



LET'S TACO ABOUT THE PLOT



Background

The plot is the most important part of a story because it holds everything together—it is the structure, the stuff that actually happens. Like the taco shell, it might not be the best part, but it is the most *necessary*.

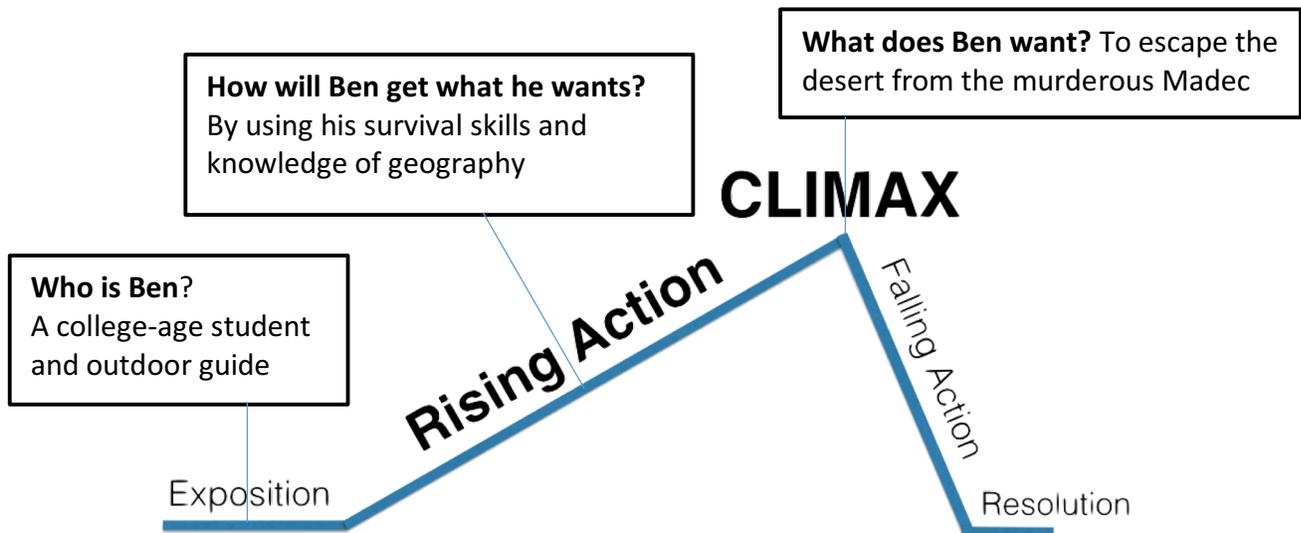
How to Plot Your Story

Step 1: Create a 1-sentence summary by answering **The Big Three**:

- Who is your main character?
- What do they want?
- How are they going to get it?

Example from DEATHWATCH by Robb White: *Ben, a college student and outdoor guide (Who), must rely on his survival skills and knowledge of geography (How) to escape the Mojave Desert after a rich client, Madec, tries to murder him in order to cover up a fatal hunting accident (What).*

Step 2: Put your 1-sentence summary on a plot diagram



Step 3: Widen the plot with a **short synopsis**, a 2-4-page summary

- Includes more detailed scenes, specifically the **initial incident** (event that launches the character into the rising action) and the story's **climax** (when the conflict is resolved)
- Characters and themes begin to emerge
- Does not need to include EVERY scene or detail
- Helps you see any problems with the story and why

OTHER PLOTTING TIPS

- Create **tension** by adding scenes that put the main character’s goal/quest in danger. This engages the reader by making them anxious and curious.
 - *Example from DEATHWATCH: Ben nearly dies from sun exposure and dehydration during his escape from the desert. Also, there is always the threat of Madec outright shooting him with his hunting rifle.*
- Always go back to the **story arc**—your 1-sentence summary that is the story’s main highway. Ask, “Is this scene moving the story forward along the arc?”

Activity: Choose one of your favorite books or movies and taco about the plot.

Book or Movie:

The Big Three:

- *Who* is the main character(s)?
- *What* do they want?
- *How* do they get it?

1-Sentence Summary:

Add the following elements to the plot diagram: Who, the initial incident, several events from the How, the climax (What), and the resolution—how the story ends.

