

Exploring the Art of Plotting

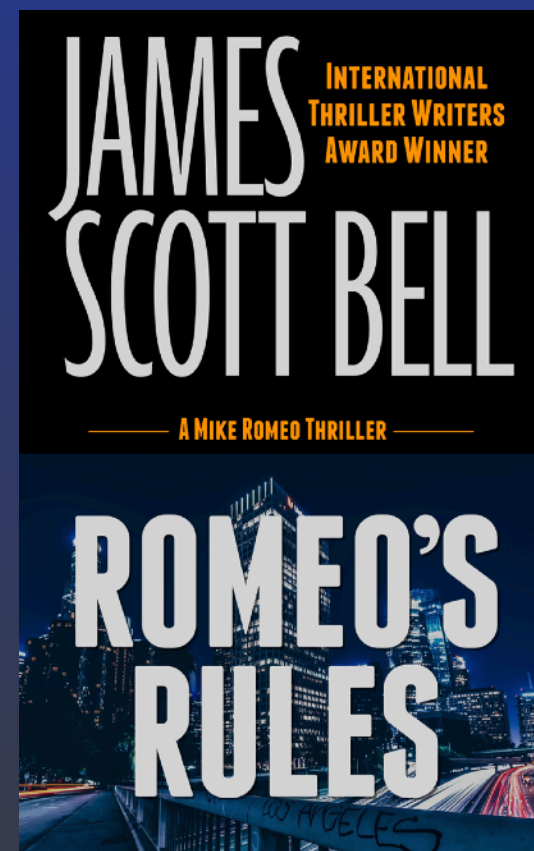
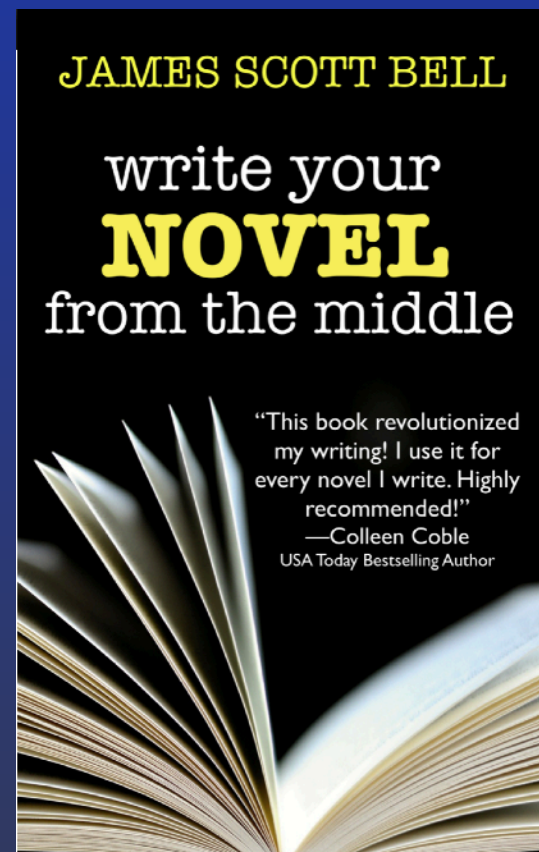
with Carrie Stuart Parks

Plotter or Pantser?

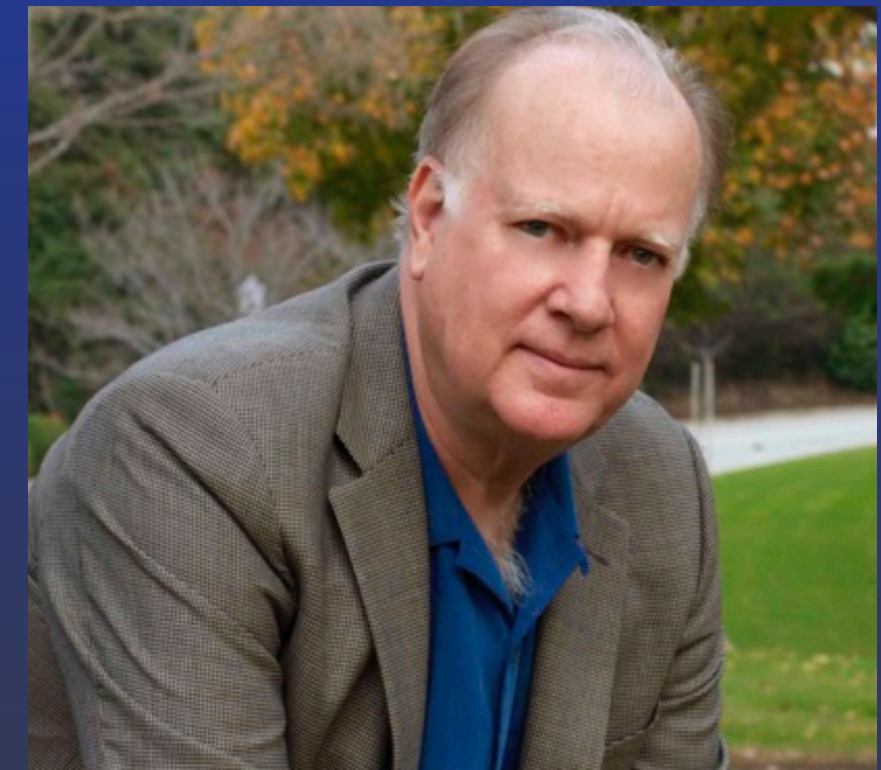
- ◆ Plotter works out the story in advance.
- ◆ Pantser writes and works out the story as it progresses.

Story VS Plot

“A story is a series of events recorded in their chronological order.”



-James Scott Bell



Story VS Plot

“A plot is a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance.”

-James Scott Bell

“Plot is about story events.

“Structure is about where to place those events so as to create the greatest effect upon the reader.”

-James Scott Bell

◆ Your novel is more than just “this happened, then this happened...”

◆ Imbibe your novel with purpose.

Questions Answered

- ◆ What does your protagonist want?
 - ◆ (Outward journey)
- ◆ Why does she want it?
 - ◆ (Inward journey)
- ◆ Who/what will try and stop her?
- ◆ What are the stakes?

Example



- Ordinary World
- Inciting Incident
- Rising Action or Progressive Complications
- Darkest Moment
- Climax
- Resolution

Character and Character's Ordinary World



Critical Note

- The backstory, notes, life, details do not necessarily appear early in your book.
- Recommendation:
- <https://hiveword.com/knockout>





Start brainstorming!



Inciting Incident

Definition:

An unexpected event in a story that upsets the character's status quo.

This begins the story's movement, either in a positive way or negative, that culminates in the climax.



**“Something must
happen
at the very beginning of
the story—
an event that throws
the lead character’s life
out of balance.”**

-The Story Grid by Shawn Coyne

Inciting Incident

Change of Plans

- * The hero's world is normal and ordinary; the inciting incident makes the hero's world abnormal and extraordinary.
- * May be called a doorway, end of Act I, Plot Point, call to adventure, origin of conflict.

Inciting Incident

Can occur in one of two ways:

- * Active choice, a cause.
- * Random event, a coincidence.

Critical Note

Five criteria:

- Early. Sometimes in the first scene.
- Interruption. Interruption in the main character's normal life.
- Out of the protagonist's control.
- Life-changing. Higher-than-normal stakes.
- Urgent. They necessitate an urgent response.



◆ What does your protagonist want?

◆ (Outward journey)

◆ Why does she want it?

◆ (Inward journey)

◆ Who/what will try and stop her?

◆ What are the stakes?

Your inciting incident will help define these.

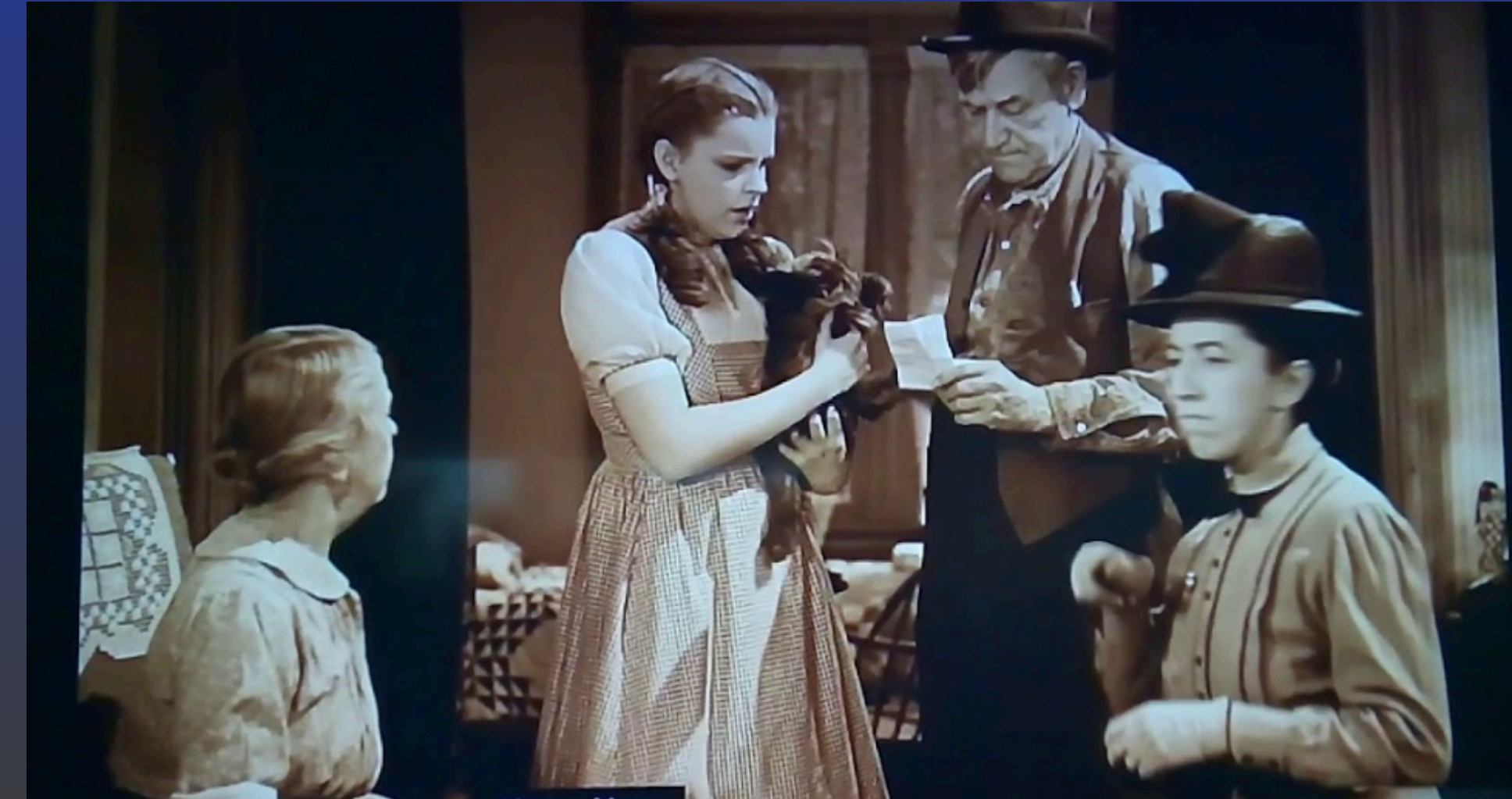
Inciting incident

Who/what will try and stop her?



What does your protagonist want? Why does she want it?

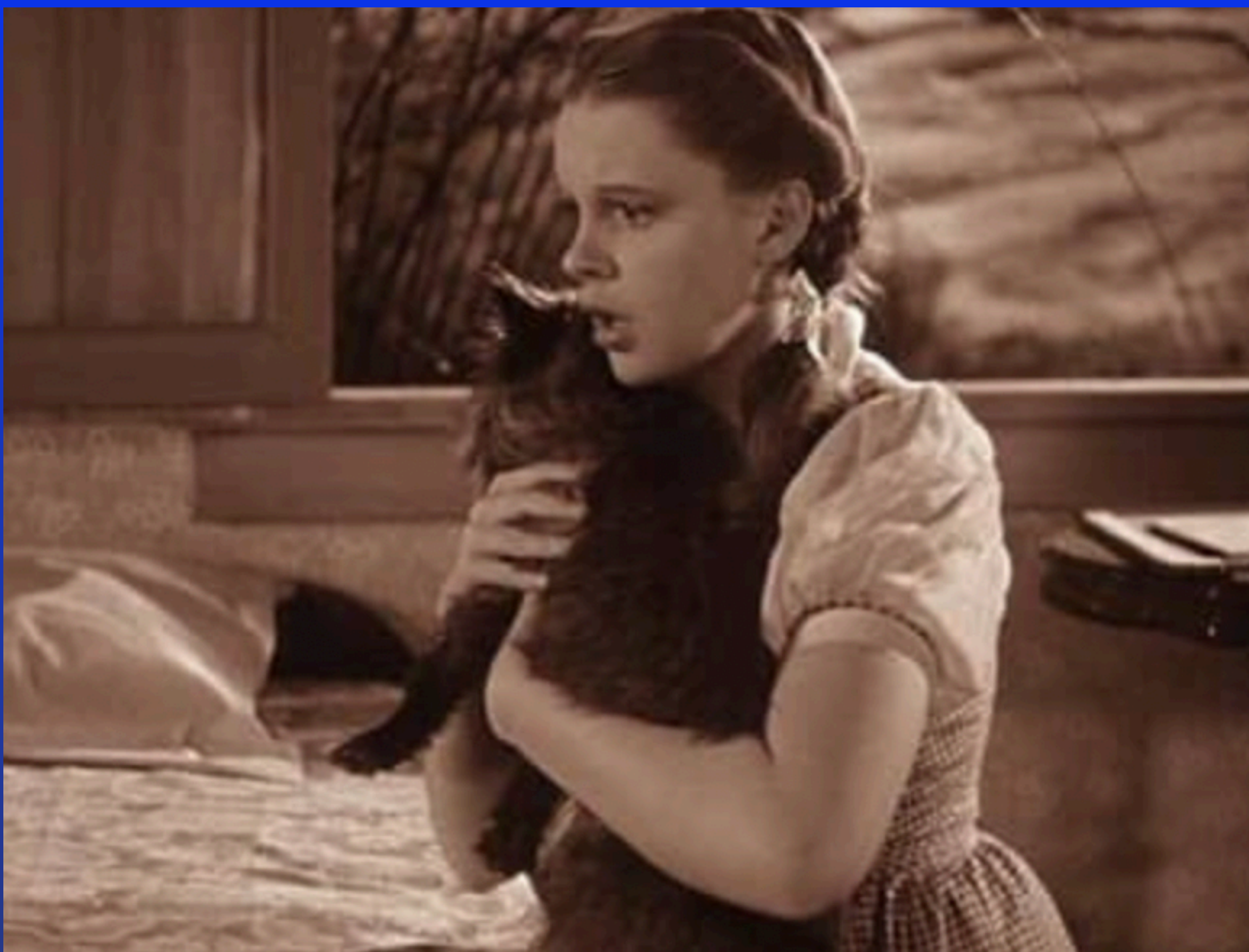
What are the stakes?



Start Brainstorming!

Suggestions

- Interruption in the main character's normal life.
- Out of the protagonist's control.
- Life-changing. Higher-than-normal stakes.
- They necessitate an urgent response.
- Will give you protagonist's inner and outer journey.
- Will give you the stakes.
- May give you an antagonist.



**Dorothy decides to run
away.**

Inciting Incident

-Refusal of the Call

Refusal of the Call

We adore heroes
and want to be like them.
But more than anything,
we want them to be like us.



Can't pass test on first try
Blow it, screw up, or
chicken out.
Readers know that being
a hero is hard.

Critical Note

Your character can't be cool.

Cool isn't interesting.

Conflict is.

And conflict requires weakness.



Start Brainstorming!

Suggestions

- How will they originally try to “fix” things?
- What weakness will this show?

Rising Action

Definition:

Rising action moves the plot toward the climax through a series of progressively more complicated events and decisions by the main character or characters, leading up to a final decision of great significance.



**Raise the stakes.
Begin building up to
climax.**





Reader should know
what's at stake.
Clearly understand the
conflict.





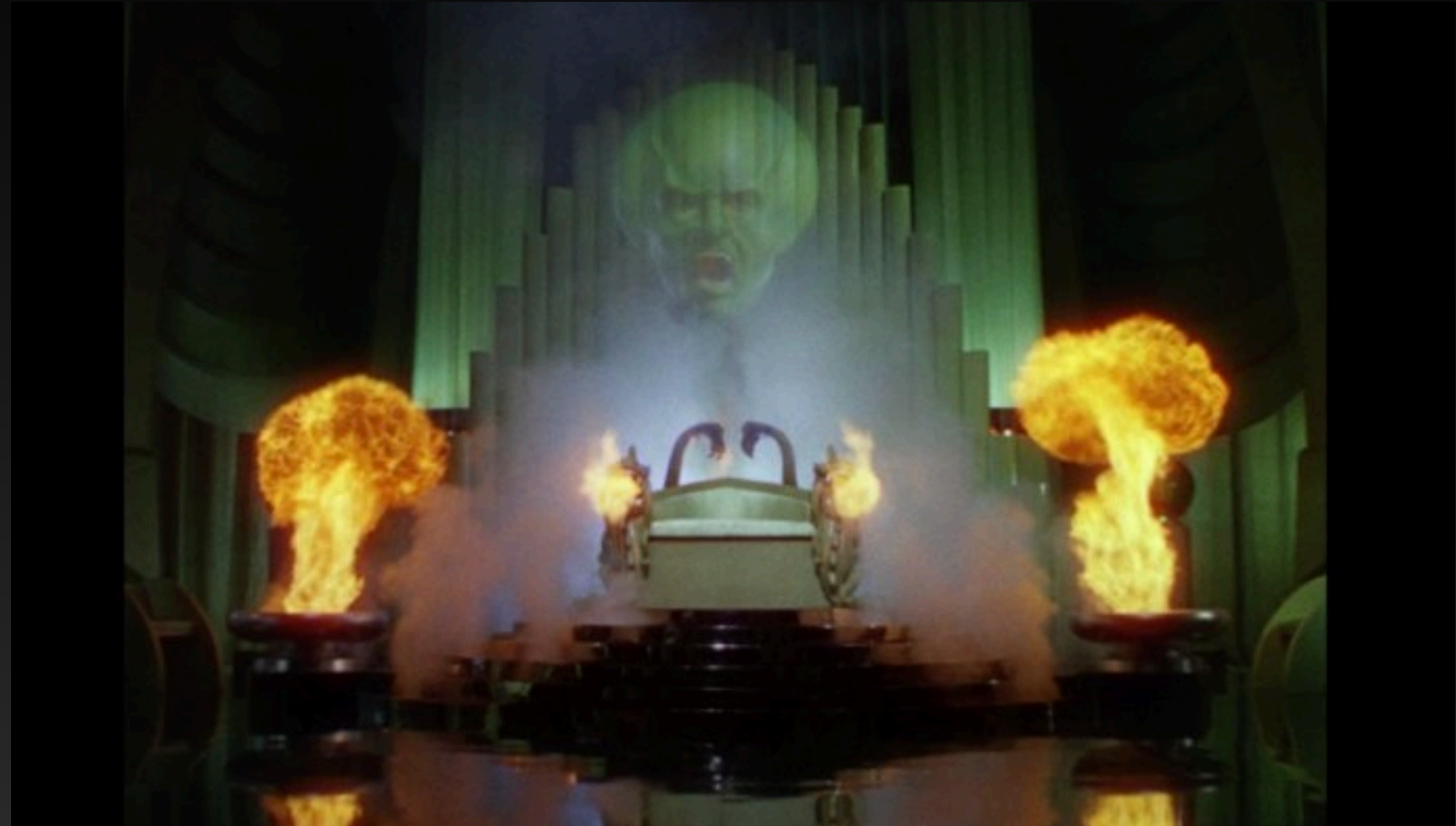
Rising tension
Character has to dig
deeper



Learn new things
Make new allies
Moving toward the
darkest moment

Critical Note

- Things get more and more complicated for the protagonist.
- It's about choices.
- What can go wrong?
- Can you make it worse?
- Your protagonist can't be TSTL.



Start Brainstorming!

Suggestions

- Have the protagonist make a decision and act on it. Everything goes from bad to worse.
- Have them make a logical decision based on this.
- This only makes it worse...

Darkest Moment



Point of no return / darkest
moment / all is lost



Critical Note

Everything our protagonist has relied on—connections, money, power, family, bright ideas, super powers, good looks, charm, etc.—FAIL them.



Start Brainstorming!

Suggestions

- Think about having your protagonist have to make a decision that puts two values at odds: money vs love.

Final Battle/Climax



The moment where the core value of a story is put to the final test, the biggest challenge.

Critical Note

Rather short-usually one scene.

Protagonist must confront (can't be "saved" by others.)

Clear up sub-plots before climax.



Start Brainstorming!

Suggestions

- Final battle, final confrontation, final face off.

Resolution



New normal,
incorporating the
changes and experiences
of your characters.

Critical Note

A satisfying conclusion.

A transformation of a character or a situation.

May bookend with opening.



Start Brainstorming!

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Questions?

Genre

You make a promise to your reader
that you will provide the
expectations of your genre.

Genre

Genre: broad catalogue of all stories.

Genre

How we inform the reader what to expect.

1. How long the story will last.
2. How far to suspend our disbelief.
3. Style of the story.
4. Structure of the story.
5. General content of the story.

-The Story Grid by Shawn Coyne

Fiction Author

- * Christian fiction
- * Romance
- * Mystery
- * Adventure
- * Speculative
- * Historical

Fiction Author

Knowing your genre
will tell you the crucial conventions
and obligatory scenes you must include.

-The Story Grid by Shawn Coyne

Critical Convention

Specific requirements
in terms of the method
in moving the plot forward.

Critical Convention

These requirements must
be present or the reader
will be confused and unsettled.

Critical Convention

Murder Mystery

- * Dead body
- * Investigator (professional or amateur)
- * False clues
- * Standard characters (side kick/prime suspect)

Obligatory Scenes

**Must-have elements to pay off
the raised expectations
of those conventions.**

Obligatory Scenes

Murder Mystery

- * Discovery of the dead body scene.
- * Confrontation between investigator and accused.
- * Ending that results in justice, injustice, or irony.

Fiction Author

You will not only be writing that novel,
You'll be crafting it.

Introduction to Mind Mapping

◆ Free association.

◆ Word painting.

◆ Link analysis.

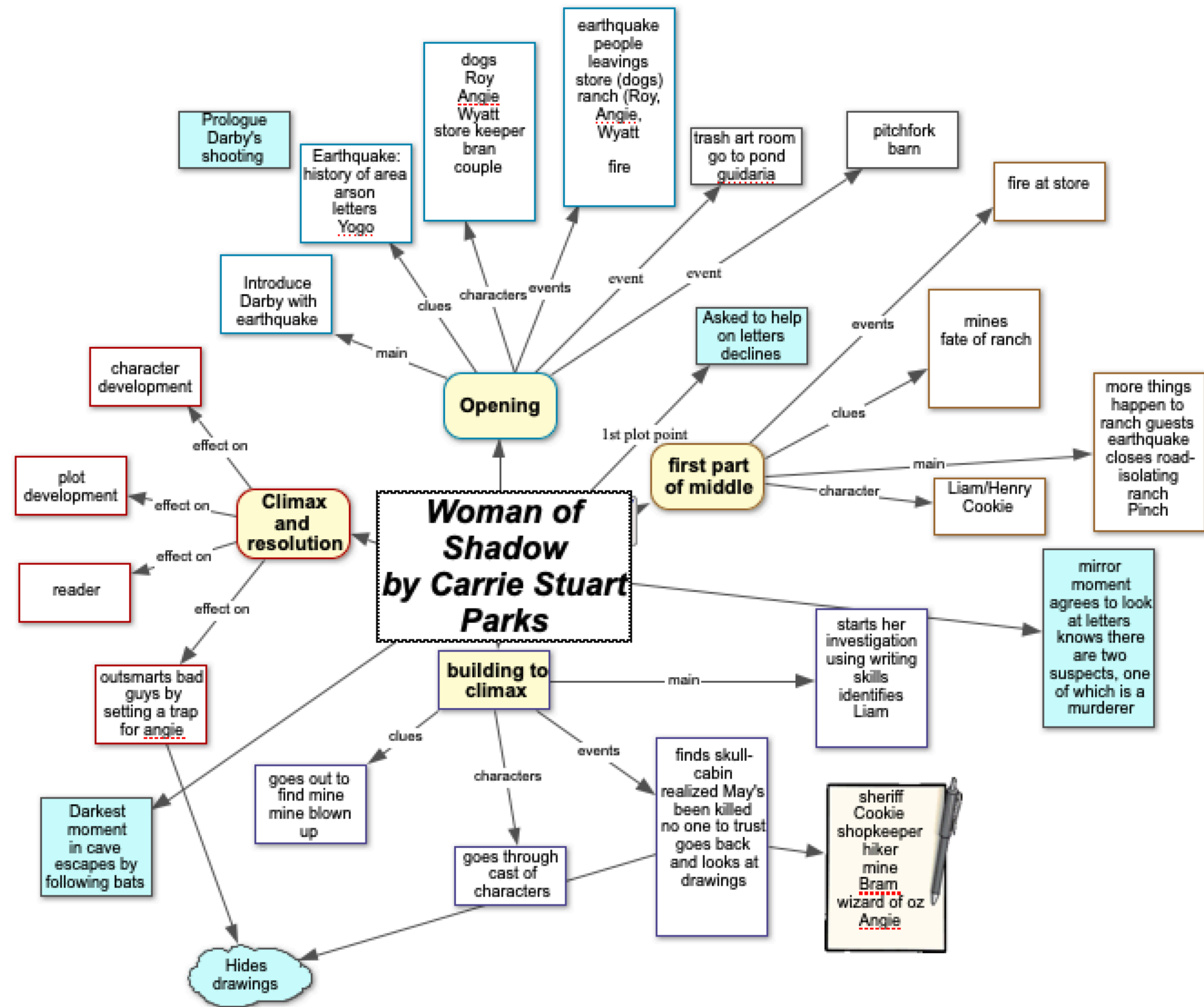
Introduction to Mind Mapping

- ◆ Highly effective way of getting ideas out of your mind.
- ◆ Logical.
- ◆ Natural organizational structure.

Introduction to Mind Mapping

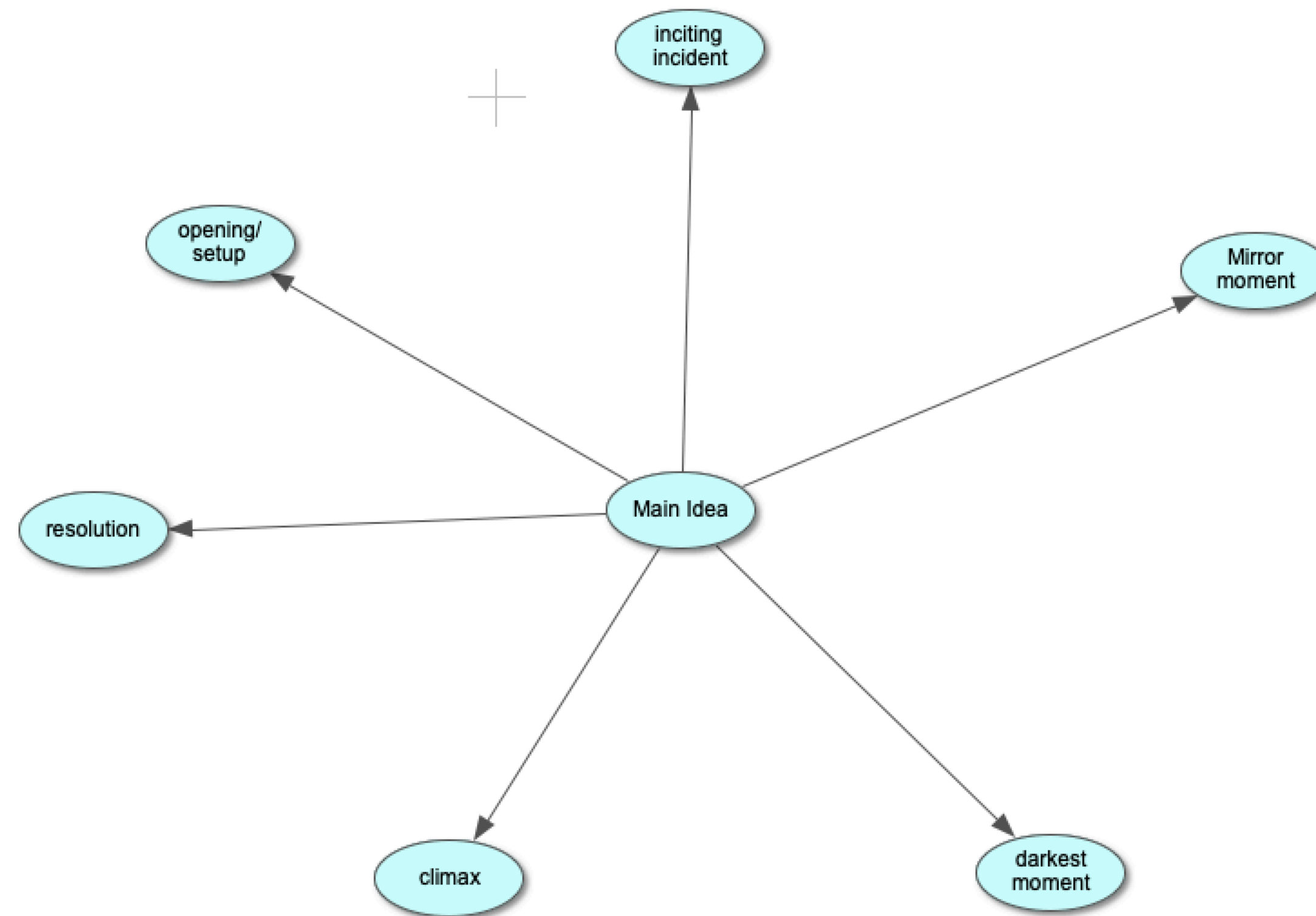
- ❖ Can be added in any order.
- ❖ Can be rearranged as needed.
- ❖ Rough idea of the main points of your novel.

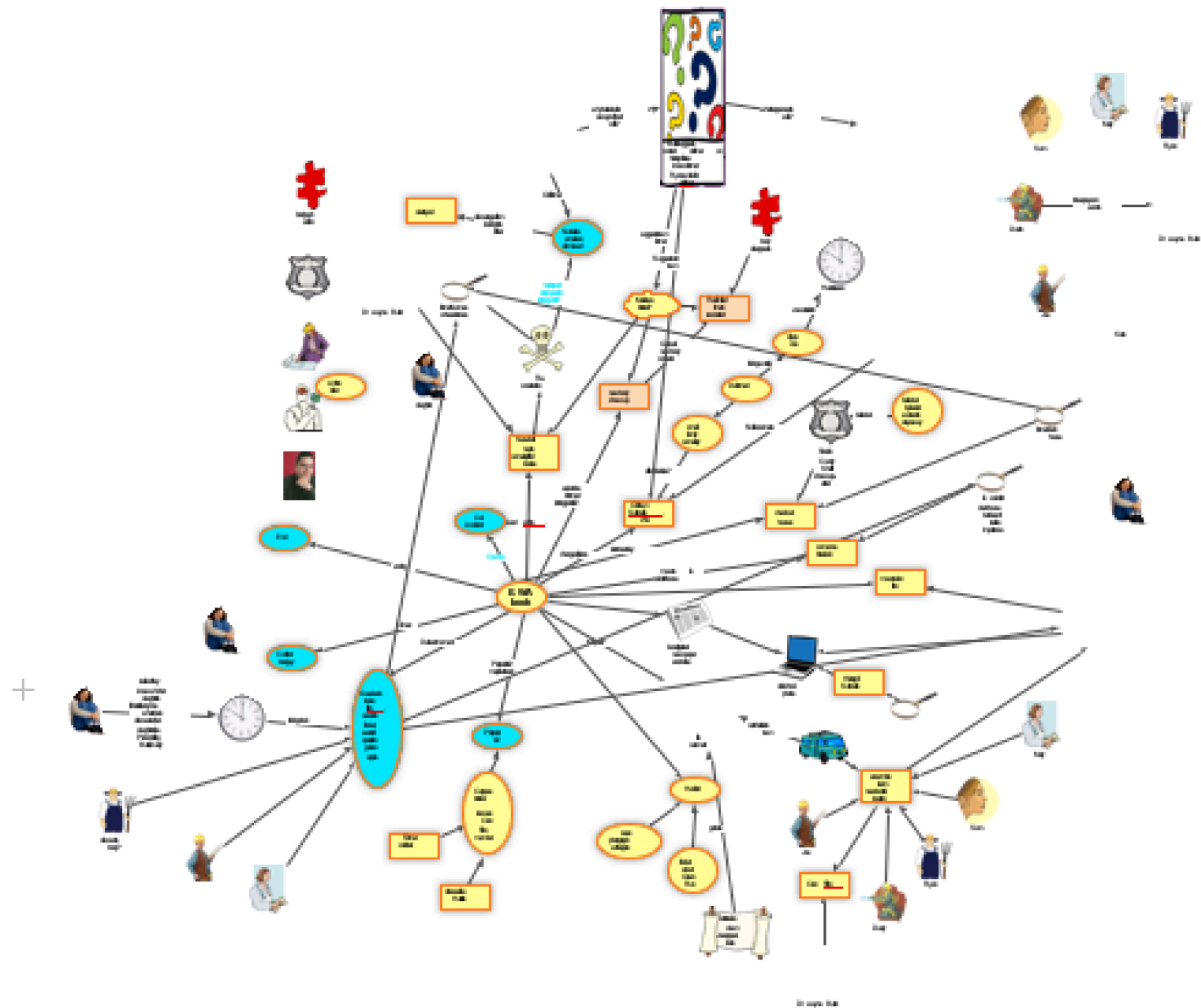
Mind Mapping



- ◆ Order of events.
- ◆ Major scenes.
- ◆ When to reveal information.
- ◆ When to introduce character.
- ◆ What to reveal about character.
- ◆ Clues.

Overview-road map







Find images that represent
scenes or characters

Inspiration

SimpleMind Lite
KnowledgeBase Builder
Scapple
miMind
Foocusplan
iThoughtsX
MindMaple Pro
Trout
Oovium
Rama
Conceptorium

Synopsis

To interest agents or publisher
in your book

- * Characters.
- * Evidence of character progression.
- * Stakes.
- * Major turning points.
- * Ending.