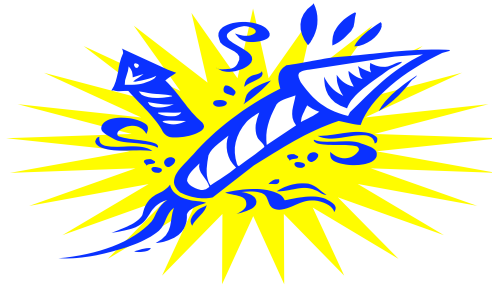


UNDERSTANDING ELEMENTS OF PLOT

A FIREWORKS ANALOGY



PLOT

Definition: Plot is the succession of events which go together in a story. Plot and story are NOT the same things. The plot is the particular manner in which the writer decides to tell the story. It is the way the playwright tells the story, not the story itself.

SOME OF THE ELEMENTS OF PLOT

Here is an analogy that often helps students when thinking about the elements of the plot. Think of the plot of the story as if it were a fireworks show. Each part of the plot then leads to a bigger and more spectacular display of fireworks until we reach the “grand finale”.

INCITING INCIDENT

The inciting incidents are the events that take place before the curtain goes up or the story starts. We see the effects of these events, but never actually see the events in the show. In our fireworks analogy, the **INCITING INCIDENT** is like lighting the fuse. The crowd never sees the fuse lit, but they see the effects of a lit fuse, which sets the whole fireworks display in motion. The audience learns about the inciting incident in the **EXPOSITION**.

EXPOSITION

The **EXPOSITION** gives us background information that the audience has to know in order to enter the world of the play. In the fireworks analogy, the **EXPOSITION** could be best described as the first streak of light that pierces the sky, telling a crowd where the fireworks will be exploding. The streak itself is not all that interesting, but it leads to the first explosion, which becomes interesting.

CONFLICT

The **CONFLICT** is the explosion of the first firework in the show. It is the moment when the main action (plot) really begins.

CRISIS

The major **CRISIS** can be thought of as the turning point in the action that causes a shift in the action. The major **CRISIS** is built up through a series of complications & conflicts throughout the plot (the **BUILD** or **RISE** or **ACTION**). In terms of fireworks, the **CRISIS** is a series of vivid explosions before the “last big bank” or the show-stopper. Neither the fireworks nor the characters will be the same after this moment.

CLIMAX

This is the biggest moment in the play and what all of the prior fireworks lead to; it's the **GRAND FINALLY!** This is where the main character (or characters) is either triumphant in meeting their main objective or they give up the struggle. It is the point of maximum intensity.

DENOUEMENT

After the final explosion of fireworks have lit up the sky, the **DENOUEMENT** is much like the final sparks descending to the earth and the smoke clearing as the audience sits quietly in awe. It wraps up all the loose ends leaving the audience with a sense of completion and knowledge of the final outcome.