INTRODUCTION TO 3-ACT STRUCTURE

☐	The 3-Act Structure is one of at least eleven different techniques that writers use for plotting. That being true, it is also true that many of those eleven techniques are based on the 3-Act Structure.	☐	As we delve into this subject, you may notice a similarity to movies or plays. That is because they use the same technique and, in fact, it was first explained and taught by Aristotle for Greek plays.
☐	With that as a foundation we can trust the reliability of this technique. Besides its longevity, it also has proven to be highly effective. Instead of teaching you eleven different ways to plot, I am going to teach you one way that has been used as is, added to, and expanded.	☐	In the following Overview I will be explaining the structure in detail. Don't pass over this. Whether you are a pantser or a plotter, you need to know this.

OVERVIEW OF 3 – ACT STRUCTURE

☐	The name tells you that it is divided into three separate acts. Let us look at them. ACT One – The Setup ACT Two – Confrontation ACT Three-Resolution These names may be the same as others have written on this subject or different. I am using these because they are clearer.	☐	Each act is divided into three parts, such as • Beginning • Middle • Ending Within each act these will have different names with the name indicating the action taking place.
☐	**Act One** is called the **Setup** because it lays out the beginning and setting of the book. This is where your plot begins.	☐	The **Beginning** is also called the **Exposition** or Introduction. I prefer Introduction. Here the author introduces the protagonist and perhaps a couple other characters, plus the setting.
	The **Middle** is also called the **Inciting Incident** which indicates that the conflict begins , or the character first becomes aware of a conflict whether internal or external.		This conflict will be central to the story as to what it is and how the protagonist handles it.
	The Inciting Incident is the "call to action." Somebody got kidnapped and the protagonist is faced with a call to rescue that person.		It could be as simple as a fight where one of the combatants draws a knife or a gun and the protagonist must act before blood is shed. Whatever it is it will relate to the overall plot.

☐	The **Ending** is also called **Plot Point One**. Here we pause to explain a Plot Point.	☐	**Plot Point** A plot Point is an incident in the story that directly effects what is going to happen next. It moves the story forward and often the character out of its *comfort zone*.
	Plot Point One This is not the "hook" that I described in the lesson on Potting. That also takes place in Act One but at the very beginning. The Plot Point One takes place at or near the end of Act One. And it is time for the protagonist to make a decision.		However, the "hook" may well relate to that "plot point." And the incident that occurred in the Middle of the Act leads right into the Plot Point. But the key here is the **decision** the character must make. That separates it from everything else.
	The blending together of the different parts of an Act smooths the story as it unfolds. You know that there are three parts to the Act, but it is not necessary for the reader to know. But the decision to act stands out.		That concludes our study of Act One. Review it and answer these questions: - What is the Setup? - What is the Inciting Incident? - What is the Plot Point One?
	Act Two is also called **Confrontation**. This is often the longest of the three Acts. If Act One took up one quarter of the story, it is likely that Act Two will take up the *next two* quarters.		The **Beginning** is here called *Rising Action*. Two avoid boring the reader there needs to be action or a degree of intensity. Perhaps a mounting sense of anticipation.
	Whether the **Rising Action** is physical or mental the reader needs to "feel it"!		In a mystery it could be clues discovered or an attempt to stop the protagonist from pursuing the clues.
	If an adventure it could be an obstacle or some kind of danger that must be faced.		And all these incidents must fit within the plot. Although, in a mystery there could be false clues. Misdirection is permitted.
	The **Middle** of Act Two is also called **Midpoint**, which obviously means the middle.		One writer explaining this said that the protagonist's goal established earlier in the story is key. Is that goal threatened? Or has something gone wrong?
	At this point the protagonist is in a dilemma. Feeling threatened or facing a new obstacle can bring a lot of pressure.		And this leads to the third part of the Act.
	The **Ending** is also called **Plot Point Two.** This is where the protagonist takes charge of the situation, or makes a major decision resulting in moving forward.		It is where the protagonist may have to pivot to take a more aggressive role. It is a key moment in the story.

Act Three is also called **Resolution**. This is where all the loose ends are brought together into a satisfactory conclusion.		The **Beginning** of Act Three is also called the **Pre-Climax** or **Crisis**. Because of what happened in Act Two there occurs a situation or a crisis. It is possible, depending on your story, that the protagonist suffers some kind of defeat, or something happens to discourage the protagonist.
The **Middle** is also called the **Climax** because this is where the story reaches its primary conclusion between the protagonist and the antagonist.		Here the battle ends hopefully with the protagonist triumphant. In a mystery all the clues are shown, and the mystery is solved.
The **Ending** is also called the denouement where everything comes to a happy (or sad) conclusion.		Make sure you: • Tie up loose ends • Answer all questions made • Bring closure (ease the tension)
Review • Describe the Acts and their Parts • Explain Plot Points • Explain Rising Action • How does the 3-Act Structure work for your story? • If you haven't started your story yet, now is a good time to do so.		