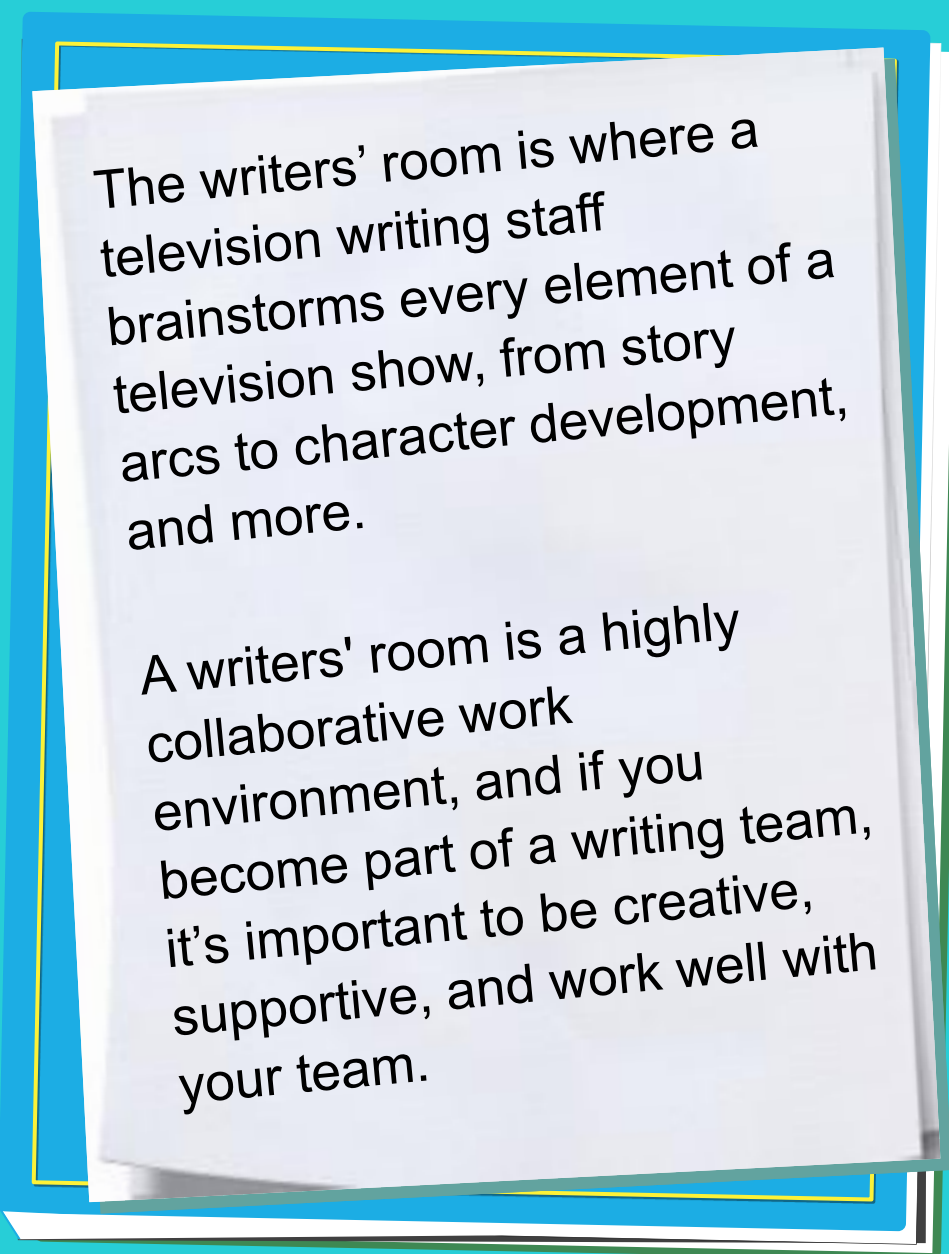


WRITING FOR TV FILM AND RADIO

The Writers' Room

A stack of papers with a yellow border, set against a teal background. The top paper is white and contains two paragraphs of text. The bottom paper is blue.

The writers' room is where a television writing staff brainstorms every element of a television show, from story arcs to character development, and more.

A writers' room is a highly collaborative work environment, and if you become part of a writing team, it's important to be creative, supportive, and work well with your team.



WHAT IS A WRITERS' ROOM?

WHO WORKS IN THE WRITERS' ROOM?

- **Showrunner:** Often the creator of the show, this person is at the top of the hierarchy. They make the decisions on which ideas are the most viable.
- **Executive producer:** Executive producers serve as second-in-command to the showrunner.
- **Producers:** Below the showrunner and executive producer are various producers and co-producers—who fulfil leadership roles in the writers' room. They are often experienced writers and take responsibility for script approvals, casting, and creative direction.
- **Story editor:** Story editors are experienced writers who have been with a show for some time. Story editors are usually the ones tasked with writing a draft of the episode.
- **Staff writer:** Staff writers are developing writers tasked with breaking and developing the story of an episode. Staff writer is an entry-level position in which you can learn to hone your storytelling skills.
- **Writers' assistant:** Many writers' rooms will have a writer's assistant on hand, who is responsible for taking notes and keeping the writers on track.



WHAT TO BRING INTO THE WRITERS' ROOM

RESPECT: Always support your fellow writers by letting them finish their thoughts uninterrupted. Writers' rooms are safe spaces where ideas should be freely and willingly shared.

ACTIVE LISTENING: Writers' rooms can have anywhere from two to 10 (or even more) writers, which means that it might be difficult to get a word in. Pay close attention by taking your own notes.

BRAVERY: Coming up with strong ideas often means shuffling through some not-so-strong ones at first. Be willing to take a punt.

COLLABORATION: Every idea pitched in the writers' room is in service to the show. If another writer comes up with an idea you don't like, try to find ways to improve or build upon that person's idea or help make it work for the story.

OPENMINDEDNESS: If your first instinct to an idea is 'No', ask yourself, 'Why Not?'



HOMework

You should have a top-line pitch for the project.

- A suggested form e.g. 60 minute TV drama / 45 minute radio drama / 30 minute sit-com
- A rough character breakdown for your central protagonist
- A setting: time and place (e.g. Contemporary Paris / A space station in 2069)
- A genre: Comedy / Drama / Sci-fi / Historical Romance etc.
- A one-line pitch: e.g. When Amy discovers that her husband, Nick is going to leave her for another woman, she vanishes and frames Nick for her murder.

PITCHING SESSION



WHERE TO BEGIN?



AN IDEA – A THEME OR A CHARACTER THAT INTRIGUES YOU

6 QUESTIONS:

- **WHO?** Characters make the plot happen.
- **WHAT?** Is happening to these characters?
What do they want?
- **WHEN?** Present, past, or future?
- **WHERE?** Setting: war zone? spaceship?
boarding school?
- **WHY?** The context that has led up to
present situation.
- **HOW?** This is the story line.

THE PROTAGONIST

- Hero may be flawed – they may even be an anti-hero but they must be compelling
- Find out what inner conflicts reside within the character
- Characters must reveal themselves within the action of the story
- Our understanding of the characters must grow as the action unfolds
- The protagonist's struggle to achieve their aim, makes the steps of the story
- No struggle = no story
- Where does the struggle come from?
- Writer must create opportunities for the character to show these inner conflicts visually
- If the protagonist doesn't achieve their goal by the end of the story, there must be some other kind of resolution





CHARACTER



INTERIOR

FROM BIRTH TILL PRESENT

FORMS CHARACTER



Character biography



EXTERIOR

DURATION OF THE SCREENPLAY

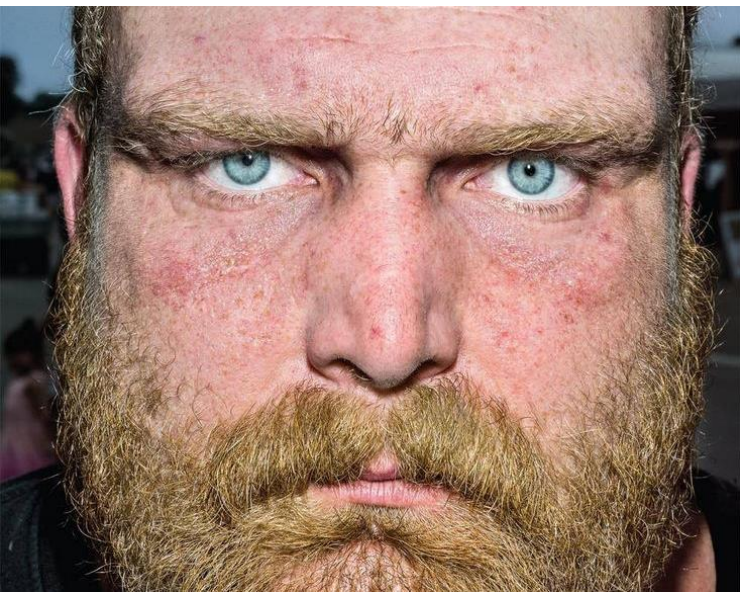
REVEALS CHARACTER



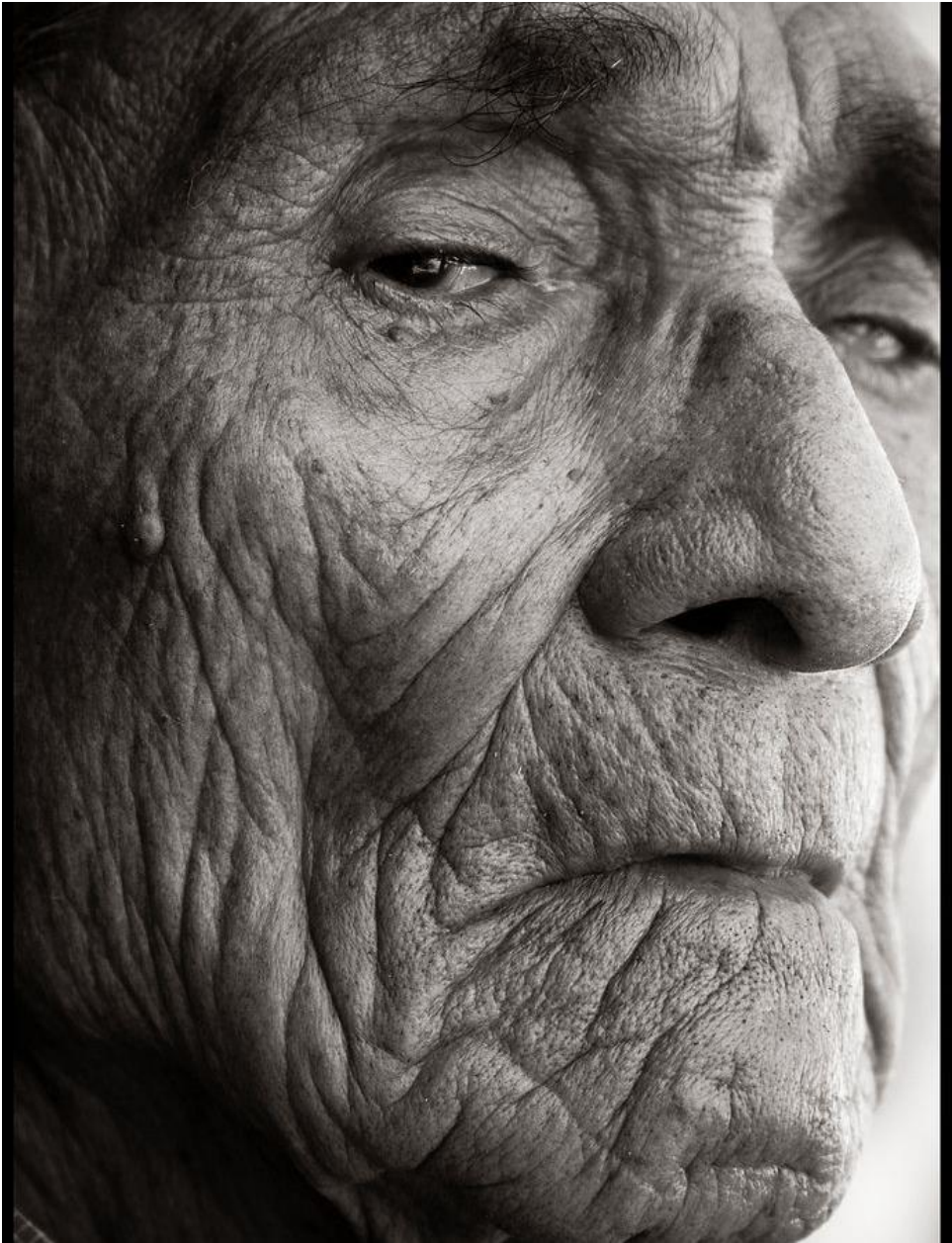
Define the need

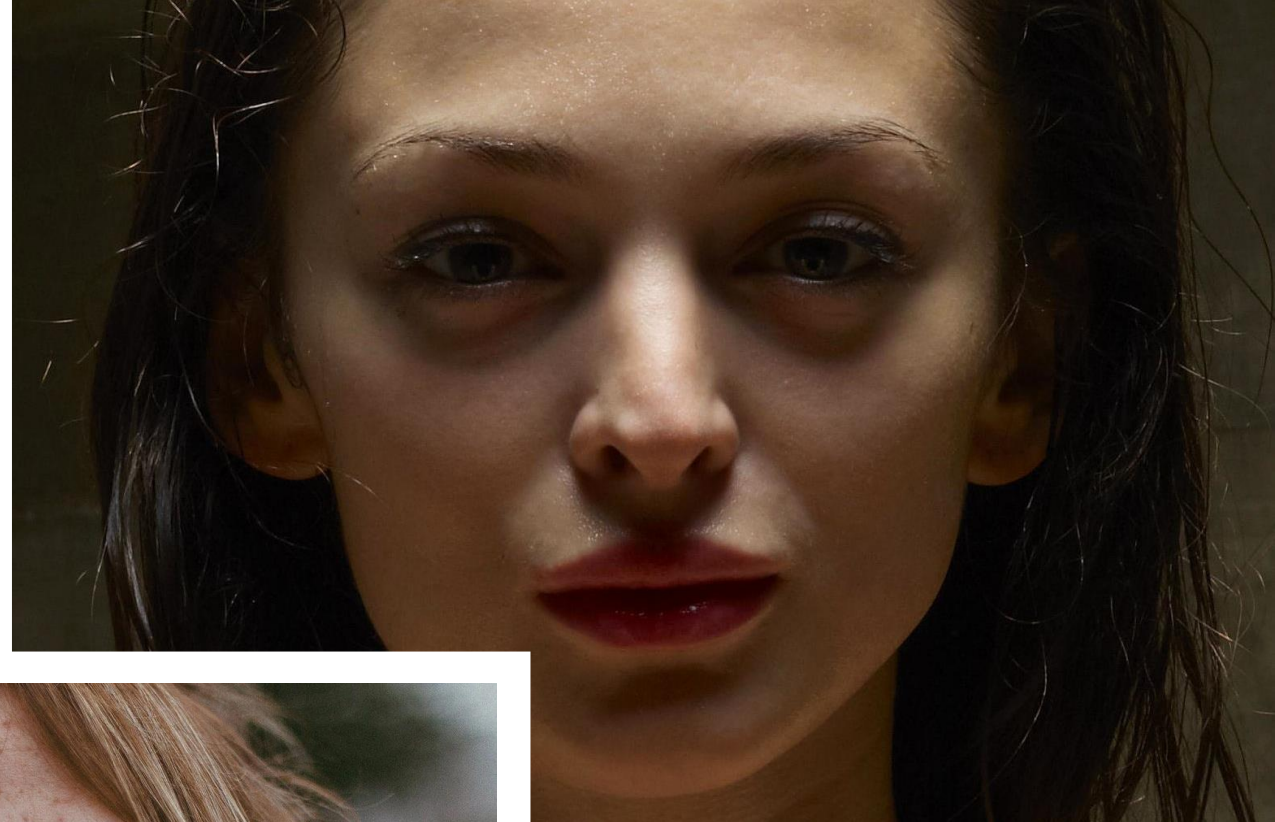


Action is character







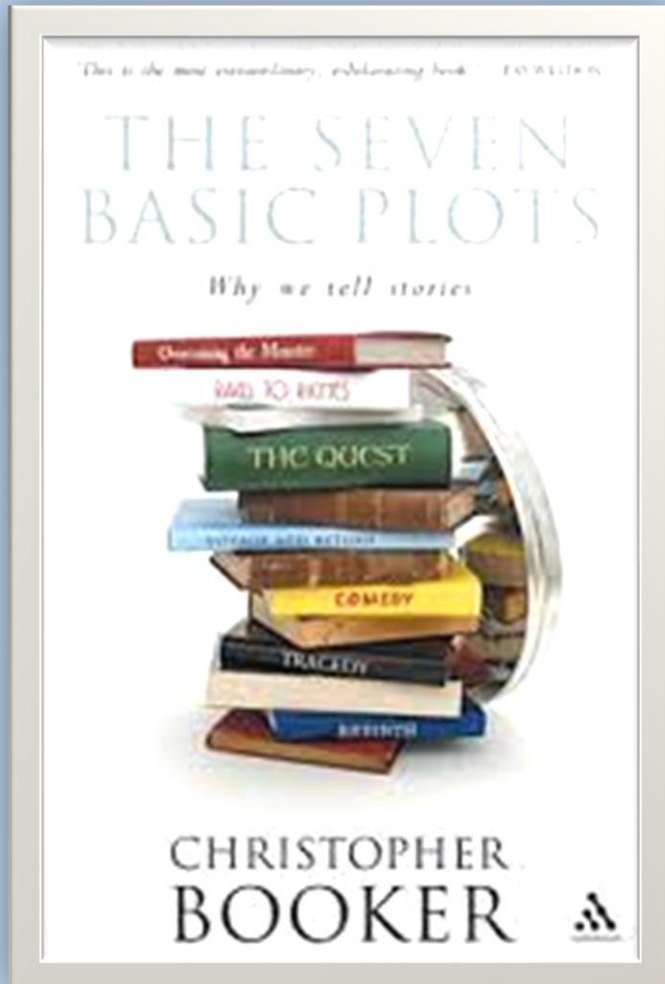






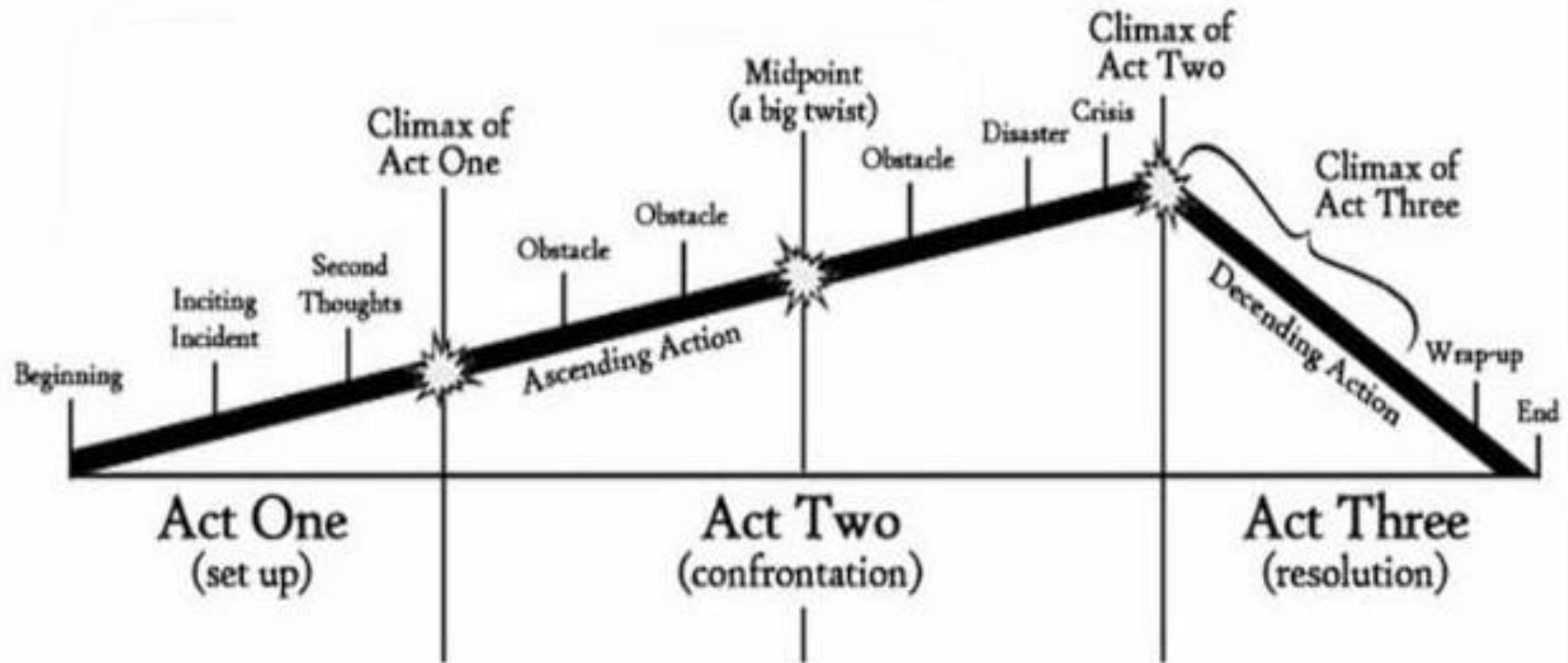


THE SEVEN BASIC PLOTS



- Overcoming the monster
- Rags to riches
- The quest
- Voyage and return
- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Rebirth

Three-Act Structure



ACT 1 – THE SET UP

- Approximately the first quarter of the script / screenplay

ACT 2 – CONFRONTATION

- Approximately one half of the total length

ACT 3 – RESOLUTION

- Approximately the last quarter of the total script / screenplay

