

PROTOTYPE SCENE

By Mike Klaassen

To show how to write a scene in fiction, let's look at a *prototype scene*—an ideal, a fully developed model. For your convenience, the components of a scene are shown in italics.

The *scene setup* establishes setting, including time, especially in relation to the previous passage of writing. The setup also establishes the point of view, which in many cases is that of the scene's focal character. The scene setup also establishes the character's *situation*, his predicament. The scene setup, through a combination of situation and setting, establishes a scene *crucible*, the confining circumstances that limit the choices available to the character to deal with his predicament (so the character can't easily walk away from the situation).

The character has a *goal*, the failure of which to achieve would have undesirable consequences, i.e., *stakes*. A goal with stakes helps create character *motivation*.

The character makes an *attempt* to achieve his goal. *Resistance* complicates the character's attempt. This creates *conflict*, which results in *uncertainty* as to whether the character will achieve his goal and *tension* in the mind of the character and the reader.

Since the character is properly motivated and the stakes are adequate, he *attempts* to overcome resistance more than once. Uncertainty about the outcome of the conflict draws out over *time*, creating *suspense* for the reader.

The character tries yet again (his third attempt) to overcome the obstacle. Since the character is confined to the situation somehow by the crucible, and since he has a

decreasing number of options and no way out, pressure rises to a breaking point at the scene *climax*.

The outcome of the scene climax is the *resolution*, which may be either success or failure or some variation of either or both. Since outright success too often in the story would be anticlimactic, the more likely scene resolution would be bittersweet success, outright failure, partial failure, or failure that leaves the character even farther from his goals than when the scene started. At the end of the resolution, the scene is over.

LEARN MORE

Mike Klaassen is the author of *Scenes and Sequels: How to Write Page-Turning Fiction*, which is available for order at traditional and online bookstores. You may "Look Inside" the eBook edition at Amazon.com.

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