

The Unsexy Part of Novel Writing: Story Structure

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First start with two important questions:

What is the story theme: A universal point of the story (frequently a cliché)

- Friends stick together when times get tough
- True love is the most important thing
- People are more than they appear

What is the story about: Specific to the story (similar to a logline or elevator pitch)

- E.g. Gone With the Wind – A previously privileged young woman in the Civil War South struggles for the love and acceptance of her heart's desire only to find out she has lost the person who truly loved her.

Gone With the Wind by Margaret Mitchell

Ordinary world – Scarlett's world at Tara. She is the center of attention.

Inciting Incident:

- Scarlett declares her love for Ashley (to Ashley, who is engaged to Melanie).
Scarlett's world is rocked when he refuses her love (The thing Scarlett thinks she **wants** – to be on the arm of her heart's desire).
- (War is declared.
Everyone's world is rocked.)

First Plot Point:

- Atlanta comes under siege so Scarlett is forced do so something (to start her journey to the thing she actually **needs** – true love/real relationship). She has to escape to Tara.

Turning Point:

- The war ends.
Scarlett is on the offensive – she has to save Tara and its inhabitants (a goal bigger than herself)

Second Plot Point:

- Scarlett is assaulted. Frank (her new beau) and Ashley ride to save her honor but are captured by Yankees (and Frank dies). (low point)

Climax:

- Melanie dies after a miscarriage, making Scarlett finally realize what is really important – true love (with Rhett, not her infatuation and desire to be with Ashley).

Resolution:

- Scarlett rushes home to tell Rhett she loves him but he's done with her.
- Scarlett declares that she'll carry on, no matter what.

(General structure taken from K.M. Wieland's story structure database: helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com)

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Book References on Story Structure:

Story Genius by Lisa Cron

Techniques of the Selling Writer by Dwight V. Swain

Story by Robert McKee