**LET’S TACO ABOUT THE PLOT**





**Background**

The plot is the most important part of a story because it holds everything together—it is the structure, the stuff that actually happens. Like the taco shell, it might not be the best part, but it is the most *necessary*.

**How to Plot Your Story**

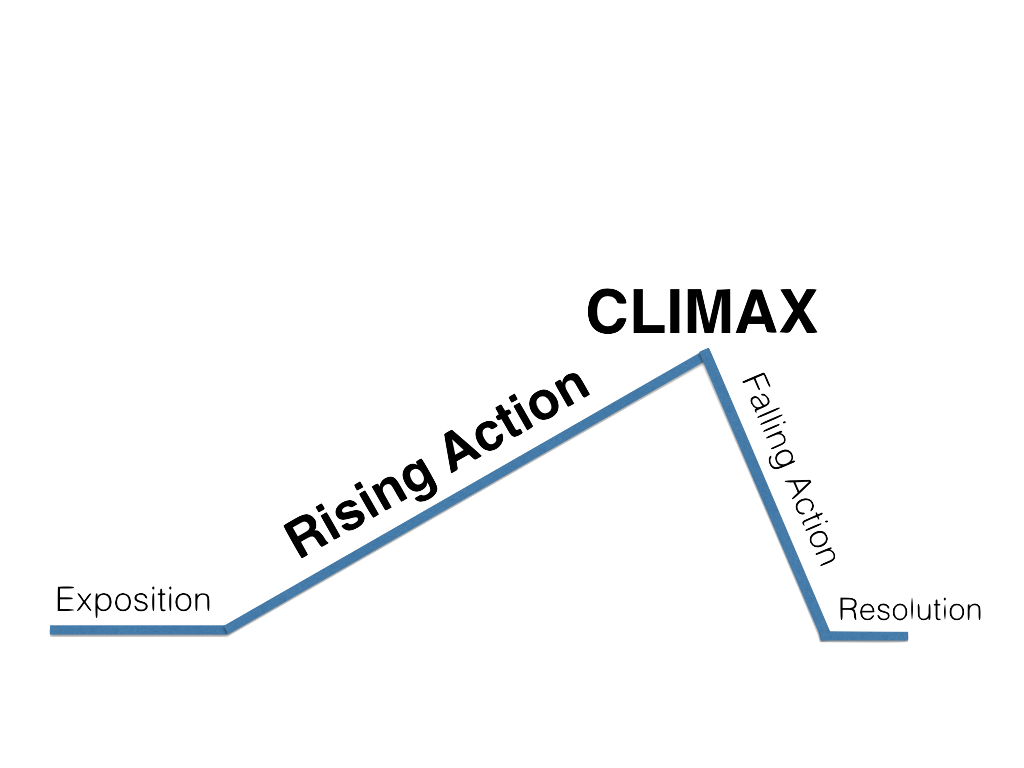
**Step 1**: Create a 1-sentence summary by answering **The Big Three**:

* 1. *Who* is your main character?
  2. *What* do they want?
  3. *How* are they going to get it?

Example from DEATHWATCH by Robb White**:** *Ben, a college student and outdoor guide (Who), must rely on his survival skills and knowledge of geography (How) to escape the Mojave Desert after a rich client, Madec, tries to murder him in order to cover up a fatal hunting accident (What).*

**Step 2**: Put your 1-sentence summary on a plot diagram

**What does Ben want?** To escape the desert from the murderous Madec



**Step 3**: Widen the plot with a **short synopsis,** a 2-4-page summary

* Includes more detailed scenes, specifically the **initial incident** (event that launches the character into the rising action) and the story’s **climax** (when the conflict is resolved)
* Characters and themes begin to emerge
* Does not need to include EVERY scene or detail
* Helps you see any problems with the story and why

**Who is Ben**?

A college-age student and outdoor guide

**How will Ben get what he wants?** By using his survival skills and knowledge of geography

**OTHER PLOTTING TIPS**



* Create **tension** by adding scenes that put the main character’s goal/quest in danger. This engages the reader by making them anxious and curious.
  + - *Example from DEATHWATCH: Ben nearly dies from sun exposure and dehydration during his escape from the desert. Also, there is always the threat of Madec outright shooting him with his hunting rifle.*
* Always go back to the **story arc**—your 1-sentence summary that is the story’s main highway. Ask, “Is this scene moving the story forward along the arc?”

**Activity:** Choose one of your favorite books or movies and taco about the plot.

**Book or Movie:**

**The Big Three:**

* *Who* is the main character(s)?
* *What* do they want?
* *How* do they get it?

**1-Sentence Summary:**

**Add the following elements to the plot diagram:** Who, the initial incident, several events from the How, the climax (What), and the resolution—how the story ends.

