



*Dream of
Travel Writing*

Story Structure to Take Your Feature Articles to the Next Level

by Gabi Logan, founder of Dream of Travel Writing

A blurred background image of a coffee shop setting. In the foreground, there is a white cup of coffee on a saucer. To the left, a smartphone is visible. In the background, there is a vase of purple flowers and a white napkin. The text "Today, we're going to talk about..." is overlaid in the center.

Today, we're going to
talk about...

1. What does story arc even mean and how does that translate to real life?

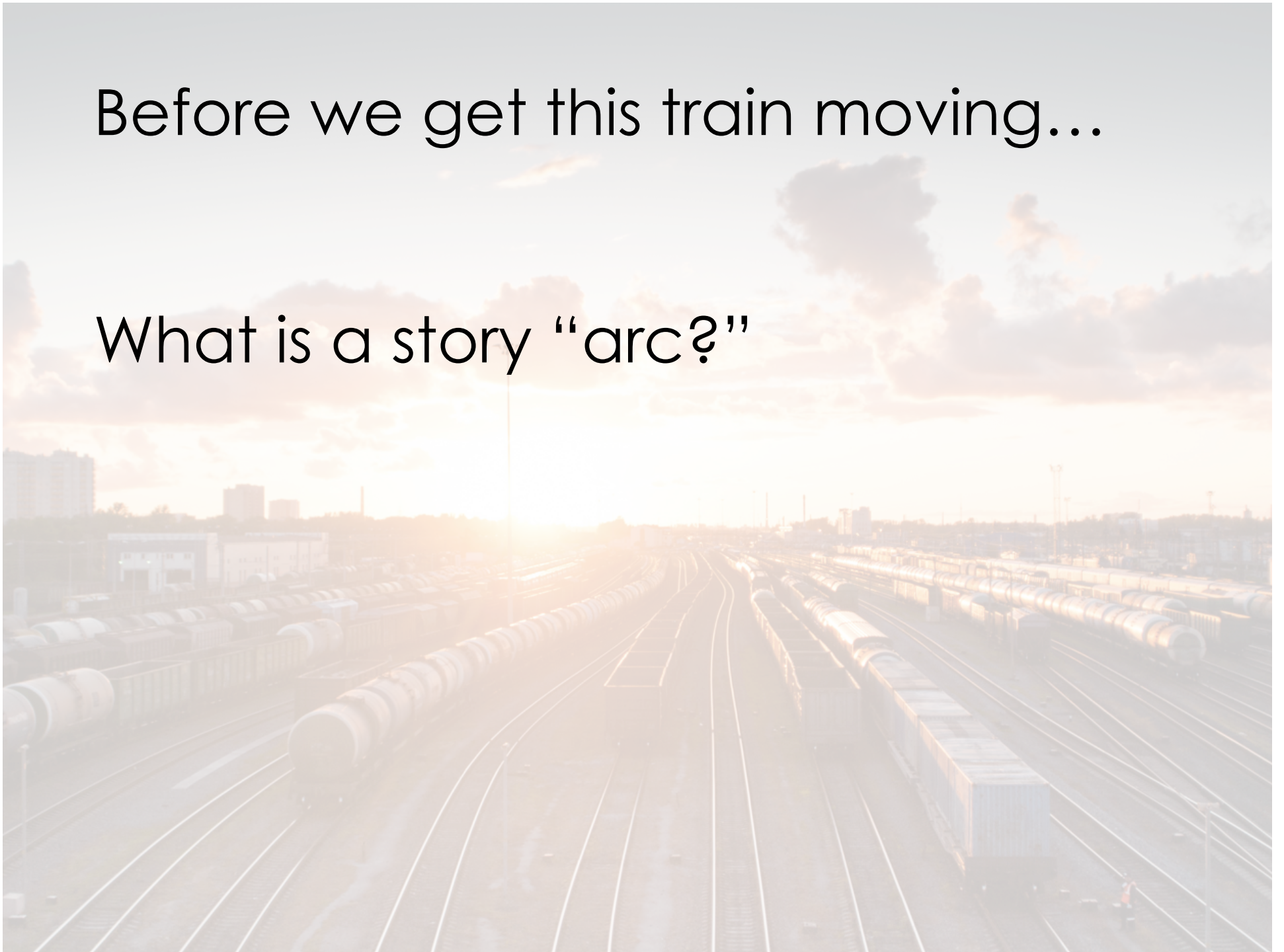
2. How do story arcs work in travel articles specifically?

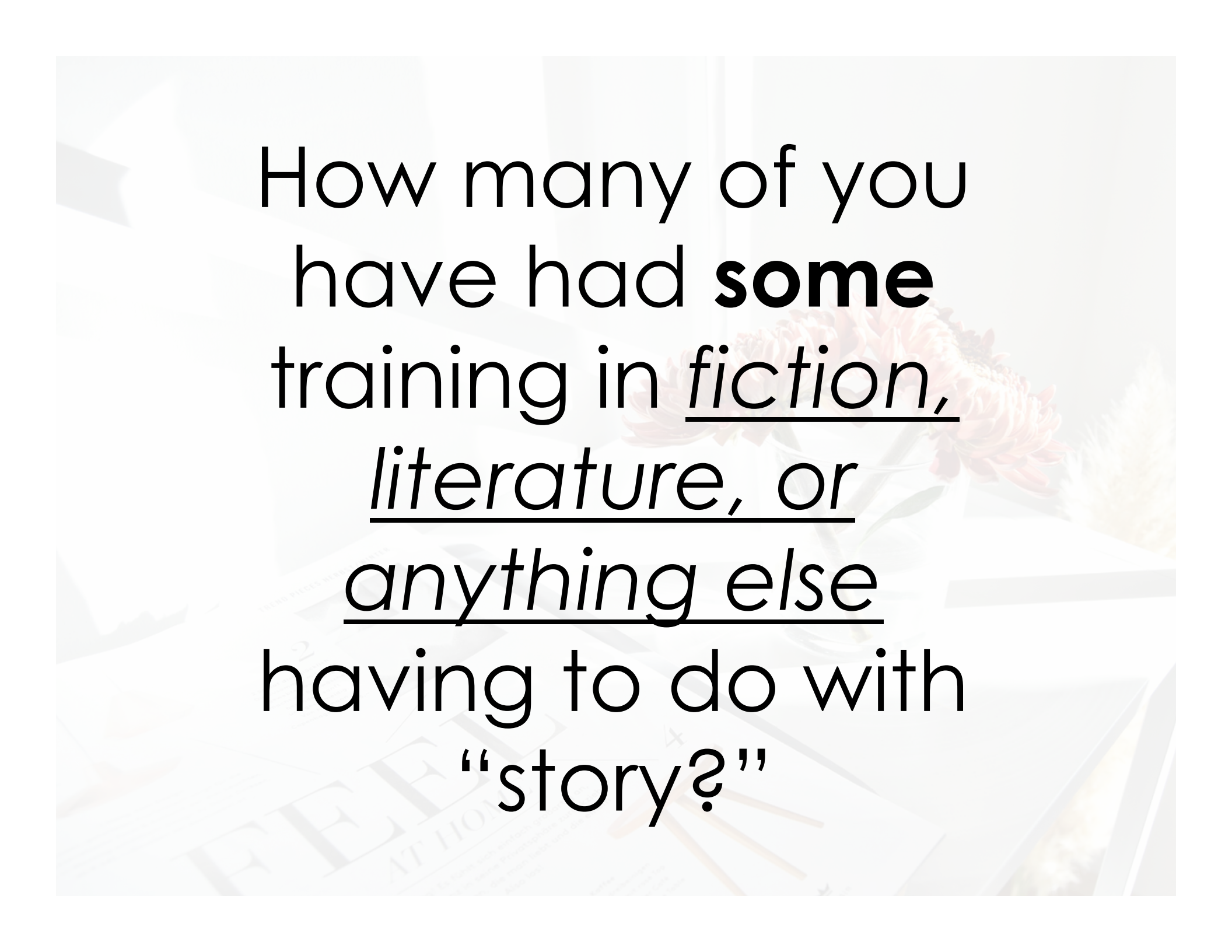
3. What key story structures we can directly trace over our travel features



Before we get this train moving...

What is a story “arc?”



The background of the slide features a soft-focus image of a desk. On the left, there are several books stacked. In the center, a pen lies on a piece of paper. On the right, a vibrant orange-red flower, possibly a gerbera, is in bloom. The overall lighting is bright and airy, with a light beige or cream color palette.

How many of you
have had **some**
training in fiction,
literature, or
anything else
having to do with
“story?”

Tips for Writing Travel Features

- “Develop your story thematically or chronologically, but keep it moving.”
- “End with a lesson, a discovery, or a personal transformation.”
- “A feature writer for a travel magazine or say, for your own blog, is in the business of selling one thing and one thing only: fantasy.”
- “Your first job is to decide on the particular story you want to tell, and the events which make up that story.”

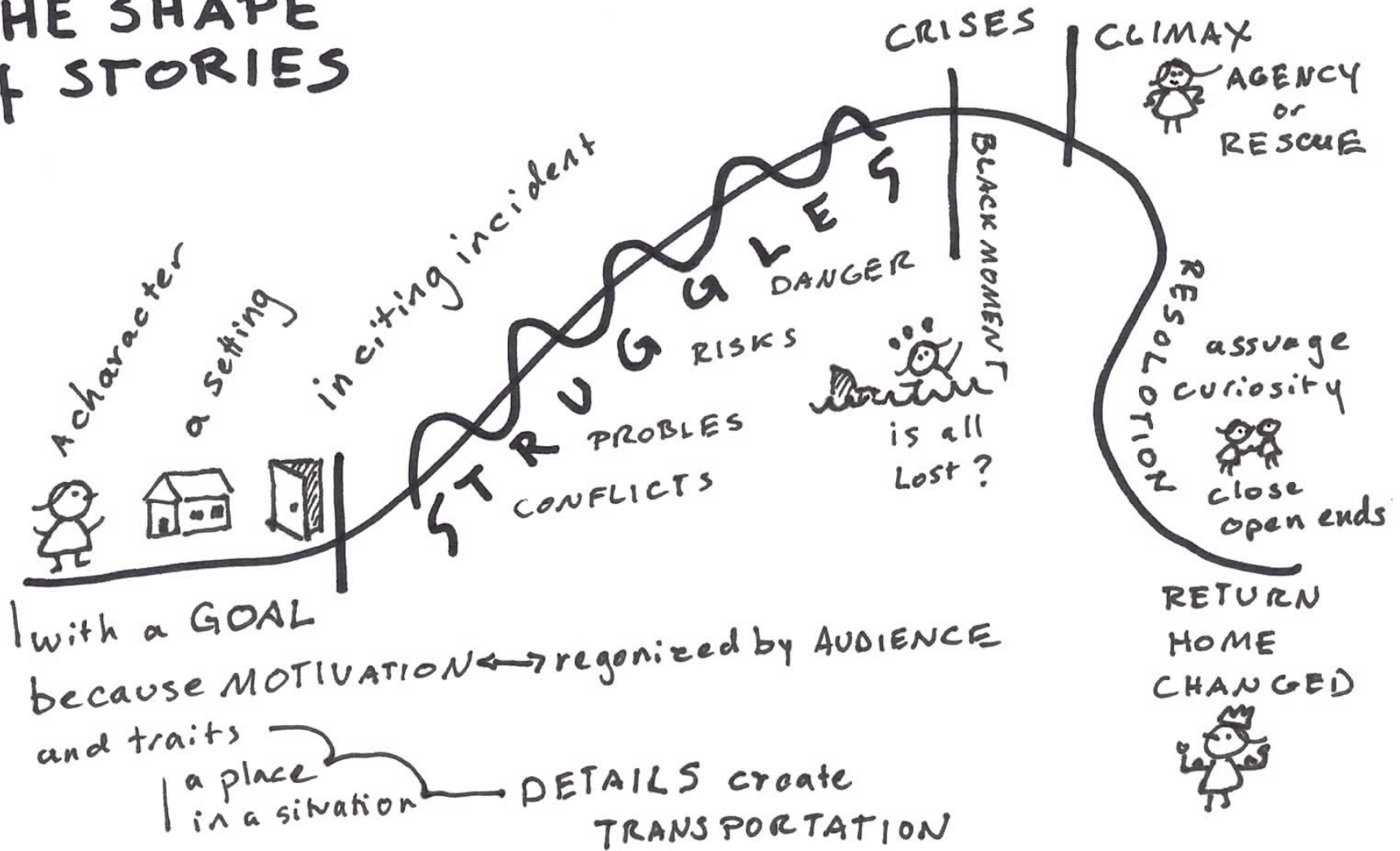
The 5 C's

- Current state
- Conflict
- Climax
- Consequences
- Conclusion

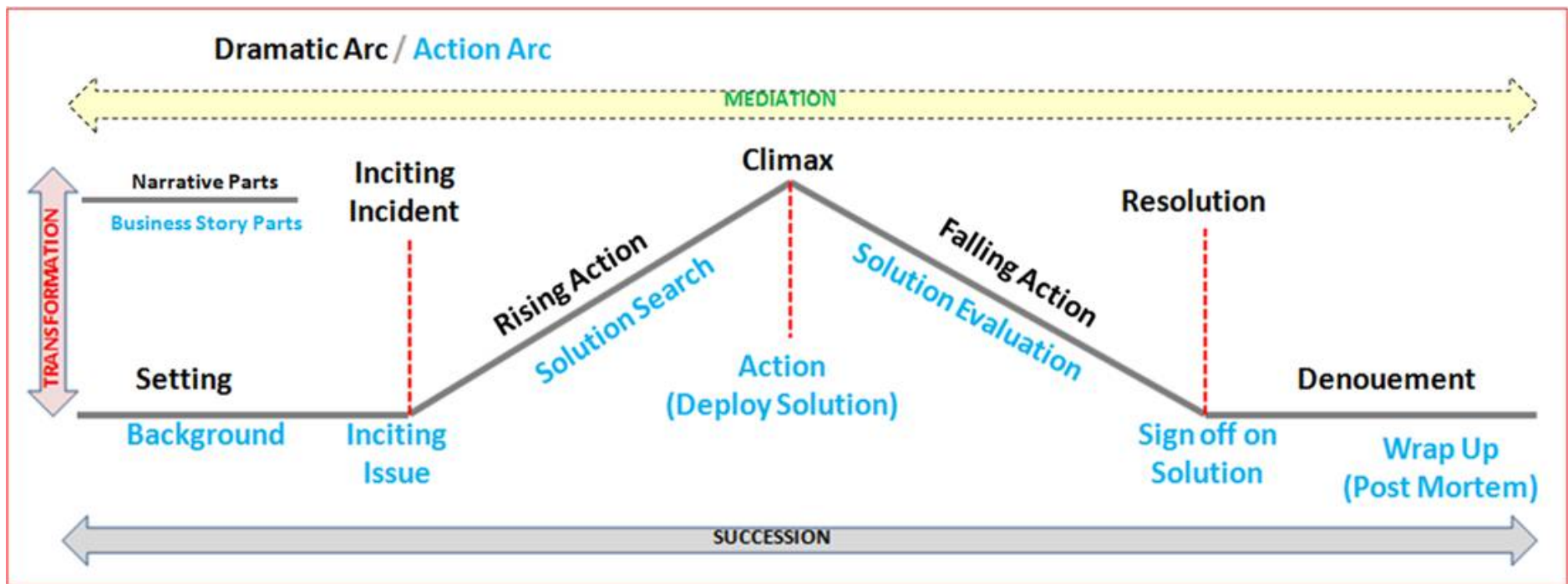


THE SHAPE OF STORIES

@cwodtke



The Very, Very Oversimplified 5-C Structure

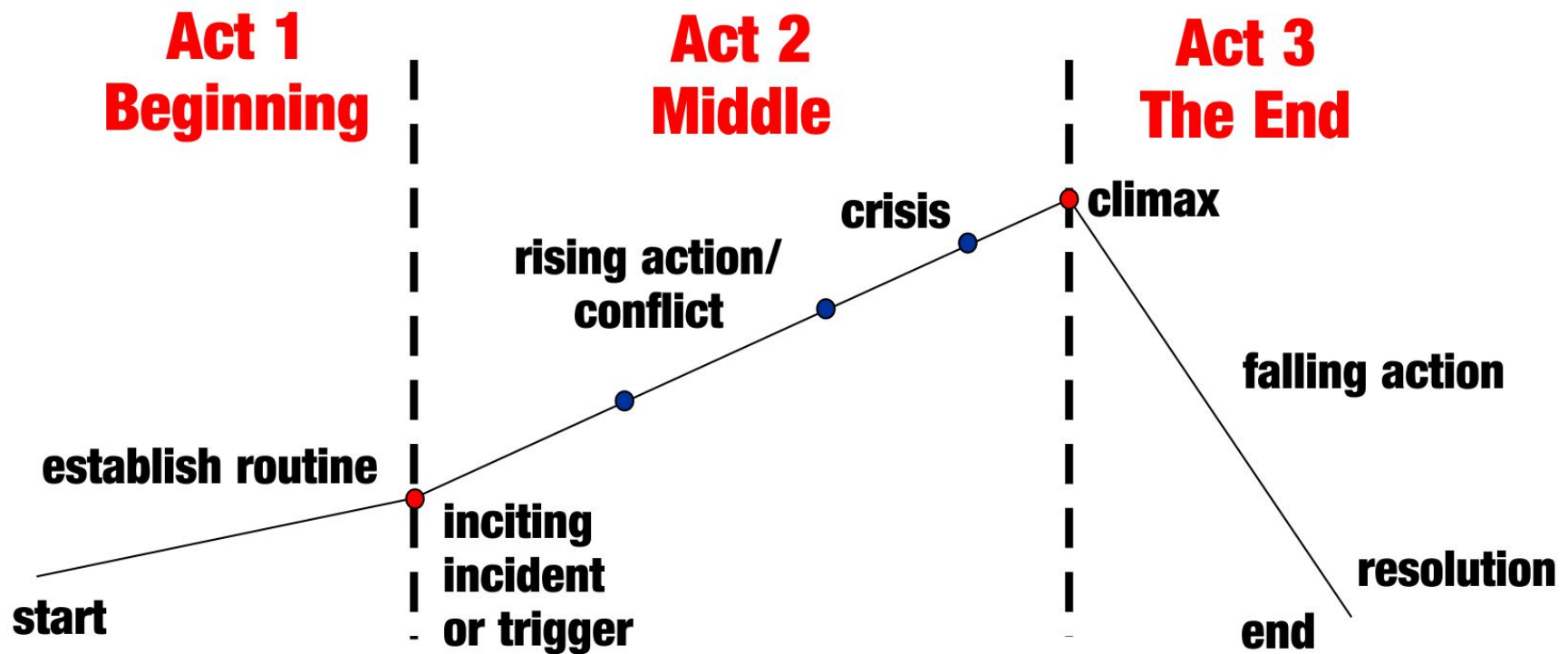


Better...But Still Way Over Simplified



Are There Really Only Three “Acts?”

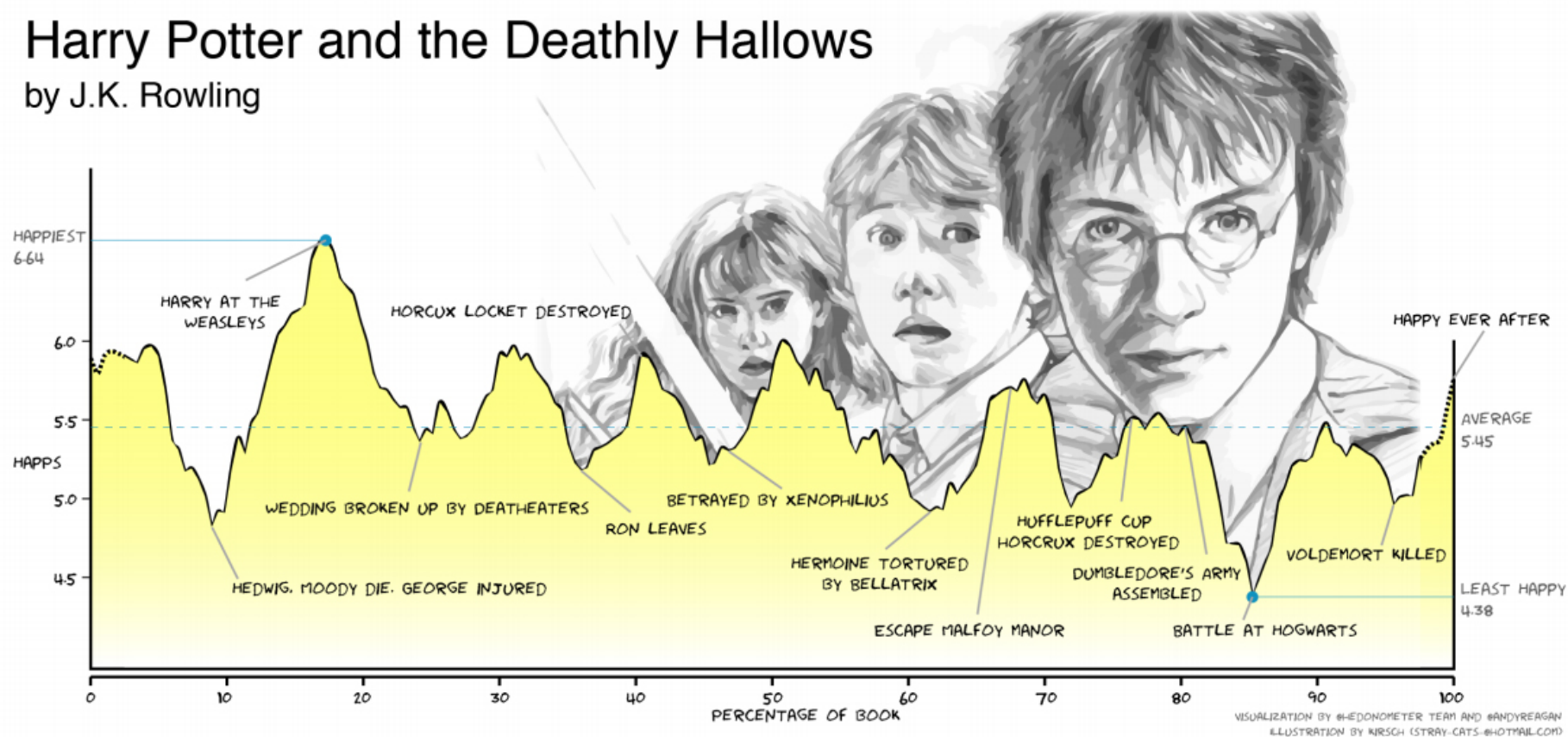
Story Arc



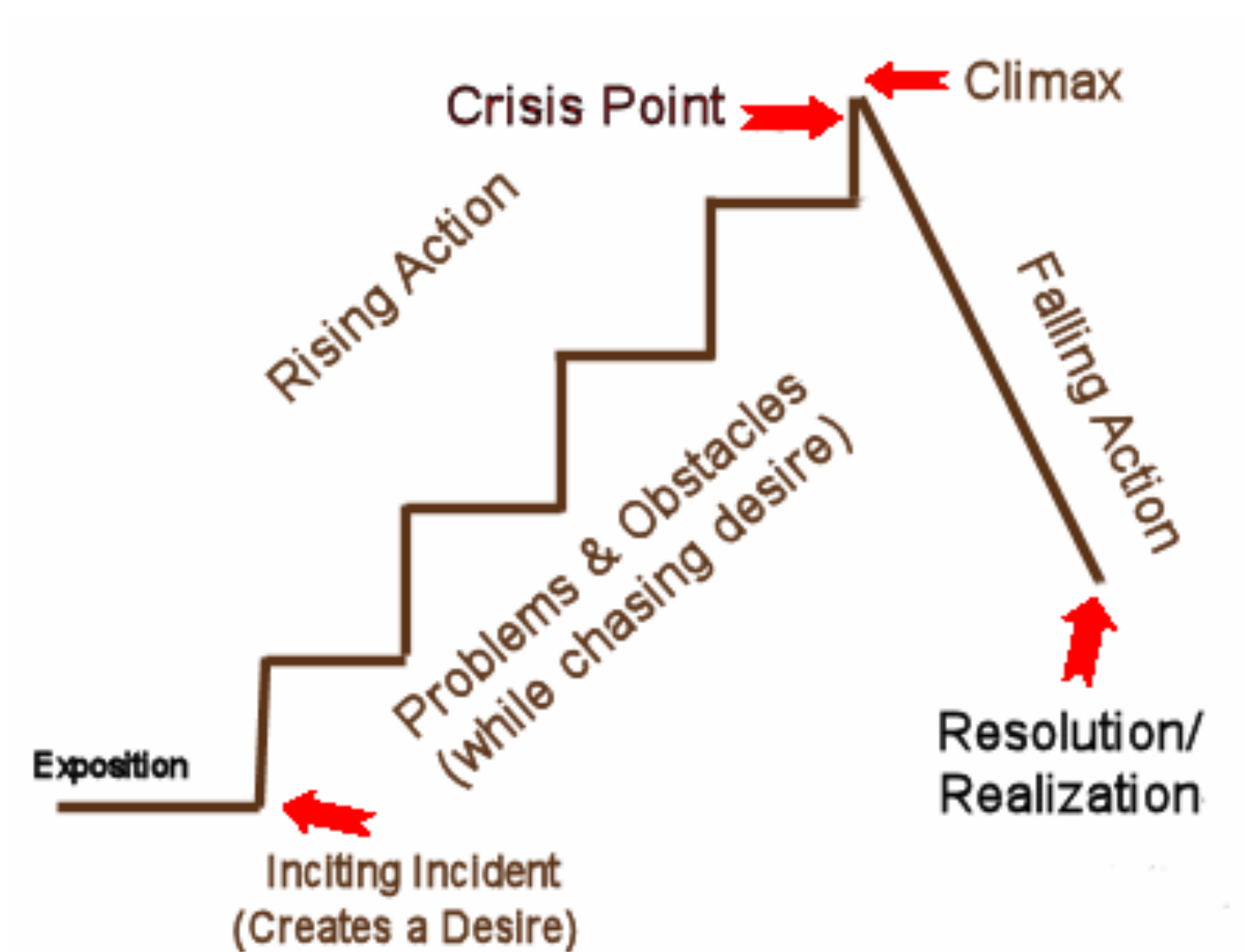
The Longer the Story, the More Up and Downs it Needs

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

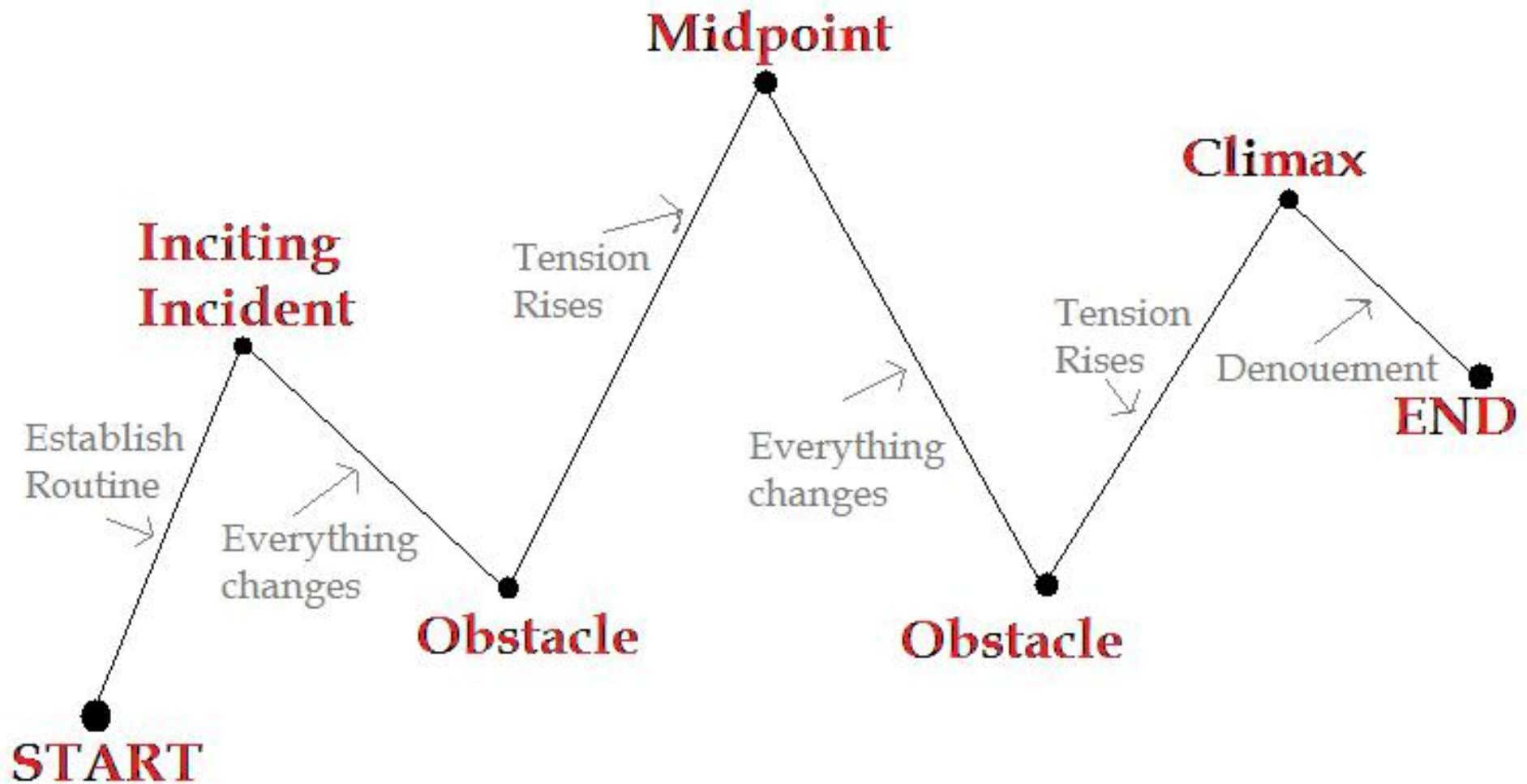
by J.K. Rowling



But Stories Just Aren't That Simple,
Like Harry Potter, That Don't Go Up
Consistently



This “Arc” Is Closer to What We Use
in Travel Articles (pre-time shift)



A hand is holding a grey Kindle e-reader. The screen shows a page of text from a book, with the word 'kindle' visible at the top. The text on the screen is a paragraph of fiction, mentioning characters like Miss Montag and Miss Bürstner. The background is a soft-focus image of a person's face and a book.

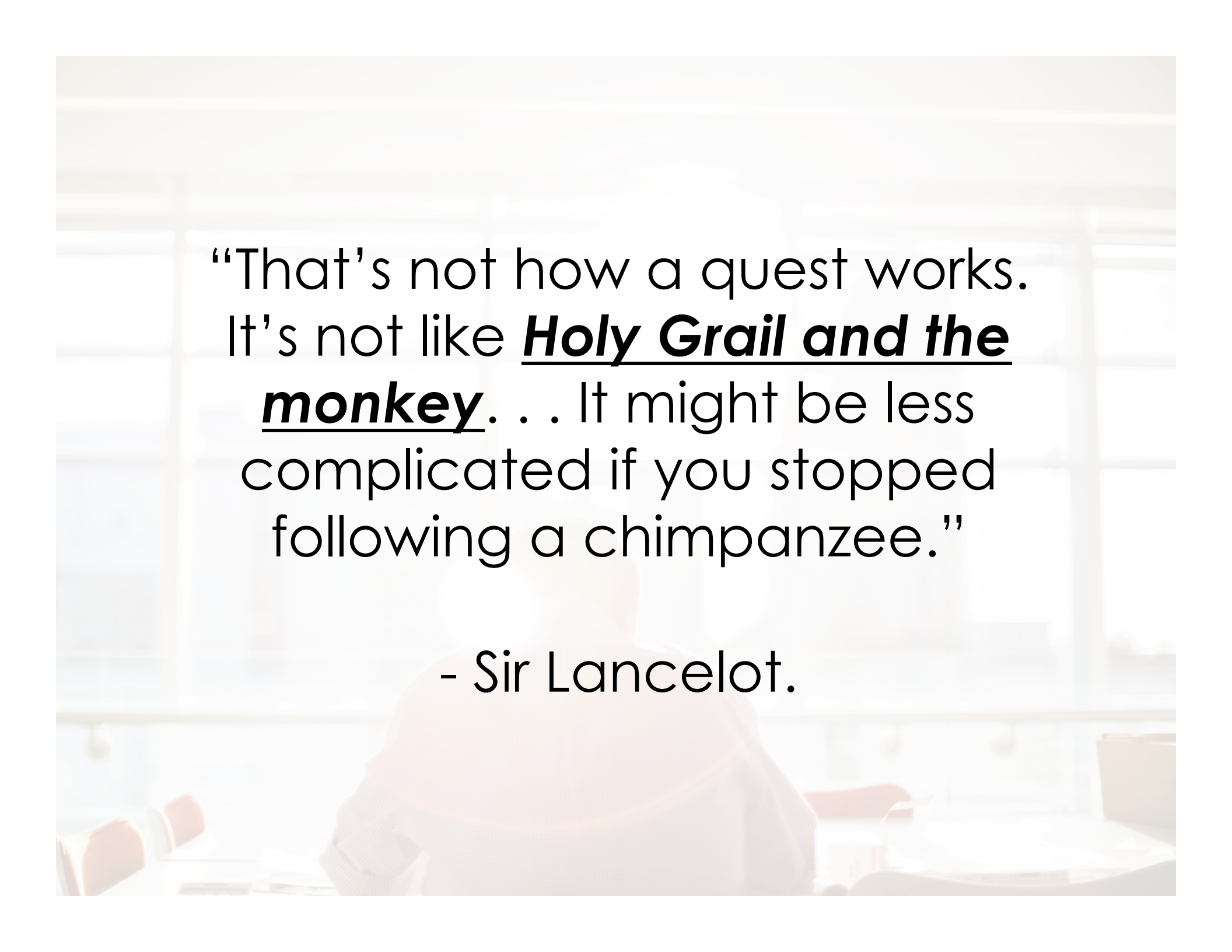
So, how do we
map *that* out??

The 5 C's

1. Current state (start)
2. Conflict (inciting incident)
 - Conflict 2.1: Obstacle
 - Conflict 2.2: Midpoint
 - Conflict 2.3: Obstacle
3. Climax
4. Consequences
5. Conclusion

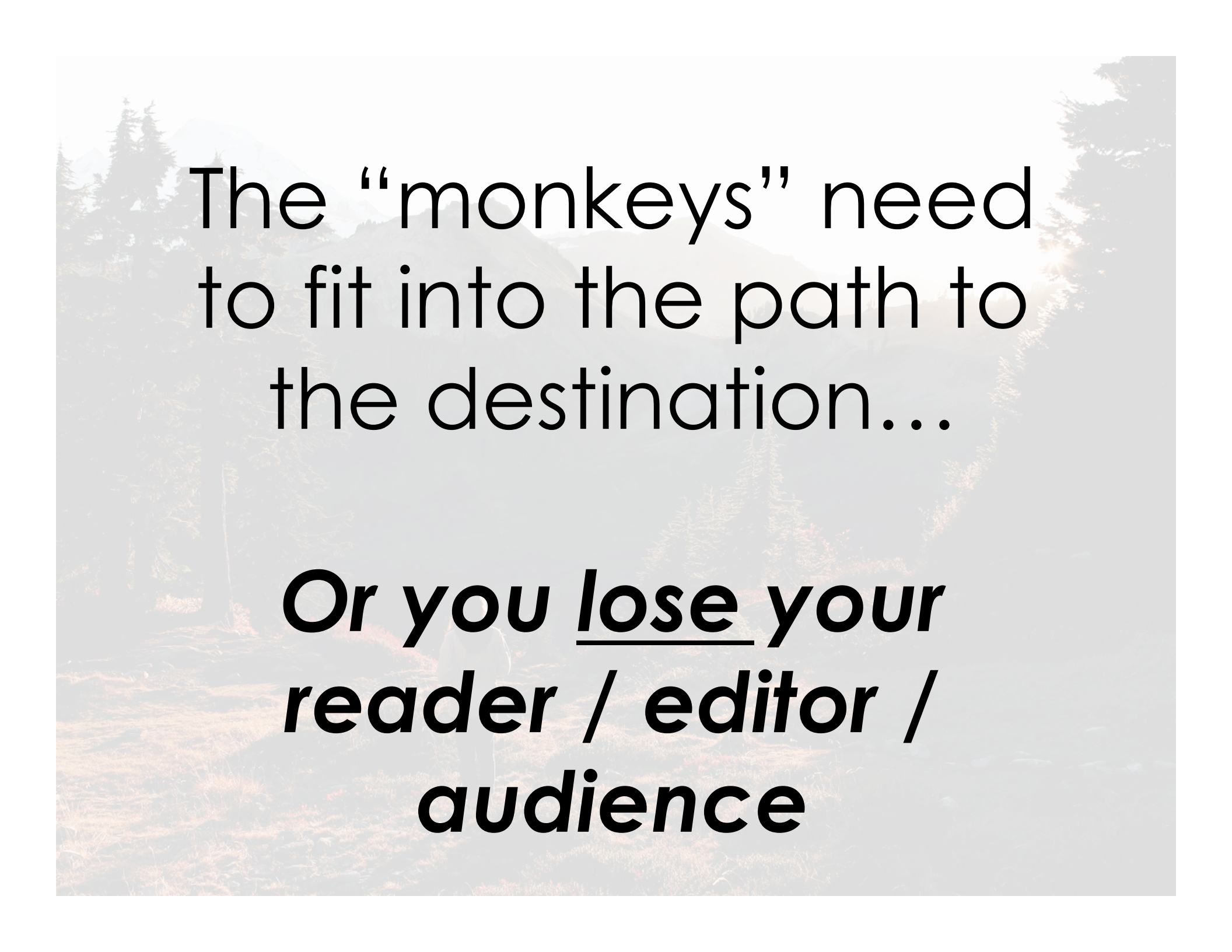
In real life, however,
stories aren't 3/5
devoted to “wrap up.”

It's about the **journey**,
not the *destination*.

A person is sitting at a desk in a bright office with large windows. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and is looking towards the camera. The desk has some papers and a laptop. The background is a bright, overexposed office space with large windows.

“That’s not how a quest works.
It’s not like **Holy Grail and the
monkey**. . . It might be less
complicated if you stopped
following a chimpanzee.”

- Sir Lancelot.

A photograph of a person walking away on a dirt path through a misty forest. The path is illuminated by a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a strong lens flare effect. The trees are tall and thin, and the overall atmosphere is hazy and ethereal.

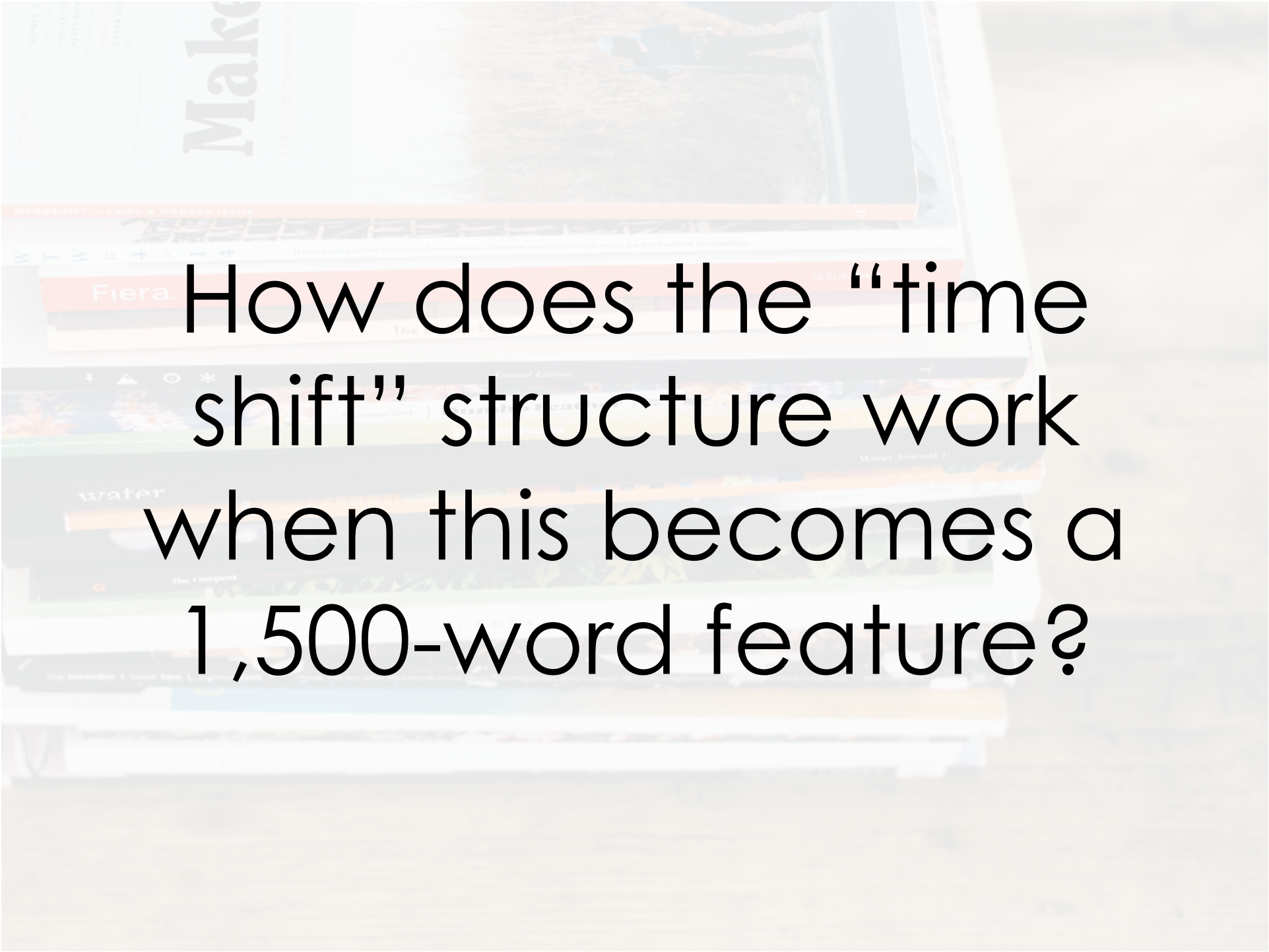
The “monkeys” need
to fit into the path to
the destination...

***Or you lose your
reader / editor /
audience***

Things to Avoid a.k.a. Commonly Unsuccessful / Lazy Tropes

- Need X to do Y to get Z
- “Epiphany” out of nowhere to “conclude” things
- Unnecessary background
- Front-loading background
- Introducing characters with no grounding for the sake of “action” or “dialogue”

(Basically think of everything mediocre television shows do. You don't want to do those things. You'll also sound mediocre.)



How does the “time shift” structure work when this becomes a 1,500-word feature?

The 5 C's

1. Current state (start)
2. Conflict (inciting incident)
 - Conflict 2.1: Obstacle
 - Conflict 2.2: Midpoint
 - Conflict 2.3: Obstacle
3. Climax
4. Consequences
5. Conclusion

It frequently takes the shape of:

2. Conflict – Obstacle 3

1. Current state + 2. Conflict (inciting incident)

1. Midpoint

2. Obstacle 2

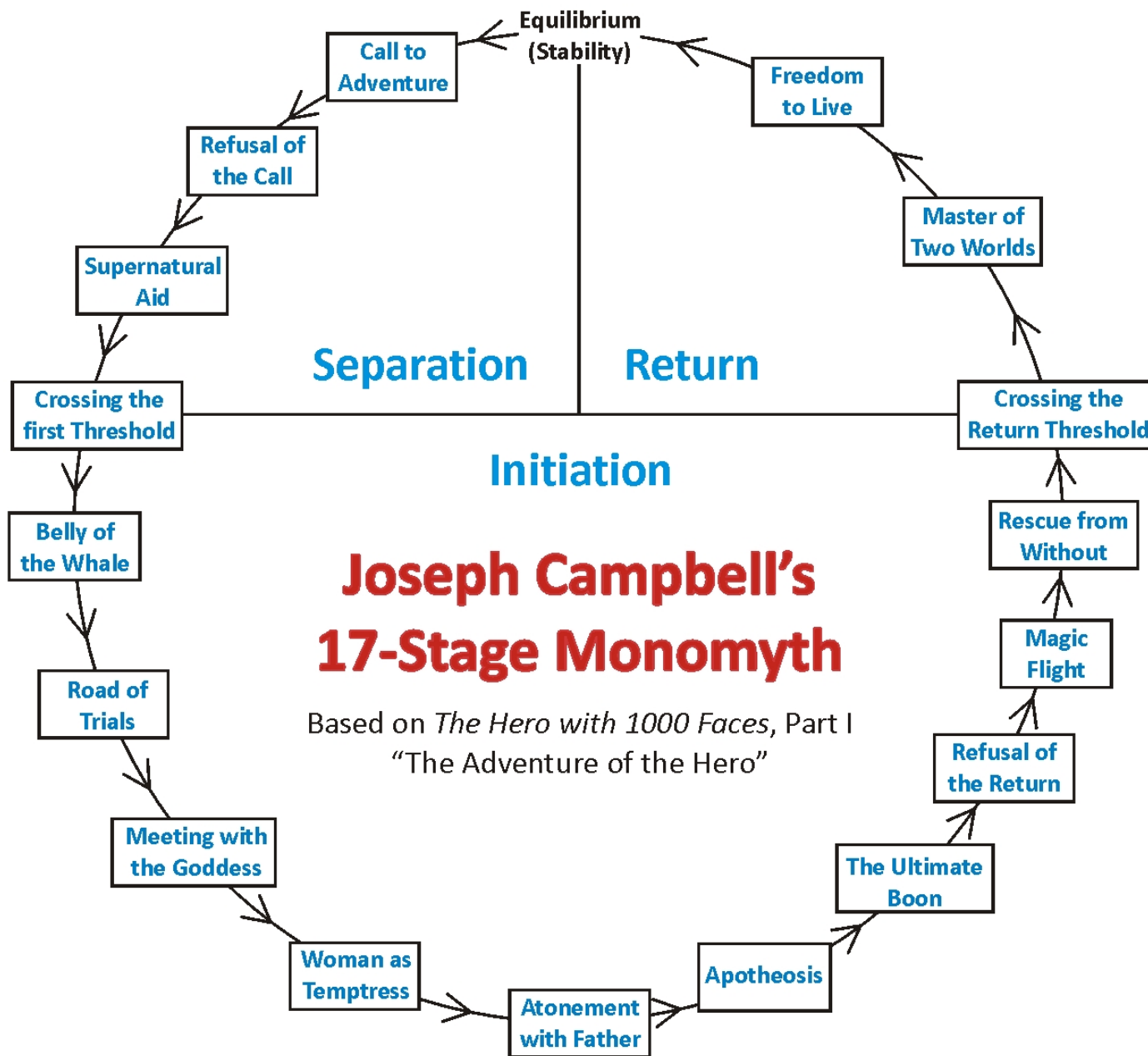
3. Climax + 4. Consequences + 5. Conclusion (one paragraph)

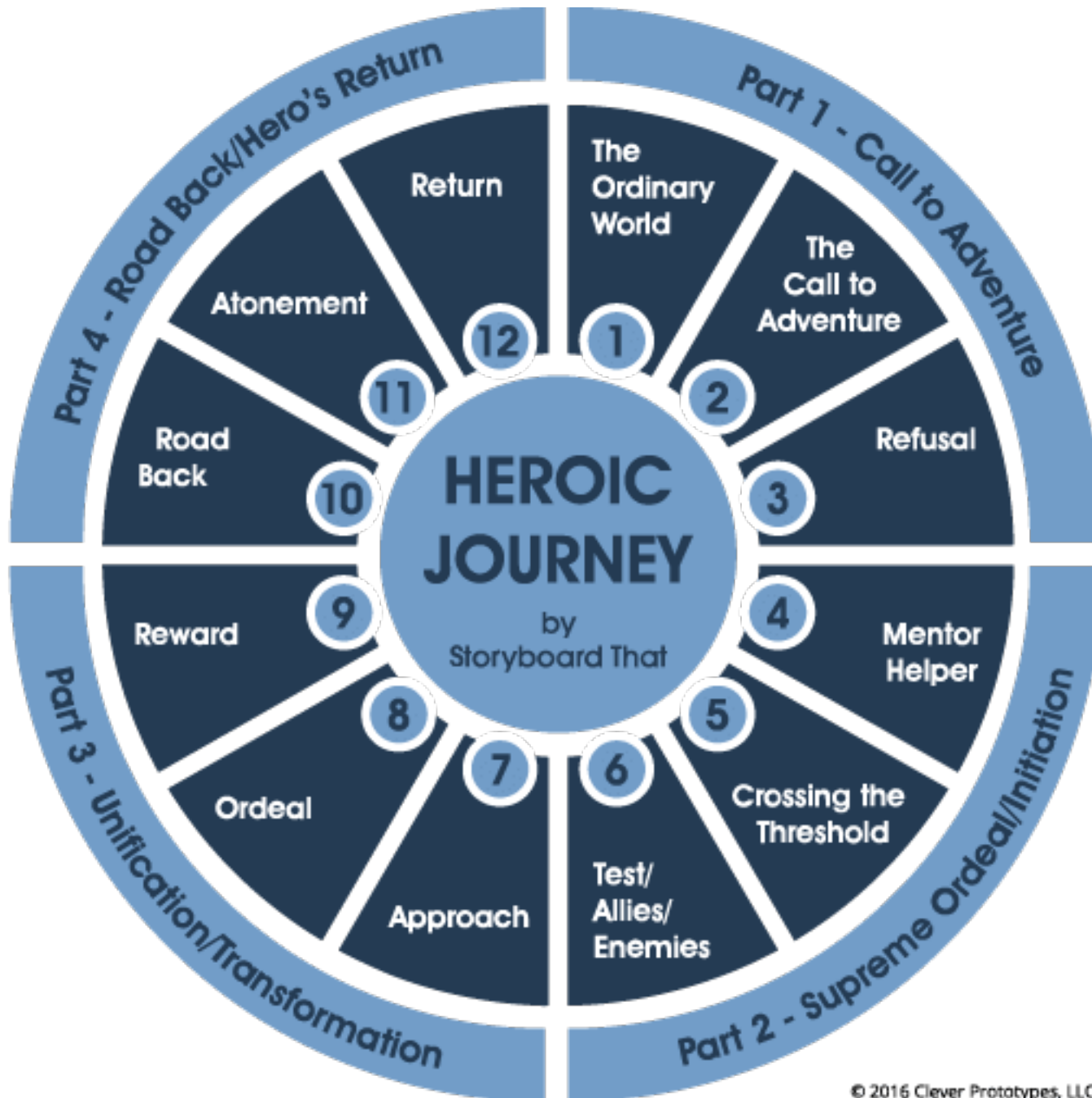
The Don George Feature Formula: The Fast Track to Transformation

- What changed for you / about you / about your conception of the destination or subject?
- Describe that moment
- Describe what you realized
- Now what were the stepping stones across that pond?
 - Only the moments and facts **directly related to that realization**
- Done! Use the rest of your material for the next story

The Hero's Journey

- Like the previous version, the key here is to select the parts of your “story” or trip that fit the journey and leave the rest
- The whole thing is a 17-step process, but we don't usually have that long
- However, it's time-honored, and following it guarantees a good story
- Let's give it a look (as well as a shortened version)





The Secret to Endings

- The best endings sound trite if said without the preceding story
- The trick to making the “realization” not sound trite is that **the reader has been taken on the journey with you**
- Anna Karenina: “but my life now, my whole life, regardless of all that may happen to me, every minute of it, is not only not meaningless, as it was before, but has the unquestionable meaning of the good which it is in my power to put into it!”
- Tale of Two Cities: “It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.”

What Round-Up Features with Lots of Mini-Articles Stuck Together?

- Have a point / thesis throughout
- Structure the order of your “tiny articles” to support this point
- Follow the five c’s in terms of order; start with current state in intro, incite with the first, end with something conclusive of your point
- Offer a “complication” with each tiny part to keep things interesting

Thanks so much
for joining us today!

It was a pleasure chatting
travel writing with you 😊

Have a follow up question on this webinar? Email questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com and we'll cover it in an upcoming webinar or in our Monday reader mailbag post on the Six-Figure Travel Writer blog.

