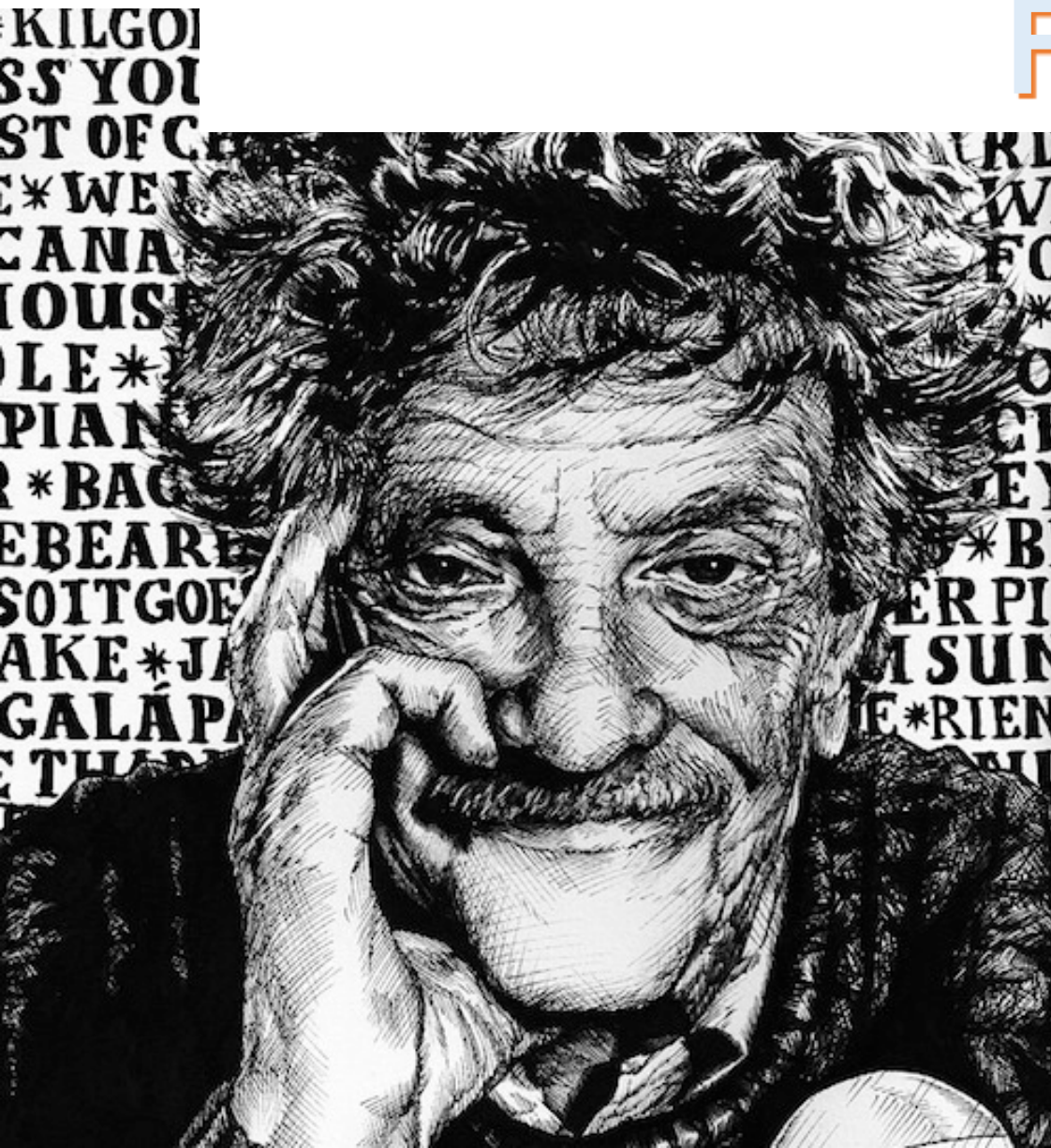




Kurt Vonnegut
MEMORIAL LIBRARY[©]

Kurt Vonnegut's Tips on Writing

Fiction

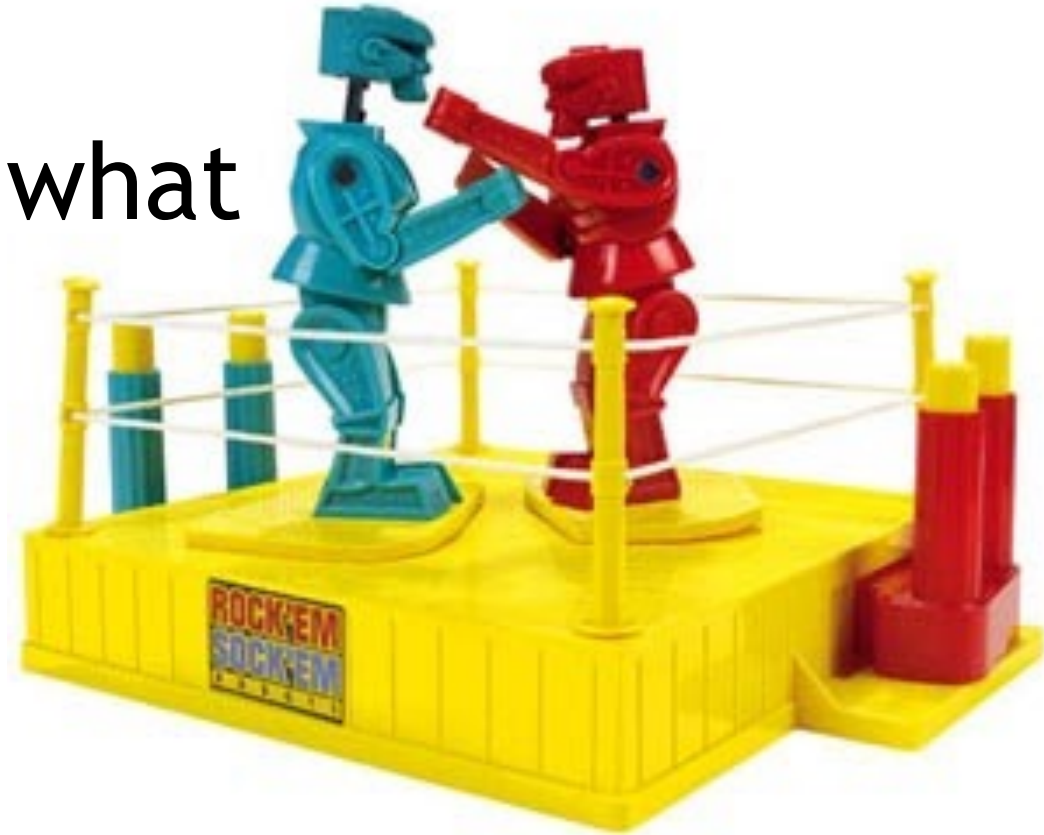


- Use the time of a total stranger in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
- Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
- Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
- Every sentence must do one of two things—reveal character or advance the action.
- Start as close to the end as possible.
- Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them—in order that the reader may see what they are made of.
- Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia.
- Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible. To heck with suspense. Readers should have such complete understanding of what is going on, where and why, that they could finish the story themselves, should cockroaches eat the last few pages.

From the preface to Vonnegut's short story collection *Bagombo Snuff Box*

Tips Before Beginning Narrative Fiction

- Plot is driven by the conflict, so determine what that conflict will be



Conflict Types

Internal:

- Person vs. Self

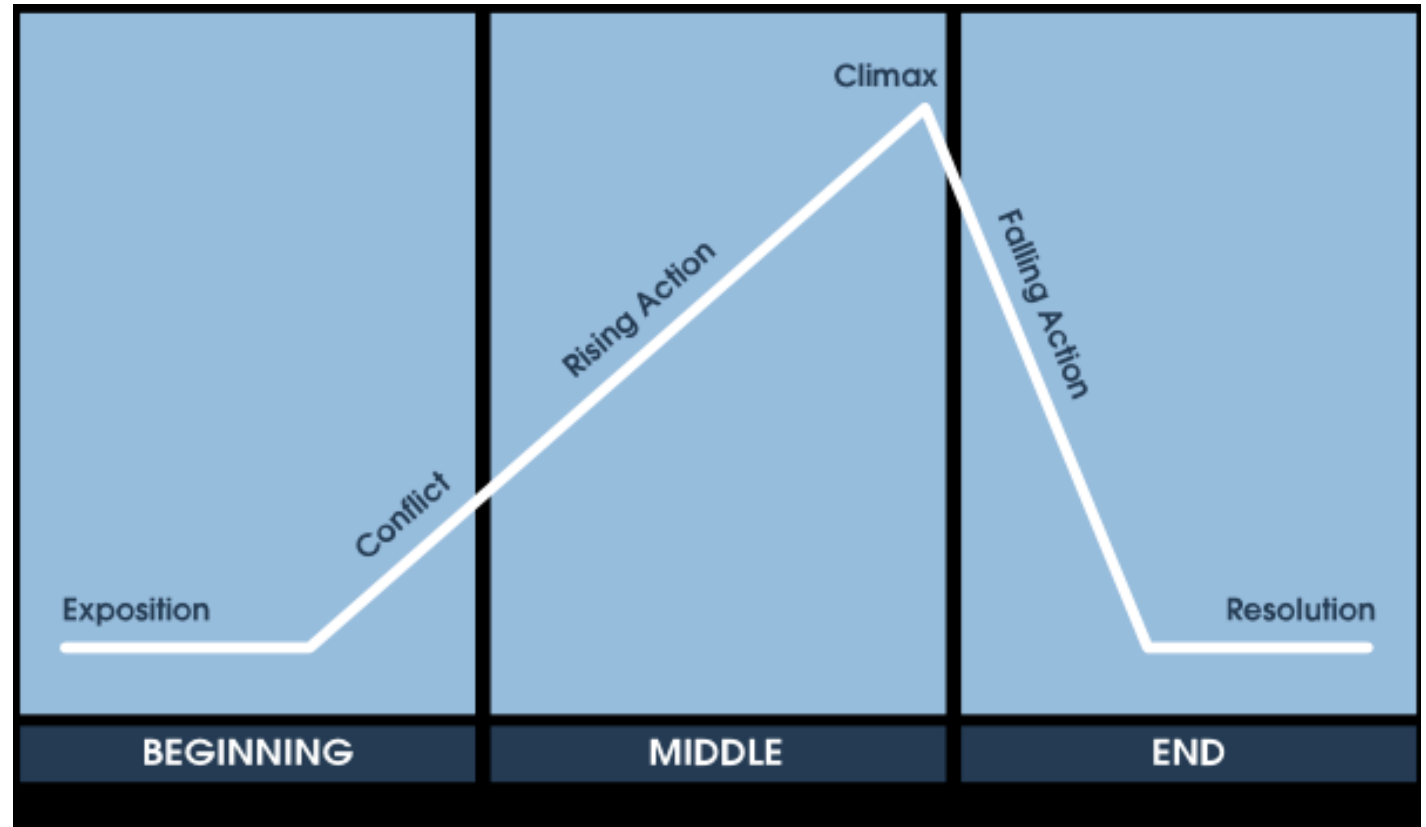
External:

- Person vs. Person
- Person vs. Nature
- Person vs. Society
- Person vs. Supernatural
- Person vs. Technology

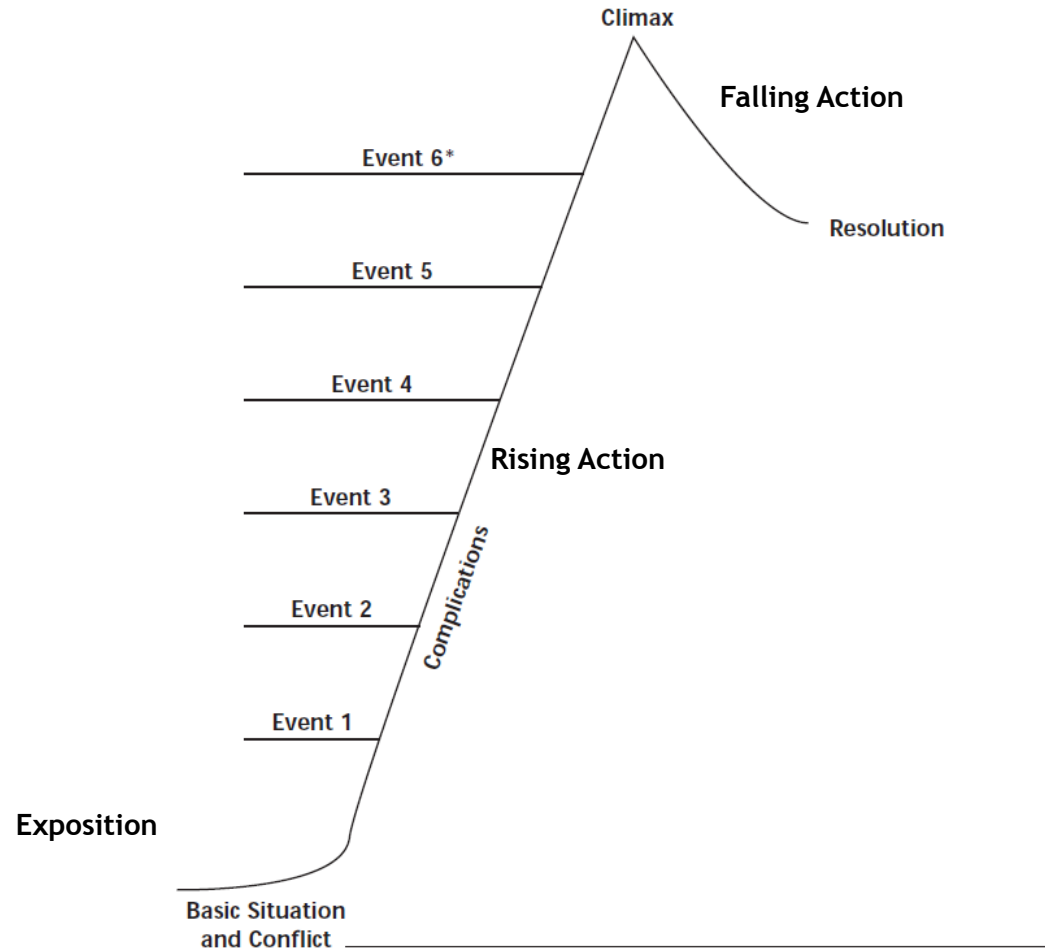


Tips Before Beginning Narrative Fiction

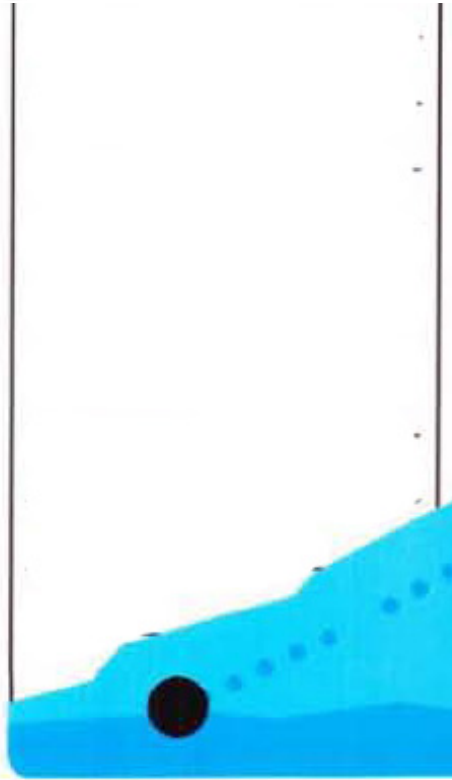
- Plot follows patterns, so diagram key plot points



Traditional Plot Diagram

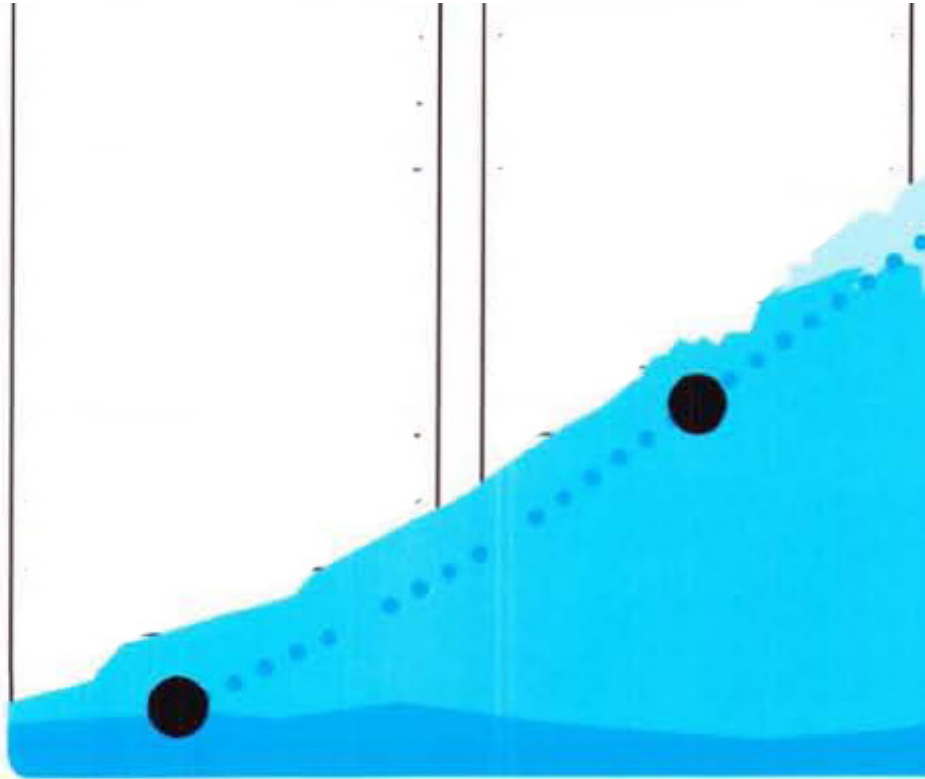


Exposition
Or
Introduction



Setting, characters, main conflicts are introduced to the reader; this is the beginning of a novel or story and may be short or long, but is always flat (little action or emotion).

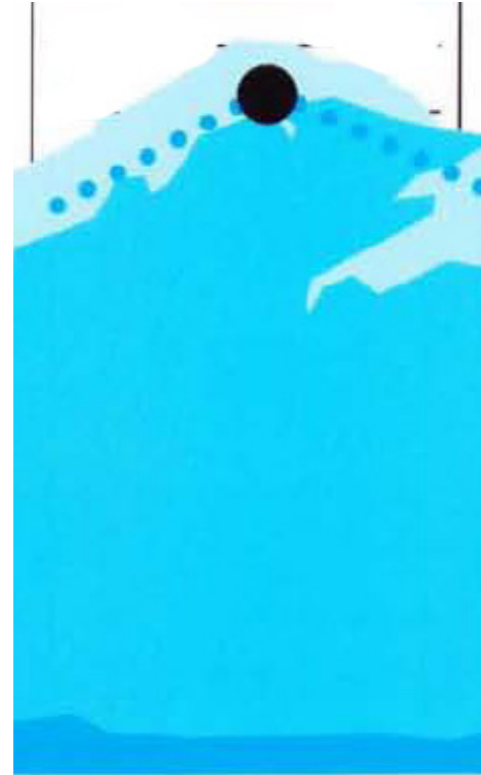
Rising Action



Round characters are developed, conflicts are increased and acted out in many ways, motives are introduced, and things happen; generally, the major part of a story. This part of the story is marked by complications.

The "high point" of a story in which the major conflicts erupt in some kind of final showdown (fight, argument, violent action, tense emotional moment...). At the end of the climax, the "winner" will be clear (there is not always a winner!).

Climax



Falling Action

The events that immediately follow the climax; a kind of "cleaning up."



Resolution

Where everything ends; the reader may have some sense of "closure" or may be asked to think about what might come next.



Kurt Vonnegut
on the Shapes of Stories



Kurt Vonnegut
MEMORIAL LIBRARY[©]