

# Freytag's Pyramid: How to Analyze a Story

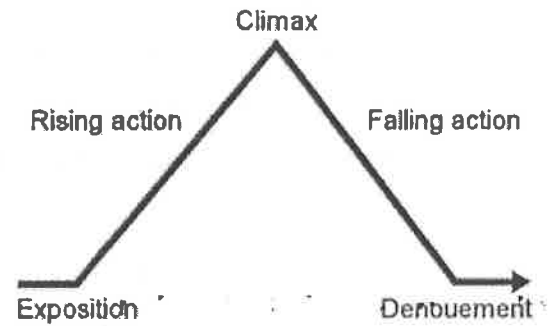
## Words You Need to Know

**Conflict:** a problem that occurs in the story

**Tragedy:** a story ending in death and sadness

**Analyze:** to look at something very closely.

According to Freytag, every story worth telling has the following parts: exposition (inciting incident), rising action, climax (turning point), falling action, and denouement (resolution). Freytag's pyramid is used to show how stories move; it is a graphic plot chart. Sometimes a story can be more complicated than Freytag's pyramid, but most stories fit perfectly into the pyramid.



Let's look at each part of the pyramid...

**Exposition (inciting incident):** The exposition is like the set-up of the story. The background information that is needed to understand the story is provided, such as the main character, the setting, the basic conflict, and so forth.

The exposition ends with the **inciting moment**, which is the one incident in the story without which there would be no story. The inciting moment sets the rest of the story in motion.

**Rising Action:** Rising action is a series of events and actions that move the story to a climax. During rising action, the basic conflict is complicated by secondary conflicts, such as obstacles and challenges that frustrate the main character's attempt to reach their goal.

**Climax (turning point):** The climax is the peak of the action and the turning point in the story. After the climax everything changes. Things will have gone badly for the main character up to this point; now, things will begin to go well for him or her. However, if the story is a tragedy, the opposite will happen after the climax; things that have been going good for the main character begin to go bad.

**Falling Action:** During the falling action, the conflict unravels with the main character either winning or losing. The falling action might contain a **moment of final suspense**, during which the final outcome of the conflict is in doubt.

**Denouement:** The story ends with the denouement, in which the main character is better off than at the beginning of the story. However, the tragedy ends with death and sadness, in which the protagonist is worse off than at the beginning of the story.

An example of Freytag's pyramid at work can be found on the back of this handout.

## Shrek plot summary

SHREK is grumpy, smelly and ugly ogre, living peacefully in a swamp. One night, he suddenly finds his land has been squatted by a mass of fairy-tale creatures (Pinocchio, the three little pigs, Peter Pan, Snow White, Cinderella, among others), who have been banished by the evil Lord Farquaad. One of these is Donkey (who just won't shut up). Accompanied by him, Shrek confronts Lord Farquaad, demanding his land back. Farquaad does him a deal, telling him to rescue Princess Fiona from a dragon-guarded castle, to get his swamp back.

Shrek and Donkey go and rescue the Princess, narrowly avoiding being burned by the Dragon, who tries to seduce Donkey (being a girl Dragon!). Fiona is disgruntled about being rescued by an ugly ogre, rather than Prince Charming. However, despite their differences, she and Shrek grow fond of each other.

On the second night of their return journey, Fiona hides in a windmill. Donkey finds her, and discovers that she's turned into an ogress. She explains that she's under a spell, which can only be broken by true love's first kiss. Shrek overhears part of this, but misunderstands and thinks she doesn't love him because he's ugly.

Just as she decides to tell Shrek the truth, the sun rises and she becomes a beautiful princess again. Lord Farquaad arrives and takes Fiona to his castle, and Shrek returns to his swamp. Both are miserable.

Later, Shrek, Donkey and Dragon head to Farquaad's castle, to try to stop Fiona marrying him. When they arrive, the sun sets and Fiona becomes an ogress again. Farquaad doesn't want to marry her, and sets the guards on everybody, but Dragon comes to the rescue and eats Farquaad up. Shrek and Fiona kiss. Therefore, Fiona stays ugly (in conformity with the spell: "you find true love's first kiss and then take love's true form"), and marries Shrek, and they live "ugly" ever after.

**Exposition:**

**inciting incident:**

**Rising Action:**

**Climax:**

**Falling Action:**

**Denouement:**

# Parts of Plot Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

*Read the plot summary and answer the questions*

Ellen Montgomery lives in Pullman, Washington. She wants an expensive racing bicycle, but does not have enough money to buy it. She works for eight months after school and weekends in a supermarket to earn the money to buy it. When she has just saved enough money to buy the bicycle, the money is stolen from her house. Ellen then works another six months in the bicycle shop. She is finally able to buy the bicycle, and she becomes a state champion bicycle racer.

1. What is the exposition of this plot summary?

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2. What is the rising action?

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3. What is the climax of this plot summary?

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4. What is the development?

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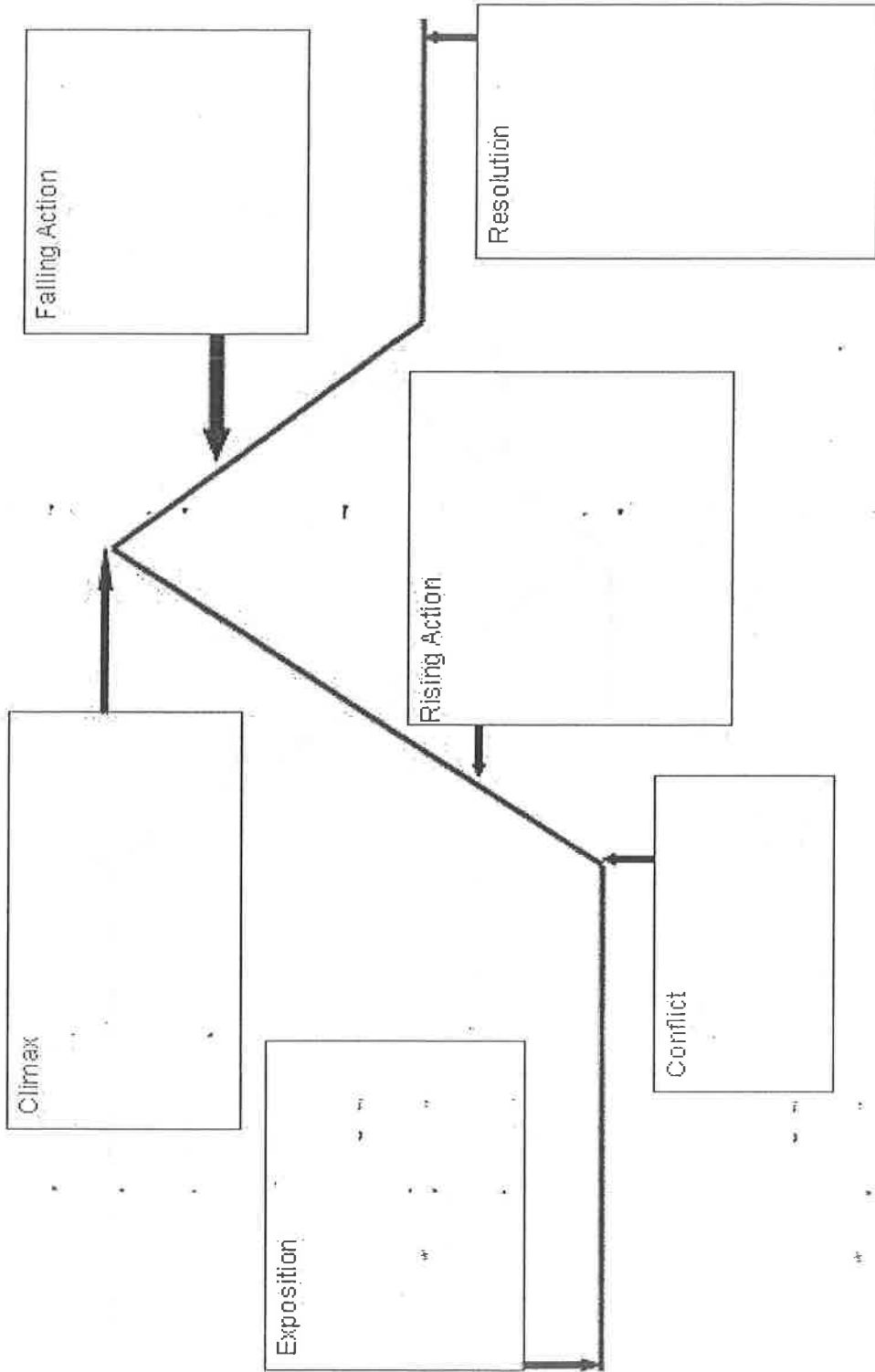
5. What is the resolution?

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Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Freytag's Pyramid



Title: \_\_\_\_\_

### Freytag's Pyramid

