



AUTHORS PUBLISH

WRITING THE ESSENTIAL SCENES OF ACT 3



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OVERVIEW

01

What are
essential
scenes?

02

What makes
these scenes
work?

03

What do you
need to pull
them off?

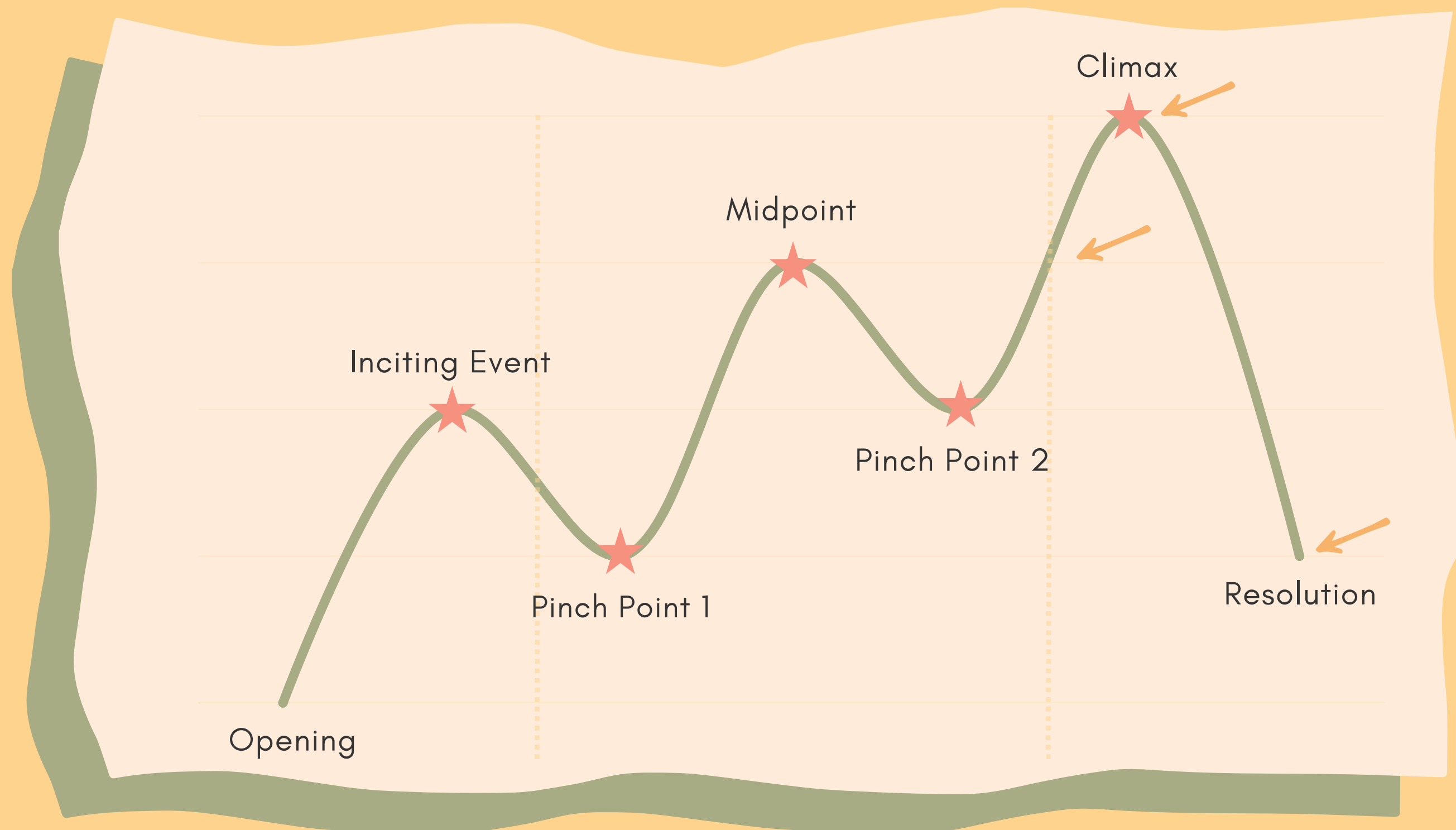
WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL SCENES?

Essential scenes are key beats that define your story's overall plot.

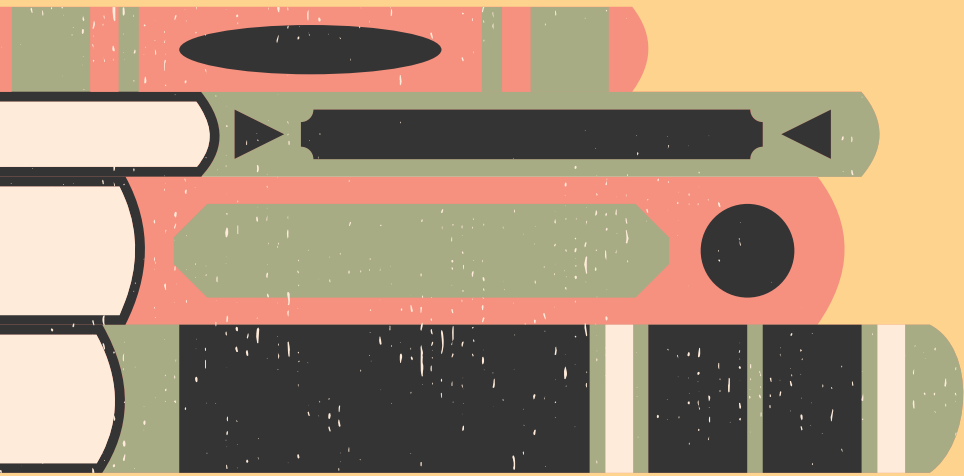
They uphold the narrative structure of your story.



ESSENTIAL SCENES OF ACT 3

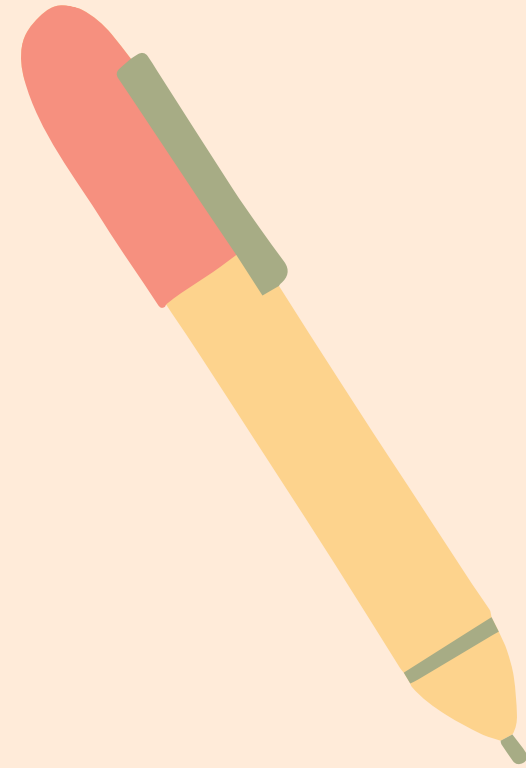


ESSENTIAL SCENES iN ACTION

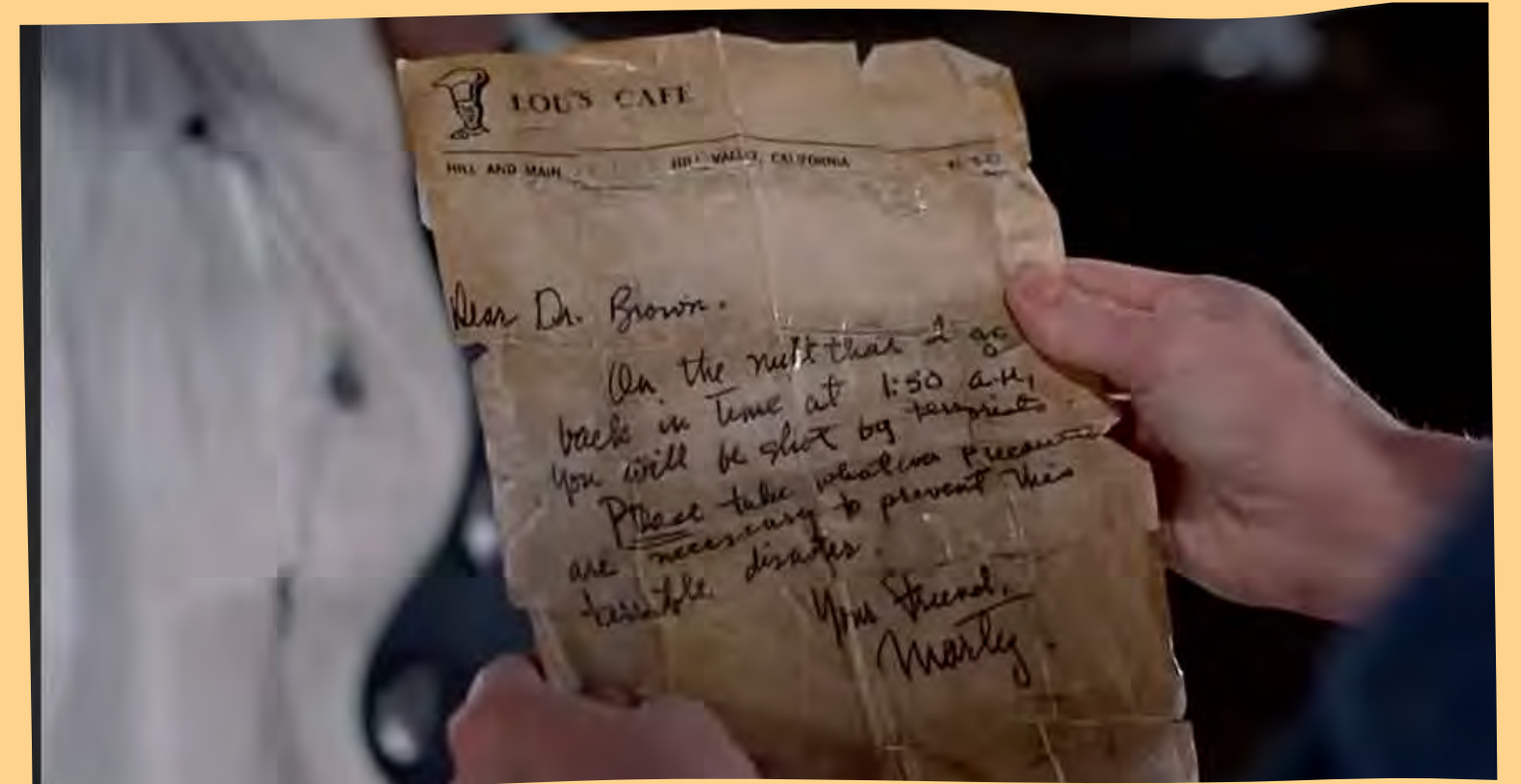




Do not open until
1985



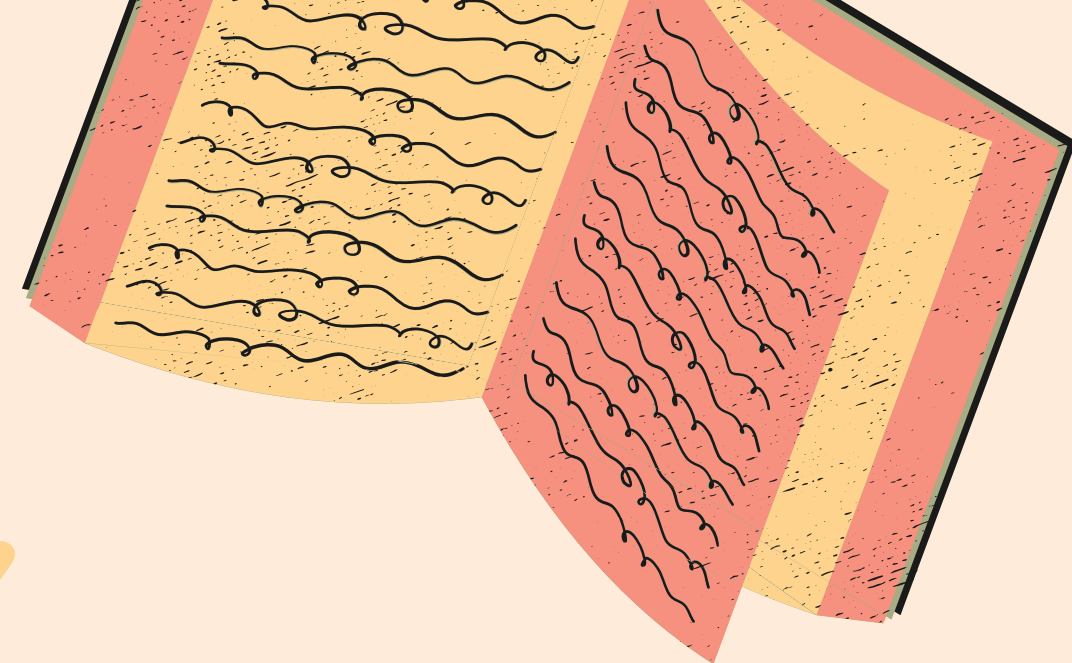




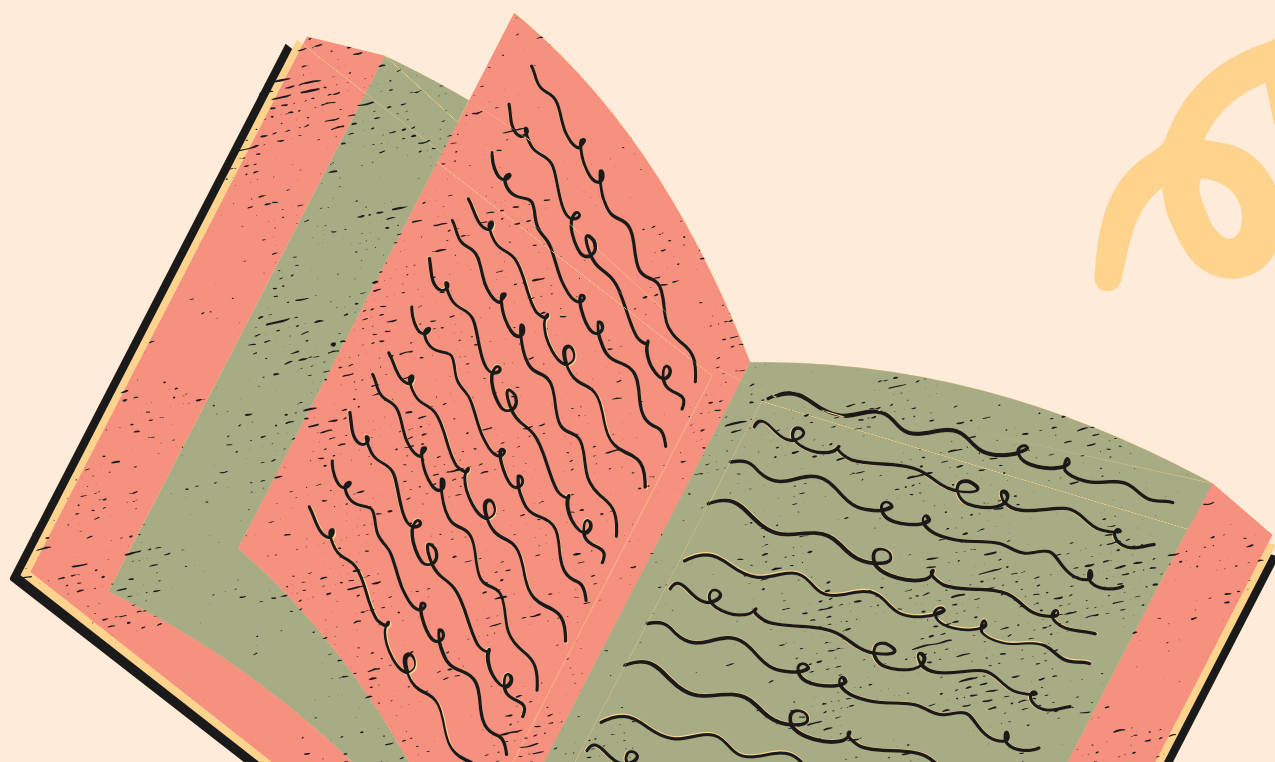


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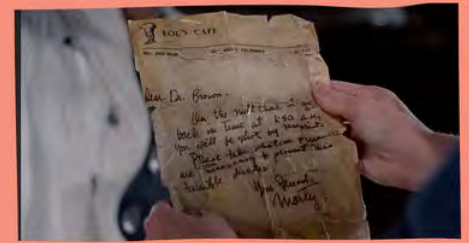
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ESSENTIAL SCENES IN STRUCTURE

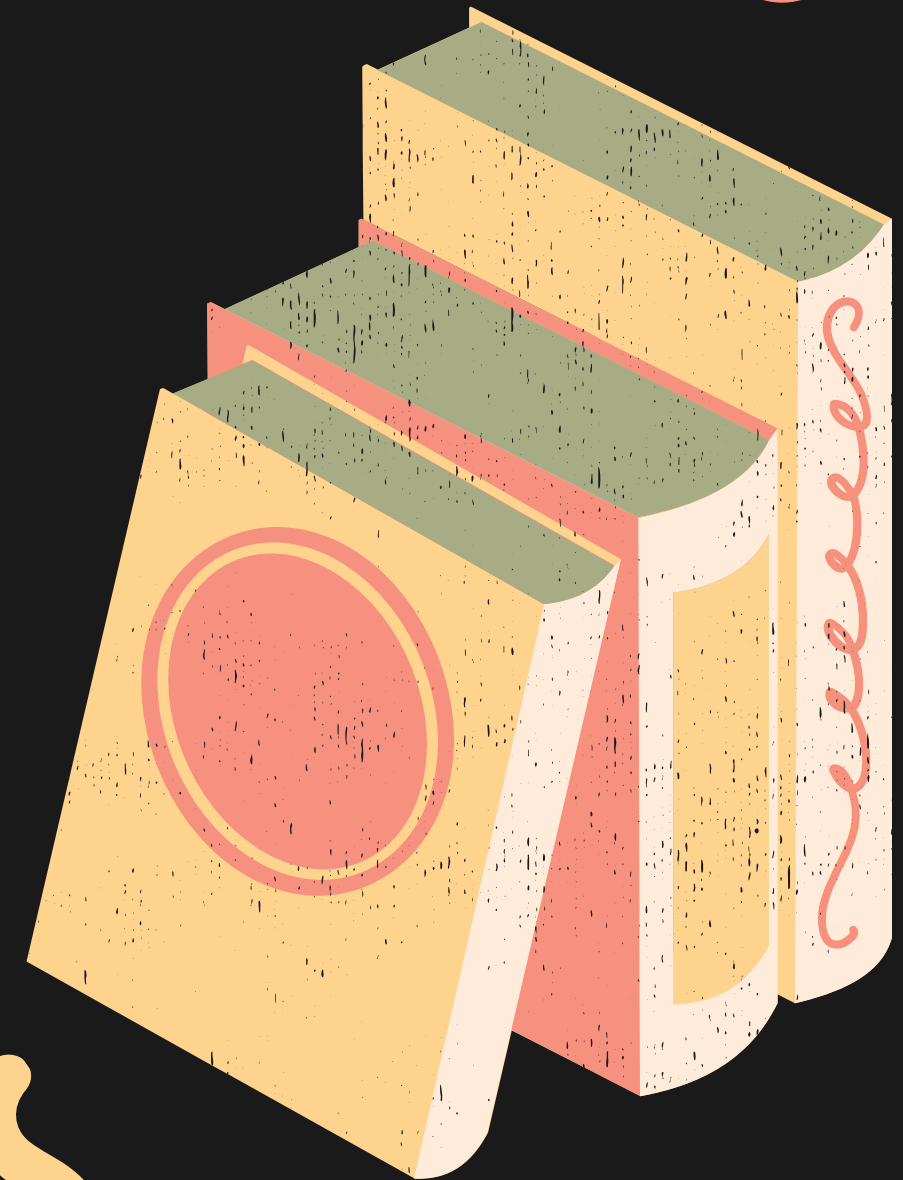
Tension builds and stakes increase heading into the climax.

Marty's actions have a direct impact on the outcome of the story.

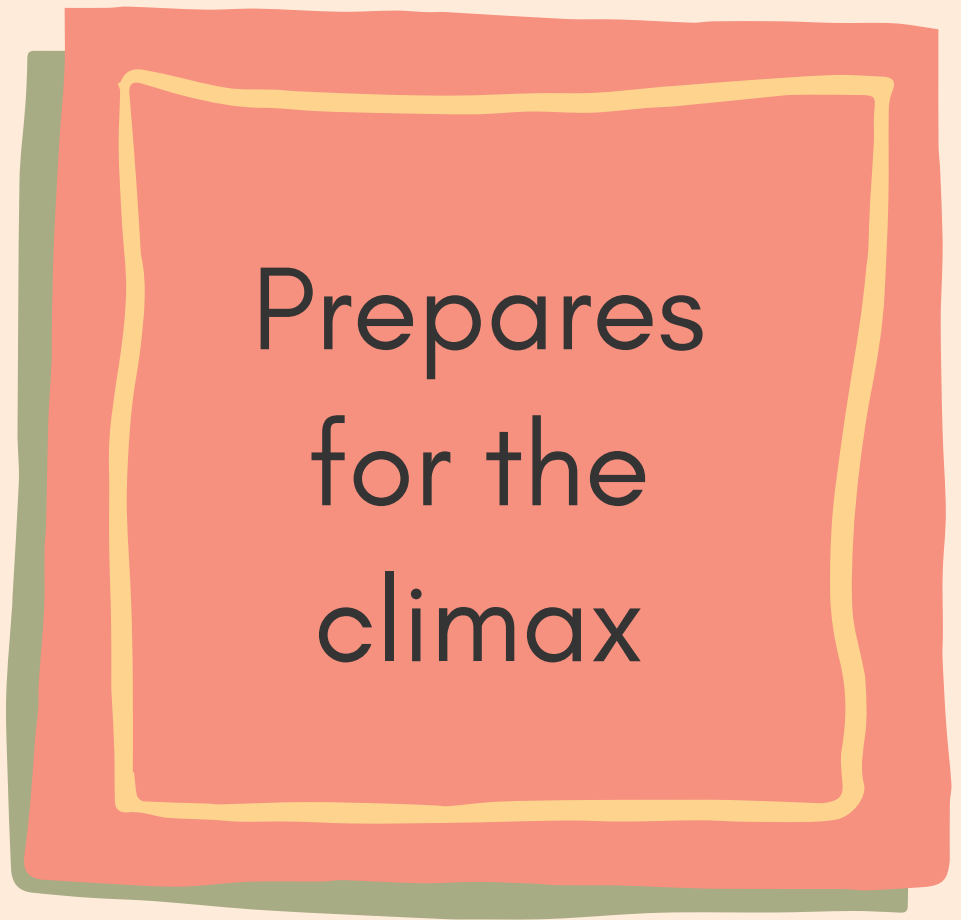


THE PLAN

IT ALL COMES TOGETHER



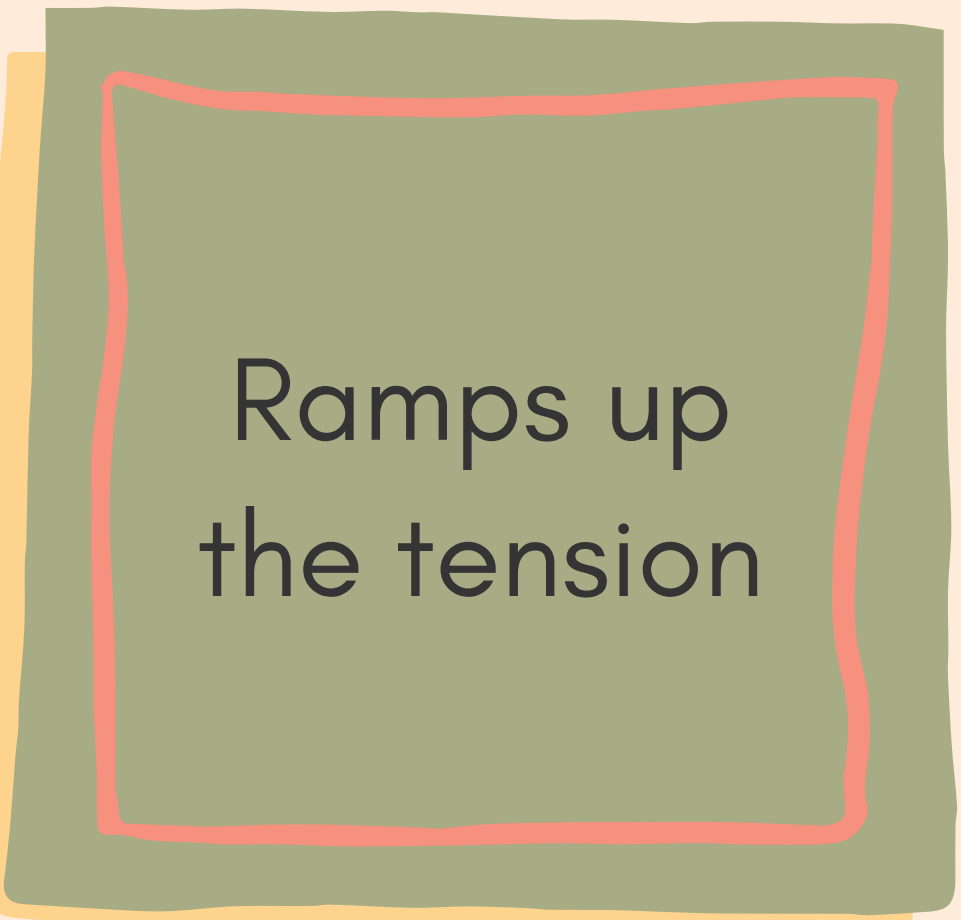
THE PLAN



Prepares
for the
climax



Restates the
stakes



Ramps up
the tension

THE PLAN

Shifts the story's focus back to the external conflict, preparing readers for the heightened pace and tone.

01

Outline what's at risk for the protagonist.

02

Provide a clear source of tension right away.

03

Balance tension and drama.

THE PLAN

What is the major conflict awaiting your protagonist?

What obstacles stand between it and them?

How are they prepared to face these obstacles?

Who and what do they rely on for support?

EXAMPLE



Do not open until
1985

CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

IT ALL FALLS APART

CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

Kicks off
the
climax

Disrupts the
protagonist's
plans

Dramatically
raises the
stakes

CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

Introduces complications to heighten the tension leading into the protagonist's final confrontation.

01

Accelerate the chain of cause and effect.

02

Bring in unexpected obstacles.

03

Fire your Chekhov's Guns.

CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

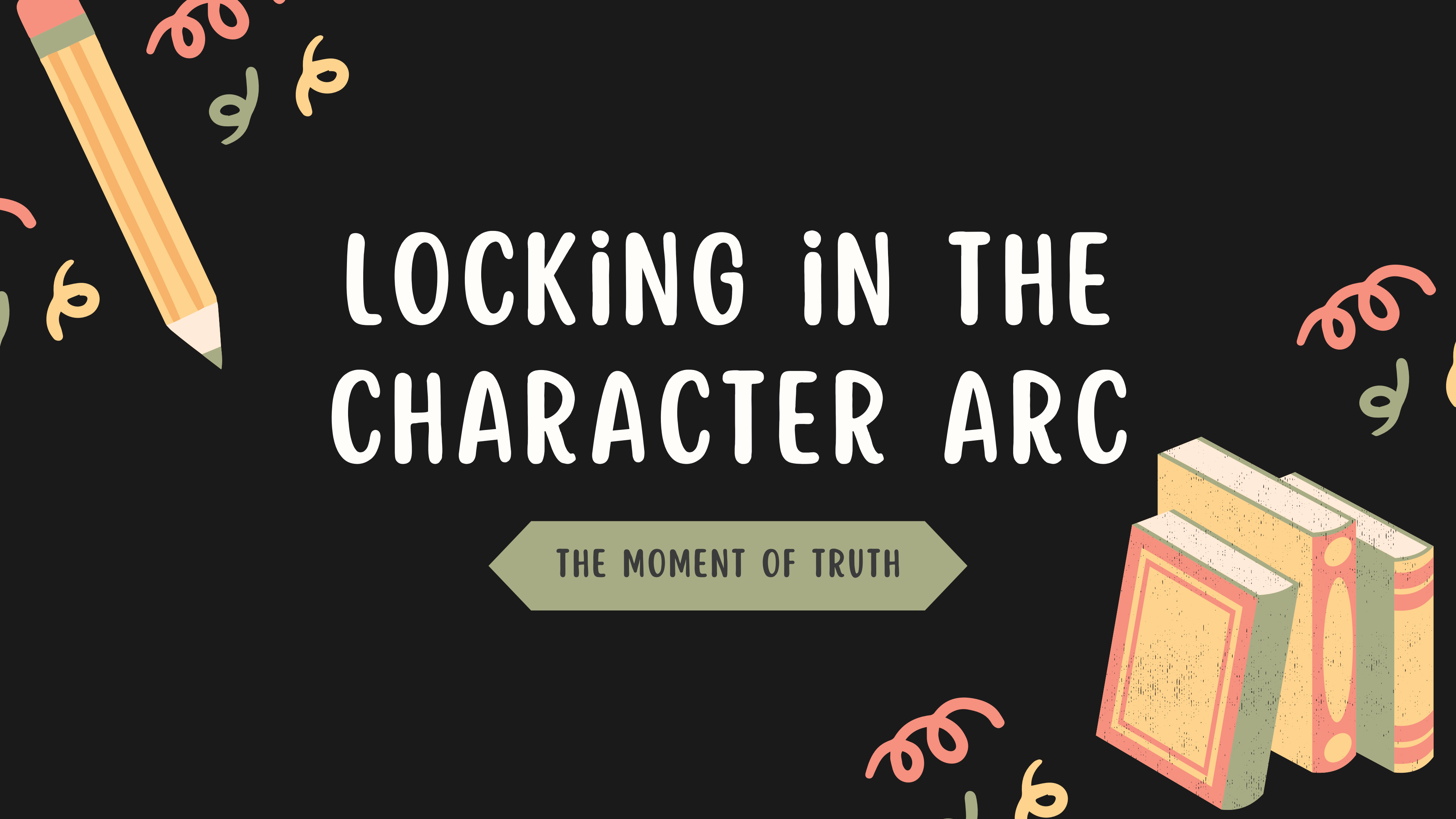
What interrupts
the protagonist's
plan?

What impact does
this have in the
short term?

How are they at
a disadvantage
for the climax?

EXAMPLE





LOCKING iN THE CHARACTER ARC

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH





LOCKING iN THE CHARACTER ARC

Peaks the
climax

Challenges
the
protagonist

Finishes the
character
arc



LOCKING IN THE CHARACTER ARC

Redirects attention to the internal arc during a pivotal moment for the protagonist, allowing them to complete their personal arc.

01

Create a challenge around the tragic flaw.

02

Slow down the pacing for self-reflection.

03

Base success around the character's skills.

LOCKING IN THE CHARACTER ARC



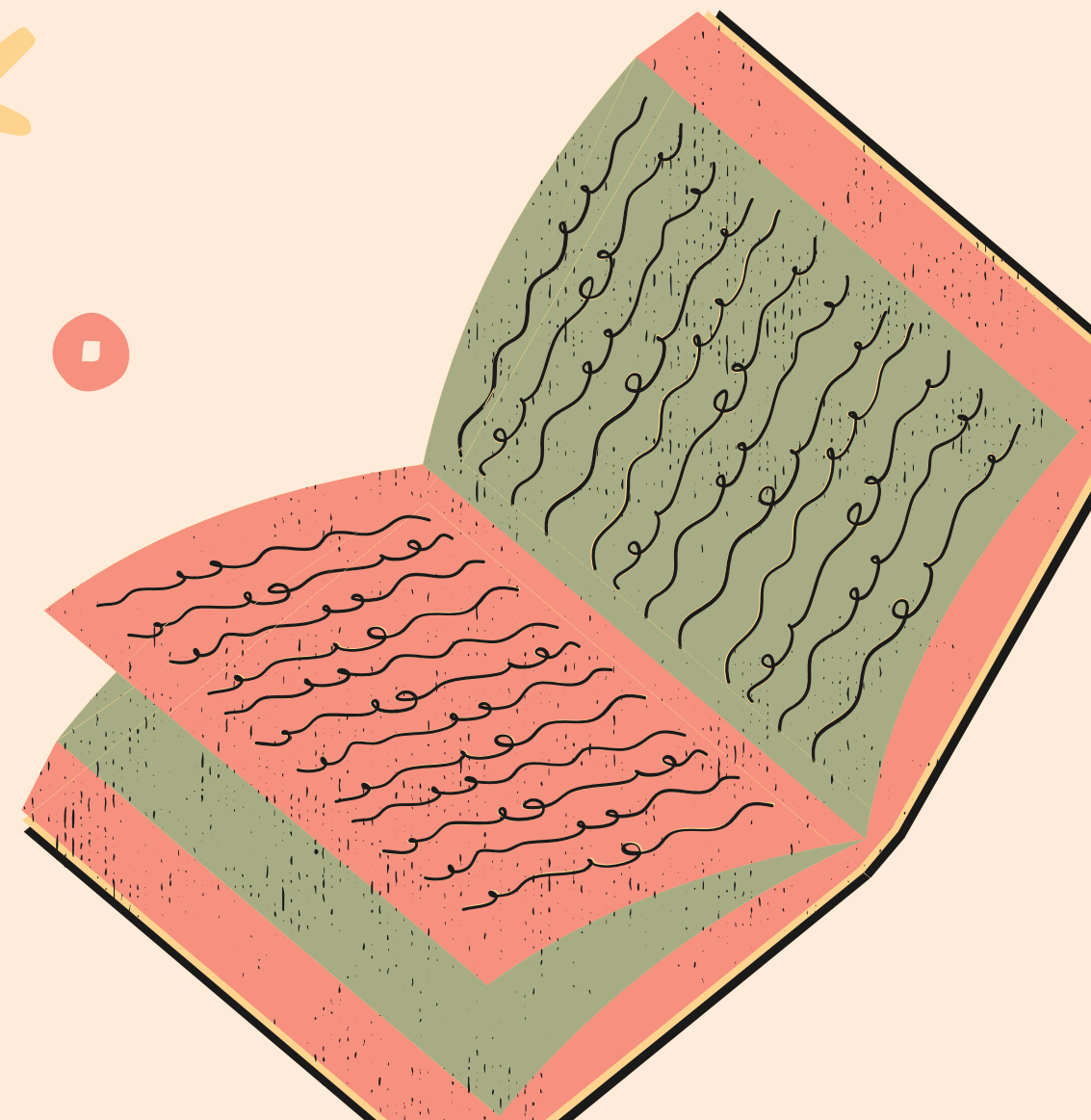
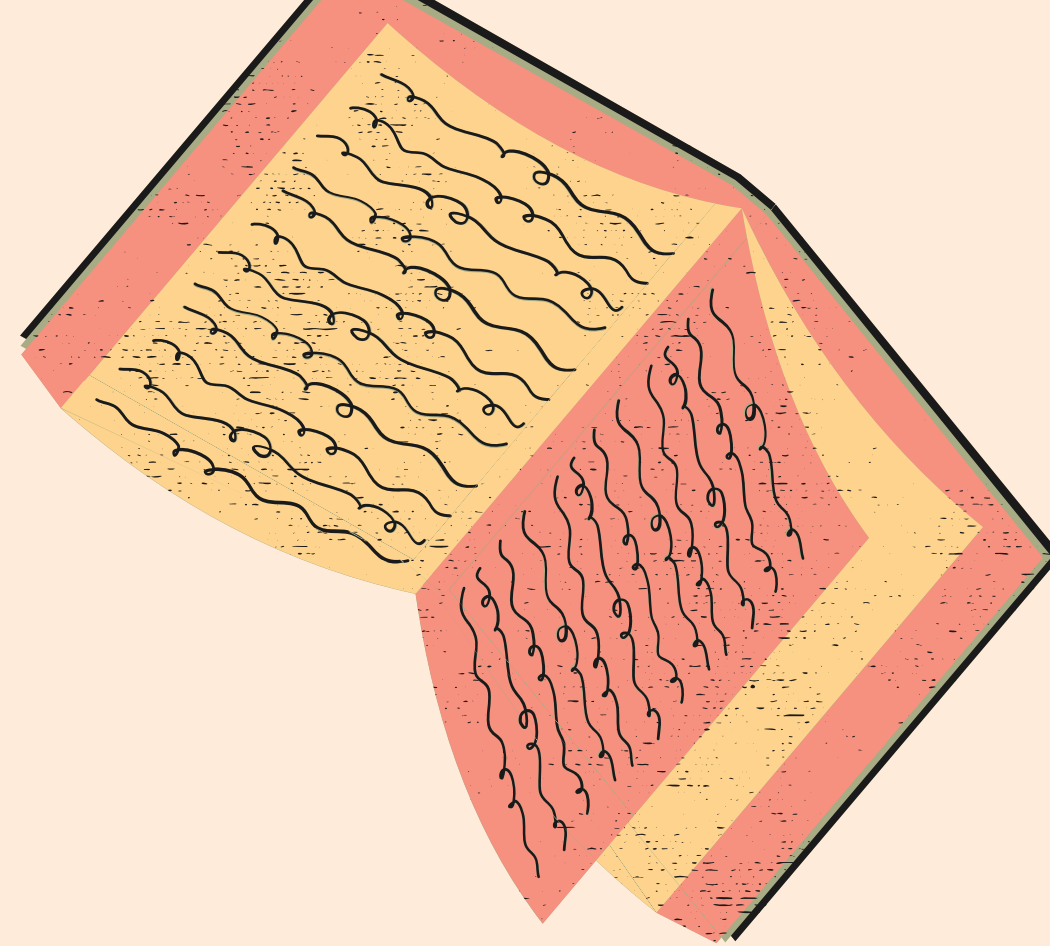
What is the final challenge the protagonist faces?

What is needed for them to overcome it?

How do they use their new perspective to win?

What is the outcome (and cost) of their success?

EXAMPLE



CLOSING SCENES

TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

CLOSING SCENES

Brings down
tension and
pacing

Establishes
the new
status quo

Ends the
story

CLOSING SCENES

Leaves readers with a clear conclusion to all major plot lines and story questions.

01

Explore the world post-climax.

02

Establish the characters' new goals.

03

Take time to address remaining questions.

CLOSING SCENES

What is the status quo after the climax?

What is the most notable difference from the start?

What is the protagonist's biggest takeaway?

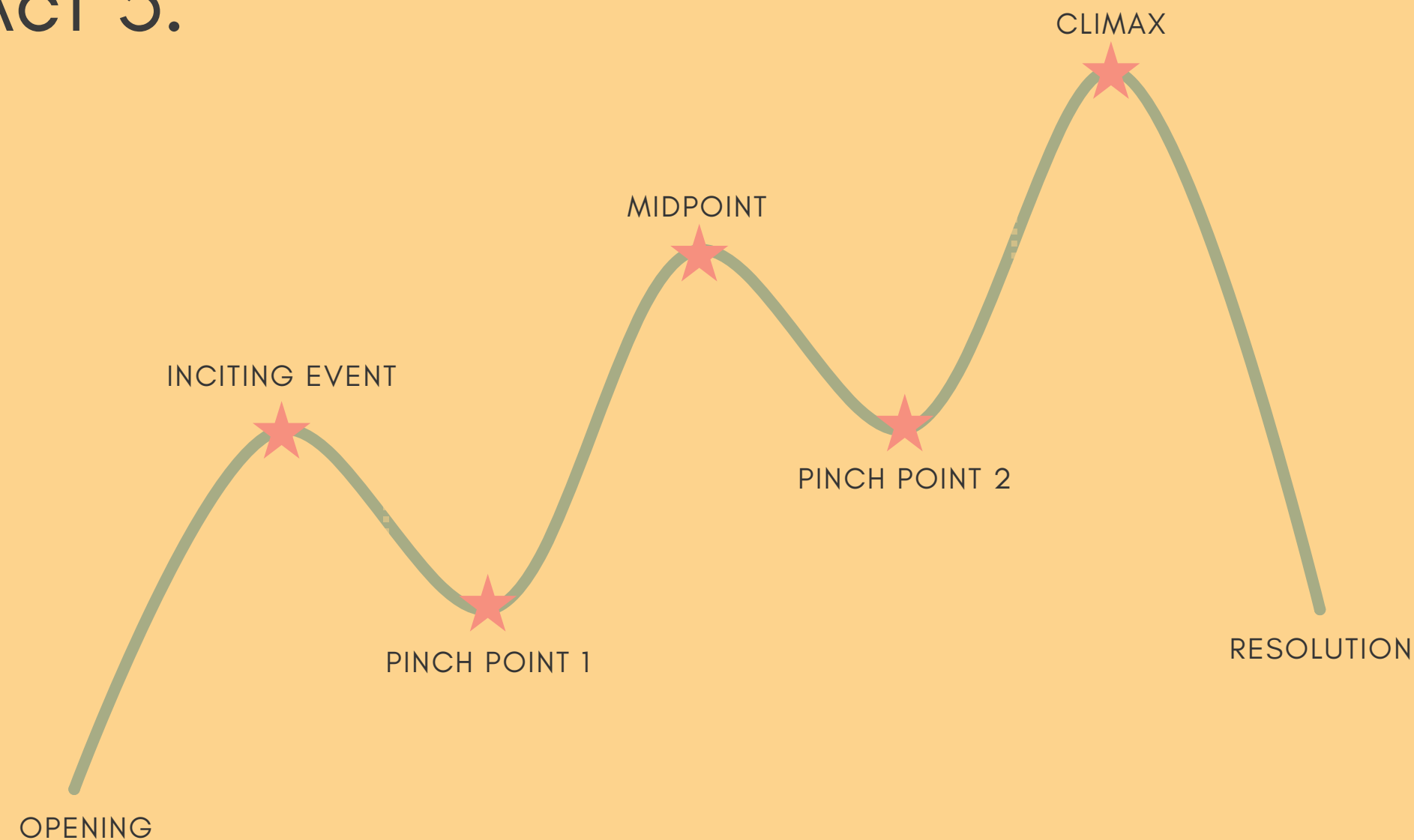
How have other aspects of their life changed?

EXAMPLE



CONCLUSION

Essential scenes are crucial to the structure of Act 3.



CONCLUSION

The Plan establishes the stakes and sets reader expectations heading into the climax.

Contact with the Enemy kicks off the climax and ramps up tension as your protagonist moves toward their final challenge.



CONCLUSION

Locking In the Character Arc confronts that challenge, giving your protagonist a chance to overcome their flaws and save the day.

The Closing Scenes provide resolution to the story and bring everything to an end.



THANK YOU!



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