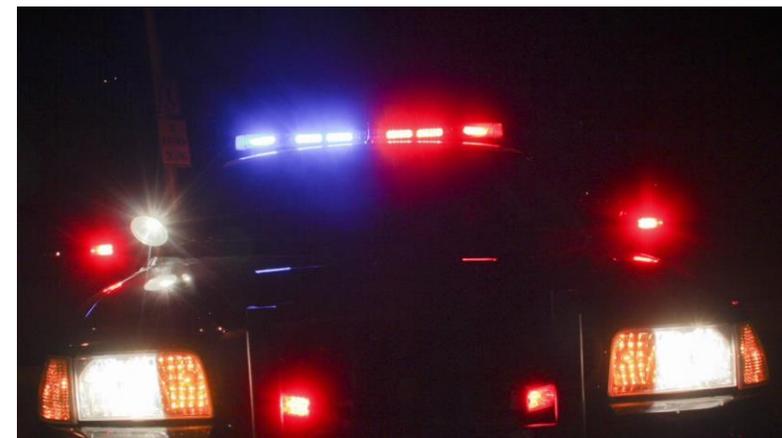
1. Opening Image
2. Theme Stated
3. Set-up
4. Catalyst
5. Debate
6. Break Into Two (Choosing Act Two)
7. B Story
8. Fun and Games
9. Midpoint
10. Bad Guys Close In
11. All is Lost
12. Dark Night of the Soul
13. Break Into Three (Choosing Act Three)
14. Finale
15. Final Image



**BLAKE SNYDER**

# Opening Image – Pg. 1

- The very first impression of what a movie or book is.
- Can potentially provide a “before” snapshot of the protagonist.
- The opening image has a matching beat: the final image. These are bookends.
- The opening and final images should be opposites, a plus and minus, showing change so dramatic it documents the emotional upheaval the movie represents.



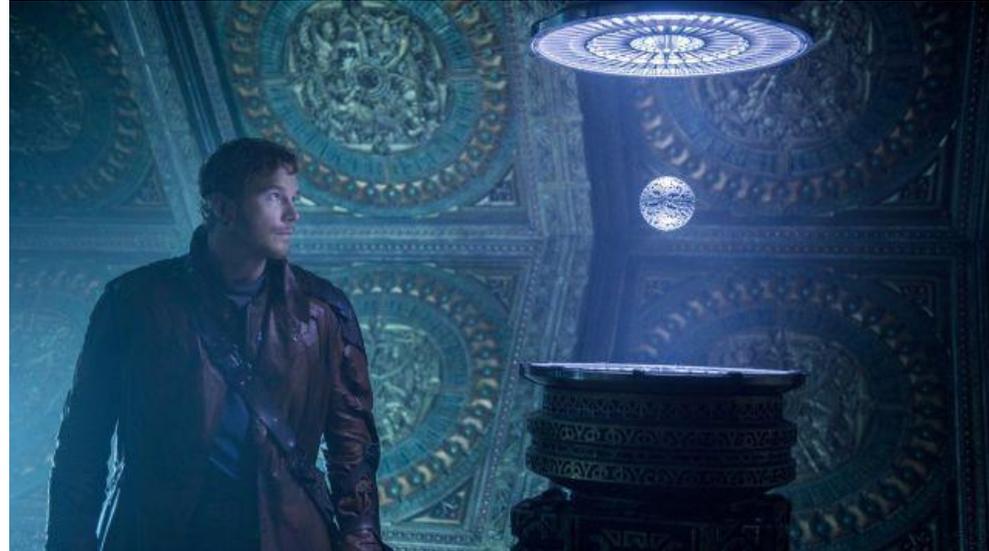
# Theme Stated – Pg. 5

- Within the first five minutes, or around the first fifteen pages of a three hundred page novel, a character (usually not the main character) will pose a question or make a statement that is the theme of the movie or book.
- The theme won't be obvious. It will be conversational, an offhand remark that has far-reaching and meaningful impact later.
- A book or screenplay is, in many ways, an argument posed by the writer.



# Set-Up – pgs. 1-10

- This is the make it or break it section.
- The writer should have introduced every character in the A story, planted every character tic, every behavior a character needs to change in order to win.
- This is where the writer provides the **Six Things That Need Fixing** – the laundry list of problems that you must SHOW an audience that is missing in the hero's life.
- This is the calm before the storm. But there is a sense in the set-up that a storm is about to hit.



# Catalyst – occurs around pg. 12

- After you have told us what the world is like, now is the time to knock it all down. BOOM!
- The catalyst is not what it seems. It's the opposite of good news, and yet, by the time the adventure is over, it's what leads the hero to happiness.
- The first moment when something HAPPENS.



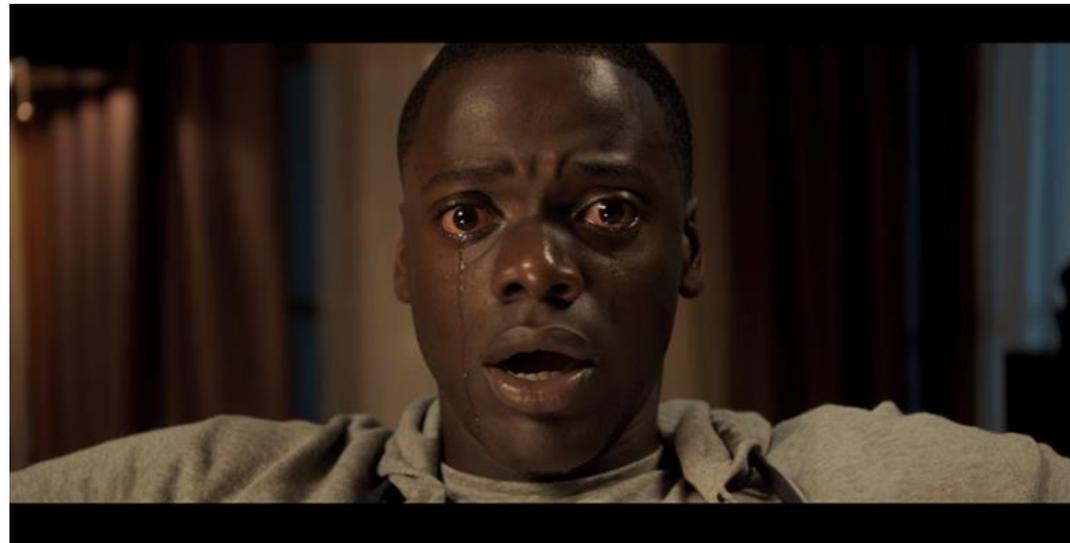
# Debate - pgs. 12-25

- The debate section is the last chance for the hero to say: “This is crazy.” And we need him or her to realize that.
- Should I go? Dare I go? Sure, it’s dangerous out there, but what’s my choice? Stay here?
- The debate section must ask a question of some kind.



# Break into Two – pg. 25

- The act break is the moment where we leave the old world, the thesis statement, behind and proceed into a world that is the upside down version of that, its antithesis.
- The hero cannot be lured, tricked, or drift into Act Two. The hero must make the decision himself. That's what makes him a hero – being proactive.



# B Story – pg. 30

- This is the “love story.”
- It is the booster rocket that helps smooth over the shockingly obvious A story act break.
- The B story provides a breather. It’s lightly off-theme.
- The B story is also very often a brand new bunch of characters. They are the antithesis creatures.



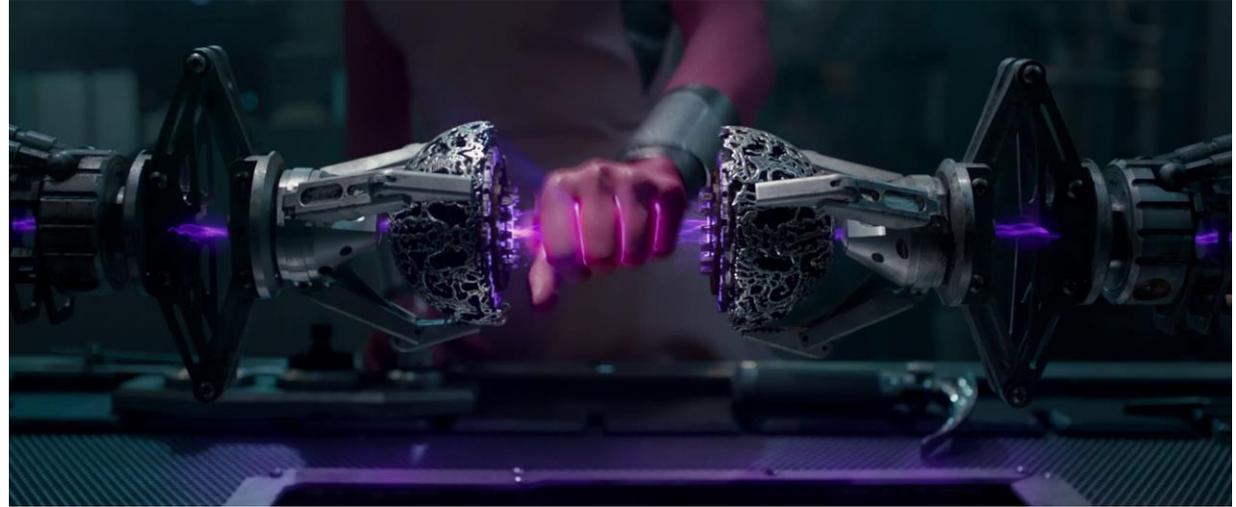
# Fun and Games – pgs. 30-55

- The fun and games section provides “the promise of the premise.” It is the core and essence of the movie’s poster.
- It’s where we aren’t as concerned with the forward progress of the story.
- The fun and games section answers the question: “Why did I come to see this movie? What about this premise, this poster, this movie idea, is cool?”



# Midpoint – pg. 55

- The midpoint is a point halfway, where there is either an “up,” where the hero seemingly peaks (though it’s a false peak) or a “down” where the world collapses all around the hero (though, it is a false collapse).
- At the midpoint, the stakes are raised. It’s the point where the fun and games are over, and it’s back to the story.
- The midpoint corresponds with the “All is Lost” point (#11), in that it’s never as good as it seems to be at the midpoint, and it’s never as bad as it seems to be at the All is Lost point. Or vice-versa.



# Bad Guys Close In – Pgs. 55-75

- This is the point where the bad guys decide to regroup and send in the heavy artillery.
- The forces that are aligned against the hero, internal and external, tighten their grip. Evil is not giving up, and there is nowhere for the hero to go for help. He is on his own and must endure.
- The main character is headed for a huge fall.



# All Is Lost – pg. 75

- The All is Lost moment is also called “false defeat.” Even though all looks hopeless, it’s just temporary.
- All aspects of the hero’s life are in shambles. Wreckage abounds. No hope.
- Snyder calls it the “whiff of death.”
- All is Lost is the place where mentors go to die, presumably so their students can discover “they had it in them all along.” The mentor’s death clears the way to prove that.
- “All good, primal stories have this. It resonates for a reason.”



# Dark Night of the Soul – pgs. 75-85

- In the middle of a death moment at the All is Lost point is the Dark Night of the Soul.
- The darkness right before the dawn. It is the point just before the hero reaches way, deep down, and pulls out the last, best idea that will save himself and everyone around him.
- The moment where the character admits his or her humility or humanity and yields control of events over to Fate – gives up – and, only then, finds the answer.



# Break into Three – pg. 85

- The hero has found the answer. The hero has prevailed, passed every test, and dug deep to find the solution. Now all he has to do is apply it.
- An idea to solve the problem has emerged.
- The world of synthesis is at hand.



# Finale – pgs. 85-110

- The Finale is Act 3. This is where we wrap it up. It's where the lessons learned are applied. It's where the character arcs are mastered, and the A and B story end in triumph for our hero.
- It's the turning over of the old world and a creation of a new world order – all thanks to the hero, who leads the way based on what he experienced in the “upside-down, antithetical world of Act Two.”
- It's not enough for the hero to triumph. He must change the world. And he must do it in an emotionally satisfying way.



F HD

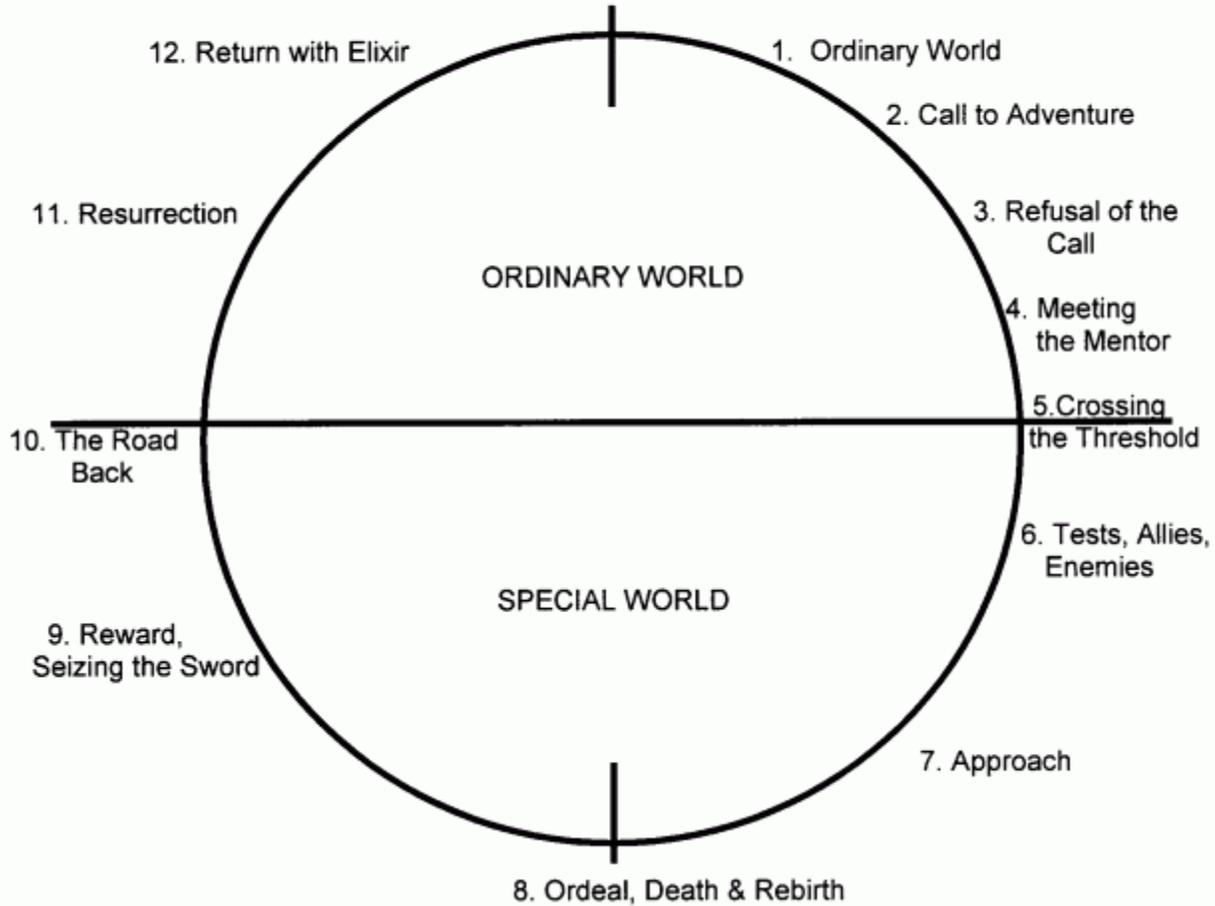
# Final Image – pg. 110



- The final image in a movie is the opposite of the opening image. It is proof that change has occurred and that it's real.



## THE HERO'S JOURNEY



# THE WRITER'S JOURNEY

MYTHIC STRUCTURE FOR WRITERS

THIRD EDITION

CHRISTOPHER VOGLER



# The Ordinary World

- Most stories take the hero out of the ordinary, mundane world and into a Special World, new and alien.
- If you're going to take the "fish out of water," you're going to first have to show him in that Ordinary World to create a vivid contrast with the strange new world he is about to enter.
- The first chapter of most novels simply focuses on setting up the Ordinary World.



# The Call to Adventure

- The hero is presented with a problem, challenge, or adventure to undertake.
- Once presented with a Call to Adventure, he or she can no longer remain indefinitely in the comfort of the Ordinary World.
- The Call to Adventure establishes the stakes of the game and makes clear the hero's goal: to win the treasure or lover, to get revenge or right a wrong, to achieve a dream, confront a challenge, or change a life.



# Refusal of the Call

- This one is about fear.
- Often at this point, the hero balks at the threshold of adventure, Refusing the Call or expressing reluctance. After all, he or she is facing the greatest of all fears, terror of the unknown.
- The hero is not yet fully committed to the journey and may still be thinking of turning back.



# Meeting the Mentor

- By this time, many stories will have introduced a Merlin-like character who is the hero's Mentor. The relationship between hero and Mentor is one of the most common themes in mythology, and one of the richest in its symbolic value.
- It stands for the bond between parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, god and man.
- The function of the mentors is to prepare the hero to face the unknown. However, eventually the hero must face the unknown alone.



# Crossing the first Threshold

- The hero has finally committed to the adventure and fully enters the Special World of the story for the first time by Crossing the First Threshold.
- He or she agrees to face the consequences of dealing with the problem or challenge posed in the Call to Adventure.
- This is the moment when the story takes off.
- Heroes don't always land gently. They may crash in the other world, literally or figuratively.
- Often times there are threshold guardians blocking the way.



# Tests, Allies, and Enemies

- Once across the First Threshold, the hero naturally encounters new Challenges and Tests, makes Allies and Enemies, and begins to learn the rules of the Special World.
- Scenes like these allow for character development as we watch the hero and his companions react under great stress.



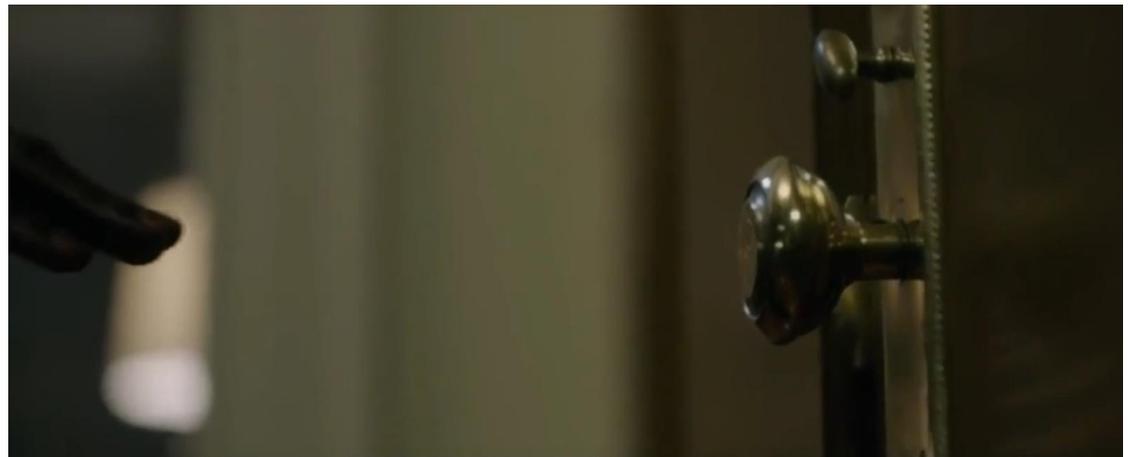
# Approach to the Inmost Cave

- The hero comes at last to the edge of a dangerous place, sometimes deep underground, where the object of the quest is hidden. Often it's the headquarters of the hero's greatest enemy, the most dangerous spot in the Special World.
- When the hero enters the special place, he will cross the second major threshold. Heroes often pause at the gate to prepare, plan, and outwit the villain's guards.



# The Ordeal

- Here the fortunes of the hero hit bottom in a direct confrontation with his greatest fear. He faces the possibility of death and is brought to the brink in a battle with a hostile force.
- The Ordeal is a moment for the audience where they are held in suspense and tension, not knowing if the hero will live or die.
- He is in the belly of the beast.



# Reward (Seizing the Sword)

- Having survived death, beaten the dragon, or slain the Minotaur, hero and audience have cause to celebrate. The hero now takes possession of the treasure she has come seeking, her Reward. It might be a special weapon like a magic sword, or a token like the Grail or some elixir which can heal the wounded land.
- Sometimes the “sword” is knowledge and experience that leads to greater understanding and a reconciliation with hostile forces.



# The Road Back

- The hero's not quite out of the woods yet. The hero begins to deal with the consequences of confronting the dark forces of the Ordeal.
- If she has not yet managed to reconcile with the parent, the gods, or the hostile forces, they may come raging after her.
- Some of the best chase scenes spring up at this point, as the hero is pursued on The Road Back by the vengeful forces she has disturbed by Seizing the sword, the elixir, or the treasure.



# Resurrection

- The hero has been to the realm of the dead and must be reborn and cleansed in one last Ordeal – Resurrection.
- This is often a second life-and-death moment, almost a replay of the death and rebirth of the Ordeal.
- It's kind of a final exam for the hero, who must be tested once more to see if he has really learned the lessons of the Ordeal.
- The hero is transformed by these moments of death-and-rebirth, and is able to return to ordinary life reborn as a new being with new insights.



# Return with the Elixir

- The hero returns to the Ordinary World, but the journey is meaningless unless she brings back some Elixir, treasure, or lesson from the Special World. The Elixir is the magic potion with the power to heal. It may be a great treasure like the Grail, or it might simply be knowledge or experience that could be useful to the community someday.



# The End

If we have more time...

The Threshold Guardian

# The Threshold Guardian

- As you approach the threshold, you're likely to encounter beings who try to block your way. They are called Threshold Guardians, a powerful and useful archetype. They may pop up to block the way and test the hero at any point in a story, but they tend to cluster around the doorways, gates, and narrow passages of threshold crossings.
- The task for heroes at this point is often to figure out some way around or through these guardians. Often their threat is just an illusion, and the solution is simply to ignore them or push through them through faith.
- The trick may be to realize that what seems like an obstacle may actually be the means of climbing over the threshold. Threshold Guardians who seem to be enemies may be turned into valuable allies.
- Sometimes the guardians of the First Threshold simply need to be acknowledged. They occupy a difficult niche, and it wouldn't be polite to pass through their territory without recognizing their power and their important role of keeping the gate. It's a little like tipping a doorman or paying a ticket.

# Threshold Guardian Examples

- Friends
- Eyes Wide Shut

# Writing Exercise

For this exercise, write a scene in which your main character desires to reach a place or person, but there is an object, person, animal, test, lack, gap, or phenomenon that blocks his path. The scene should focus on what blocks the character, rather than the place the character needs to reach.

# Works Cited

- Milles, Corey. “*Guardians of the Galaxy* Beat Sheet.” *Save the Cat!*<sup>®</sup>, 15 Aug. 2014, [www.savethecat.com/beat-sheets/guardians-of-the-galaxy-beat-sheet](http://www.savethecat.com/beat-sheets/guardians-of-the-galaxy-beat-sheet). Accessed 25 January 2019.
- Roff, Don. “*Get Out* Beat Sheet.” *Save the Cat!*<sup>®</sup>, 29 Sept. 2017, [www.savethecat.com/beat-sheets/get-out-beat-sheet](http://www.savethecat.com/beat-sheets/get-out-beat-sheet). Accessed 25 January 2019.
- Smith, Rebecca. “A Break down of the Hero’s Myth: *Guardians of the Galaxy*.” *The New York Experience*, BYU School of Communications, 24 May 2017, [nybyu.com/pop-culture-analysis/how-to-become-a-guardian-of-the-galaxy-through-the-heros-journey/](http://nybyu.com/pop-culture-analysis/how-to-become-a-guardian-of-the-galaxy-through-the-heros-journey/). Accessed 25 January 2019.
- Snyder, Blake. *Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting That You'll Ever Need*. Michael Wiese Productions, 2005.
- Vogler, Christopher. *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Michael Wiese Productions, 2007.