

The Secret Science of Storytelling

Recipe for the Rollercoaster

What is your *inciting incident*, the event that happens that gives reason to have a story? This is the moment that occurs that introduces the trouble that your *protagonist(s)* must face and deal with. You don't need much here. You are building a *storyboard*, a blueprint, a rough, napkin-style sketch.

What is your *Try/Fail Cycle 1*? This is your first high point in the story that happens right around the quarter-mark in the story. While there will be drama, shenanigans, or misfortune that happens, otherwise, *Try/Fail Cycle 1* is that first critical juncture where the *protagonist(s)* tries to overcome the *conflict*, and fails. This is also where *the deeper storyline* is introduced.

What is your *Try/Fail Cycle 2*? It's often useful to work backwards here. Sort out your *inciting incident*, and your *Try/Fail Cycle 3*, and then look backward from what *must happen* to get to *Try/Fail Cycle 3*. Working backward will allow you to better see what could work for *Try/Fail Cycle 2*. This may also help you to figure out that tricky middle part of the project.

What is your *Try/Fail Cycle 3*? This is your final high point in the story that happens right around the three-quarters mark, or a bit later in the story. This is the point in the story where the *protagonist(s)* tries to overcome the *conflict*—it looks like all is lost—but then there is a reversal and they overcome, or win, although sometimes at a terrible cost. This is also where your *Secret Staircase* is revealed.