

## *Pepping up Your Major Scenes*

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*Major scenes portray the most powerful actions and the main characters at critical points. Critical points are turning points caused by complications. Novels will have major scenes and minor scenes. In the major scenes, you have your main characters in pursuit of their goals. Remember that your Protagonist (lead character- Hero or Heroine) is pursuing the novel's main plot's goal and your Antagonist is pursuing a goal that hinders your lead character. Hence the complications.*

### **Purpose of Scenes**

- ✓ Move the novel's story line forward
- ✓ Introduce or develop characters
- ✓ Introduce or worsen a problem
- ✓ Set up later scenes
- ✓ Solve a problem
- ✓ Create an atmosphere

### **Content of Scenes**

- ✓ Orients reader to place and time in story line
- ✓ Shows external action (character hits someone, a character jogging, etc.)
- ✓ Shows internal action (an emotional reaction, tension between characters etc.)
- ✓ Displays characters' **responses** through dialogue and actions.
- ✓ Contains characters' obstacles and reaction to obstacles.
- ✓ Has one point of view. Make sure you focus on one character narrating each scene and not jumping between multiple characters' thoughts.

### **The Opening Scene**

- ✓ Has a great first line.
- ✓ Shows high excitement or intensity to make opening scene an attention grabber!

Great *Opening Scenes* tend to fall into three basic groups:

- a. "Midaction" EXAMPLE: Car swirling out of control, Character running to a critical meeting, The door opens to a party, The elevator opens to two people arguing.

- b. "Calm before the Storm" scene starts on calm note, but ends devastatingly.  
EXAMPLE: Scene opens with bright sunny day, characters looking out of the car window at puffy clouds and fat lazy cows while thinking of their vacation destination. The car goes around a blind curve and crashes into an oncoming car.
- c. "Opening Statement to the Jury" is the writer or character making a statement about the conflict and how it sets the tone of the story that is about to be told. EXAMPLE: He was a wretched excuse for a husband. Wasted precious oxygen that could have been breathed by someone else. That's why I didn't regret him dying, but now I cry every day because of what I discovered about him four months ago. That is a miserable story that goes like this...

### **1st Major Encounter Scene**

Major scenes help tell why your characters are involved in the plot and what value they add to the story. Consider the character's G-M-C and the novel's setting for sketching the encounters. When you rewrite, add more scenes. Remember that each scene should contain an element of drama that helps to propel the novel. The drama doesn't necessarily need to be physical. It can be a character's thoughts, fears, etc.

**EXAMPLE:** If this was the plot about a man and his dog lost at sea, the first encounter could be about him walking his dog before getting in the car to go to the marina. He was supposed to take his son to baseball practice but had asked his wife to do it so he could take the boat out instead. Scene could also show how smart and useful the dog is.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Major Encounter Scene (If romance, then the First Kiss Scene of Hero/Heroine)**

What is the next big action or encounter that might help or hinder the character's goals or complicate matters, yet move the story along.

**EXAMPLE:** For our man and dog example, the 2<sup>nd</sup> encounter could be the man on his sailboat checking the recently repaired engine. Sees a problem but doesn't think it will interfere with the sailing trip he's eager to go on.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Major Encounter Scene (If romance, then First Lovemaking Scene of Hero/Heroine)**

Build on the last two encounters with another help or hinder scene.

**EXAMPLE:** For the man and dog example, the 3<sup>rd</sup> encounter could be engine failure and the resulting fire onboard. He manages to put out the fire.

### **Dark Moment – (Major Climax Scenes)**

In your sketch, outline the major issue(s) or problem(s) you want to highlight throughout the novel that will lead to a climax, which will be the cause of the downward spiral of everyone's life.

The Dark Moment contains the climax scenes detailing the results of the major issues or problems you scatter throughout the beginning and middle. The Dark Moment is the seemingly irreconcilable incident or moment where all seems hopelessly lost.

**EXAMPLE:** In the man and dog example the Dark Moment starts with the engine not working and the man calling the Coast Guard for help. They inform him that a violent storm is coming. The storm arrives before help does. The boat sinks, leaving the man and dog in a small life raft with no food and lost at sea.

### **Major "Resolution" Scene**

This is the logical and inevitable result of your climactic scenes. Just when the reader thinks all is forever lost, it isn't. The resolution scenes are the solving of all the problems, the answering of all the questions, the telling of the "why."

- ✓ Be brief. Don't add more climactic events that lessen the Dark Moment.
- ✓ Resolve all doubts or give characters insight to recognize issue can't be fixed.
- ✓ Don't preach. Let your readers draw the right conclusions based on what they read.

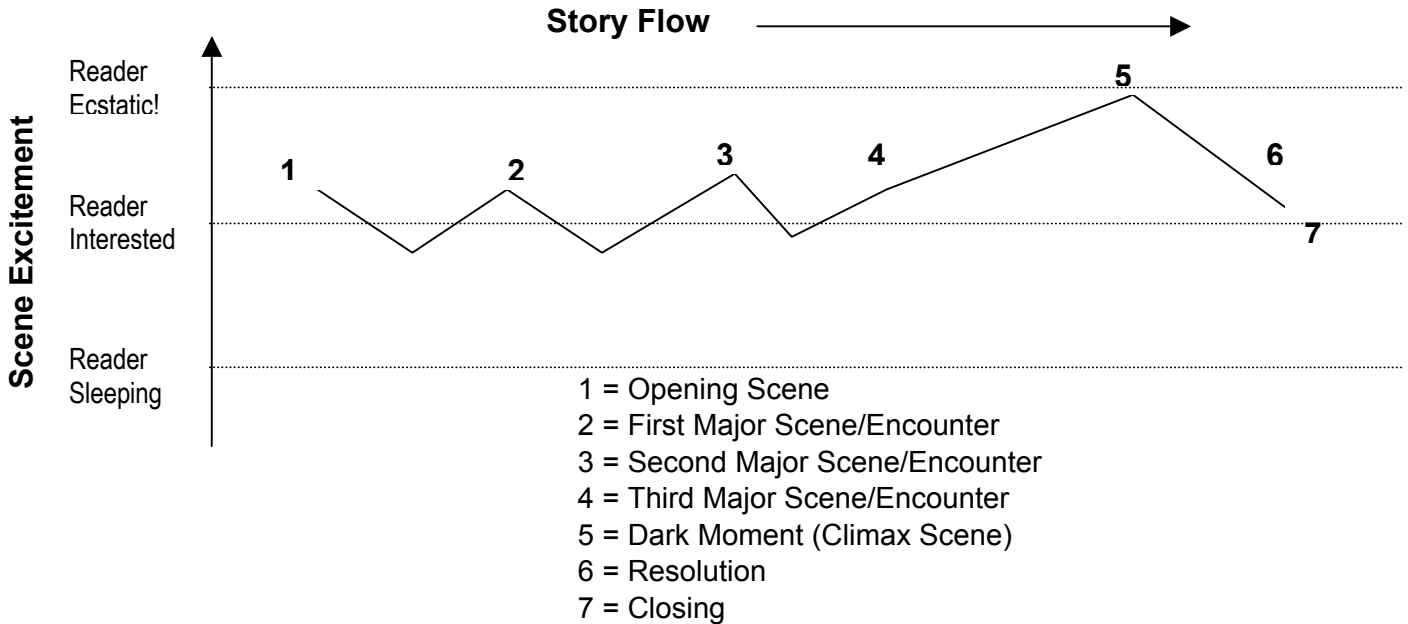
**EXAMPLE:** For our example, the dog is great at diving for fish, the only food they have to sustain them. The man uses a beer can found in the sea to catch rainwater to drink. A week later they are found and reunited with family.

### **Closing Scene**

The closing is your destination. When you first sit down to write, you don't need to know how the ending is going to come about. But by jotting down ideas on how you would like the ending to be resolved, gives you a general direction in which to go. This adds structure to your story and prevents you from wandering aimlessly down wrong paths or staring needlessly at a blank page or screen.

**EXAMPLE:** With our man and dog at sea example, the story could end with Fluffy the dog having puppies to reinforce the concept built in the story that "life does go on." Possibly have the man's son playing with the puppies in an open field far from water. Man realizes boating should never be enjoyed more than his precious family. "The End" for now.

## The Flow of Major Scenes



Remember, novels will have major and minor scenes. You want your major scenes to show powerful actions or be intense with emotions. In the major scenes, your characters are at critical points in the story because they are faced with important decisions, complications, struggles or changes.

### Note:

- A. Although only a few major scenes/encounters are shown above, your story can have much more than this. The example above is to give you an idea of how the intensity of the major scenes increases over the minor scenes and throughout the story.
- B. Notice how the story develops with greater intensity as it climaxes.
- C. From the Opening to the Climax, the story is longer (Beginning to Middle).
- D. From the Climax to the end of the story, it shortens. (Middle to End).

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***"Love the desire to write and write the story you love..."  
by Dorothy Elizabeth Love***