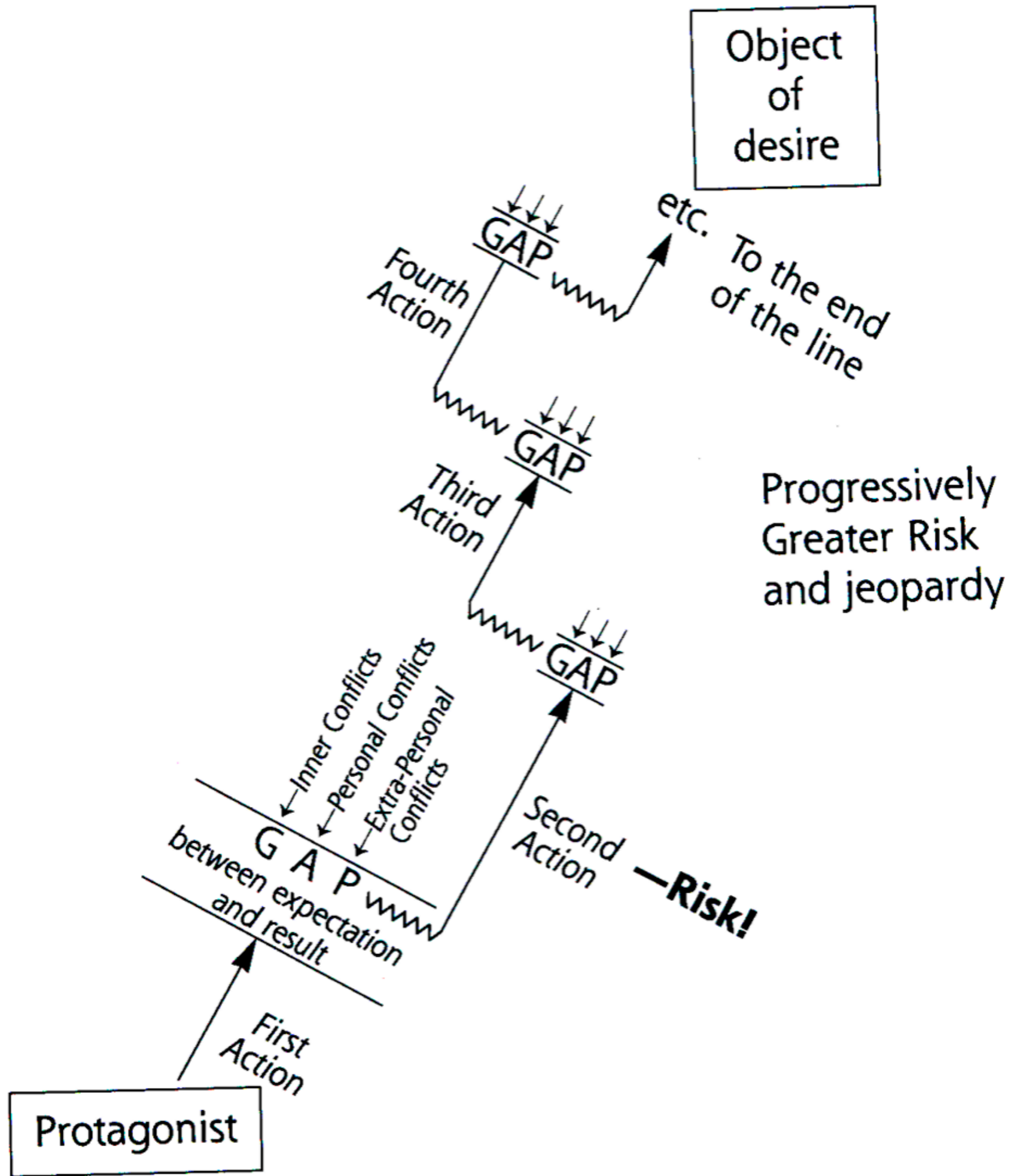
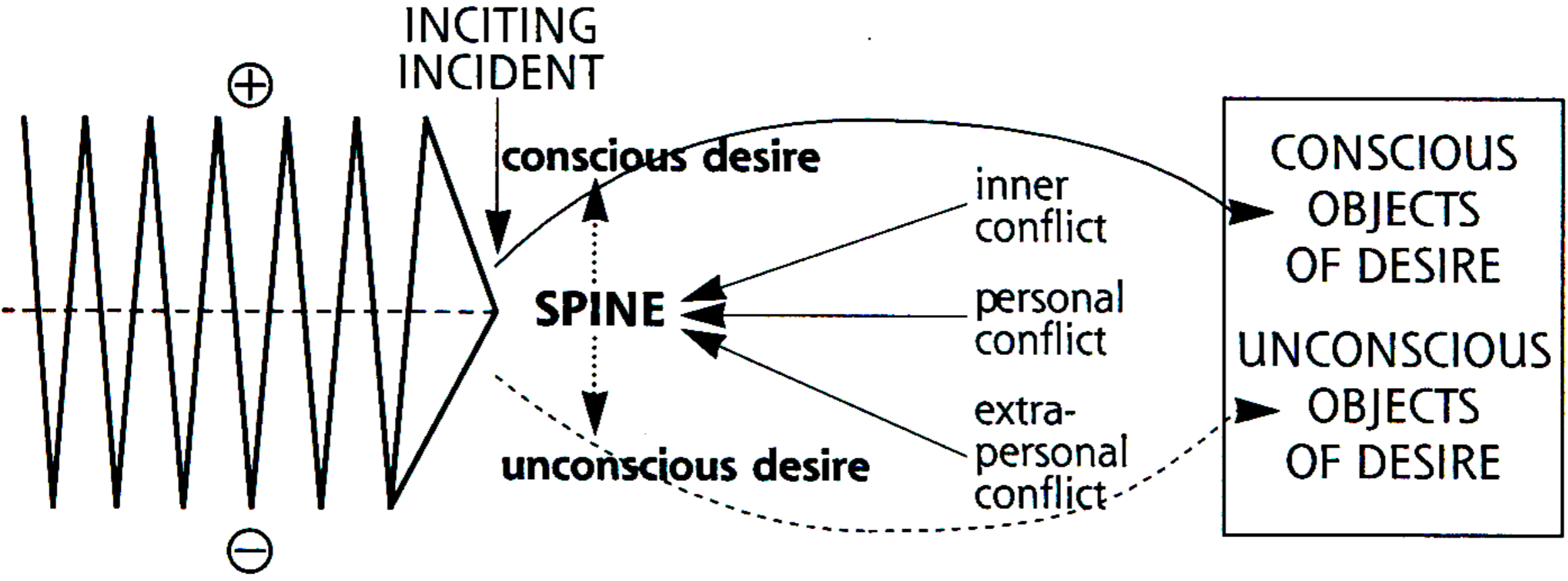


CLASSICAL  
STORY  
STRUCTURE:  
'ARCHPLOT'



# THE QUEST



# ACT I:

- Act I: General: Set-up/Exposition
  - Location, mood, genre, emotional setting, visual style, moral universe, rules of internally consistent "realism"
  - Important to keep set up short
  - Sets standards for the film, its "realism" rules. Only has to be internally consistent. Story has to "stay in character" and avoid internal contradictions.
  - Art: to give only what is necessary, to allow audience to fill in the gaps, don't over-explain or thematize
-

# Act I

- Act I Development: May introduce Backstory, or the Situation
  - Foreshadowing
    - Much of exposition is foreshadowing issues, skills, quirks, etc. that will later figure in the plot
  - Central Question: Every film is a kind of mystery: sets up a question that will be answered by the end. Once raised, everything else relates to it.
-

# Act I

- "Image" [Not literally a single visual image]
    - Strong set-ups often begin with an image: a scene, place, mood...one that also sets up the theme for the film
    - Give us clues about the spine or direction of story...focusing the characters, situation and milieu into a coherent story with direction and theme
  - Hook: the first scene that grabs the viewer's interest (may or may not be the opening scene; credits scene, etc.) Key to grab viewer's attention immediately.
  - Complication
    - Important story event that moves us to the spine of the story, typically involves the protagonist
-

# Act I

- Early in story this gives central character a goal, desire, need, problem
  - Something happens: the first main push that gets the plot going, sets the main character in motion
  - An action by the main character that moves him or her directly into the spine of the story, that dramatic area of focus that locates what the story is going to be about...usually the protagonist saying "Yes"...doing an action that is affirmative...to a question that moves us into the central focus of the story.
-

# Act I

- Not necessarily the Big Event. Gives Protagonist a new problem or desire, will often reveal something of the main story conflict, premise or situation
  - Big Event is the plot point that moves to act two
  - First major event that galvanizes protagonist; "start of the movie"; radically upsets the balance of forces in the protagonist's life.
  - Protagonist reacts, perhaps animating both conscious and unconscious desires, goals.
-



# Act I

- Turning Point
    - Raises the central question again, makes us wonder about the answer
    - Often a moment of decision or commitment on the part of the main character
    - Raises the stakes
    - Pushes the story to the next act
    - Takes us into a new arena and gives us a sense of a different focus for the action
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# Act I

- Launches the Protagonist to restore balance, by undertaking a Quest for her Object of Desire against forces of antagonism (inner, personal, outer) which she may or may not achieve.
  - Spine: the deep desire in and effort by the protagonist to restore the balance of life. The primary unifying force that holds all other story elements together. No matter what happens on the surface of the story, each scene, image, and word is ultimately an aspect of the Spine, relating, causally or thematically, to this core of desire and action. Protagonist may or may not have an unconscious desire to match the conscious one; but if so, this always takes precedence.
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# ACT 2:

- Second act: complicates initial problem. Characters reach for dramatic arc of change or catharsis.
  - Protagonist emerges from Big Event with desire/need to do something. Action will likely fail, forcing new actions, complications. Setbacks. Temporary triumphs.
  - Progressions: build by moving dynamically between the positive and negative charges of the values at stake in the story. Idea and counter-idea "argue" and go back and forth in debate and battle...at climax one of the two voices wins and becomes the story's Controlling Idea. Take care to build the power of both sides—compose the scenes that contradict your final statement with as much truth and energy as those that reinforce it.
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# Act 2

- Begins with the protagonist firmly in the "extra-ordinary" world, the new experience of the story, with no turning back. Initially things go well. But midway through Act Two, where the part one of the act moves into part two of the act, there is a major plot point called the MIDPOINT that spins story in a new direction.. Sometimes it also defines a new goal for the protagonist. The story spins into a broader, more complex dimension.
  - Key: rising action and escalating sense of conflict.
-

# Act 2

- PINCH: About half-way through Act 2, another event which causes Protagonist to become fully committed, when commitment to goal becomes clear, when stakes are raised. In reaction, the Antagonist may also take strong actions.
  - In the last half of Act Two, the journey of the protagonist turns downward, ending in the end-of-act plot point, which is the low point of the hero's journey. It is here that all seems lost.
  - Concentrate on that moment in which a character takes an action expecting a useful reaction from his world, but instead the effect of his action is to provoke forces of antagonism. Takes an action, but the reaction is different than expected, oppositional.
  - Subplots intersect with main plot
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# Act 2

- Crisis: Dark Moment/Low Point
    - Protagonist often is on verge of defeat or giving up
    - Forces protagonist to take final actions, resolve the story; choose a path
    - Sometimes in two beats: a Dark Moment, followed by new stimulus
    - Makes events more intense than before...a sense of urgency pushing toward conclusion
-

# Problems writers often have in Act 2

- Most structural problems here
  - Loss of focus. The clear hero's journey set up in Act One becomes lost as the story becomes more complex. Sometimes subplots become more important than the central dramatic issue; sometimes minor characters become more interesting than the protagonist. The spine of the story collapses.
  - Insufficient build. In the journey through Act Two, tension must build right along with the complexity of the story. There must be a through-line connecting the turns of the story and that the stakes must be raised at each twist. The story is like a poker pot with the bets raising and raising again.
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- Antagonist's revenge. If one character is apt to steal the focus from the protagonist, it is the bad guy, the antagonist. Often bad guys are more interesting to write than good guys.
  - Too high a low point. Movies are bigger than life in all ways. Often writers do not put their protagonists in deep enough a hole at the end of Act Two. The stakes aren't high enough, the danger not great enough, the sense of defeat not threatening enough.
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# ACT 3: CONCLUSION

- The third act begins with the hero's recovery after the low point that ends Act 2. The first job is to get the main character out of the fix you created. [The Hero's recovery.] This should be done by the hero being active, not passive—being rescued by someone else.
  - Armed with a second wind, the hero now moves towards the showdown of the movie...often against a "ticking clock" or device which puts him under pressure
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# Act 3

- SHOWDOWN/CLIMAX
    - Bigger than the Crisis...the biggest scene, event, confrontation in the movie; everything has led up to it
    - Makes events more intense than before...a sense of urgency pushing toward conclusion
    - Final confrontation between the Protagonist and the Antagonist
    - During this scene or sequence (or just afterward), the P realizes something new about herself; we see evidence of this growth
  - DENOUEMENT/RESOLUTION: all loose ends tied together
    - Subplots resolved, future foreshadowed, etc.
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