

PLOT PILLAR TEMPLATE

by C.C. Foster

Title: _____

Genre: _____

Project Summary

A short summary of your story.

Designing Principle

The true moral behind the story. For example: a greedy old man overcomes his selfish nature and learns the true spirit of Christmas when he's visited by three ghosts.

Act I: 1-25%

Opening Scene:

Shows the character's normal world and what they want! Should answer the 5 W's. Who, what, when, where, and why.

Dramatic Question:

The question that keeps readers going. Will X survive the war? Will Y find true love?

Inciting Event:

The introduction of the key event to the story. The inciting event does not have to include the main character, but should be clear on the page. Follows setup of “normal world”. Introduces the plot to the reader. Sometimes also the catalyst, which introduces the plot to the character.

Catalyst (Key Event):

Sometimes happens alongside the inciting event. The Key Event is what irrevocably engages your protagonist with the inciting event. Even if you have a great big Inciting Event (like, say, the beginning of a war), it can't affect your character until the Key Event drags him into the mess (as would happen if he were drafted into the Army).

Plot Point 1 (No Turning Back):

*The First Plot Point marks the end of the First Act and the beginning of the Second. It is the metaphorical lid on this section of this book. This is where everything changes for your character. Enter the New World. A literal **no turning back point**.*

In What Lies Between, this point is the first banquet and poisoning mentioned in the premise! Nira literally cannot leave and is now sealed in the manor with the other guests, and must compete for a cure. This forces her to create a new goal.

Act 2 (Part A): 26-50%

Reaction to Plot Point 1:

Reactive. Character still hasn't taken charge. Your protagonist spends time in reaction mode—a snowball effect is created with focus on plot point 1. They should be responding to the events of your first plot point and pushing the plot forward. They scramble to understand this New World and the events that transpired.

Pinch Point 1:

A reminder of the antagonistic force that usually appears about halfway between the first plot point and the midpoint (second plot point). A pinch point is sometimes also referred to as a “villain beat”. It’s a plot point for the antagonistic force in the story—a reminder of the stakes.

In What Lies Between, this is the first trial, which falls almost exactly halfway between the beginning of Part 2 (Act 2 Part A) and Part 3 (Act 2 Part B).

Development (Skills learned for Act 3):

List any skills and information acquired that will be useful in Act 3.

Plot Point 2 (The Midpoint):

Often known as a second inciting event and may mirror the first inciting event, but not always. A moment of truth. Primary goal change. Protagonist becomes active in combating the antagonistic force. Usually a big reveal that shatters/remakes the characters whole world. The character may gain what they think they want at this stage but soon realize it’s not what they need.

In What Lies Between, this is when Nira learns the answer to the question haunting her through the narrative, and realizes the answer cannot save her. Threat intensifies. New goal is needed.

Act 2 (Part B): 51-75%

Reaction to Plot Point 2 (goal shift):

The character begins to take action here and is no longer simply reactive. Act 2 (Part B) should snowball from the Midpoint. Thanks to new understanding, the protagonist forms goals and moves forward, making positive progress against antagonistic force. In a positive arc, this would see the character beginning to challenge their misbelief. In a negative/stagnant arc, they fail to challenge that belief and lean deeper into it.

Pinch Point 2 (stakes rise):

Reminds readers of the stakes. Often puts the protagonist's back against a wall and creates room for more revelations, necessary to fulfillment/detriment of character arc. Usually foreshadows plot point 3 and heightens stakes for readers.

In What Lies Between, this is the second trial, which begins almost exactly halfway between Part 2 {Act 2 Part B) and Part 4 {Act 3}.

Revelations:

What has the character learned about themselves and the external plot at this point. How is this going to shape their arc going forward? Positively? Negatively? Stagnant?

Plot Point 3:

Usually follows a dark moment for the protagonist. They're forced to confront their inner struggle/misbelief/lie before they break into Act 3. In a negative change/stagnant change arc, they fail to fully confront and instead might embrace this belief.

Act 3: 76-100%

Reaction to Plot Point 3:

A continuation of plot point 3 and its consequences. Sees the character creating a new final goal/decision that will help them defeat the antagonistic force for good—or give up entirely.

Climax:

A turning point that forces protagonist/antagonist into final confrontation. Only one of these forces can be victorious.

Climactic Moment:

Character's goal is achieved (or failed, as in tragedy). Sometimes those goals are achieved with great cost and moral expense.

Resolution:

Character embraces/denies their New World. Final emotion.

Closing Line:

The final line to close out the story. Or in cases of a cliffhanger, to foreshadow the next one...

