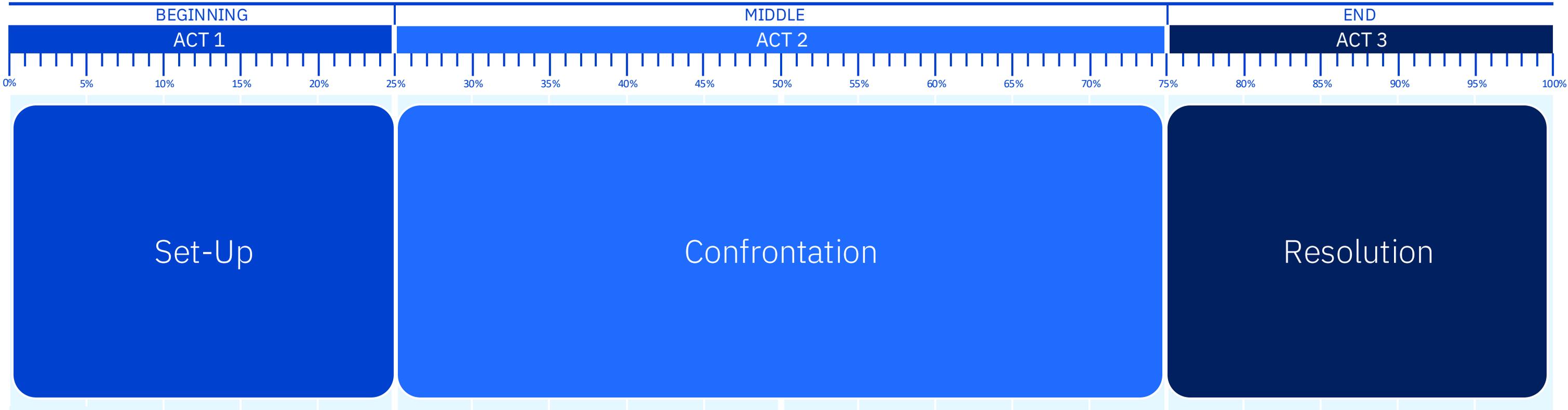


Aristotle's Classic 3-Act Structure: *The Poetics*



Context:
Aristotle invented the 3-Act structure in 335BC in *The Poetics*. Most story structures are a variation on *The Poetics* – the outline of dramatic movement – which suggests that every well-constructed story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, each linked by clear cause and effect so the plot unfolds with necessity and probability. He argues that the plot should build toward a reversal and recognition that lead to a powerful emotional release – the catharsis that gives the story its impact.

Business Application:
 Great screenwriters such as David Mamet, Shonda Rhimes & Aaron Sorkin are evangelistic about *The Poetics*. I've heard them encourage students to become *obsessed* with it. I feel the same way about business leaders. If you want to persuade & influence a person (or an audience), you need a compelling story and to do that, you need to understand story structure – and *The Poetics* is the OG.

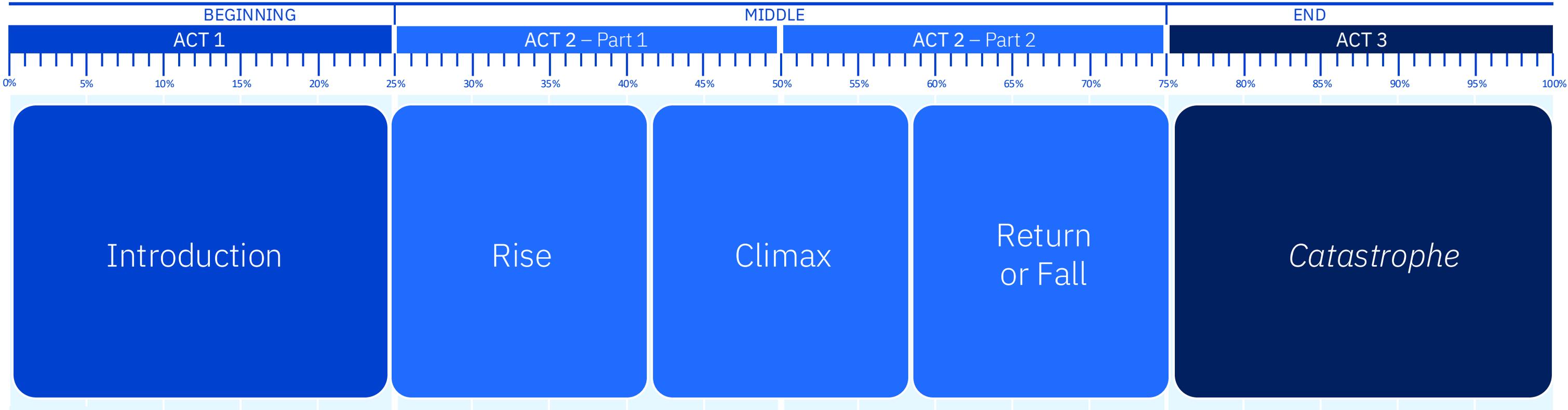
***The Poetics* according to David Mamet**
 “It’s the hero’s journey from A to B. The hero has to be transformed from a beggar to a king. From a king to a beggar. It has to happen in the least possible number of steps. It has to happen in one place over 48 hours. And at the end we have to undergo shock and awe, fear and pity. Pity because we see the poor schmoe – “*My god, he’s just like me*” – and fear, because you might say “*Oh, I didn’t see that coming. How is it possible that I, just like the hero who represents me onstage, didn’t see that coming?*” That what’s we have to undergo. What the hero has to undergo is two things, called **recognition** and **reversal** of the situation.
 Eg. In one moment, Bam! – he realises he’s been sleeping with his mom. He killed his dad. He puts his eyes out. He goes from being the most powerful man in the world to being a blind beggar. So he undergoes a **reversal** of the situation, and he undergoes **recognition**. He has to say, “*Oh my god, what have I done?*” And that’s the punchline of the tragedy. That’s basically Poetics in 30 seconds.”

David Mamet won a Pulitzer prize for writing Glengarry Glen Ross & Speed-the-Plow.

Read *The Poetics* [Free PDF]

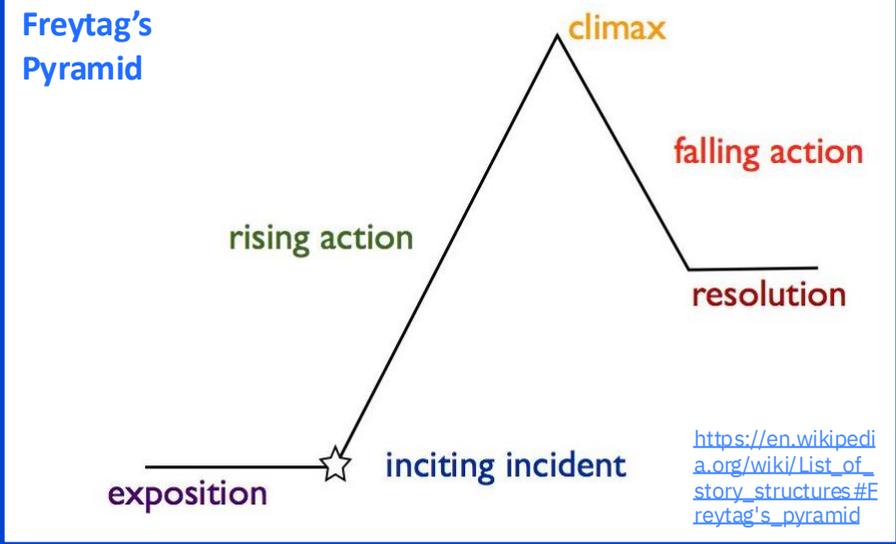
<https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/media/1812/The%252520Poetics%252520of%252520Aristotle%252520C%252520by%252520Aristotle.pdf>

Gustav Freytag's Pyramid



Context:
Gustav Freytag's Pyramid is a narrative structure that breaks the story arc of a drama into five distinct sections. Freytag was a 19th century novelist and playwright who wanted to collate centuries of storytelling thinking into a simple structure. By codifying the work of Greek dramatists and playwrights such as Shakespeare, he distilled their thinking into a five-act narrative structure.

Business Application:
By dividing a story into a dramatic arc consisting of five parts (*introduction, rise, climax, return or fall, and "catastrophe"*) Freitag championed the importance of emotions in a story, without always needing to have a "conflict". Telling a story with back-to-back contrasting emotions is a useful framework business leaders use to establish credibility when telling their own personal leadership stories.



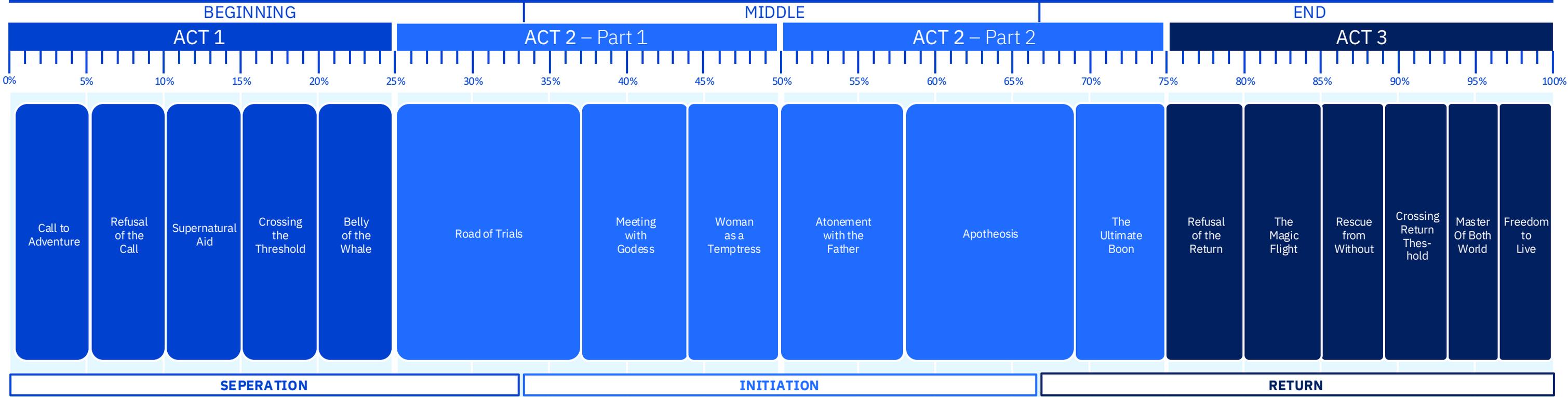
Learn More:

FREYTAG'S PYRAMID

Analyzed Shakespearean and ancient Greek drama; he developed a model based on his examination of the structure of those plays.

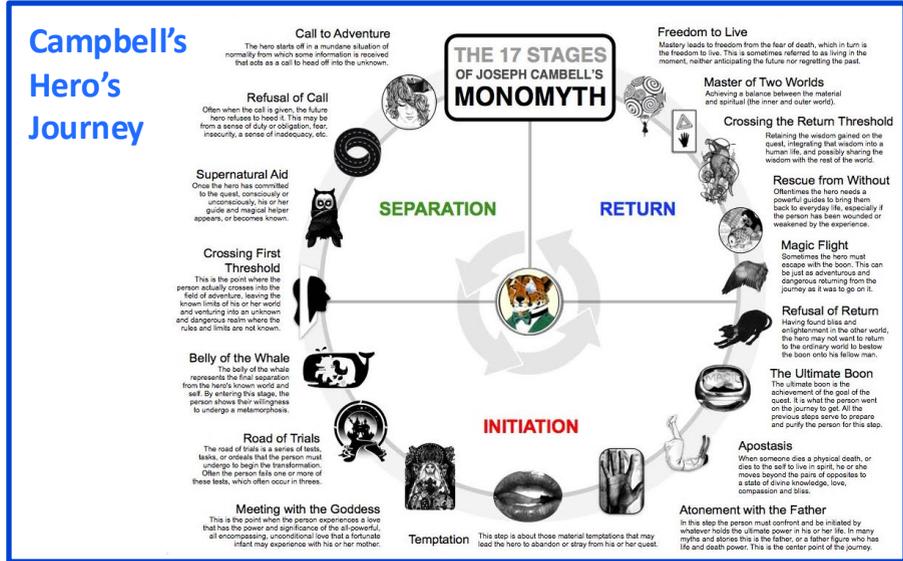
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_Ema28Zg7r8

Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey



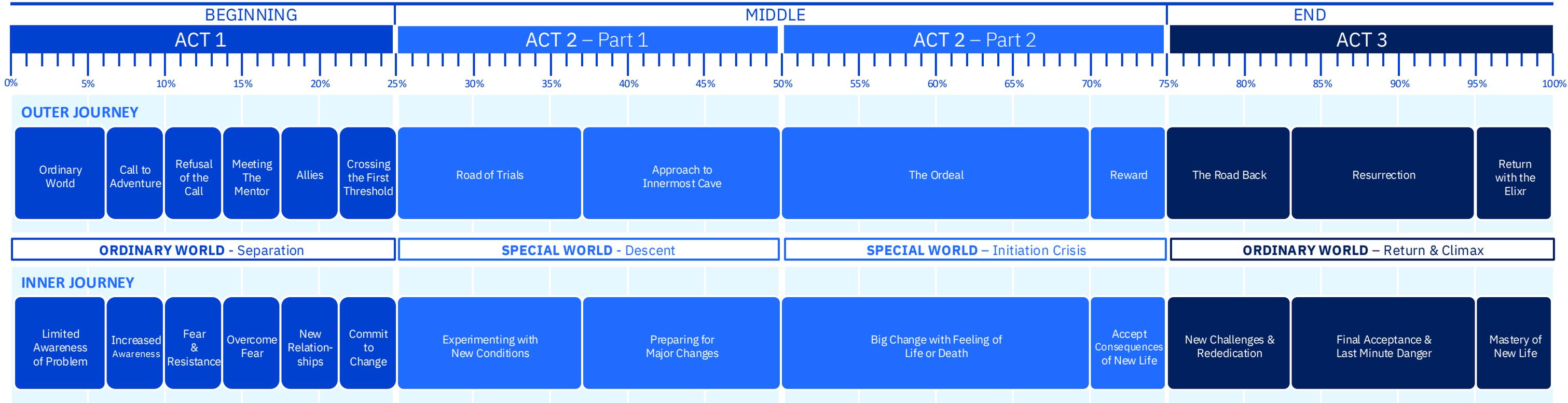
Context:
Joseph Campbell first coined the term “*Hero’s Journey*” in 1949, in his comparative mythology book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In this book, Campbell outlined the hero’s journey in three basic stages and seventeen detailed steps. Campbell (influenced by Carl Jung’s analytical psychology) is often rejected by storytelling purists due to its theoretical structure.

Business Application:
 While **Vogler** takes a sentimental and idealistic approach to storytelling, **Campbell** is much more analytical, having identified recurring patterns in mythical stories. This “*monomythic*” approach to storytelling (where the hero is transformed but *always* returns home) could make it suitable for a business story about an organisation which needs to return to its core values, having lost its way.



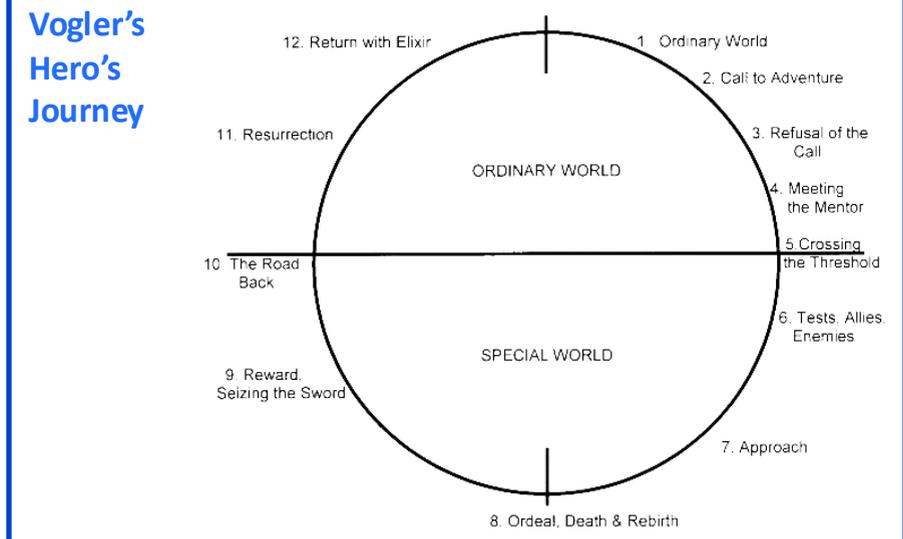
Learn More:

Chris Vogler's Hero's Journey



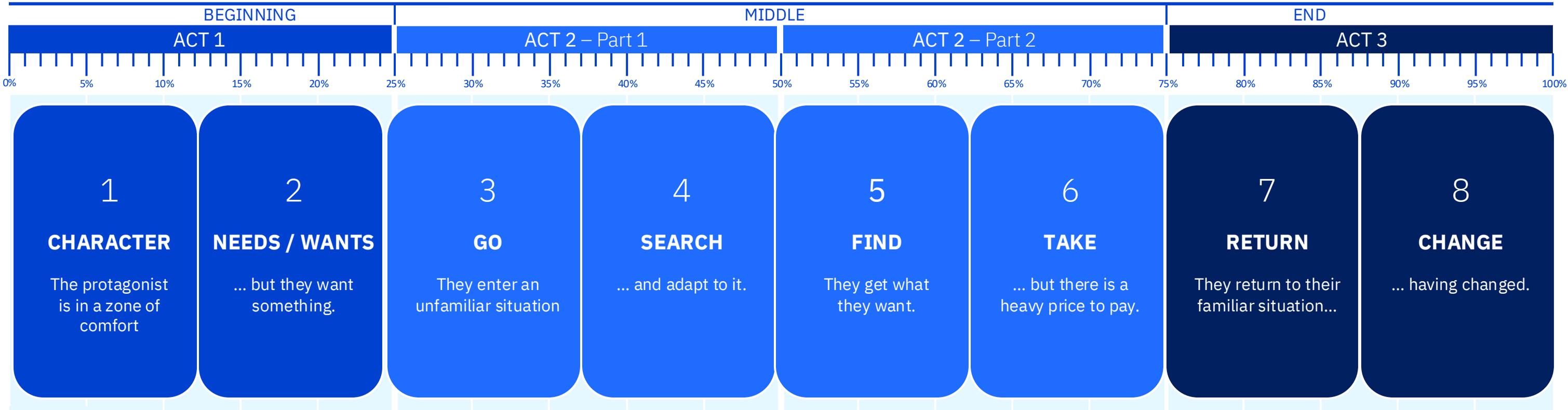
Context:
Christopher Vogler was a Hollywood development executive and screenwriter working for Disney. He took his passion for **Joseph Campbell's** story monolith and developed it into a twelve-stage framework, which he explained in a seven-page company memo for the company's development department to help incoming screenwriters. He famously re-wrote *The Lion King* as an adaptation of *Hamlet*.

Business Application:
 While Vogler's framework was originally designed to be used by screenwriters and book writers, it is a useful framework for business storytelling, especially when communicating complex enterprise-wide transformation. The **Inner Journey** could be the internal story (relevant for employees) while the **Outer Journey** could tell the external story (relevant for clients / customers).



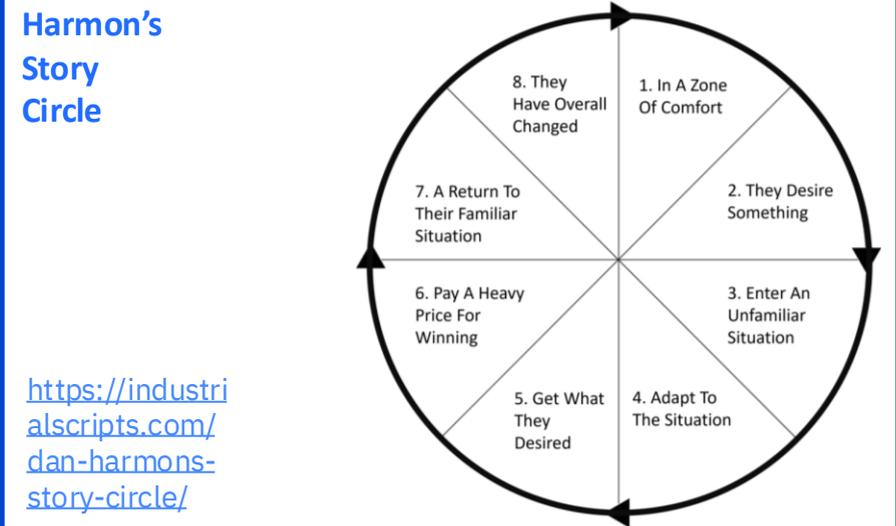
Learn More:

Dan Harmon's Story Circle



Context:
[Daniel James Harmon](#) is an American screenwriter and producer best known as the creator and producer of the NBC sitcom *Community* and *Rick & Morty*. Many of the directors he worked with at Channel 101 claimed that they were unable to write plots for TV. This prompted him to simplify **Joseph Campbell's** structure into a circular eight-step process that would reliably produce coherent stories.

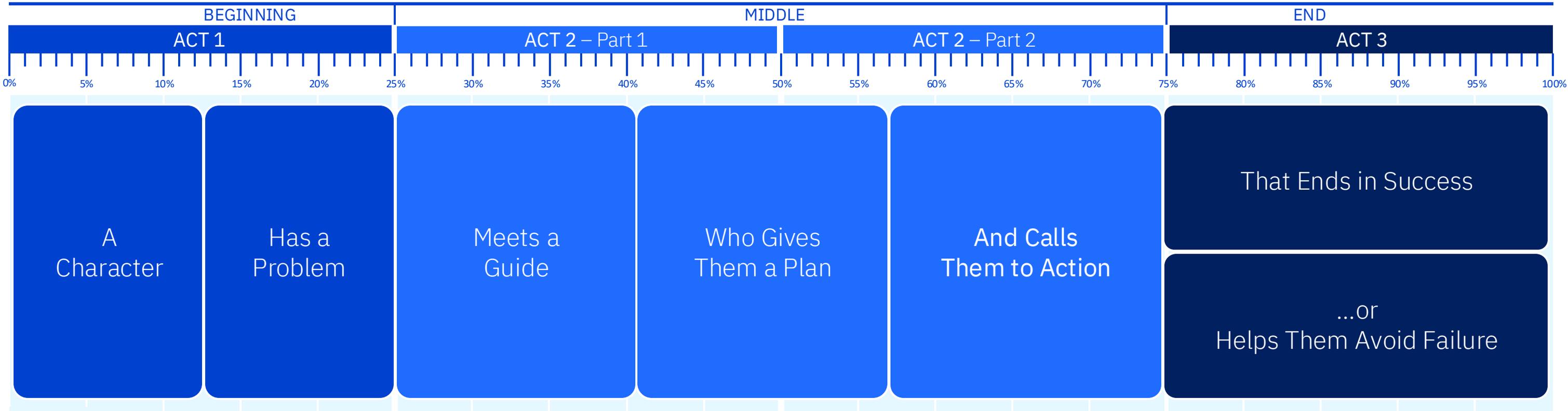
Business Application:
Vogler & Campbell's frameworks are suited to movies with a beginning, middle and end. But **Harmon** works in TV where he doesn't want the audience to watch one show and leave the theatre on a high, he wants them to keep coming back for years. That's why this simplified circular structure can be suitable for regular client communications, where you are building a long-term relationships.



Learn More:

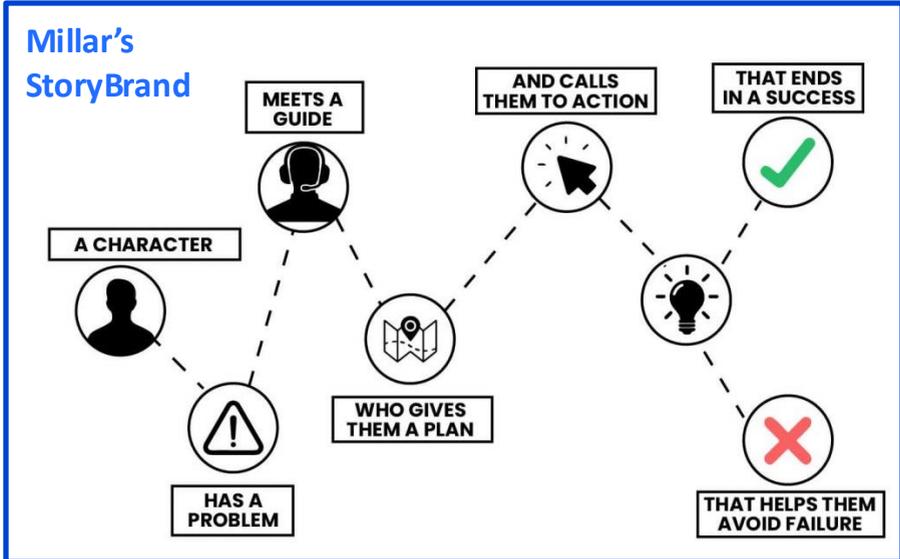
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XGUVkOmPTA

Donald Miller's StoryBrand



Context:
 The StoryBrand framework is a messaging tool created by marketer **Donald Miller** for his book "Building a StoryBrand". He designed the 7-stage framework to help business leaders to clarify their message while making it more "customer-centric". The framework is built upon the premise that that customers don't always buy the best products; they buy the products that communicate the clearest.

Business Application:
 StoryBrand treats the customer as the hero ("a character") and focuses the story around the question "What problem are you solving?". This encourages business professionals to you communicate how they'll solve that problem by structuring their response in the form of a simple but effective customer journey. It's as easy framework to learn and is ideal for client success stories and short presentations.



Learn More:

#1 Wall Street Journal Bestseller

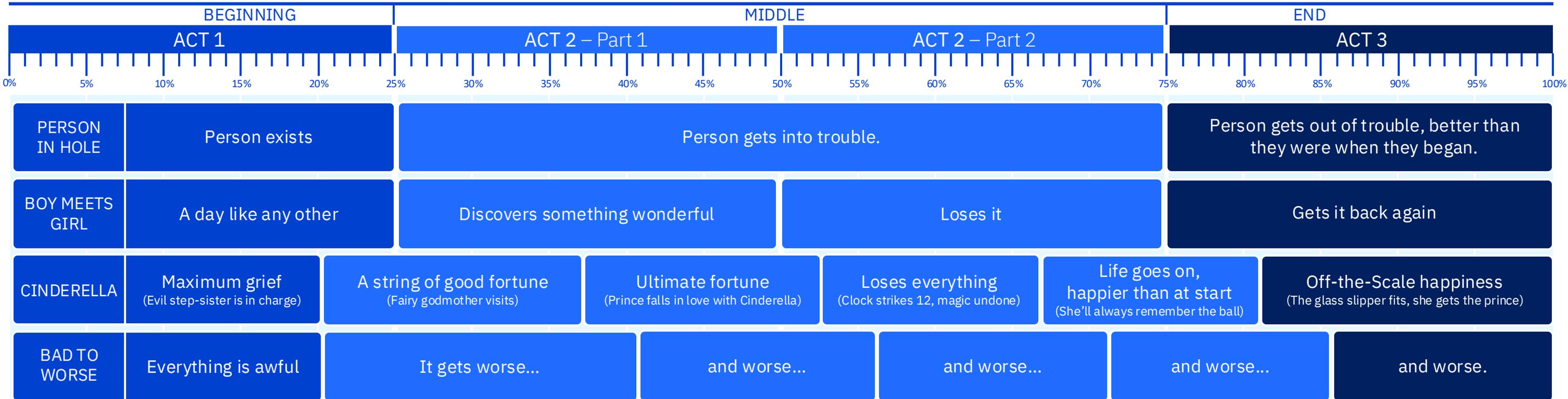
DONALD MILLER
New York Times Bestselling Author

BUILDING A STORY BRAND

Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen

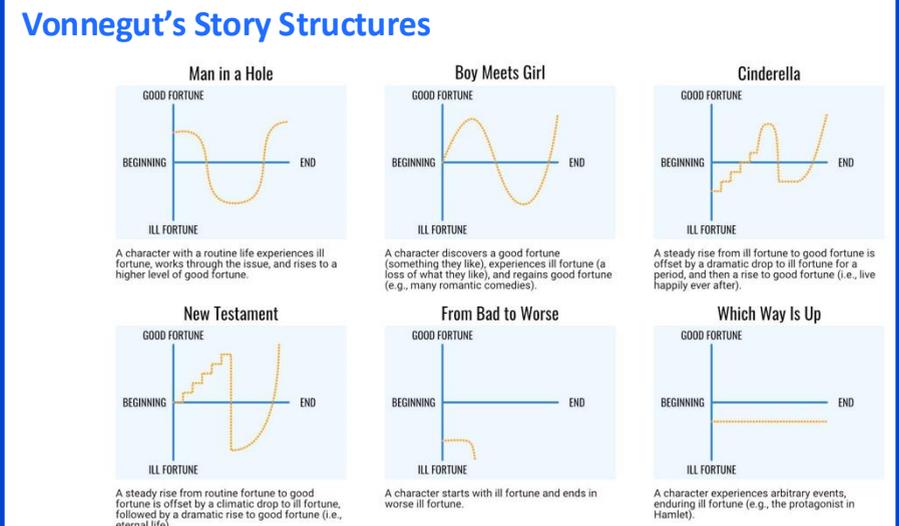
Use the 7 Elements of Great Storytelling to Grow Your Business

Kurt Vonnegut's Story Structures



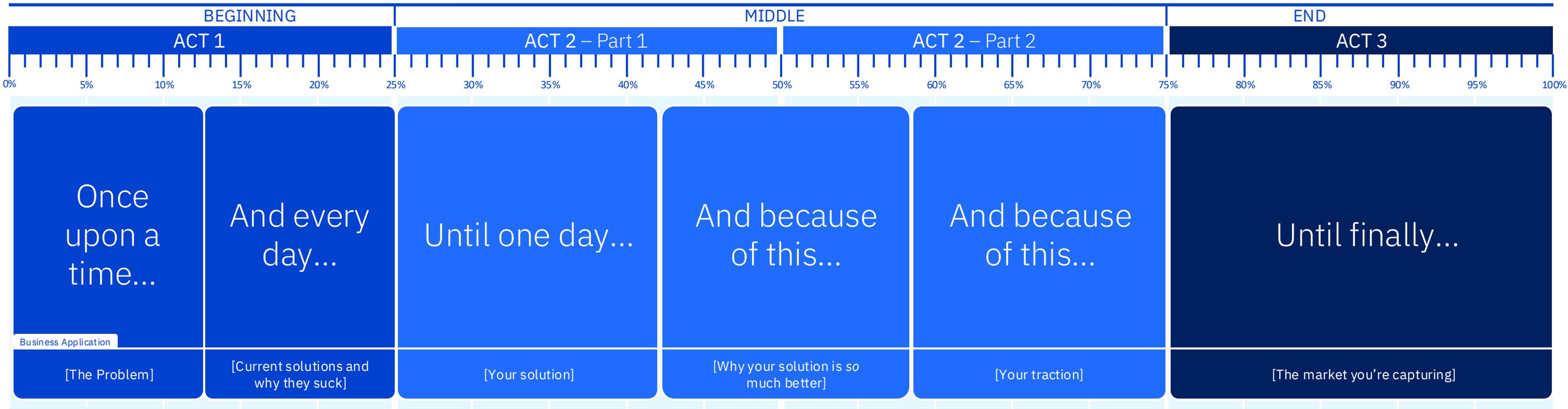
Context:
 Kurt Vonnegut was the author of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, known for his satirical and darkly humorous novels. He published 14 novels, 3 short-story collections and 5 plays over 50 years. Vonnegut believed that ideas, and the convincing communication of those ideas to the reader, were vital to literary art. He once said *"There's no reason why the simple shapes of stories can't be fed into computers."*

Business Application:
 Vonnegut was a student of storytelling who never stopped learning on the job, and passing what he'd learned to the next generation of storytellers. When he was once asked for communications advice, Vonnegut replied, *"We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down."* Storytelling is hard. Vonnegut would have encouraged business leaders to never stop learning.



Learn More: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOGru_4z1Vc

Pixar's Story Structure



Context:
Pixar started in 1979 as part of the Lucasfilm computer division, until it was spun off in 1986 with funding from Steve Jobs. Disney acquired Pixar in 2006. They have released 28 feature films on won 23 Academy Awards. As of July 2024, Pixar have earned over \$15 billion at the worldwide box office, Their story structure, while formulaic, is designed to appeal to mainstream audiences.

Business Application:
Pixar's story structure is really useful for workshops and internal training sessions; especially when you need to get even the most *left-brain* and *technical* professionals to embrace the art of storytelling. While this structure is usually not suited to business stories, it is arguably the best framework to help engage employees who are in the early stages of their storytelling journey.

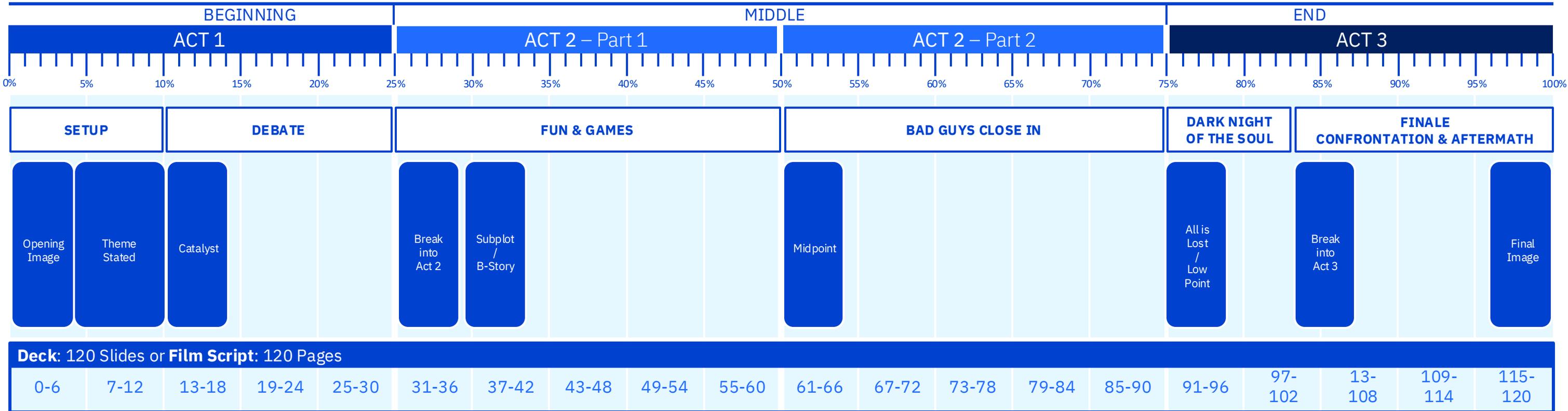
- A Few Pixar Storytelling Rules:**
1. You gotta keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer. They can be very different.
 2. Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously.
 3. Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect.
 4. Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.
 5. When you're stuck, make a list of what WOULDN'T happen next.
 6. Pull apart the stories you like. (What you like in them is a part of you).
 7. Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind. And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th...
 8. Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you?
 9. What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't succeed? Stack the odds against.
 10. You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is testing, not refining.
 11. What's the essence of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.

Learn More:



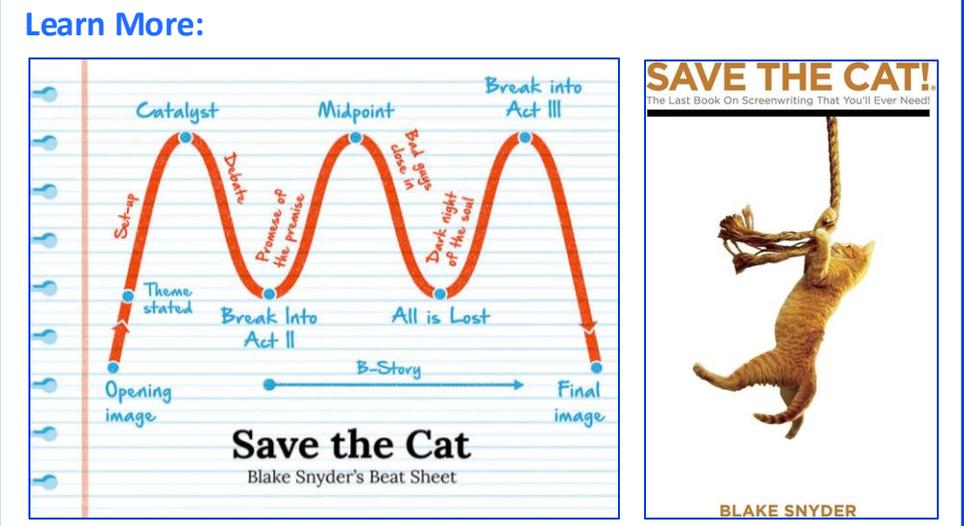
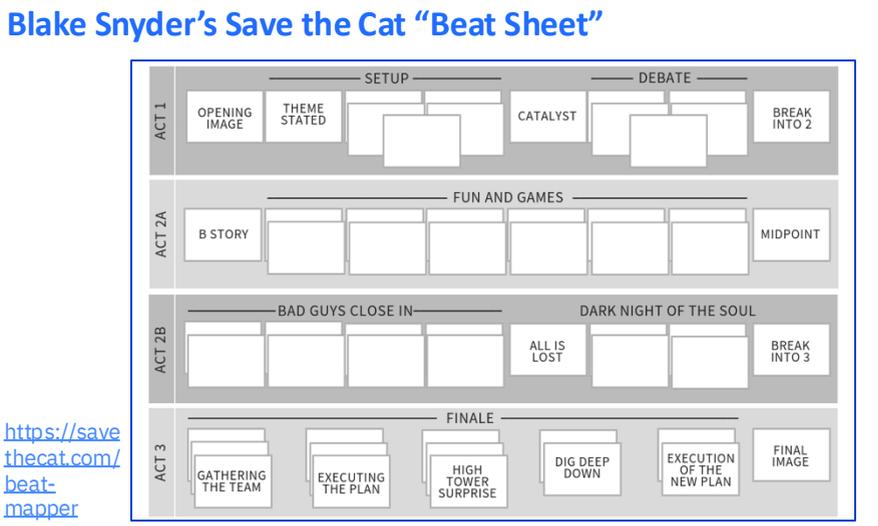

[FREE PIXAR STORYTELLING COURSE](https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/pixar)
<https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/pixar>

Blake Snyder's Save the Cat

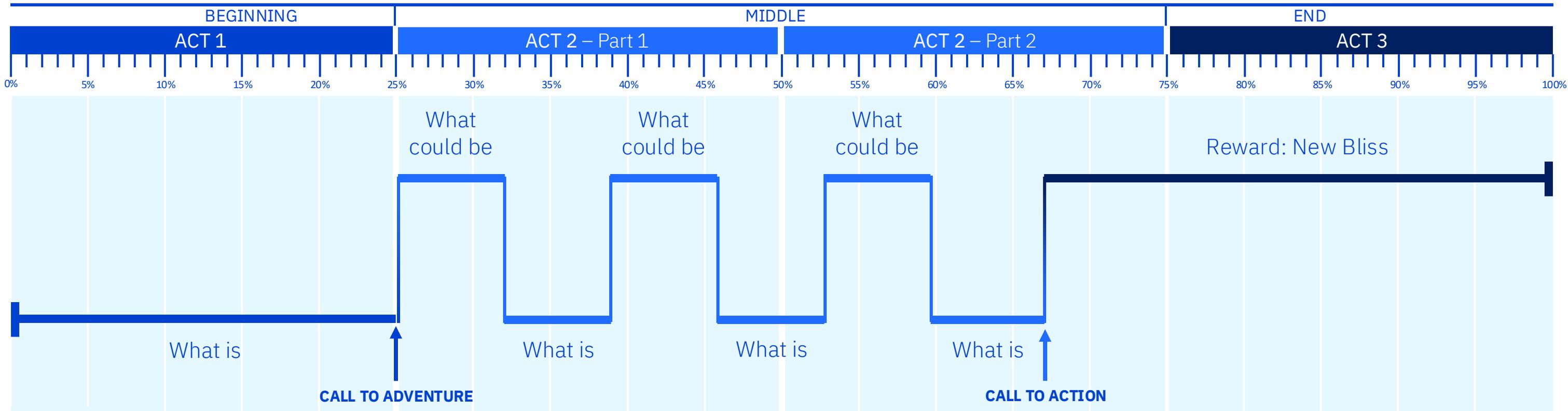


Context:
Save the Cat is a screenwriting term coined by **Blake Snyder** and refers to a particular plot device. The *Save the Cat* method involves having the protagonist do something admirable toward the start of the story in order to establish them as a likable person and get the audience on their side. 15 “beats” provide a framework that most showrunners and screenwriters when writing movies and TV shows.

Business Application:
 While this may appear over-engineered for a business story, this is an ideal structure to use for seminars, workshops or training programs. This is because the “beats” are designed to keep an audience’s attention for an extended amount of time (at least 1-2 hours); so a 90-minute workshop could be structured like a 90-minute movie (perhaps even treating each page of the script as a PPT slide).

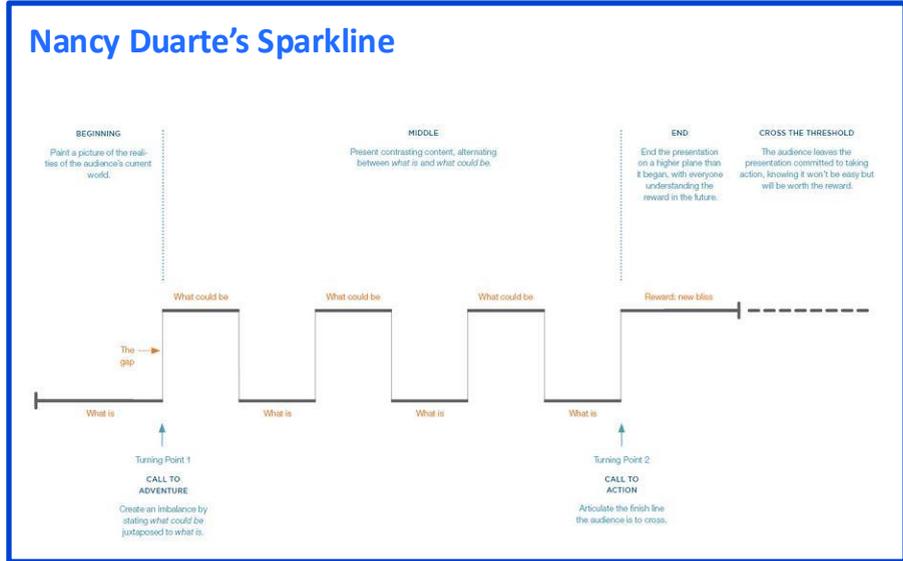


Nancy Duarte's Sparkline



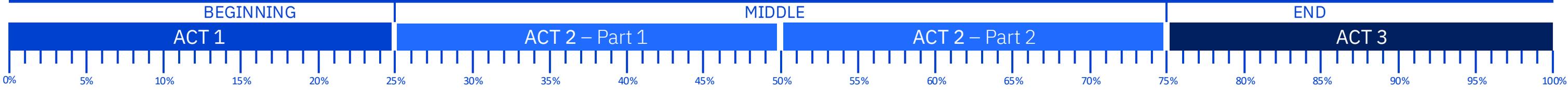
Context:
Nancy Duarte created the *Sparkline* as a narrative device that helps deliver compelling presentations through the use of contrast. Featured in her viral TED Talk "[The Secret Structure of Great Talks](#)" and her seminal book "*Resonate*", Nancy has used this framework to create presentations for Steve Jobs, Marc Benioff and even Al Gore's Oscar-winning climate change movie "*An Inconvenient Truth*".

Business Application:
 Every great talk contains drama, conflict or contrast and can be illustrated in the form of a Sparkline. They bring business presentations to life by creating contrast. From something as simple as a carefully placed "but" to painting a visionary picture of the status quo compared to where things could be, Sparklines are highly effective frameworks for strategic communications, especially keynotes.



Learn More:

Jeremy's Mission Critical Script



EXCITE

What problem are you solving, why are you excited about it, and why should we care?

DISTURB

What BIG obstacles and challenges stand in our way (and what would it mean if we overcame them)?

ASSURE

How can we work together to overcome these obstacles, why is this approach unique/differentiated and why we must act with urgency?

Context:

Jeremy Connell-Waite created this simple 3-act structure as part of a “*Tactical Communications*” project to help business leaders communicate more effectively in mission critical environments. Inspired by military OODA loops and Duarte’s Sparkline, the Mission Critical Script is effective in its simplicity because it helps business leaders to construct arguments in his pressure, high risk situations.

Business Application:

When a lot is at stake and the success of a pitch or a project can rest on a single presentation. This simple *SITUATION, COMPLICATION, RESOLUTION* structure helps to quickly construct communications for C-level pitches and important conversations. Deployed correctly, it is especially useful for winning hearts and minds and influencing boardroom executives, when no slides will be shown.

Jeremy's Mission Critical Script

Impact Storytelling
Mission-Critical Script
ACTION: Give your presentation a structure that will generate an emotional response and a positive outcome

<p>COLD OPEN: THE HERO'S WORLD (AS IT IS)</p> <p>ACT I</p> <p>EXCITE</p> <p>(TIME & WORDS PER MINUTE?)</p>	<p>BUT... THE PROBLEM</p> <p>ACT II</p> <p>DISTURB</p> <p>(TIME & WORDS PER MINUTE?)</p>	<p>THE TRANSFORMATION... THE SOLUTION</p> <p>ACT III</p> <p>ASSURE</p> <p>(TIME & WORDS PER MINUTE?)</p>
---	---	---

Time: _____
 Words: _____
 Speaking: _____ (Words per Minute)
 Readability Score (F12): _____
 Lexical Density: _____

What problem is this story attempting to solve?
 What's your UVP? eg. *Why are you the only ___ who can ___?*
 Will this conversation *SURPRISE* your audience?
 Have you created a sense of urgency to act now?
 Are you using words like "but", "except", "and then..."?
 Are you the only person who can have this conversation?

Does your story include the 4 rhetorical appeals?

For the Head | For the Heart

LOGOS (logic) | ETHOS (credibility) | PATHOS (emotion) | KARISMA (charisma)

EDUCATE | INSPIRE | SOLVE PROBLEMS | CHALLENGE

Learn More:



Read [109 Rules of Better Stories](#)

The 9 Principles of Better Stories.



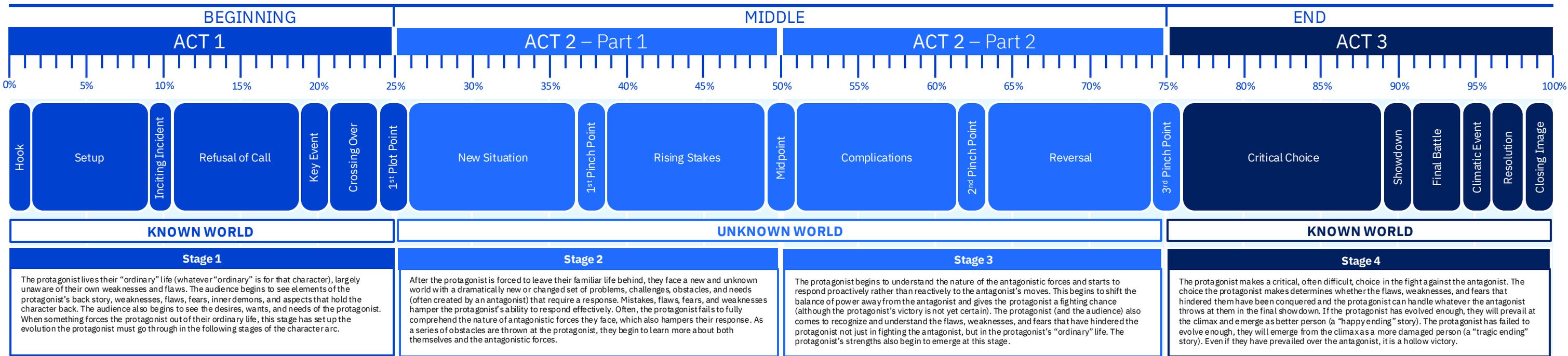
01. Better Stories are transformational.

All stories need a structure (eg. 3 Acts, Hero's Journey, Situation, Problem, Action, Resolution, Back). At their core, all stories are about a journey where someone (or something) is transformed for better (or worse).

www.BetterStories.org

Peter von Stackelberg's Pillars of Story Structure

Dramatic Tension



Context:

Peter von Stackelberg is a writer and award-winning investigative journalist. As a Visiting Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Alfred University in Alfred, New York, he teaches classes on transmedia storytelling, journalism, and mass media. The focus of his research is on worldbuilding, story structure, and narrative design across digital media, books, films, graphic novels, and games.

Business Application:

Unfortunately there is no one-size-fits-all storytelling structure suitable for every business application. Von Stackelberg's work encourages storytellers to select the correct structure for each story. In a world where many business leaders don't use any structure at all when crafting their communications, Peter reminds us to at least have a structure, and worry about whether it's the right one later.

Von Stackelberg's Story Pillars

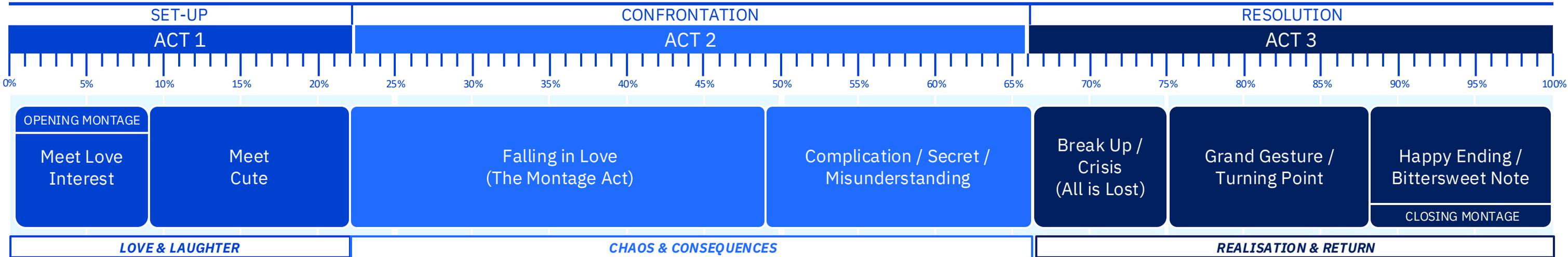
www.researchgate.net/publication/368637114_Pillars_of_Story_Structure

Learn More:

Story Idea Creation & Concept Design
Story Design for Novels, Comics, Film & More

Peter von Stackelberg

Richard Curtis Rom-Com's – The “RC” Story Structure



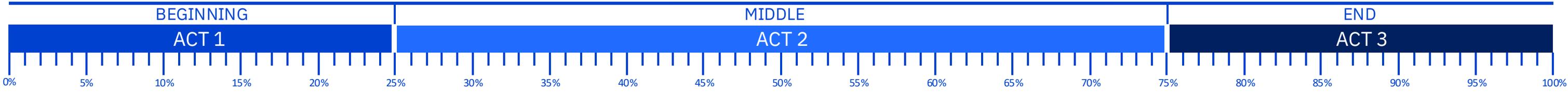
Context:
Sir Richard Curtis (Notting Hill, Four Weddings, Love Actually) loves to write about reality - not the reality of dark or sinister dramas which makes for critically acclaimed films – but of the reality of the million’s who fall in love each day. His movies are not everyone’s cup of tea but that’s why it’s important to understand his process. His movies may look like simple 3-act structures, but he has made the format his own and won an honorary Oscar in the process.

Business Application:
 Curtis is the co-founder of Comic Relief which has raised more than \$1.6Bn, largely through the power of his storytelling. Getting any audience to act (give, vote, buy) is an act driven by emotions. The *Love & Laughter / Chaos & Consequences / Realisation & Return* structure looks playful, but if you want to make an audience **FEEL** something so that they **DO** something serious; this might be just the format.

Richard Curtis Masterclass <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FENpwVe14MA>

Learn More: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WogIY2inBlg>

Billy Wilder's Story Structure



Put character up a tree.

Set the tree on fire.

Get the character down from the tree.

Context:
Billy Wilder was a six-time Oscar winning Hollywood film director who made such classics as *Sunset Boulevard* and Marilyn's *Some Like It Hot*. His films were known for their tight plots and memorable dialogue. Wilder believed that no matter how talented the actor, the result would be better if you bent the script to their personality, rather than force a performance beyond their limitations.

Business Application:
Great business leaders are not always great communicators. The way that Wilder bent his stories to suit the skills of the talent, is a good lesson we could apply in business. Why not take more notice of the personality type of the presenter, and re-purpose the script to help them make it their own? When asked for storytelling advice, Wilder often just said, *"Don't be boring"*.

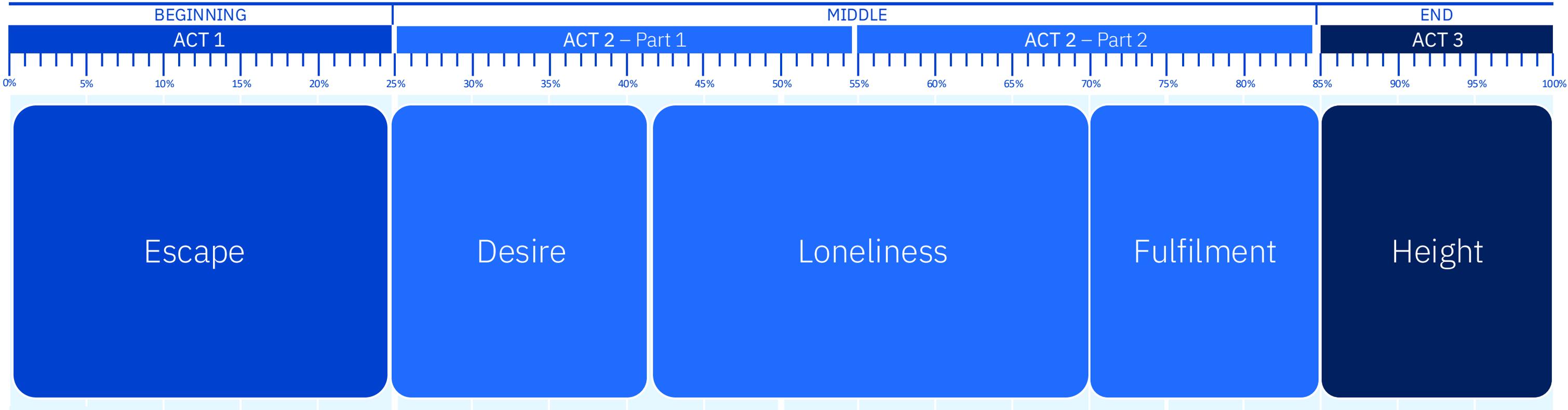
- Billy Wilder's Storytelling Tips:**
1. The audience is fickle.
 2. Grab 'em by the throat and never let 'em go.
 3. Develop a clean line of action for your leading character.
 4. Know where you're going.
 5. The more subtle and elegant you are in hiding your plot points, the better you are as a writer.
 6. If you have a problem with the third act, the real problem is in the first act.
 7. A tip from Lubitsch: Let the audience add up two plus two. They'll love you forever.
 8. In doing voice-overs, be careful not to describe what the audience already sees. Add to what they're seeing.
 9. The event that occurs at the second act curtain triggers the end of the movie.
 10. The third act must build, build, build in tempo and action until the last event, and then—that's it. Don't hang around.
- From Conversations with Wilder by Cameron Crowe.*

Learn More:



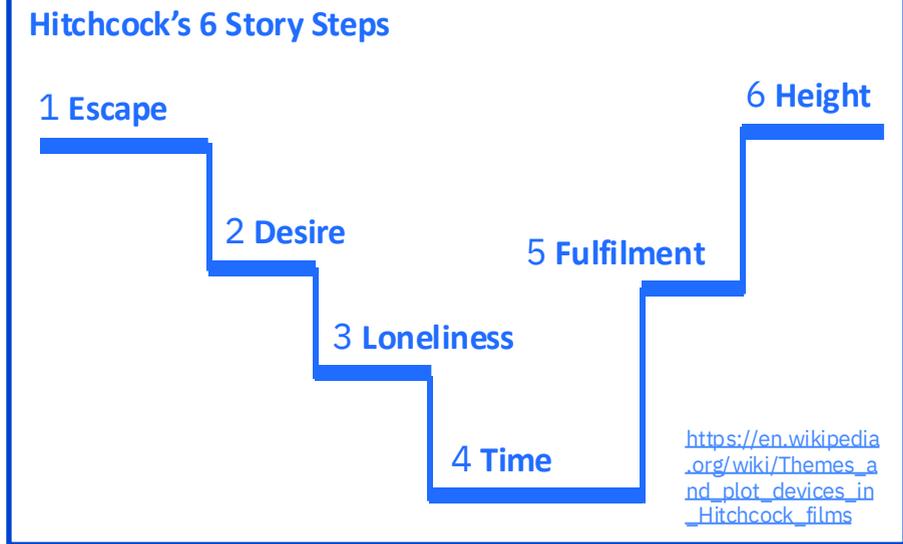
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJCdmP7amQc>

Hitchcock's Suspense Structure



Context:
 Voted the #1 film director of all-time **Alfred Hitchcock** is someone all storytellers should take notice of. His stories are all about an **ESCAPE** in response to life's reality. He highlights **DESIRE** (our deepest and most intimate wants) and then the **LONELINESS** which comes from recognising what we don't have. He uses **TIME** to create suspense and raise the stakes and then **FULFILMENT** – the realisation that it's finally possible to have what we desire. Giving the audience what they want. Hitchcock liked his dark stories to end on a high: **HEIGHT** uplifts the audience (and the protagonist) for better or worse – completing the transformation.

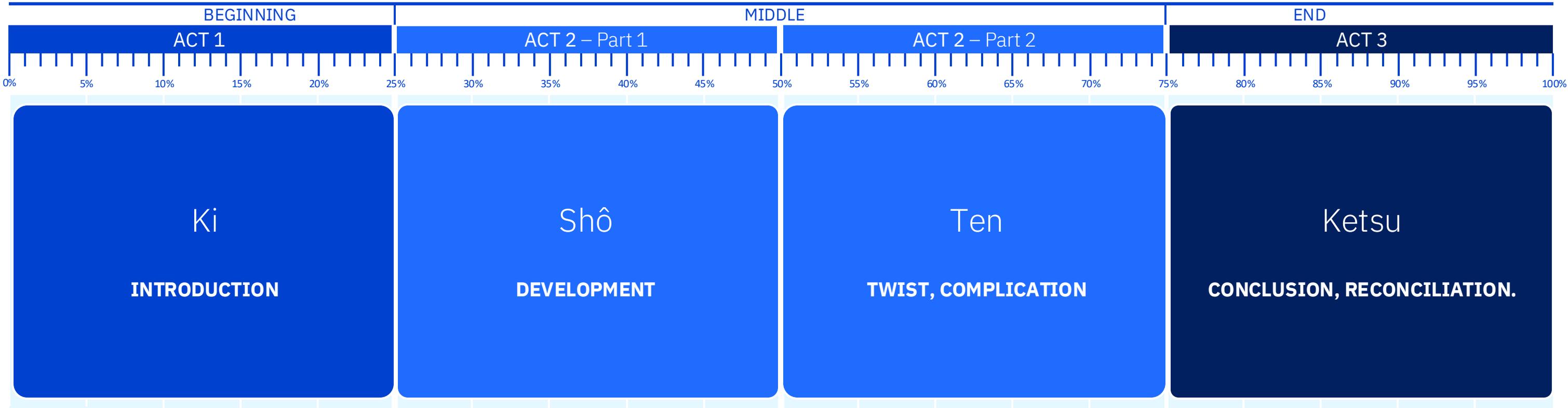
Business Application:
 Every significant business project is an *escape* from the present to create a better future state. CXO's desire a transformation but it's a long and *lonely* journey to achieve it. Business transformations can be pitched in many ways, but if you want yours to be memorable, Hitchcock's steps might be just the structure you need.



Learn More:

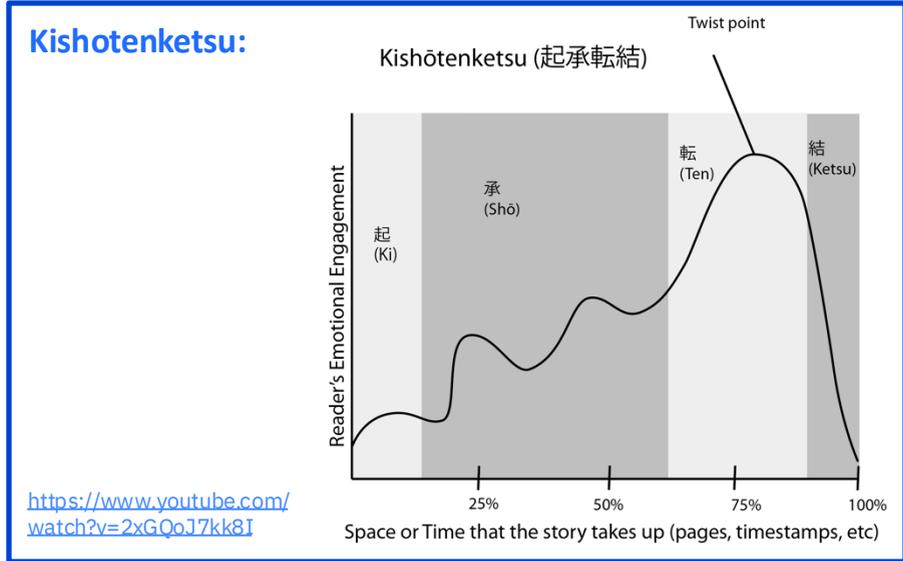
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Alfred-Hitchcock-Tony-Lee-Moral/dp/1789099544/>

Kishōtenketsu



Context:
Kishōtenketsu is an ancient storytelling structure dating back the 12th century, used in classic Chinese, Korean and Japanese narratives. It's one of the only storytelling structures that doesn't include *conflict*, relying more upon *contrast*. The focus is more on the journey and the development of the characters, rather than a dramatic ending, where the hero is transformed for the better (or worse).

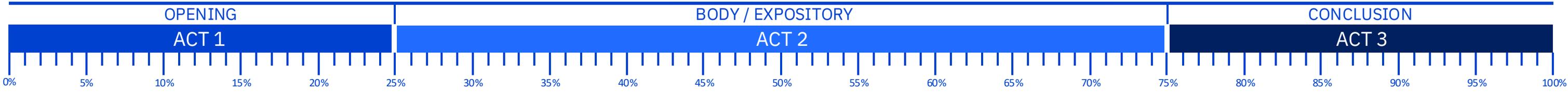
Business Application:
 In the Western world we've become obsessed with hero's journey narratives which feature conflict, obstacles, heroes and villains. But many eastern stories FEEL different because they use the storytelling technique of **Kishōtenketsu**. If you want to tell an empathy-based business story (eg. a journey or a visionary path for the future), **Kishōtenketsu** could be the most suitable structure.



Learn More:

www.betterstories.org/one-pagers

Griot Story Structure



Jokes & Riddles to Engage Audience

Tell the Tale.
[Sing / Dance / Shout & Invite audience to Join]

Share the Moral of the Story

Context:
This **West African** format of storytelling is used by **Griot** storytellers who tell their stories orally. Famous stories from this tradition include Anansi folktales. This storytelling type had influence on later African American, Creole, and Caribbean African diaspora stories. The central driver of the story is memory. The griot or the storyteller relies on collective knowledge and can perform several functions such as educator, counselor, entertainer and custodian of the collective memory.

Business Application:
Griot stories use language full of images and symbolism. They are told verbally. They are hard to forget and are passed down by generation. And they don't use PowerPoint! In a world where many business audiences forget 80% of what they hear within a week, wouldn't it be amazing to be the storyteller who engaged their audience so well, that they remembered everything (and told their colleagues)?

Tell Stories Like a Griot:

- Griots (pronounced gree-oh) are the narrators of oral traditions.
- Griots often accompany their stories and songs with music from instruments like the **kora** (a stringed instrument similar to a harp) [IMAGE]
- Think about one of your favourite stories. How would you recount it to a younger sibling, a teacher, or maybe a friend from a different country?
- What details would you add from your own personal experiences to make the story your own?
- What would you emphasize?
- How does the story represent your family life, cultural traditions, or morals?

[Link to Listen to a Kora](#)



Learn More:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_story_structures

An illustration of a griot telling a story to a group of people gathered around a fire. The griot is standing and gesturing, while the audience is sitting on the ground. There are several people, including children, and a large fire in the center. The background shows a thatched roof structure.

The One-Act Story

ONE JOURNEY – “A SLICE OF LIFE”

ACT 1

“The Hook”

Inciting
Incident

Escalation

Crisis
& ClimaxResolution
& Punchline

Context:

One-Act stories were innovated by **Euripides** for his play *Cyclops* in about 460BC. They are short stories about “*slices of life*” with a quick punchline, usually 10-minutes or less and favoured by playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. The tight structure and economy of language make them perfect for fringe festivals or short performances like TED’s 6-minute talks to break up the agenda.

Business Application:

Truth in Ten is a phrase I hear from politicians about telling short but compelling stories. “*Why take 40 minutes if you can get the job done in less than 10?*” One story arc. Continuous movement. One short journey. The storyteller drops you into the moment straight away, until everything changes, the screw is turned, there’s no turning back and a new reality is revealed. Ideal for TikTok, Reels, or Shorts.

Why Do One-Act Stories Work?

UNITY: Classical one-acts have one location, one main conflict & one continuous stretch of time keeping compression tight and the tension rising.

ECONOMY: Every line must either reveal character, intensify conflict or move the plot forward. No filler.

REVERSALS: Even short plays need moments where the power shifts, the truth flips or the audience’s assumptions are challenged. A good one-act contains a significant reversal.

A CLEAR VALUE CHANGE: Like in screenwriting, the emotional state of the play moves from hope to despair, isolation to connection, ignorance to truth, order to chaos. A visible transformation makes even short pieces feel complete. Single-act stories are hard to write but also hard to forget.

Exec Summary:

1.1: **Opening Image** – *Drop us straight into the situation*

1.2: **Problem Revealed** – *The inciting incident*

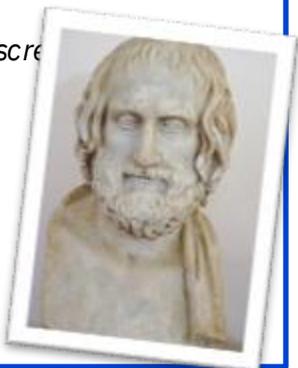
1.3: **Rising Pressure** – *Complications tighten the screw*

1.4: **Moment of Truth** – *The crisis!*

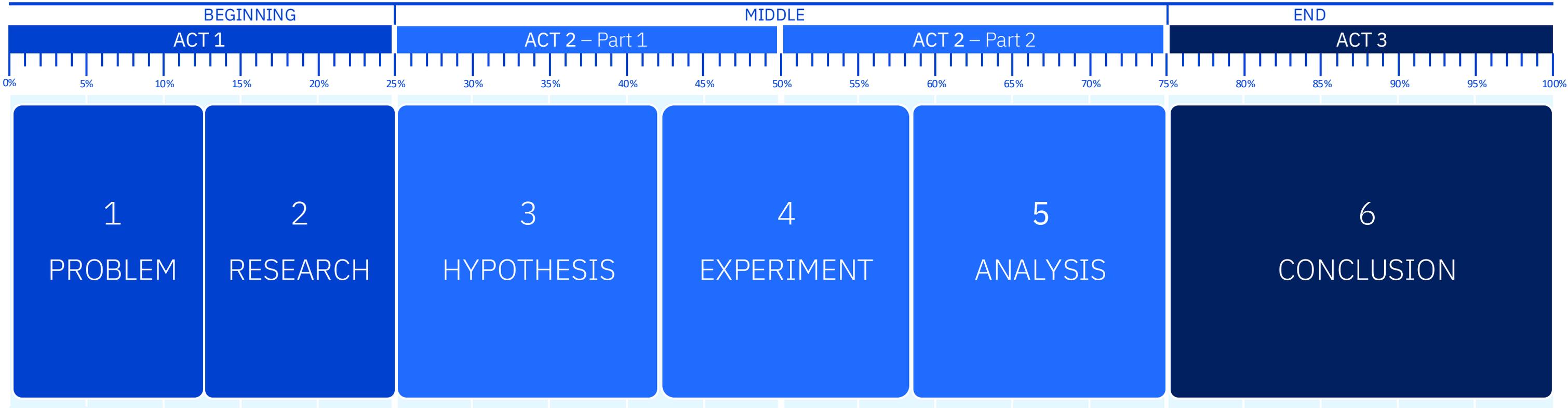
1.5: **Decision / Action** – *The climax*

1.6: **Final Image** – *A brief emotional echo*

[One Act Plays \[WIKIPEDIA\]](#)

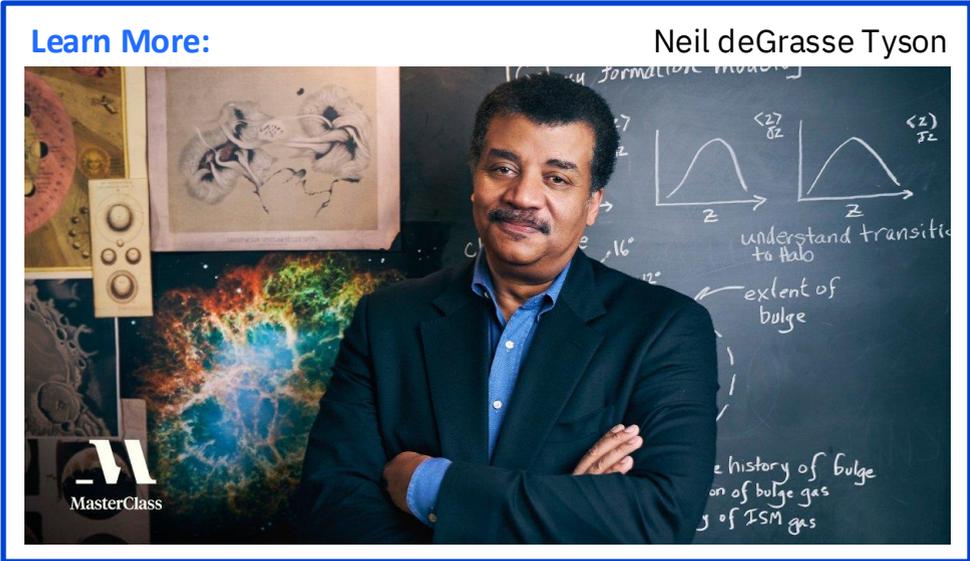
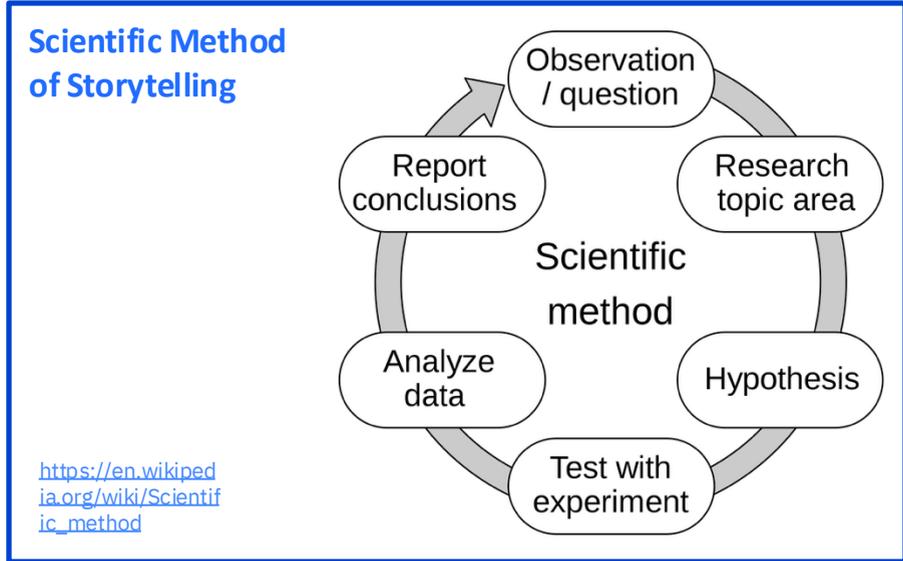


The Scientific Method

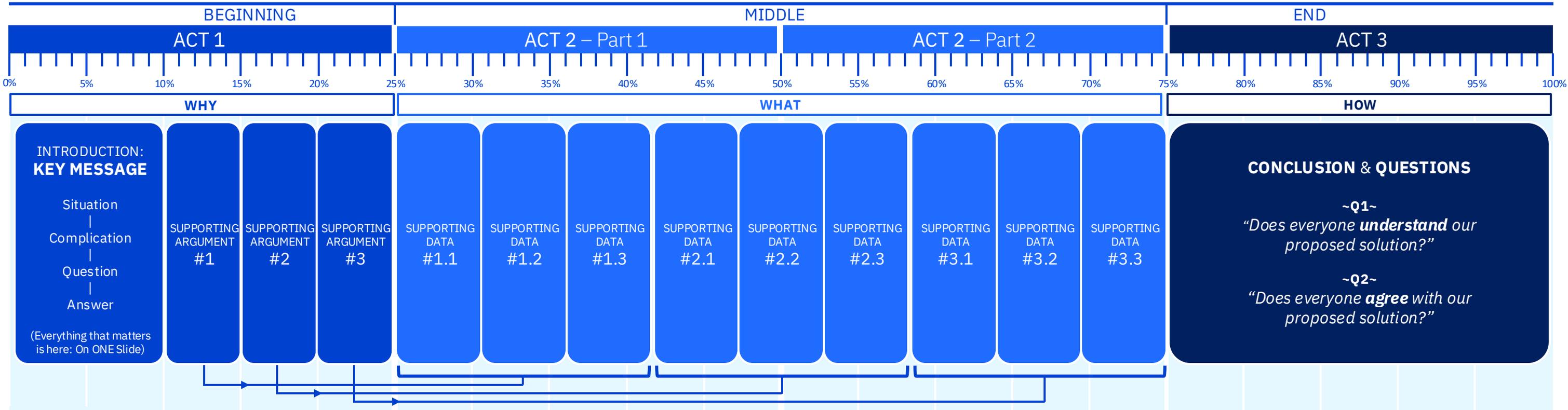


Context:
The Scientific Method is an empirical method for acquiring knowledge that has characterised the development of science since the 17th century. It involves careful observation coupled with rigorous scepticism, creating a hypothesis through inductive reasoning, testing it through experiments and statistical analysis (adjusting or discarding the hypothesis based on the results).

Business Application:
 Cognitive bias often gets in the way of a good story. We tell the stories we want to tell, which are not always the stories that the audience needs to hear. The scientific method is structured around unbiased testing because cognitive assumptions can distort the interpretation of the observation. While not officially a “*story structure*” it is a valid method for telling evidence and data-based stories.

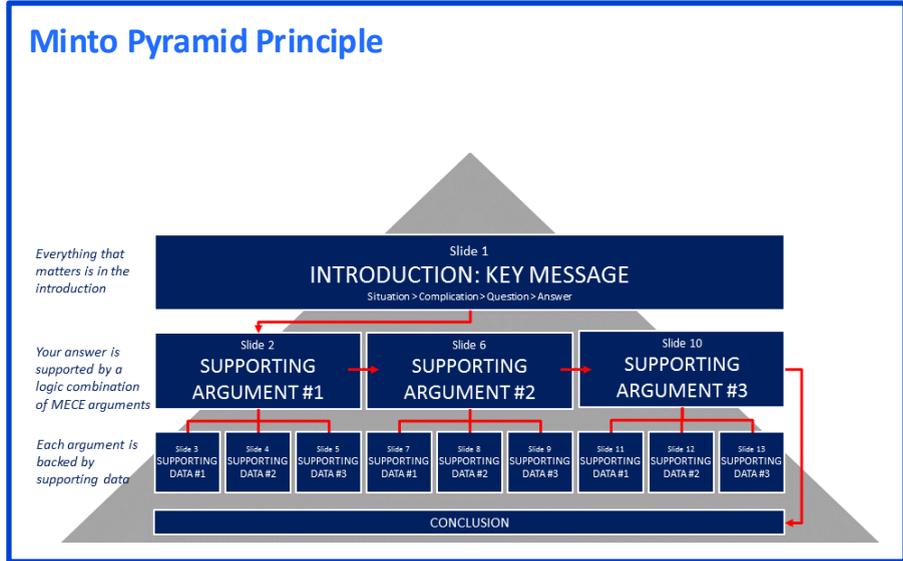


Minto's Pyramid Principle



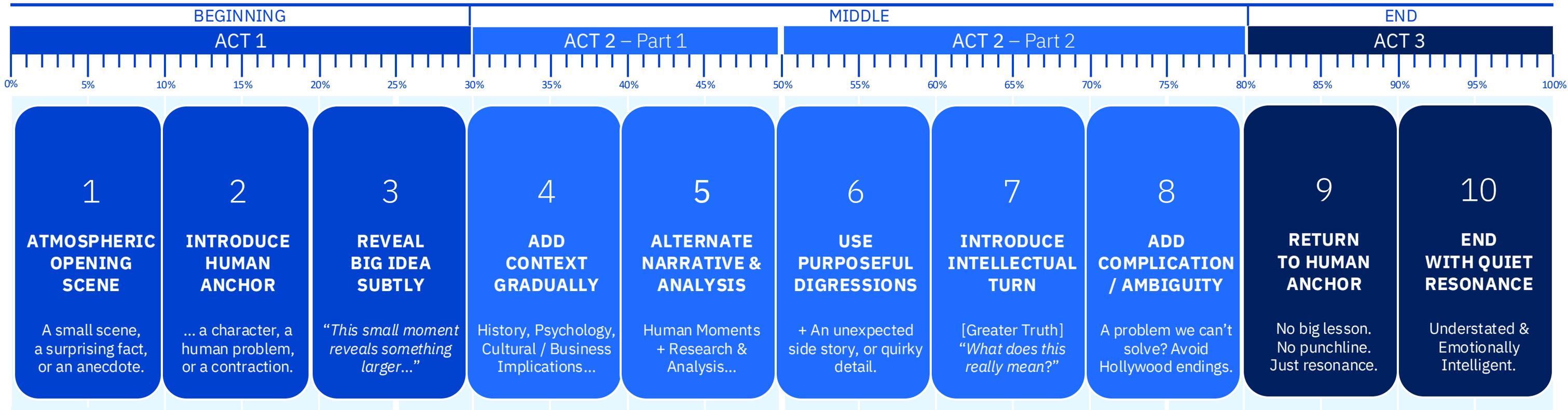
Context:
 The Pyramid Principle is a storytelling tool that quickly and clearly communicates complex issues to busy business executives. It was developed by **Barbara Minto**, a McKinsey consultant in the 1970's. Her pyramid literally flipped presentations on their head and over 50 years later, it is still widely recognised as the standard for communicating concepts and arguments in a logical, well-structured way.

Business Application:
 Unlike other storytelling structures, **Minto's Pyramid** was designed for business. Instead of focusing on a narrative arc or a transformational hero's journey, it starts at the end (with the proposed solution) and systematically works backwards to carefully explain why the ending (the solution) works. It is ideal for presentations to busy executives when complex topics need to be communicated quickly.



Learn More:

The New Yorker 10-Part Story Structure



Context:
 Behind every unforgettable story lies a structure which is often invisible to the reader's eye. For over 100 years, [The New Yorker](#) has perfected this craft, shaping narratives that unfold with the patience of a novel and the precision of journalism. The New Yorker guides readers through experience, not information: scene by scene, idea by idea, until the world appears subtly changed by the final line.

Business Application:
 In an age of overwhelming information and shrinking attention, business leaders must communicate with clarity, nuance, and emotional intelligence. That's why mastering a structure like this matters. *The New Yorker* approach teaches leaders how to frame complexity through human moments. Leaders who tell stories with structure and subtlety don't just inform their audience; they inspire them.

Learn How to Write Stories for The New Yorker

New Yorker stories do not begin with ideas; they begin with people. The middle is where the meaning is discovered not announced. And they "end with echoes", often open-ended and sometimes ironic or hopeful.

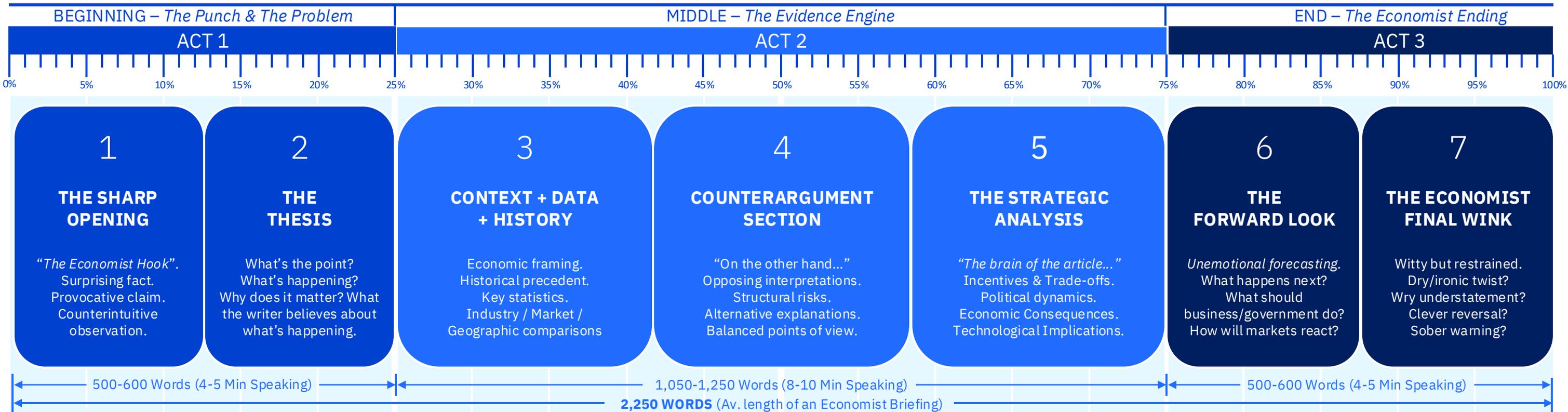
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1994/06/27/storyville>

Watch "The New Yorker at 100" on Netflix:

See the science the behind the stories and go behind the scenes to learn about the people who have made *The New Yorker* what it is for over a century.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m-R4vcx9MI>

The Economist 7-Part Story Structure



Context:
 For 183 years, **The Economist** has helped decision-makers make sense of a complex world by doing one thing exceptionally well: explaining how power, money, politics, and technology interact. In today’s volatile geopolitical climate - where AI advances outpace regulation, markets react in milliseconds, and leaders are expected to take positions on issues far beyond their formal remit - this kind of clarity has never been more valuable.

Business Application:
 For business leaders, thinking like an Economist journalist sharpens both writing and speech. It trains you to get to the point faster, explain complexity without jargon, and sound authoritative without sounding dogmatic. In a world where credibility is fragile and attention is scarce, adopting this mindset helps leaders communicate with confidence that is earned, not performed.

Forget copying TED Talks. Try structuring your next business presentation like an Economist Briefing.

2,250 words is the average length of an Economist Briefing. Coincidentally, that’s also the same length of an 18-minute TED talk, speaking at a respectable 125 words per minute.

Business people often make the mistake of treating 15–20-minute presentations as a TED talk. Unless you have an inspirational / innovation-based message to deliver, this is usually a terrible idea.

But, for most (not all) business presentations, if you structure your 15–20-minute talk more like an Economist Briefing (see [word counts above](#)) - you won’t go far wrong. Give it a go. You’ll be surprised.

Money talks, but sometimes it needs an interpreter.

In real life, the tortoise loses.

It’s lonely at the top, but at least there’s something to read.

Do you suffer from sharp, stabbing pains in the back?
 We may be too late to help you.

Want to go far? Sometimes a newsagent can be more helpful than a travel agent.

Who gets the office copy first?
 Precisely.