

# TOP 3 EMOTIONAL STORYTELLING TOOLS

**SETUPS/CALLBACKS** - Placing something strategically early on in the story, in order to reference it to a greater degree later.

*Examples from Summer, 2006:*

- *Mentioning Trevor in the graduation ceremony.*
- *Mentioning the main character runs when upset or sad.*

**METAPHORS/SYMBOLS** - Putting something into the story (character, object, scene, dialogue, location, action) that stands for or represents something else.

*Examples from Summer, 2006:*

- *The “two for one deal: you get both or you get nothing” representing joy and grief.*
- *Fireworks and reference to “this is a great spot” corresponding to the main character’s misunderstanding of his place in life.*
- *Firing up the grill at the end, “giving it time” also meaninggiving you and him time to process loss*

**REPETITION (RULE OF THREE)** – Putting something into a story once is random, twice is coincidence, but three times is purpose. Humans naturally seek resolution with the number three.

*Examples from Summer, 2006:*

- *Driving up to the drive thru three times (fourth time is running up!)*
- *Mentioning the “two for one” deal three times (final time is at the end)*

# ***THE KEYS***

(OR ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW TO TELL A GREAT STORY)

**STEP 1:** PICK A MAIN CHARACTER

**STEP 2:** GIVE THEM A GOAL (what they want)

**STEP 3(ish):** PONDER HOW THEY'LL CHANGE (beware: you might change!)

**STEP 4:** WRITE THESE FIVE THINGS

## ***1. INCITING INCIDENT***

The “initial spark” of the story. What sets the whole thing off. The big change in the main characters life. Once upon a time, there was a rabbit. Every day he hopped to school. *BUT THEN...* It's the BUT THEN. If there's an hour about the rabbit just hopping to school, we're gonna get bored.

## ***2. PROGRESSIVE COMPLICATION(S)***

Things get complicated because of the BUT THEN... And they do so progressively (differently, and MORE). The challenges for the main character increase in difficulty and volume. You can't have somebody break their leg, and then break their arm, or break their leg, and then get a cold. It's gotta get harder and harder and differently. This is usually the trailer of the movie. It's what gets you excited, the “idea” behind your story. But notice, it's only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a story!

## ***3. CRISIS (DECISION)***

There's been challenge after challenge, obstacle after obstacle, until finally the character has a CRISIS! Also known as a decision. There's nothing else left. The character has to make a choice, and no matter what, is going to be affected by that choice.

## ***4. CLIMAX***

The results of that choice. This is the big scene, what the audience has been waiting for, what all that happened has been leading to. Is the main character going to learn a lesson, are they going to get their goal? Will they change? We find it out here.

## ***5. RESOLUTION***

Oh wow, we've been on the edge of our seat, holding our breath. This is the final breath out. Tie up the loose ends, show an example of how the character has changed, or re-integrated into the world they were in at the beginning.

# ***THE KEYS EXAMPLE: SUMMER, 2006***

STEP 1: CHARACTER: Just-graduated senior in high school

STEP 2: GOAL: Be in a relationship with Christine.

STEP 3(ish): CHANGE?: He realizes he has to let go of Christine to reach out to others in need.

STEP 4:

## **1. INCITING INCIDENT**

Talks to the drive thru, a voice answers, and tells him he can talk anytime.

## **2. PROGRESSIVE COMPLICATIONS**

Voice box guy gives him advice to let it take time.

## **3. CRISIS (DECISION)**

High schooler will tell Christine that he wants to stay together.

## **4. CLIMAX**

High schooler gets mad at guy for his advice; he reveals he's Trevor's father.

## **5. RESOLUTION**

The main character recognizes the man's grief, and stays with him.

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT EACH PART**

*Q1: Why isn't the INC INC him graduating? Getting broken up with? Driving to the Salty Dog parking lot at night?*

*Q2: How is this a more and different obstacle?*

*Q3: Why do we need this scene? Couldn't we just skip it? Why or why not?*

*Q4: What if we didn't hear about Trevor at the beginning?*

*Q5: Happy? Sad? Upset? Relieved? What emotions does this resolution create? Could we create different ones with a different resolution?*

# ***THE CRAZIEST THING YOU'LL SEE BEFORE LUNCH***

## **1. *INCITING INCIDENT***

1. **(INC INC)** – the dog is dead, park in an empty parking lot
2. **(P COMP)** – Christine sort of broke up with you, feel confused
3. **(CRISIS)** – Need to talk to someone about it, get it off your chest
4. **(CLIMAX)** – **talks to drive thru guy, says he can talk anytime.**
5. **(RES)** – drive around a bit before heading home

## **2. *PROGRESSIVE COMPLICATIONS***

1. **(INC INC)** – Ask drive thru guy for advice
2. **(P COMP)** – Explain pool party situation, emotions even more messed up
3. **(CRISIS)** – Make the effort to try and understand what's going on.
4. **(CLIMAX)** – **Voice box guy says to let it take time**
5. **(RES)** – You blow him off, drive away

## **3. *CRISIS (DECISION)***

1. **(INC INC)** – You apologize for how you acted before
2. **(P COMP)** – Explain Christine on vacation, summer is ending
3. **(CRISIS)** – **You decide you want to stay together and make it work.**
4. **(CLIMAX)** – Resolve to tell her when she gets back, drive thru guy cautions.
5. **(RES)** – Fireworks start, you watch

## **4. *CLIMAX***

1. **(INC INC)** – Tell him she broke it off for good
2. **(P COMP)** – He tries to give you more advice about how to act
3. **(CRISIS)** – You decide he doesn't matter, tell him off, and leave
4. **(CLIMAX)** – **Man reveals he's Trevor's father.**
5. **(RES)** – Go inside hut to see what's going on.

## **5. *RESOLUTION***

1. **(INC INC)** – See him grieving about Trevor.
2. **(P COMP)** – He apologizes and admits he doesn't know what to do.
3. **(CRISIS)** – You decide to embrace him and wait.
4. **(CLIMAX)** – **You realize grief and joy are not apart, they come as a pair.**
5. **(RES)** – You cook hot dogs with him, and let time pass, like he said.