Story Structure
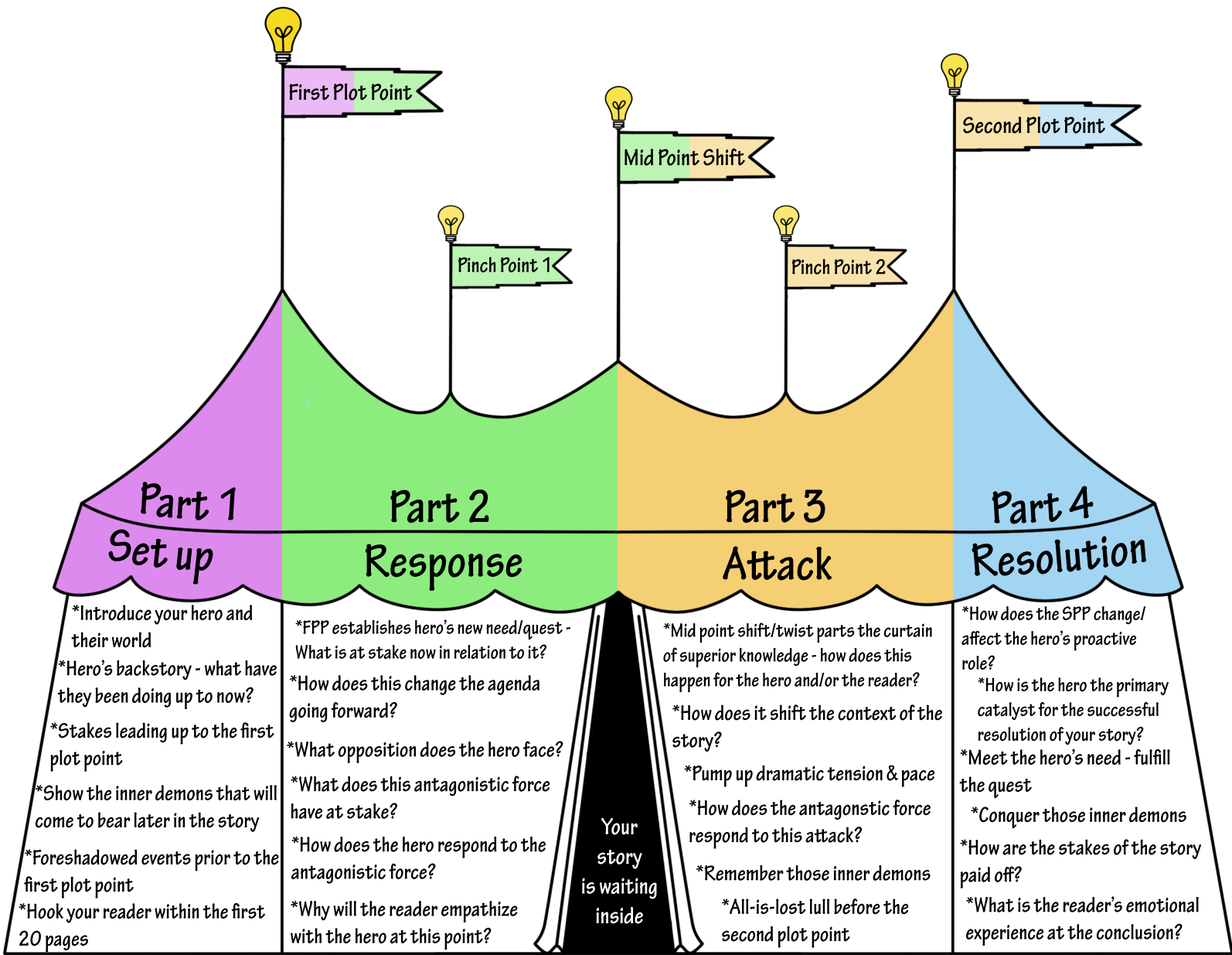## Because even a three ring circus is organized.

What should you start with?
-- What is the conceptual hook/appeal of your story?
-- What is the theme of your story?
-- Develop the through-line (elevator pitch) that captures the essence of your idea in a few sentences.
This is the foundation you'll build your story from.

First Plot Point

Mid Point Shift

Second Plot Point

Pinch Point 1

Pinch Point 2

Part 1
Set up

Part 2
Response

Part 3
Attack

Part 4
Resolution

Your story is waiting inside

Part 1 – Set up
*Introduce your hero and their world
*Hero's backstory - what have they been doing up to now?
*Stakes leading up to the first plot point
*Show the inner demons that will come to bear later in the story
*Foreshadowed events prior to the first plot point
*Hook your reader within the first 20 pages

Part 2 – Response
*FPP establishes hero's new need/quest - What is at stake now in relation to it?
*How does this change the agenda going forward?
*What opposition does the hero face?
*What does this antagonistic force have at stake?
*How does the hero respond to the antagonistic force?
*Why will the reader empathize with the hero at this point?

Part 3 – Attack
*Mid point shift/twist parts the curtain of superior knowledge - how does this happen for the hero and/or the reader?
*How does it shift the context of the story?
*Pump up dramatic tension & pace
*How does the antagonstic force respond to this attack?
*Remember those inner demons
*All-is-lost lull before the second plot point

Part 4 – Resolution
*How does the SPP change/ affect the hero's proactive role?
*How is the hero the primary catalyst for the successful resolution of your story?
*Meet the hero's need - fulfill the quest
*Conquer those inner demons
*How are the stakes of the story paid off?
*What is the reader's emotional experience at the conclusion?

First Plot Point:
-- The single most important event in your entire story.
-- Drives your hero through the ups and downs that will follow. This is where the story starts - where the primary conflict in your story makes its initial appearance front and center.
-- Should come approximately 25% of the way through at the end of your set up section.

Mid-Point Shift/Twist:
-- The curtain of knowledge is parted here, for your hero and/or the reader.
-- Doesn't change the story so much as it changes the understanding of what's going on for the hero and/or the reader.
-- If the hero is privy to this knowledge, it will change their course of action from response mode to attack mode.

Second Plot Point:
-- Final point to inject new information in your story that gives your hero everything they need to be the catalyst in the story's conclusion.
-- No new expository information can come after this point. Only use info and characters already in play.
-- Should be placed approximately 75% of the way through your story.

Pinch Point 1:
-- Something rather simple and quick given to the reader from the point of view of the antagonistic force. Remind them that this force is still out there gunning for our hero.
-- Placed in the middle of Part 2, approximately at the 3/8ths mark in your story.

Pinch Point 2:
-- In the same vein as pinch point 1, give the reader another look at the antagonistic force. Either how good or bad things might be going for the hero that they don't know about yet.
-- Placed in the middle of Part 3, approximately at the 5/8ths mark in your story.

Story structure doesn't care if you're a planner or a pantser - it'll be there regardless of how you write. At least, it *should* be there if you want to make the most of your writing. These words and ideas are certainly not my own, I simply took the knowledge shared by Larry Brooks on his website storyfix.com and presented it here in a way that helps me remember better.

These are the bare minimum bullet points, summarized on a little poster to serve as a reminder of the behind the scenes framework of a story. As someone who has written a great deal of drivel, I can say I look at my writing completely different now. I may never be a fully reformed pantser, and I will probably never embrace outlining every minute detail before starting a first draft, but I'm rather confident that my days of plunking out pages of wandering drivel are over.

Rachel Savage - 2010