

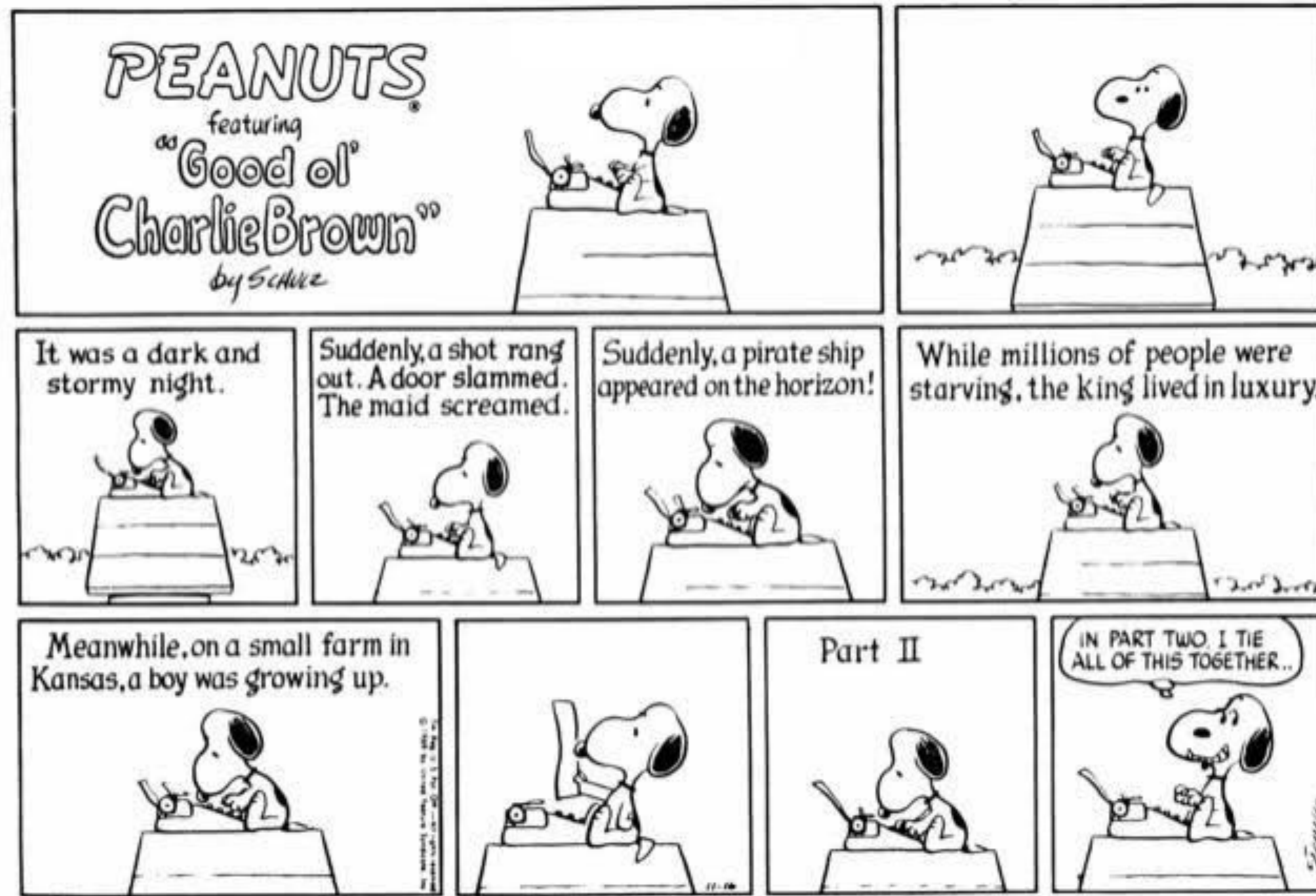
Writing Tools

The Story Pyramid and the Narrative Arc

A Quick Review:

Remember, when writing have FUN!

Don't take yourself or your story TOO seriously



What makes a Story?

WHO?

WHAT?

WHEN?

WHERE?

WHY?

What makes a Story?

WHO?

CHARACTER

WHAT?

PLOT

WHEN?

SETTING

WHERE?

MORE SETTING

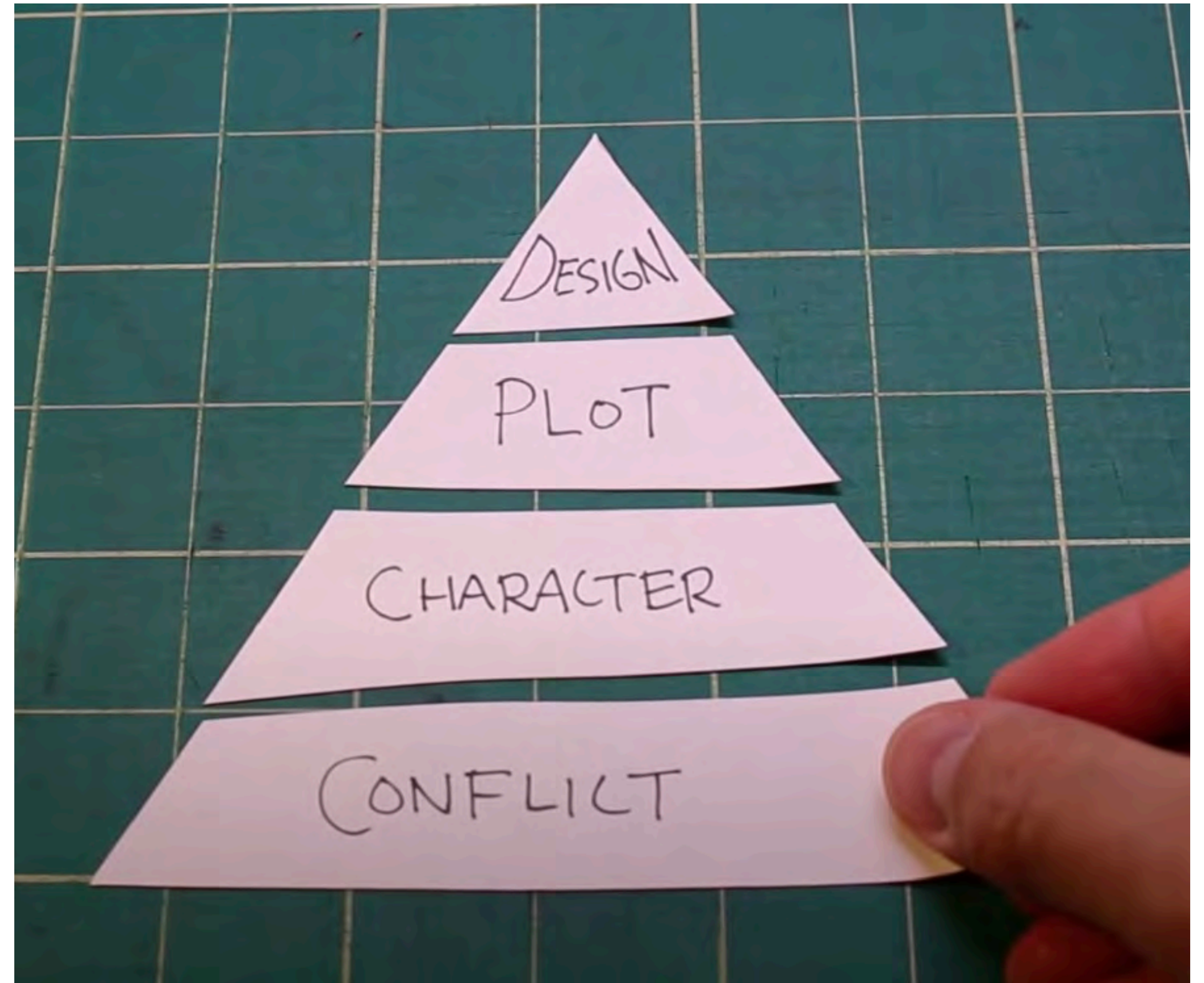
WHY?

CONFLICT

The Story Pyramid

Jake Parker (again):

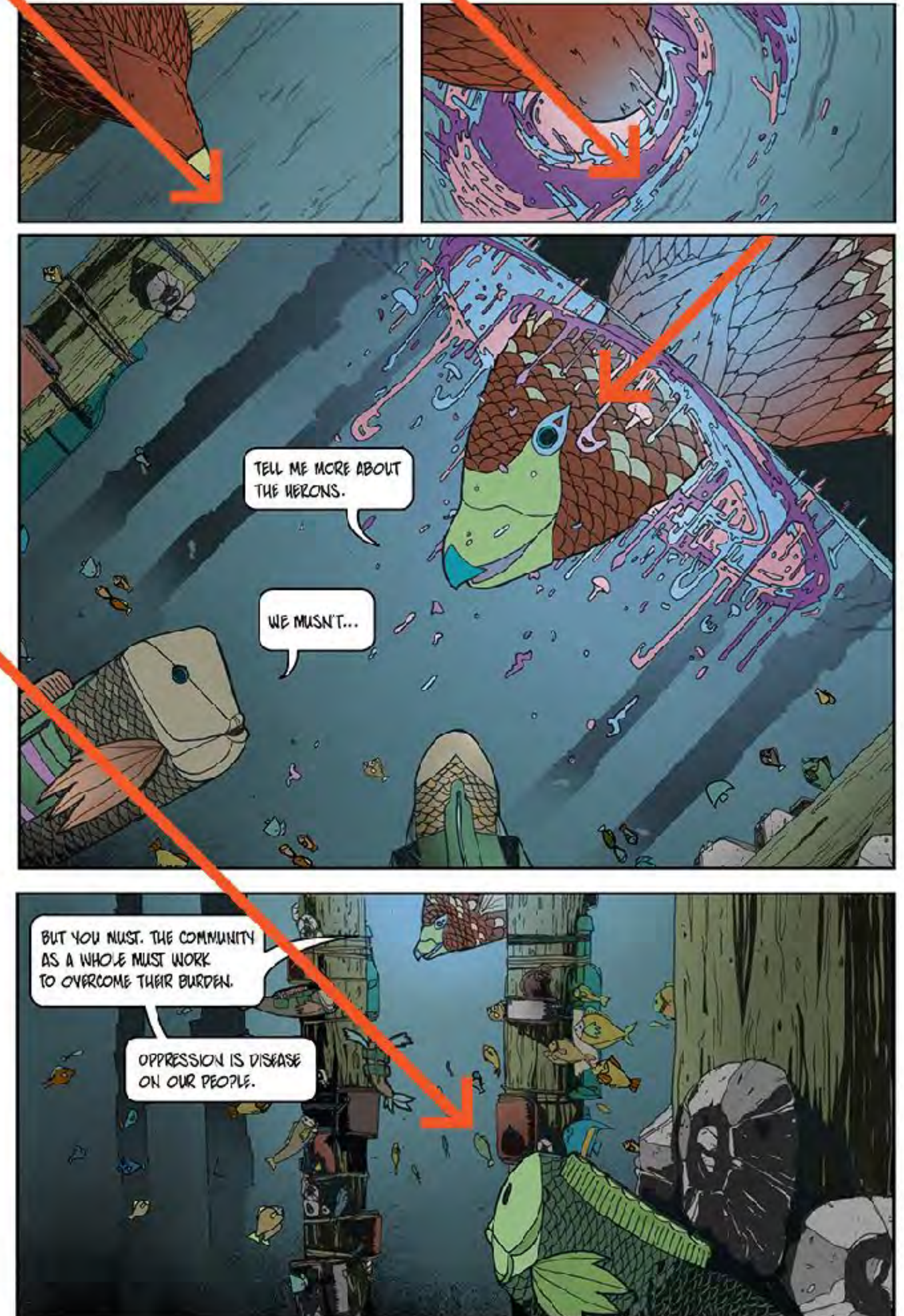
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=YogwcnbccJ4>



Design

Design is HOW we use the Visual Language of Comics to tell the Story.
The Story comes First.

- Most comics average 6.5 panels/page
- Stick between 4 & 7 and you should be good
- Use color to emphasize plot, action, and to move the reader's eye through the page
- Use dialogue to move the viewer's eye through the page



Plot

The Seven Beats of a Story

- Normal World
- Inciting Incident
- Break Into Act 2
- Midpoint
- Break Into Act 3
- Climax
- Resolution



Take a look at your story and see how many of these beats it has. If it's missing any can you add them to punch it up?

Conflict

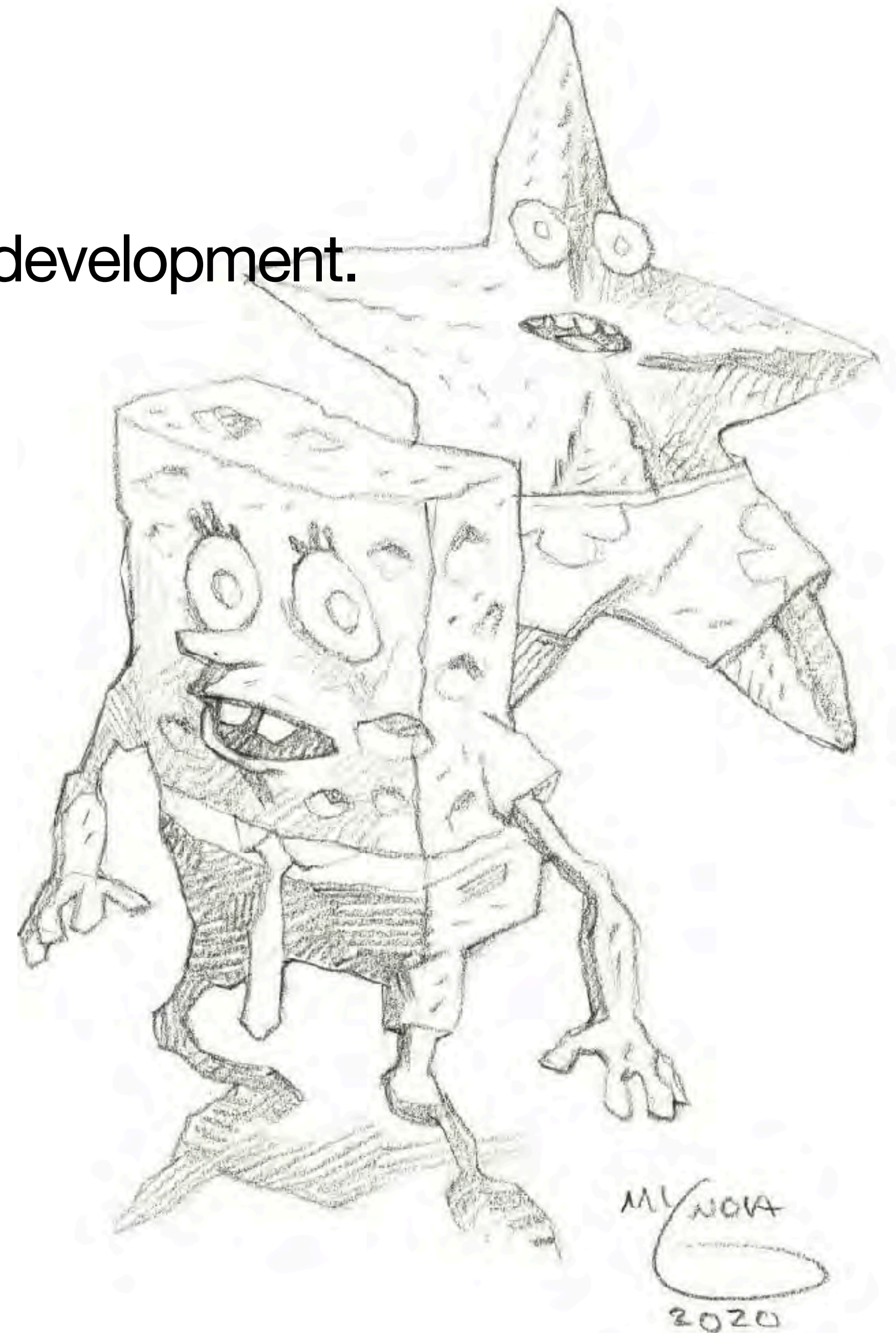
- Character is how you embody the core conflict in your story.
- There are different kinds of conflict.
- The conflict within a story generally comes in four basic types: Conflict with the self, Conflict with others, Conflict with the environment and Conflict with the supernatural.
- Thesis – What the character believes.
- Antithesis – something that negates the Thesis.
Veil is lifted – Matrix, etc.
- Synthesis – reconciles these with a new proposition



Character

Even in a short story- a character must experience development.

- Change in nature
- Inspire change in others
- External Want / Internal Need
 - the lie your hero believes
 - bring your hero towards the truth



How to begin your story...

Practical Advice

Narrative Arc

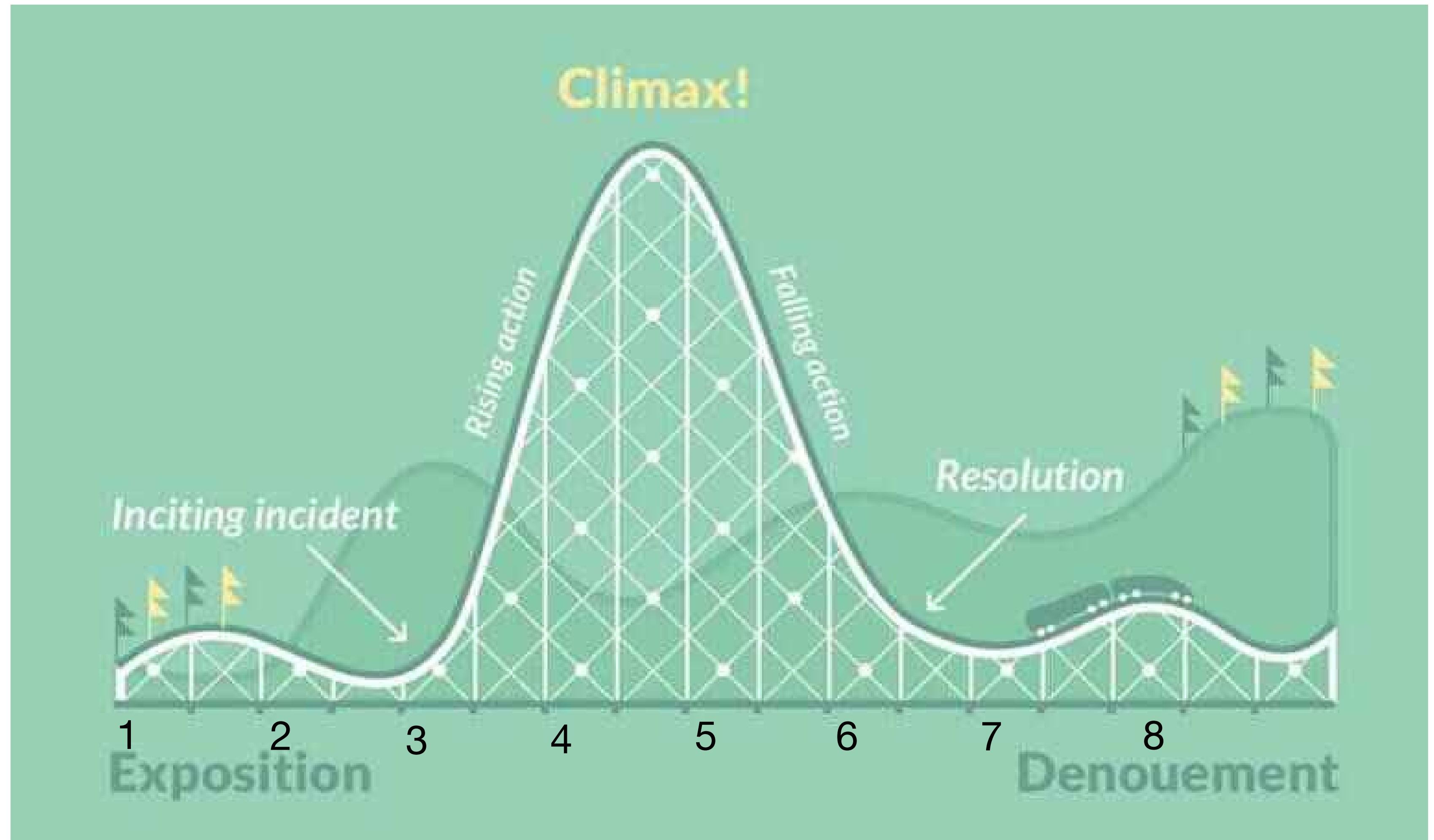
What is a narrative arc?

Narrative arc is a term that describes a story's full progression.

It visually evokes the idea that every story has a relatively calm beginning, a middle where tension, character conflict, and narrative momentum builds to a peak, and an end where the conflict is resolved.

TRY THIS:

Plot the timeline of events in your story and visualize its narrative arc.



MARK your Page Breaks on the Horizontal Axis on the bottom, so you know on what page each stage of the story will occur. Do this **BEFORE** you write your script.

Group Breakout

Think about your story and then talk about it with your classmates.

- **List out all your characters.** I suggest making a list just so you don't forget about anyone and you've got them all there in front of you at once. It can be hand written on paper or on a word document - it doesn't matter, it's up to you. Just having the list is a good idea.
- **Write down next to each character's name what drives them.** What are their motivations? Why are they a necessary part of the story at all? The more necessary they are to the story the more likely they will need to be fleshed out and seem like dynamic characters. **Do these characters have any secrets?** Write that down too - write down whatever the character is outwardly telling people. It may be a secret or it could just be something that doesn't come up in conversation. Either way, it's something your readers will see as the character becomes more rounded out.
- **Now actually think about these characters' personalities.** Don't go too wild filling out 100 question character sheets. This could take hours anyway with only a few characters to work on. Just go with the basics: **1) Character's name** (first name or nickname is fine at this point, it can still be changed) **2) A few general concepts about what kind of a person they are** (can be taken from the stuff you've already decided about them) **3) Personality traits** (pick 4 or 5 - roughly half positive, half negative) **4) Personality type Indicators** - give them a Zodiac sign and/or a Meyer-Briggs Type if you find this helpful and can do it fairly quickly. **5) Dreams and Aspirations** - this can be quick, but this is important. Not only does it tell a lot about the character, but it gives opportunity to engage in character arcs and subplots.
- **A deeper look into those Dreams and Aspirations.** The important thing here is that most characters will want more than one thing. Say the character wants to go into business. He'll want that top job, but beyond that he's still got a life, maybe he wants a wife and kids too - this is a very quick generalization, but you get the point. The other things that a character wants are going to create subplot. This is why it so easily takes shape as a love story, but really it could be anything.
- **Now character arcs:** these also have to do with the characters' dreams and aspirations. These come into play when the character's dreams are challenged and when conflicts arise. You don't have to know what these arcs will look like just yet if you're not really into planning out your whole story, but here are things to think about: what happens if the dream they had is made impossible? What happens when they fail drastically? What would happen if they actually got what they wanted? Character arcs are where personality meets conflict. The character will be changed by this conflict or come out with some realization about themselves or their situation. This is the character arc.

Group Breakout

More depth to your characters

- What is your premise and basic plot?
- Decide who the characters will be.
- Now, decide what drives each character.
- What is going to change these characters?
- Now list out the major events of the story with subplot in chronological order. This will be your timeline.
- Create a Narrative Arc from the events on that timeline. Consider where the page breaks will be along that arc.
- Once you've gotten the second list done, you've got a plot.
- Once you've got a narrative arc with page breaks, you're ready to write your script!

Writing a Comics Script

Is there a format?



In Short...YES! Comics are a unique medium and there are lots of ways to begin your writing approach, but eventually ALL comics must have a script. The script is your map which takes you on the narrative arc from the beginning to the end of your story.

- The best way to understand how to write a comics script is to read a comics script.
- Comics writer Kieron Gillen made one of his Superman Scripts open for artist use.
- Please analyze the materials in the Dropbox folder: SCRIPT TO PANEL
- Begin with his email to artists, then read the script and corresponding pages.

I'LL END THIS TUTORIAL WITH A LIST OF CASE STUDIES.

I ALSO RECOMMEND STUDYING MOVIES AND SHOWS THAT YOU LIKE. IT WILL HELP TO LEARN FRAMING, VALUE, AMONG OTHER THINGS!

Catarina Azevedo
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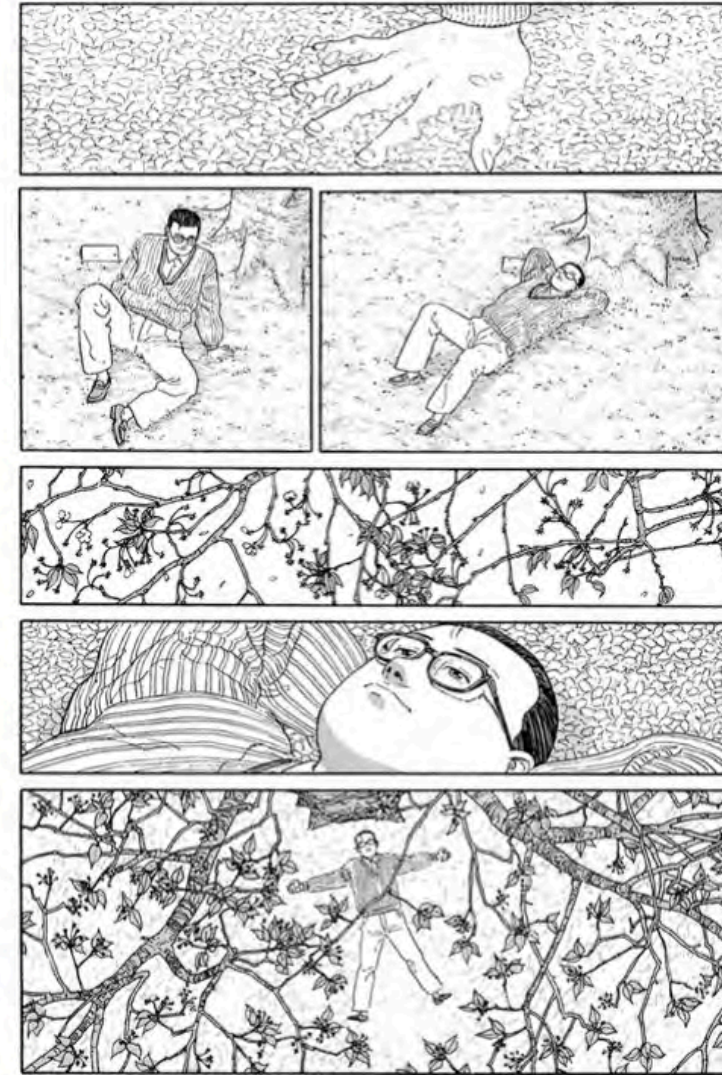


436

BLANKETS,
 CRAIG THOMPSON



L'AGE D'OR
 CYRIL PEDROSA



THE WALKING MAN,
 JIRO TANIGUCHI



436

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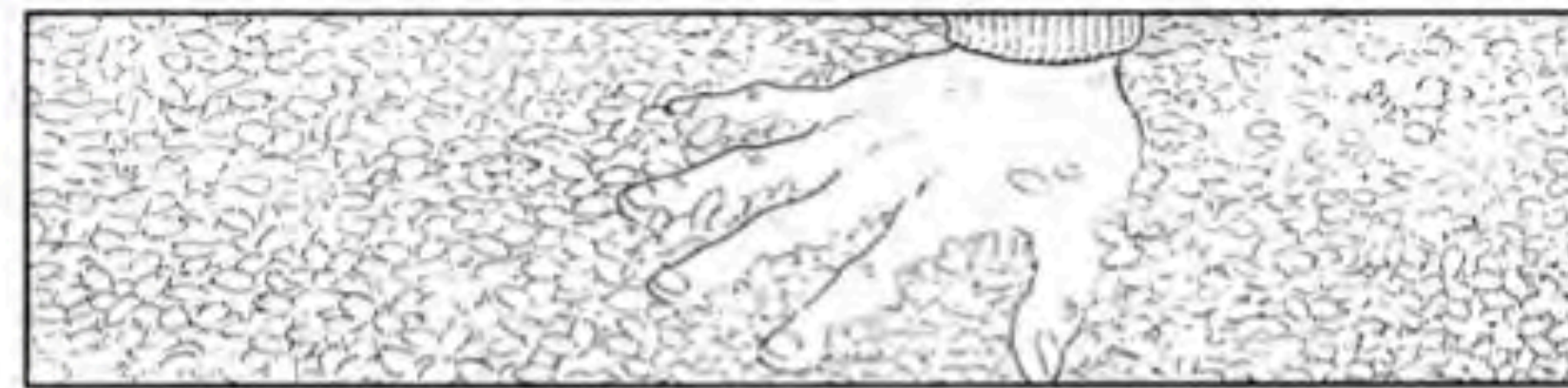
GIANT DAYS,
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