**STORY ELEMENTS CHECKLIST FOR GENERATING INDEX CARDS**

**ACT ONE**

• Opening Image

• Meet the Hero or Heroine

• Hero/ine’s Ordinary World

• Hero/ine’s Inner and Outer Desire

• Hero/ine’s Problem

• Hero/ine’s Ghost

• Hero/ine’s Special Skills

• Hero/ine’s Arc

• Inciting Incident/ Call to Adventure

• The Offer S/he Can’t Refuse (possibly)

• Sequence One Climax

• Meet the Antagonist (and/or introduce a Mystery, which is what you do when you’re going to keep your antagonist hidden to reveal at the end)

•  State the Theme/ What’s the story about?

• Introduce Allies

• Introduce Mentor  (possibly)

• Introduce Love Interest  (possibly)

• Plants/Reveals (or Set ups and Payoffs)

• Hope/Fear (and Stakes)

• Ticking Clock (possibly – may not have one and may be revealed later in the story)

• MacGuffin (not all stories have a MacGuffin)

• Central Question/Central Story Action

• Hero/ine’s Plan (may be at beginning of Act II)

• Act One Climax

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**ACT TWO, PART 1**

• Crossing the Threshold/Into the Special World (may occur in Act One)

• Threshold Guardian/Guardian at the Gate (possibly)

• Hero/ine’s Plan (may be introduced in Act One)

• Antagonist’s Plan (may be introduced in Act One)

• Picking up new Allies

• Assembling the Team

• Training Sequence (in some stories)

• Series of Tests

• Bonding with Allies/Love Interest

• The Promise of the Genre

• Attacks by the Antagonist (whether or not the Hero/ine recognizes these as coming from the antagonist)

• In a detective story, Questioning Witnesses, Lining Up and Eliminating Suspects, Following Clues

**THE MIDPOINT**

• Completely changes the game

• Locks the hero/ine into a situation or action

• Can be a huge revelation

• Can be a huge defeat

• Can be a “Now it’s personal” loss

• Can be sex at 60: the lovers finally get together, only to open up a whole new world of problems

**ACT TWO, PART 2**

• Recalibrating: after the shock or defeat of the game-changer in the midpoint, the hero/ine must Revamp The Plan and try a New Mode of Attack

• Escalating Actions/ Obsessive Drive

• Hard Choices and Crossing The Line (questionable or immoral actions by the main character to get what s/he wants)

• Loss of Key Allies (possibly because of the hero/ine’s obsessive actions, possibly through death or injury by the antagonist)

• A Ticking Clock (can happen anywhere in the story)

• Visit to the Goddess

• Reversals and Twists

• The Long Dark Night of the Soul and/or Visit to Death (also known as: All Is Lost) – this is very often the Act II Climax

• Final Revelation

• In a romance, The Lover Makes a Stand – this is very often the All is Lost Moment and Act II Climax

**THE SECOND ACT CLIMAX**

• Is often the All is Lost scene, but also can be a Final Revelation before the end game: the knowledge of who the opponent really is. Or the hero/ine finally sees the whole problem or mystery in a different way. And very, very often these two scenes, All is Lost and the Final Revelation, combine in a double punch.

• Answers the Central Question

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**ACT THREE**

Act Three is often divided into two major sequences, and a third, shorter, but important sequence:

1. Getting there (**STORMING THE CASTLE**)

2. The **FINAL BATTLE** itself

3. The **RESOLUTION** and **NEW WAY OF LIFE**

And it usually contains these elements:

• Either here or in the last part of the second act, the hero/ine will make a new, FINAL PLAN based on the new information and revelation of the second act climax.

• There may be a TICKING CLOCK

• The hero/ine may REASSEMBLE THE TEAM, and there may be another short TRAINING SEQUENCE and/or GATHERING THE TOOLS sequence

• The team often goes in together, first, and there is a big ENSEMBLE BATTLE

• In this battle, we possibly see the ALLY/ALLIES’ CHARACTER CHANGES and/or gaining of their desire(s)

• We may LOSE AN ALLY/ALLIES, or at least think we lose them

• We also get the DEFEAT OF SECONDARY OPPONENTS

• Then the hero/ine almost always goes into the FINAL BATTLE to face the antagonist alone, MANO A MANO

• The final battle takes place in a THEMATIC LOCATION: often a visual and literal representation of the HERO/INE’S GREATEST NIGHTMARE, and is very often a metaphorical CASTLE. Or a real one! It is also often the antagonist’s home turf.

• We see the protagonist’s CHARACTER ARC

• We may see the ANTAGONIST’S CHARACTER ARC, too (but often there is none)

• We get a glimpse of the TRUE NATURE OF THE ANTAGONIST

• Possibly there is a huge FINAL REVERSAL or reveal (twist), or even a whole series of payoffs that you’ve been saving (as in *Back to the Future* and *It’s A Wonderful Life*)

Then in the RESOLUTION or EPILOGUE we have these elements:

• FULL CIRCLE: Not every story uses this technique, but often the hero/ine returns to a place we saw at the beginning of the story, and we see her or his character growth.

• RESOLUTION: We get a glimpse into the New Way of Life that the hero/ine will be living after this whole ordeal and all s/he’s learned from it

• CEREMONY AND AWARDS: Not all stories have this element, but mythic structure stories very often have a step in the Resolution in which the hero/ine and team are honored by the community that they have just saved, or in a romance there is a wedding ceremony or suggestion of a wedding ceremony

• FINAL BOWS: We need to see all our favorite characters one final time (this may happen earlier, in the Team Battle, or it may be combined with the Ceremony)

• CLOSING IMAGE: Which is often a variation of the Opening Image