



Topic Three

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**The Plot**



# The Plot

Plot is the series of happenings or events that make up your play. It's a bit like a string of beads that lead, one from another, through the story.

For a play, we have to have at least one character, whose life changes (usually quite suddenly) in some way. A series of things happen, because of that change.

Sometimes this involves the main character going on an actual journey and sometimes not.

Either way, something should be very different from how they were at the beginning, and in some way, the main character should have changed as well.

The series of actions or events that happen and that change the lives of the characters, is the plot of your play

## For example

Imagine it is a normal morning in a house and you were writing a breakfast scene?

- Everyone in the family is busy, grabbing toast and cereal, before they rush off to school and work.
- Maybe two of the children are having an argument about something – like who gets to finish the cereal. This tells us that they are always fighting about something.
- Maybe there's a hint of change or something a little odd, perhaps the weatherman on the television is talking about a strange storm taking place.



**The main focus is on introducing us to the characters and what their normal breakfast routine is.**

# The CATALYST

The **Catalyst** is another word for the spark that sets off the dramatic action.

From a normal day, something different happens.

Something that changes for some or all of the characters in your play.

This thing is the spark that lights the fire of the drama.

Perhaps there's something really strange or unusual at the door? Or someone that wasn't expected?

- A huge hole
- A giraffe
- Bampy who lives a hundred miles away
- Mam's favourite singer
- A chimney sweep
- A box of cream cakes
- A pair of smelly red socks.

Choose one of these examples and without thinking too much about it, write what happens next.

**Write (or create pictures if you'd prefer, or you could record yourself telling a story) for three minutes without stopping.**



**TOP TIP:** *As soon as you start asking questions about the incident, all sorts of choices open up that can develop your story.*



# The CATALYST

## For example

If you chose a giraffe, your first question might be, Why would a giraffe be at someone's front door?

- Maybe he escaped from the zoo?
- Maybe he found his way over from Africa because he found it too hot there?
- Maybe he's on a special mission or quest and needs help?

**All of these possibilities should set a string of events into action with choices for all the characters, but particularly your main character(s).**

## Try creating your own catalyst...

Look out of the window, what can you see? Does everything look like it normally does?

- What if one of your neighbours started shouting at you?
- What if there was a car accident in the road?
- What if the girl across the road started dancing in her window?

**The change can be big or small, but it needs to show some kind of difference than normal.**

## For example

What if the giraffe pleaded to stay in the house rather than being sent back to Africa?

He wanted to stay because it was cool in the house and there are tall trees in the garden that were his favourite.

How could a family hide a giraffe from the police and other authorities? Would they need to cut a hole in the roof for his neck? Or build a special shed for him to live?

**What if there was a wicked poacher kind of character who wanted to collect giraffe neck bones and put them above the fireplace?**



# The shape of your story

Most stories generally share a similar shape or pattern.

- The main character has to face some strange, scary or difficult obstacles and events.
- These obstacles make them change and develop themselves.
- Hopefully they realise important things about themselves and the world.

You can usually shape a play around **three acts** or blocks of action.

This usually means that things will get worse before they sort themselves out.

Often, the worst point happens quite close to the end of the play, when everything might seem hopeless, but somehow things work out, either for better or worse.

Every play needs a **Beginning, Middle and End**.

- **Beginning:** is the spark that starts the story.
- **Middle:** is the series of events/journey that the character has to go through.
- **End:** is how the character has changed by the end of the story



# The shape of your story

Imagine that you want to write about a young girl who is very selfish.

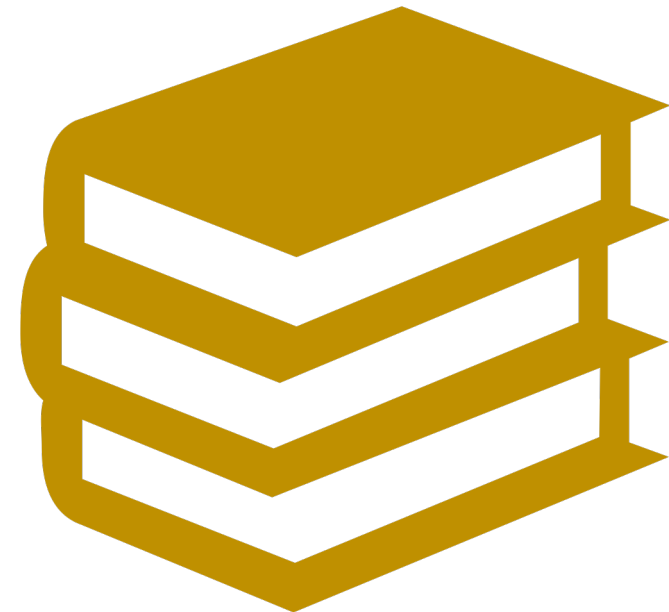
At the beginning, she only thinks about herself, but by the end she thinks about other people too.

- **Choose three things** that this girl really wants (Make at least one of the things that she wants a selfish choice).
- **Think of a spark**, something that happens that's really different to normal.
- **List 5 things/events** that happen in the story, each thing should happen **because** of the previous thing.
- **Choose an end** where the young girl has realised that it's not good to be selfish. This might make her realise that the things she thought she wanted, have now all changed too.

You have created a story with a beginning, middle and end with a series of events and actions.

Now you need to use that to make a series of scenes with different characters.

*TOP TIP: The middle is when the main changes happen and where the character faces the most difficulty. This is also where the character learns the most about themselves.*



# Hinges

The plot is a series of events that follow on from each other until they reach an endpoint, which is usually a success or failure.

Each event has to link up with each other, causing the next event to happen.

**It's a bit like falling...dominoes**

**Imagine that this is a drama about a saucepan and the saucepan begins life in a top chef's kitchen.**

By the end of the story the saucepan gets back to the same kitchen at the end.

- Choose five separate owners of the saucepan and write a short story that goes with each owner.
- How and why does the saucepan move between owners?
- What has the saucepan realised about his old life by the time he returns to the original kitchen at the end?



**TOP TIP:** These **hinges** in the story are really important, as we have to believe how one part of the story moves from one place to another.



# Types of Plays

Here are some examples of the different types of plays you could write:

**Tragedy:** This is play that ends with the main character losing everything, and maybe even dying. The plot is not very happy, but the characters usually learn something important about themselves in the process.

**Comedy:** This is a play that makes people laugh, often because many of the characters are silly or stubborn or unable to see the truth. The plot can involve everyone getting very muddled and confused for a while, but usually ends up with everything being sorted so that everyone is happy at the end.

**Mystery:** This is a play that makes people try to understand what has happened (or why). The plot is where the main character needs to unlock the mystery or understand who has committed a crime and why.

**Quest:** This is a play where a character is set a challenge at the beginning where they have to go on a dangerous journey and complete challenges in order to gain a prize.

**Fantasy:** This is a play that happens partly or entirely in a different world with different rules than normal. The plot might involve magic and the supernatural. It might also involve a character leaving our world for an adventure in a different world for a while before coming back.





# Types of Plays

**Choose one of the story styles and try writing about the following character...**

Cerys is thirteen years old. She lives with her mam and baby sister in Swansea.

She loves football and dreams of playing for Swansea City.

Every day she practises in the park in front of her house.

She's very ambitious and football is more important to her than everyone and everything else. But one day.....

- Choose a spark, something that will change Cerys' world and make her take a certain course of action. She can't ignore it, so what does she choose to do?
- Write five separate things/actions/events that happen, that connect to each other.
- By the end of these five plot points, what has Cerys learnt about herself?

**Try writing the same story in a different style.**



***TOP TIP: The style of play you are writing will influence the questions you ask and the solutions you offer.***



# To sum up:

The plot is the series of happenings that make up the play.

The catalyst or spark is the unusual event that sets the story in motion.

The play has a beginning, middle and end.

The middle part is the most risky or challenging for the main character.

