**Principles of Five-Act Structure and Change Paradigm**

**Summary**

**John Yorke, *Into the Woods: A Five-Act Journey into Story* (NY: The Overlook Press, 2015)**

Story shape is a mirror of opposites.

**Act 1 [Protagonist has a problem and leaves their familiar world.]—call to action**

No knowledge [of problem]

Hero introduced in their ordinary world

Growing Knowledge [limited knowledge of problem]

Awakening [knowledge]

They receive the call to adventure/inciting incident that serves as catalyst for the next act and the whole story

**Act 2 [They go on a journey]—pursue short-term solution to their problem based on character flaws**

Doubt [refusal to acknowledge problem]

Reluctant or refuse call

Overcoming Reluctance [beginning to acknowledge problem]

Encouraged by mentor

Acceptance [acknowledging problem]

Cross threshold and enter special world—second inciting incident where protag realizes they cannot remain the same; have to choose between new and old self

**Act 3 [They find what they’re looking for, and they take it back]**

Experimenting with Knowledge [of problem]

The encounter tests, allies, and enemies

MIDPOINT-KEY KNOWLEDGE—big change [breakthrough]—protag’s need overcomes the want for the first time.

Approach inmost cave, crossing **a second threshold** where they endure the supreme ordeal, but don’t know how to handle it correctly. Should ramp up jeopardy and raise the stakes. Protag discovers truth about themselves. The character learns what they are capable of. They embrace their new self, and they can never go back.

Experimenting post-knowledge [with knowledge of problem]

Take possession of their reward

**Act 4 [The take it back, the consequences of taking it pursue them]**

Doubt [consequences of knowledge]

Pursued on the road back to ordinary world

Growing Reluctance [growing anxiety/fear]

Regression [Full knowledge—worst point]

Undergoes a spiritual death-crisis point—they have to embrace change or reject it—ultimate question: will you revert and die or change and live?

**Act 5 [They overcome the consequences and solve their problem]—shows consequences of accepting the call**

Reawakening [final choice]—Protag enters with one concrete objective to defeat the antagonist, overcome their demon, win their prize, get the girl—antagonist will be the embodiment of the protag’s flaws.

**Cross third threshold** experience resurrection and transformed

Re-acceptance [final battle—climax]

Total Mastery [Master of knowledge—resolution]

Return with elixir, boon, or treasure to benefit the ordinary world or cure the flaw

**Last act**

**Reawakening**: Faced with the worst point, the protag wavers, unsure how to act until there is a new call to action. An opportunity presents itself, inviting them to rededicate themselves to change

**Re-Acceptance**: They make their choice, accept the call, and commit themselves to the course of action that they must pursue relentlessly to its logical conclusion, which in turn leads to…

**Total Mastery**: One final choice—the most dangerous and most profound task they will need to achieve to overcome their flaw.

**Stories are built from acts, scenes and beats**

All these units have all the parts of narrative structure

Set-up—Inciting Incident

Confrontation ending in Crisis Point

Climax and Resolution

**Act 1 and Act 5 are mirror images of each other Act 2 and Act 4 mirror each other and both halves of act 3 mirror each other. Can use opposite images in the mirror birth/death, joy/sadness, acceptance/refusal, etc.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Act 1 (problem, call to action)** | | | **Act 2 (journey** | | | **Act 3 (discovery)** | | | **Act 4 (consequences)** | | | **Act 5 (reawakening)** | | |
| Part 1 Set up-  Inciting incident= explosion of opposition | Part 2 Crisis point | Part 3  Turning point. Subversion of expectation. **Inciting Incident** | Part 1 Set up-  Inciting incident= explosion of opposition | Part 2 Crisis Point | Part 3  Turning point. Subversion of expectation | **Part 1** Set up-  Inciting incident= explosion of opposition | Part 2 Crisis Point | **Part 3**  Turning point. Subversion of expectation | Part 1 Set up-  Inciting incident= explosion of opposition | Part 2 Crisis Point | Part 3  Turning point. Subversion of expectation **Crisis Point** | Part 1 Set up-  Inciting incident= explosion of opposition | Part 2 Crisis Point | Part 3  Turning point. Subversion of expectation |