

Storytelling 201

Princeton Area
Community
Foundation



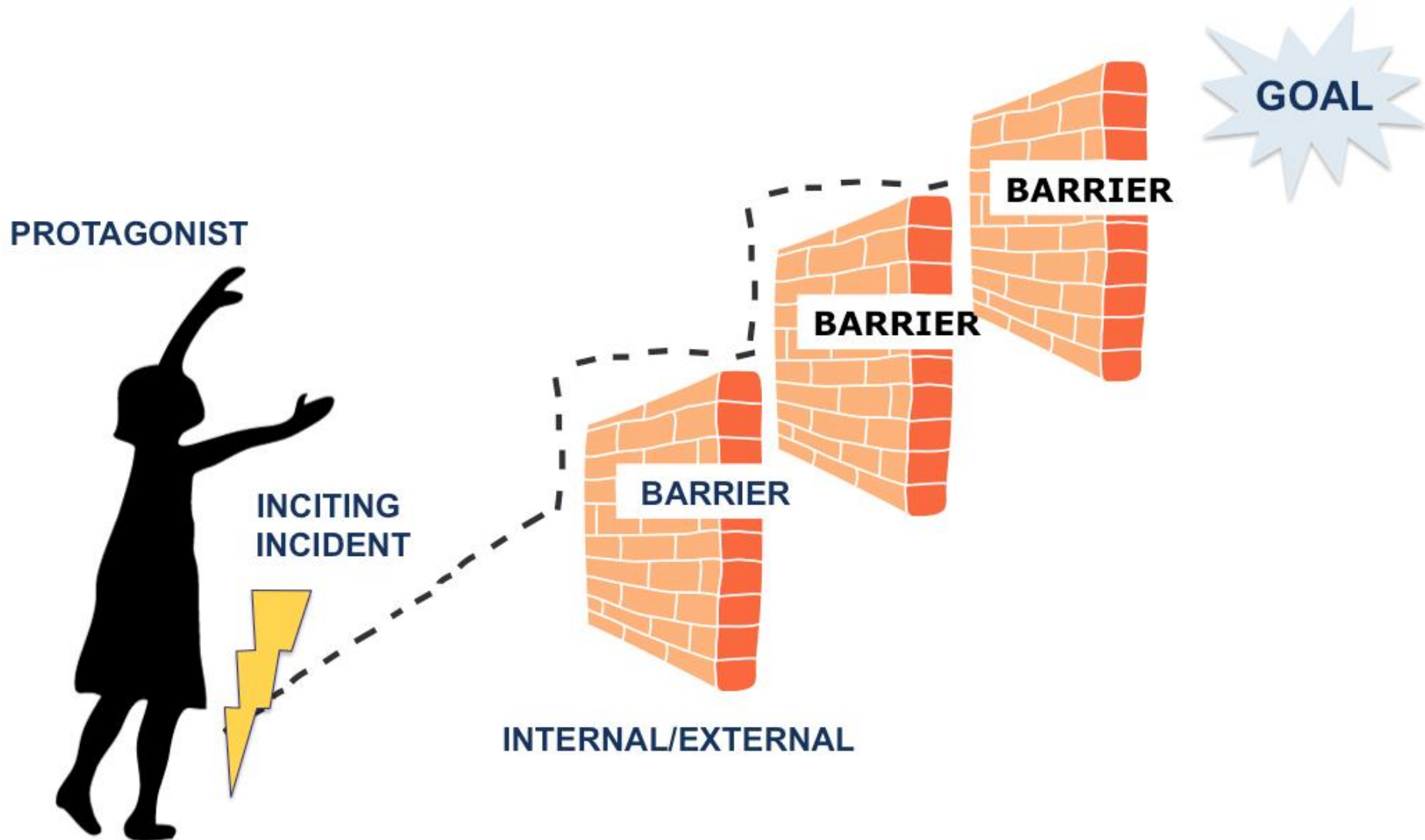
Review: The structure of a well-told story

The 10 Most Common Mistakes

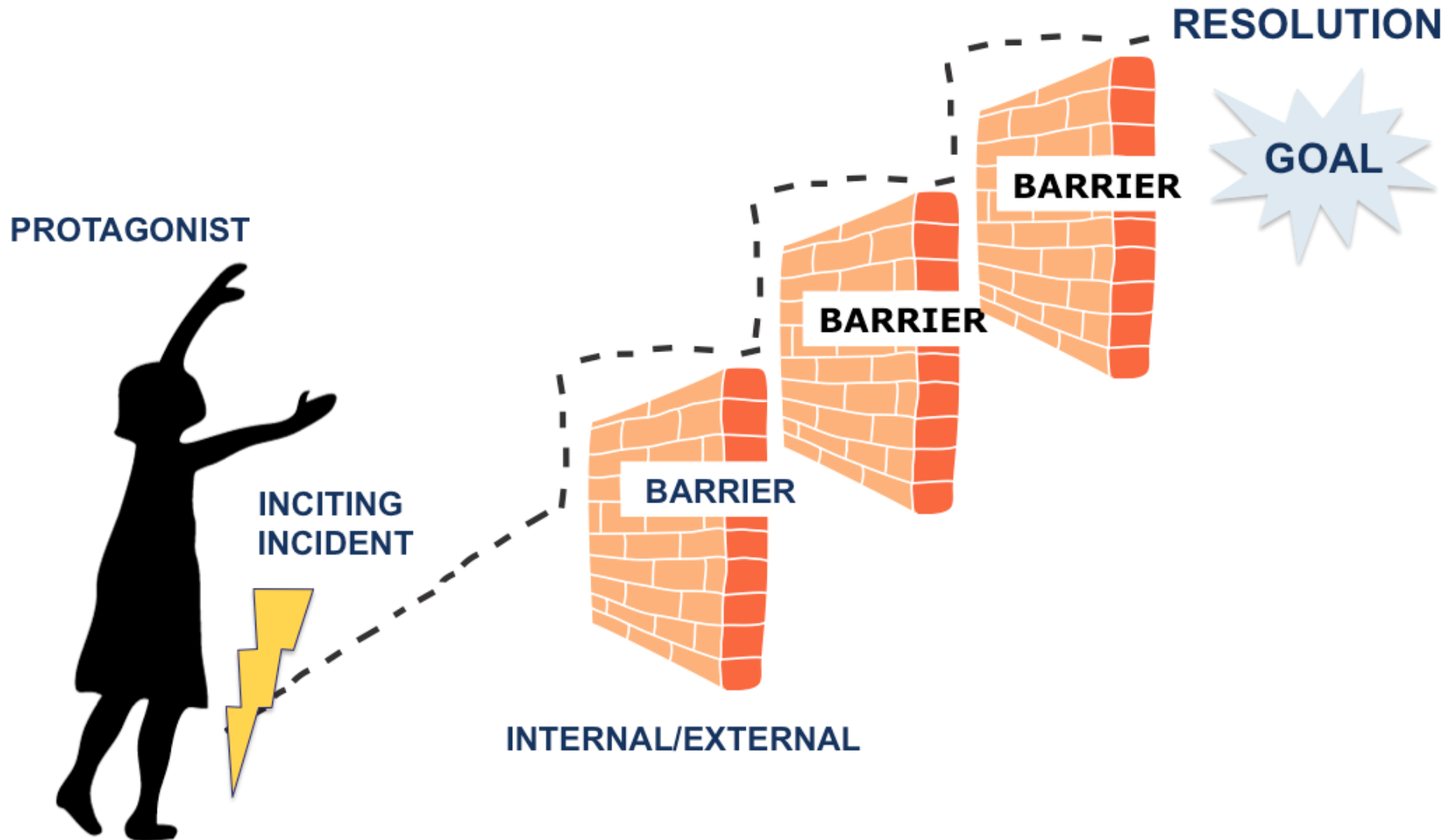
How to Get the *Whole* Story

**Short on Space or Time? Try
“Connecting Narrative Moments”**

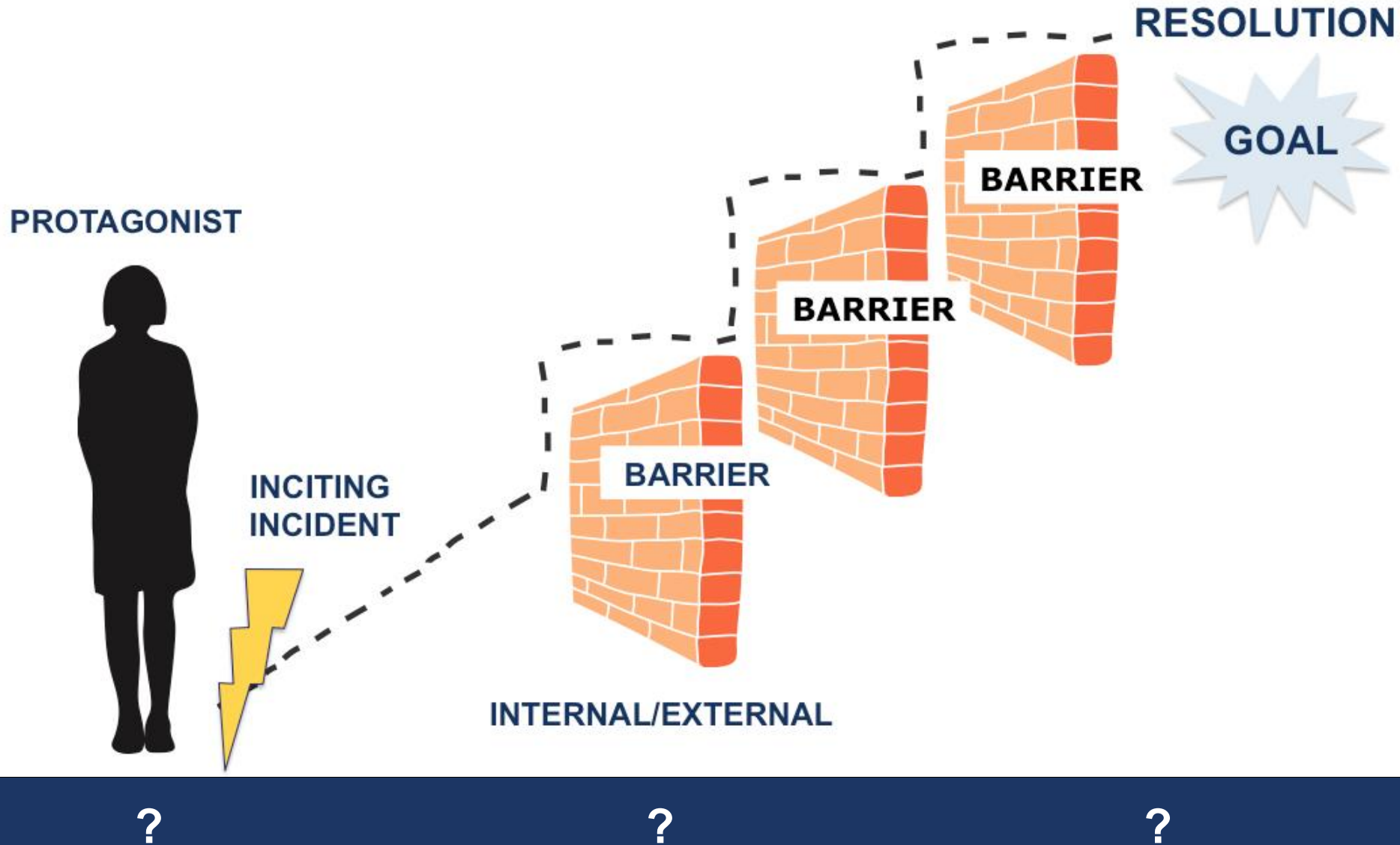
REVIEW: The Structure of a Well-Told Story



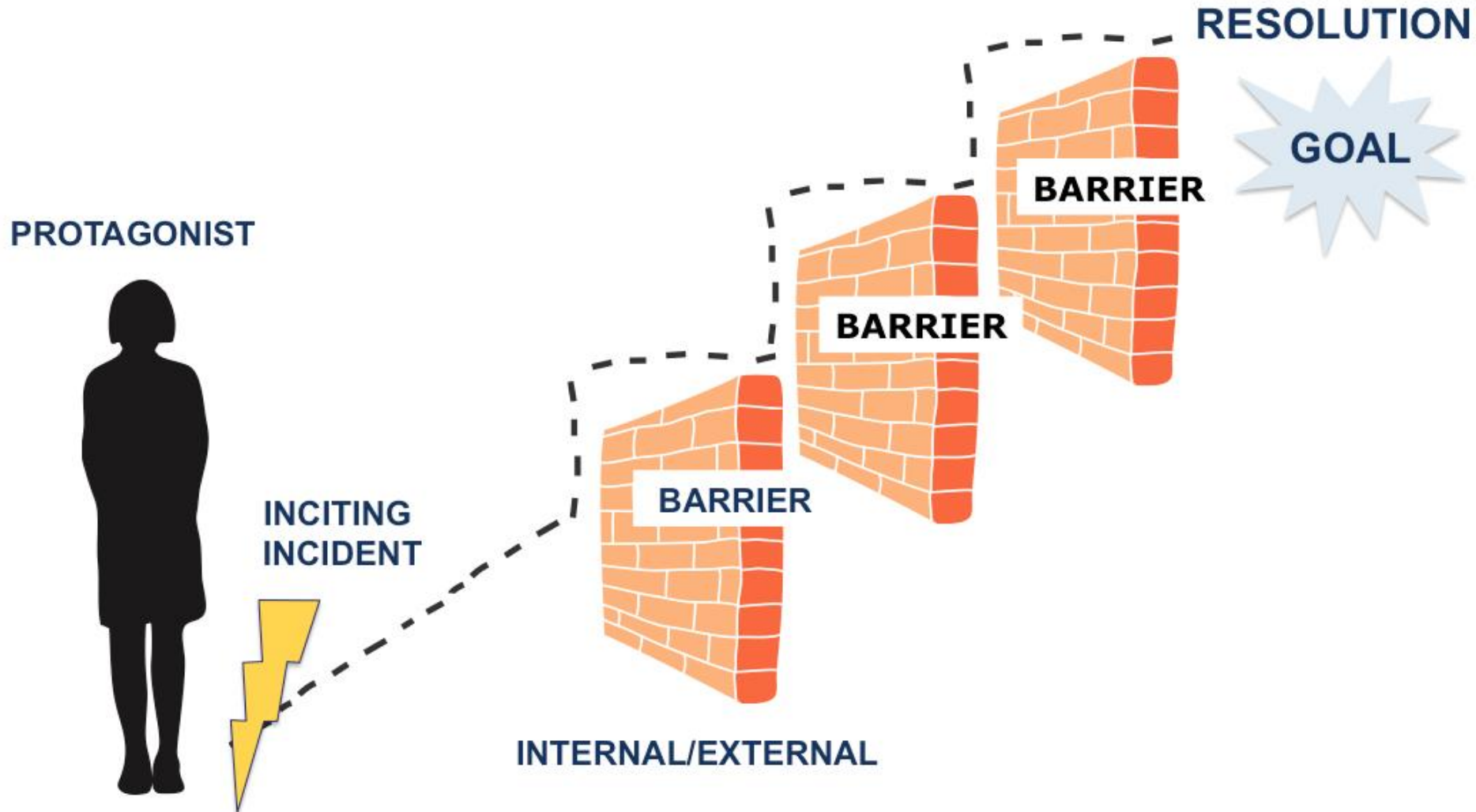
REVIEW: The Structure of a Well-Told Story



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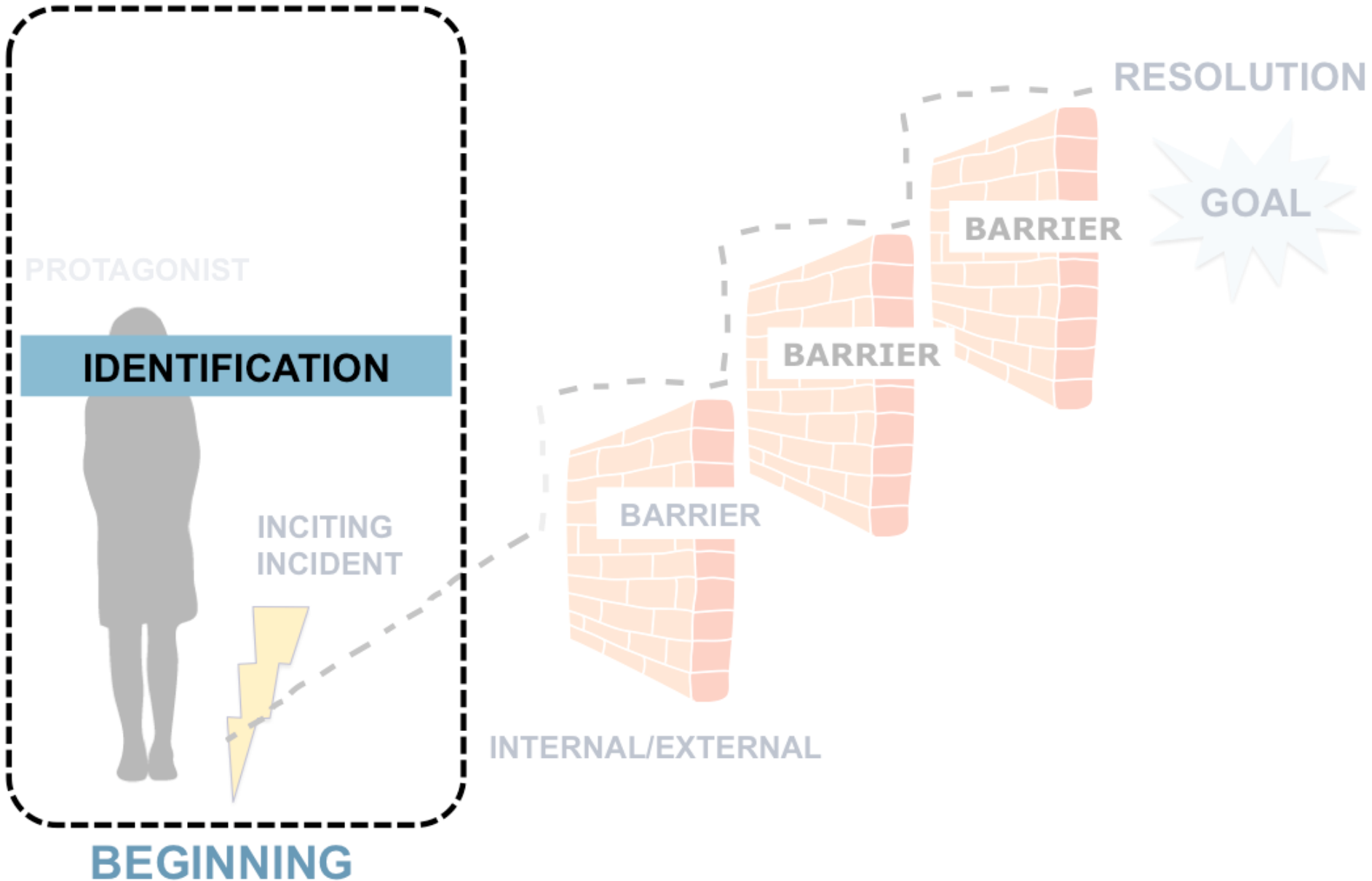


ACT I

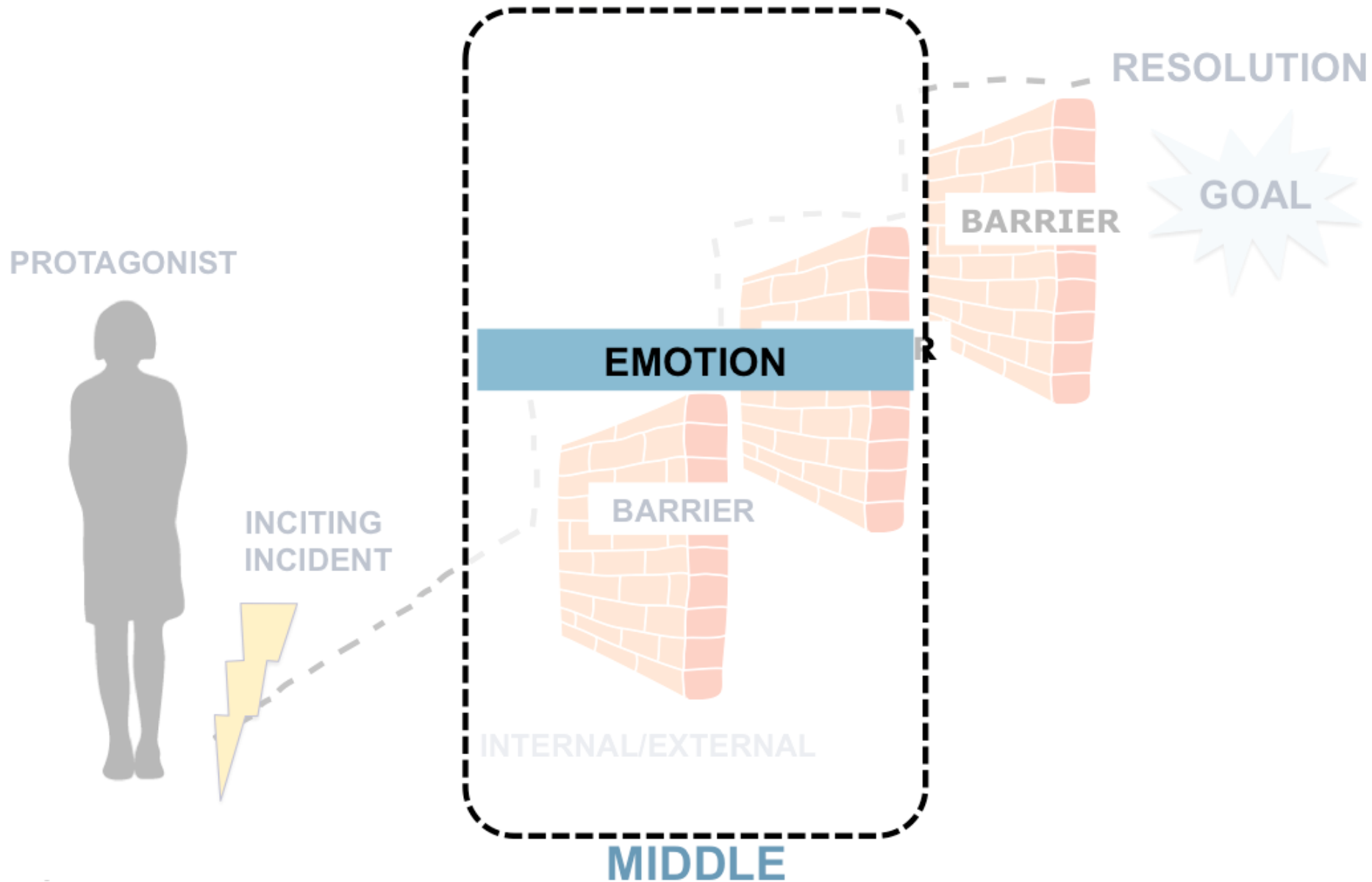
ACT II

ACT III

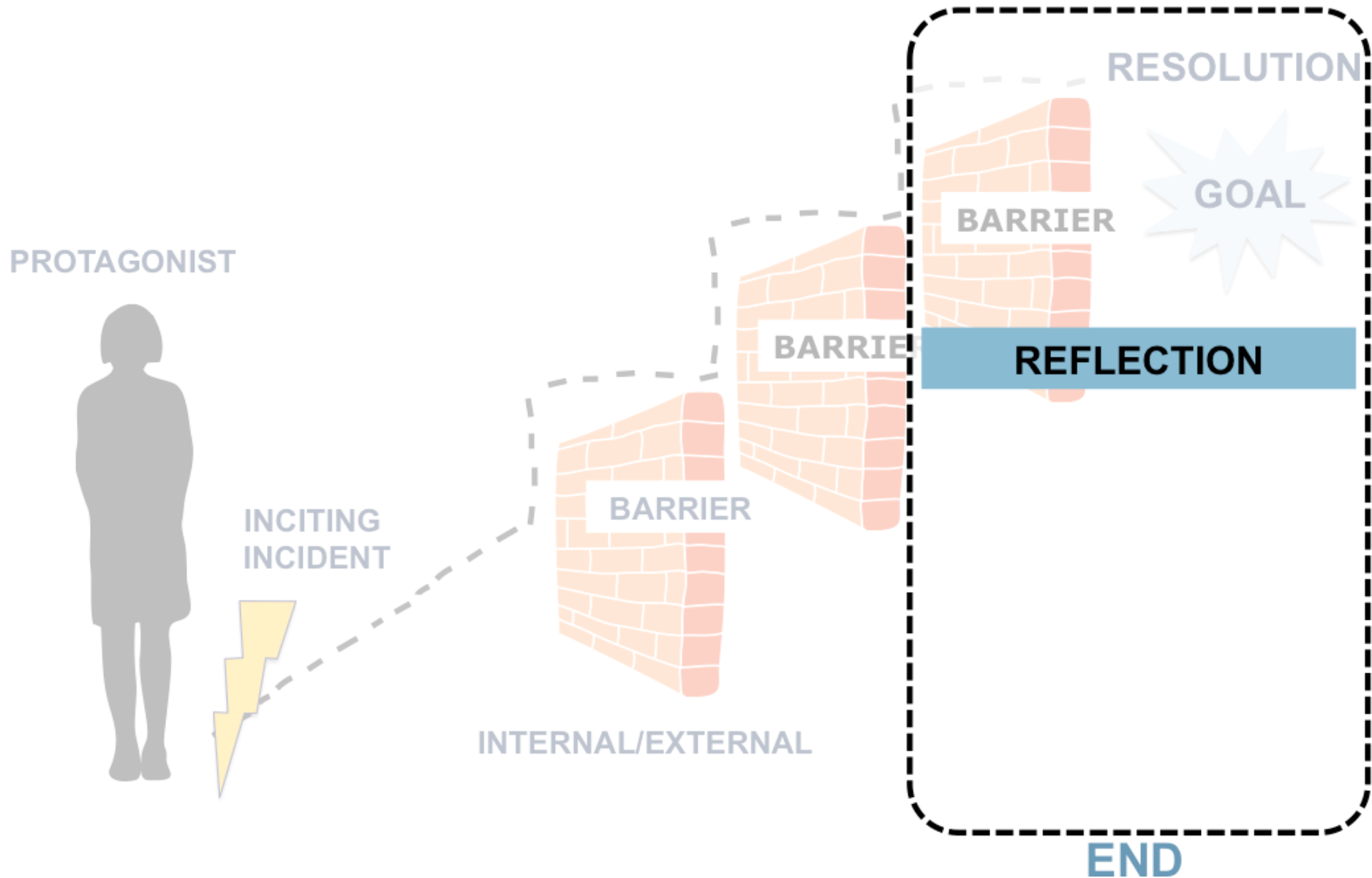
REVIEW: The Structure of a Well-Told Story



REVIEW: The Structure of a Well-Told Story



REVIEW: The Structure of a Well-Told Story



"EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING" (PBS)



Emma Schwartz

KING MIDDLE SCHOOL



Review: The structure of a well-told story

The 10 Most Common Mistakes

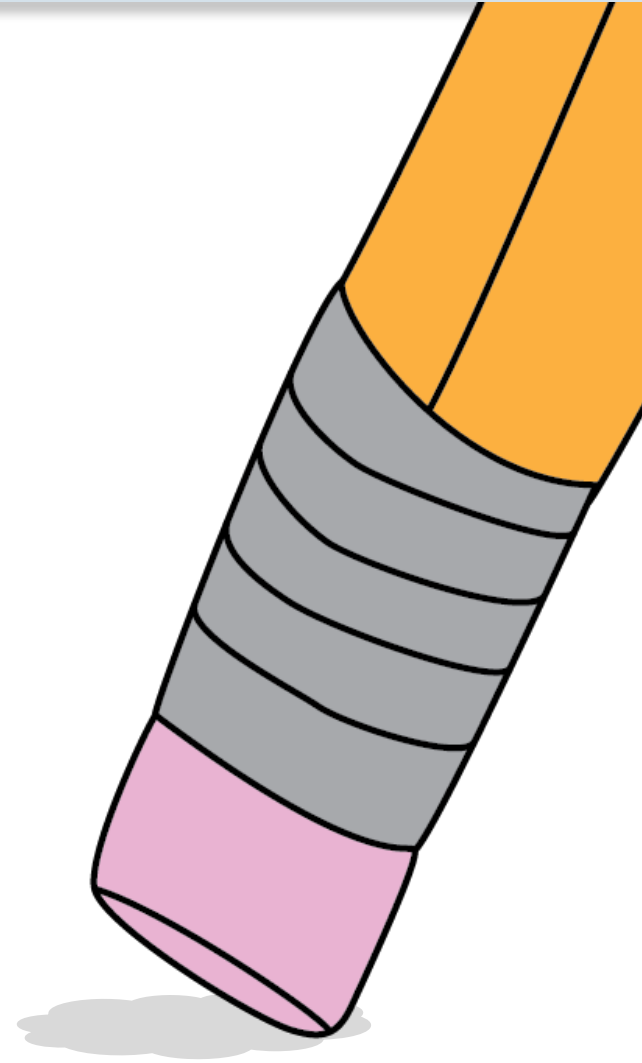
How to Get the *Whole* Story

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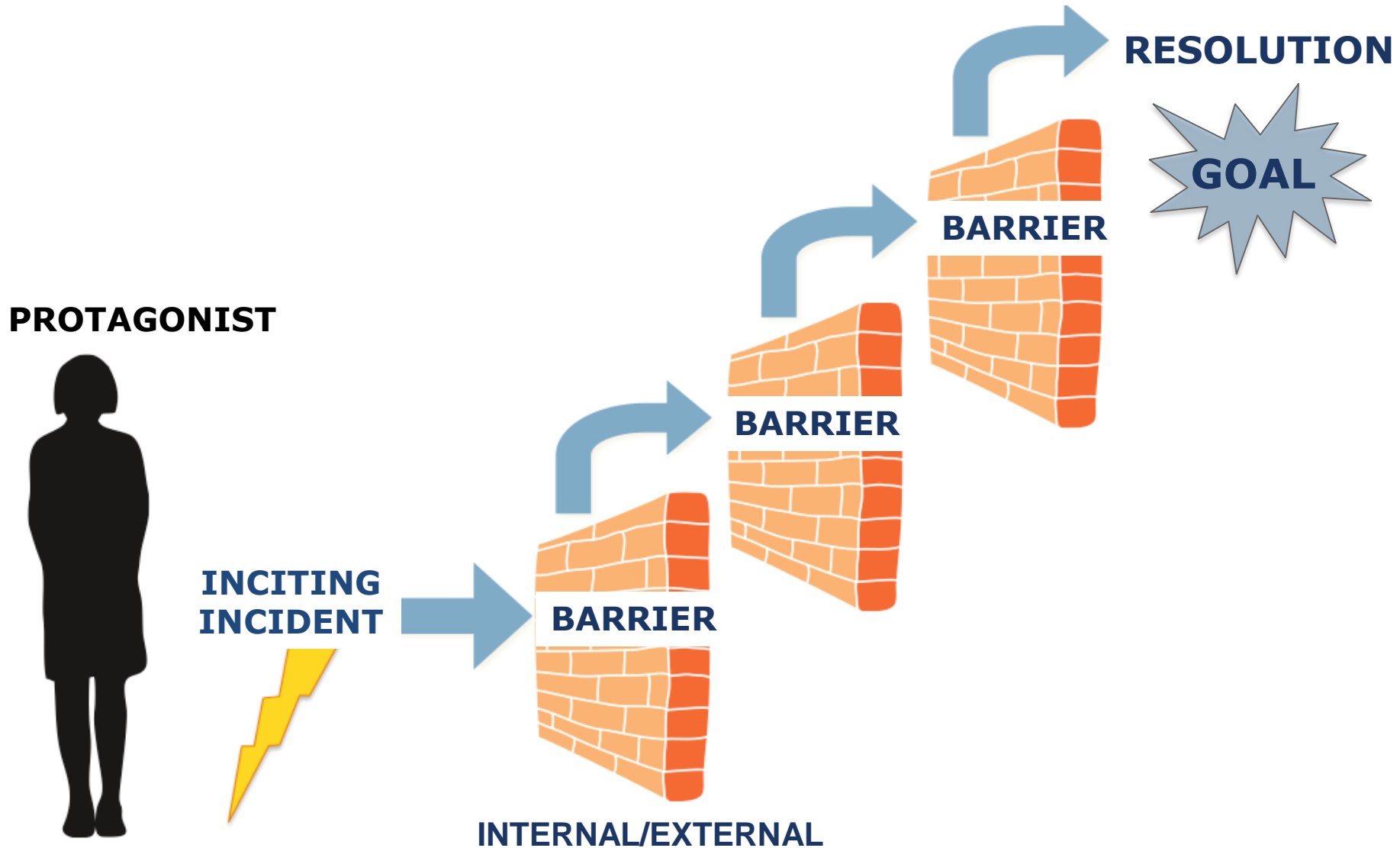
THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



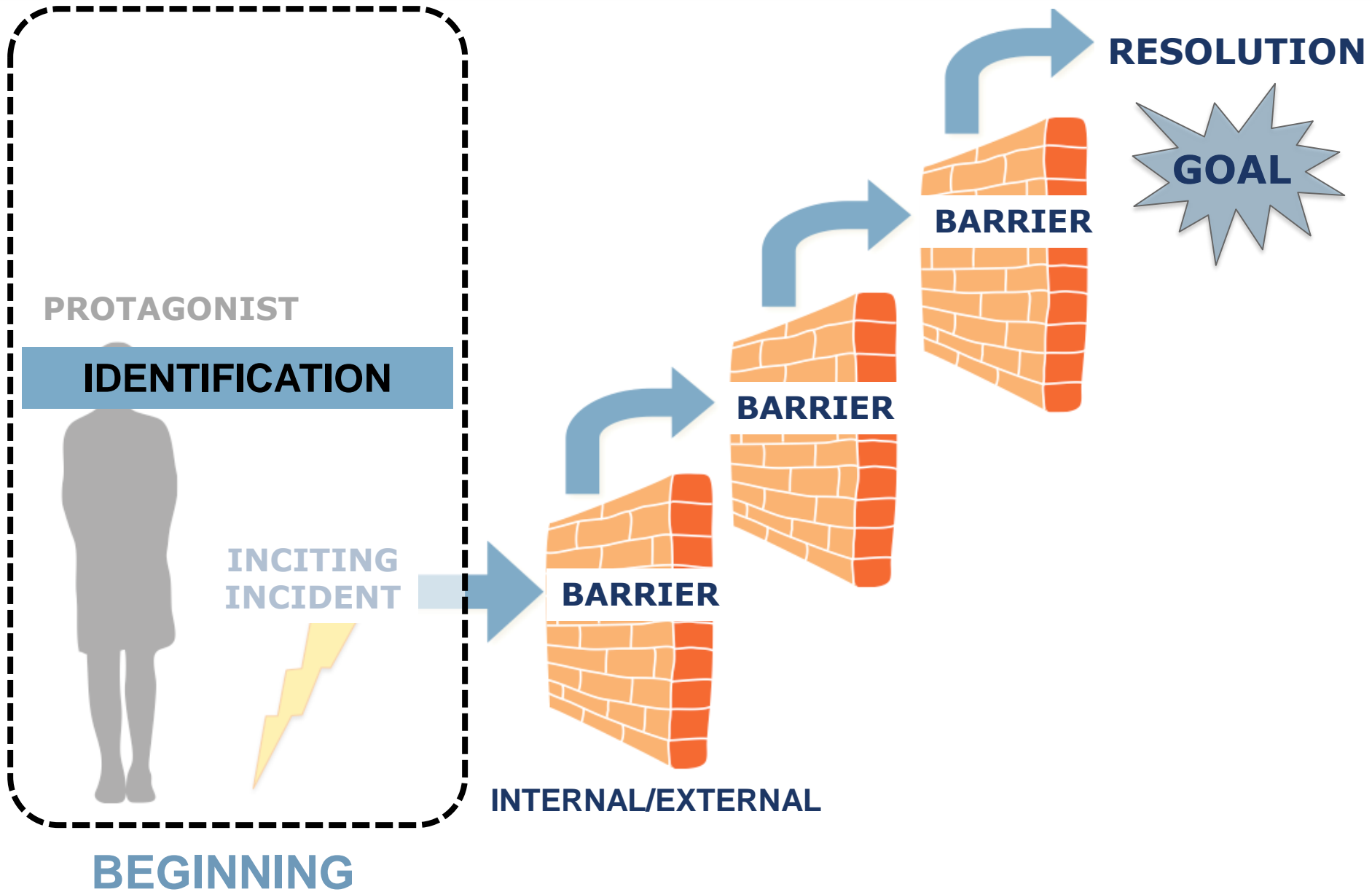
1. Protagonist problems



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist



**Corporation for
Supportive
Housing**

Take Part



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist



Darrell's Story - CSH Returning Home

MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist



beth's
story

MOST COMMON MISTAKES Cannot identify with protagonist

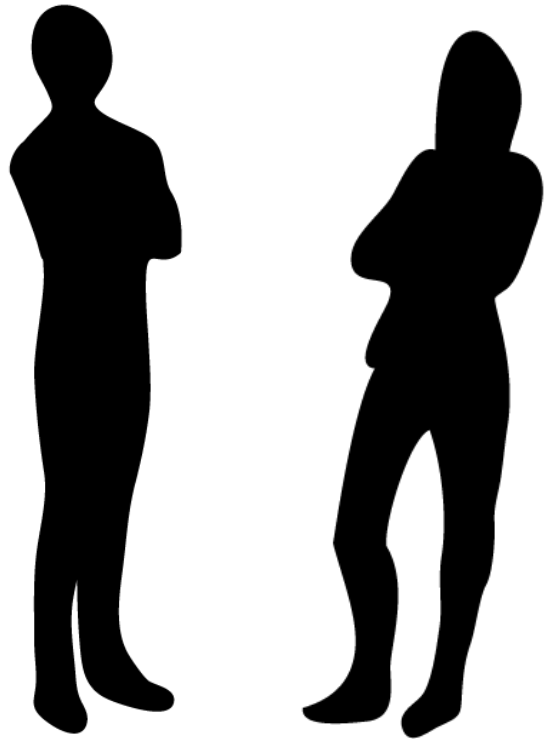


**How are they
different?**





LACK OF PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



Audience cannot “see” the protagonist or other important characters in the story.



DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WITH UNNAMED CHARACTERS



Mr. S.



The Client



DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WITH UNNAMED CHARACTERS



Mr. S.



The Client



Use actual names
(with permission)



DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WITH UNNAMED CHARACTERS



Mr. S.



The Client



Use actual names

Use pseudonyms



DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WITH UNNAMED CHARACTERS



Mr. S.



The Client

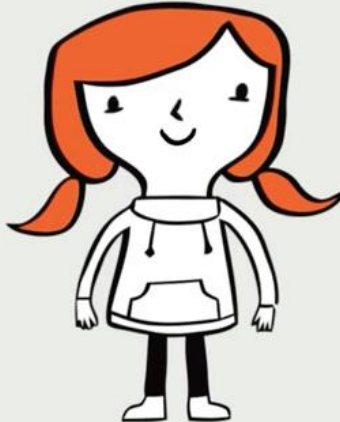


Use actual names

Use pseudonyms

**Create composite
characters and
name them**

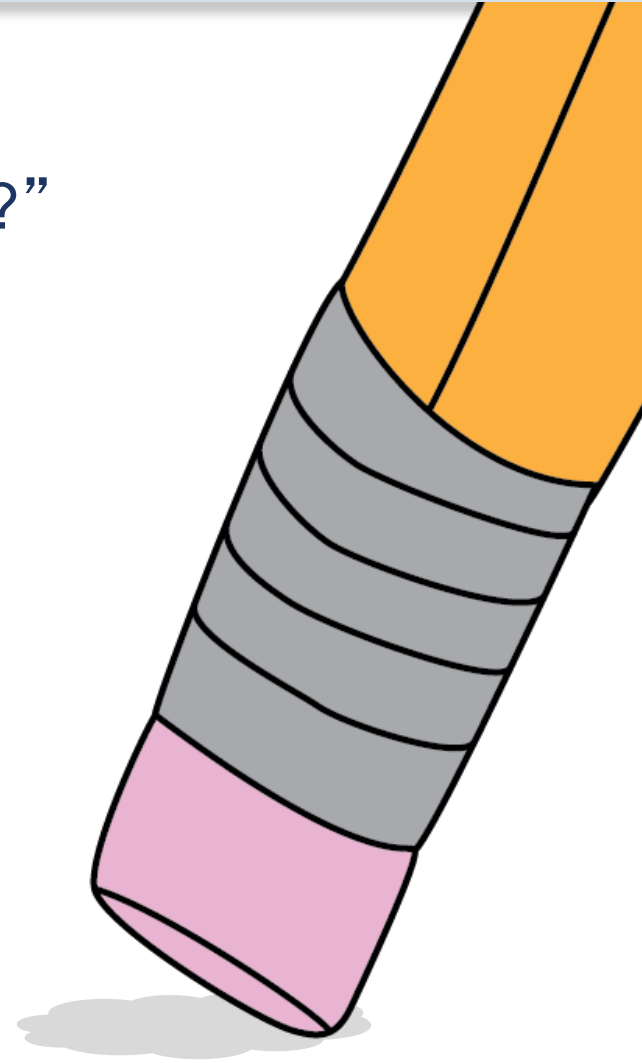


This is  ***Kate***

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



1. Protagonist problems
2. No good answer to “Why should I care?”



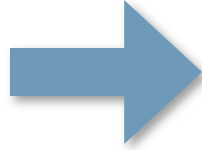
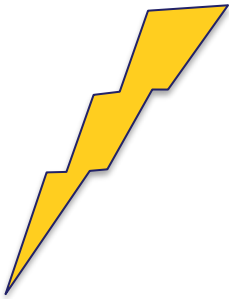
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



PROTAGONIST



**INCITING
INCIDENT**



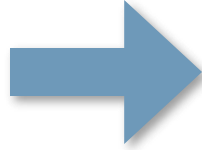
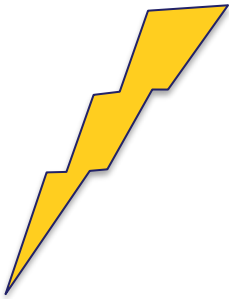
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



PROTAGONIST



**INCITING
INCIDENT**



How will he (or
she) get there?



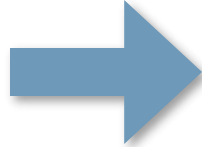
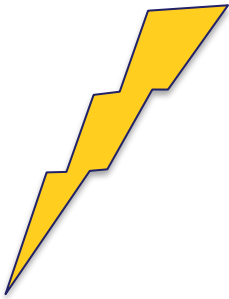
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



PROTAGONIST



**INCITING
INCIDENT**



How will he (or
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Why should I
care?



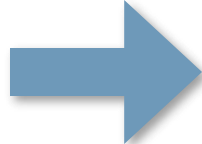
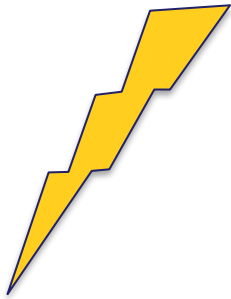
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



PROTAGONIST



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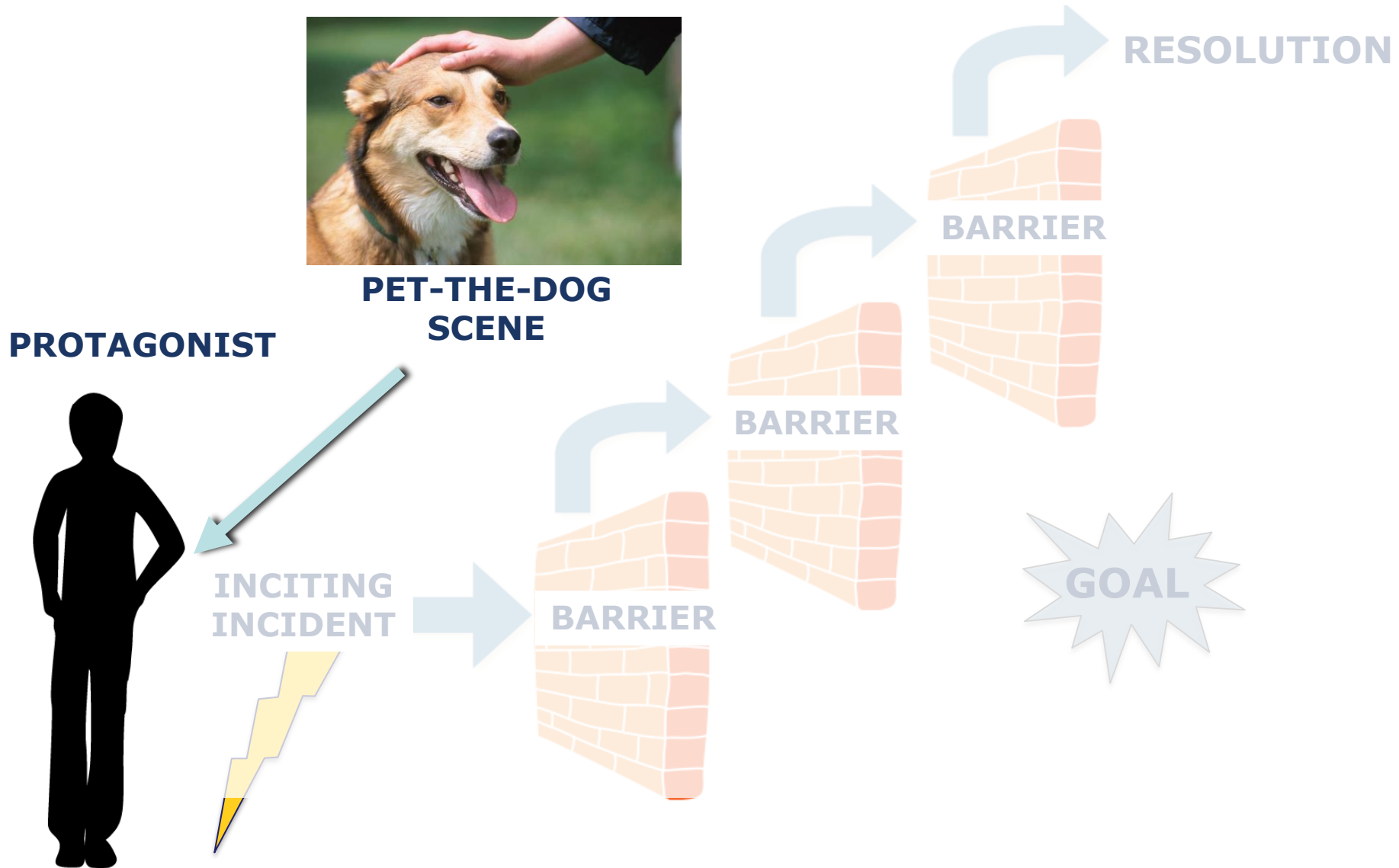
Why should I
care?

The goal is
important to me.

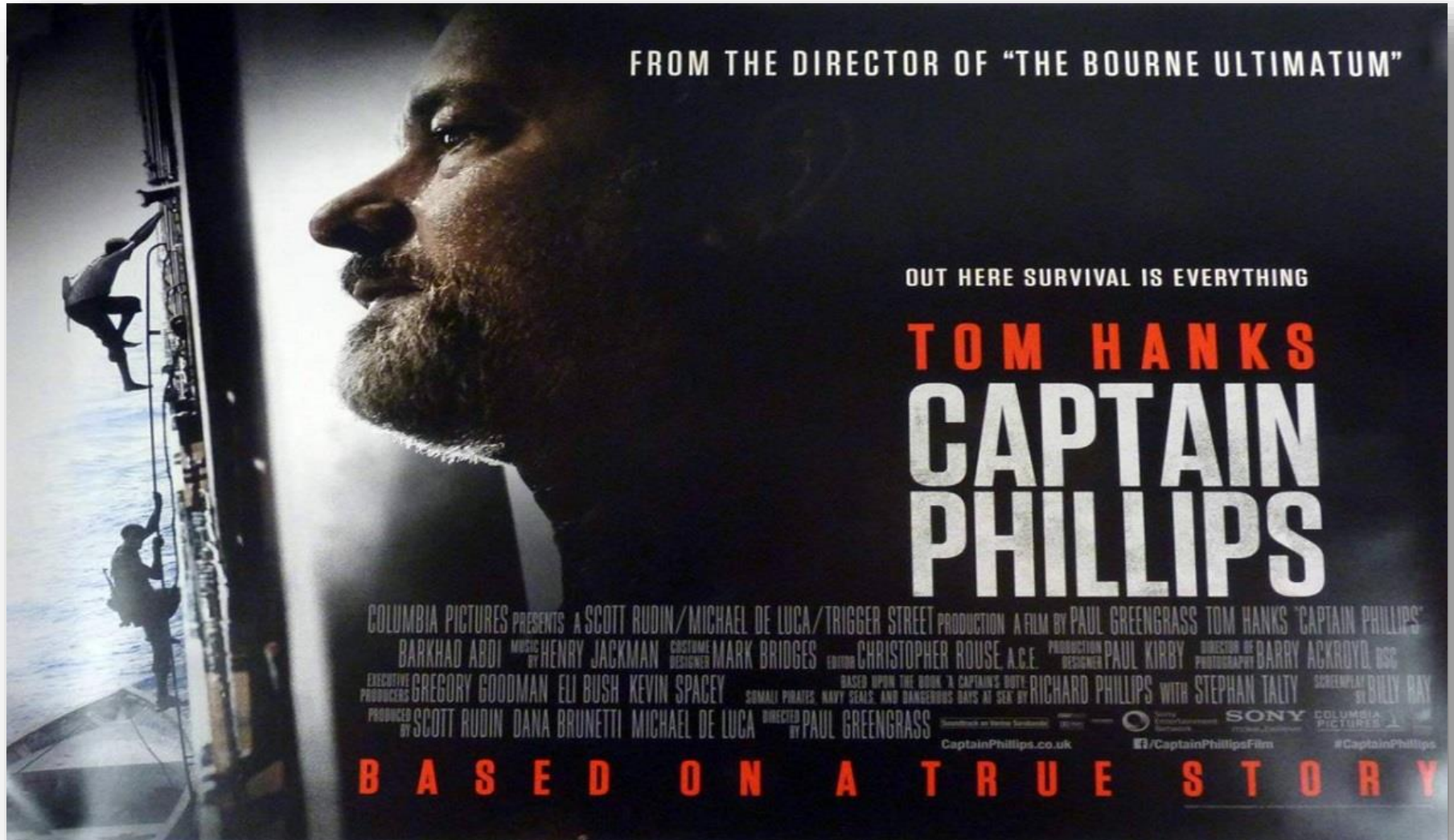
I have empathy for
the protagonist.



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



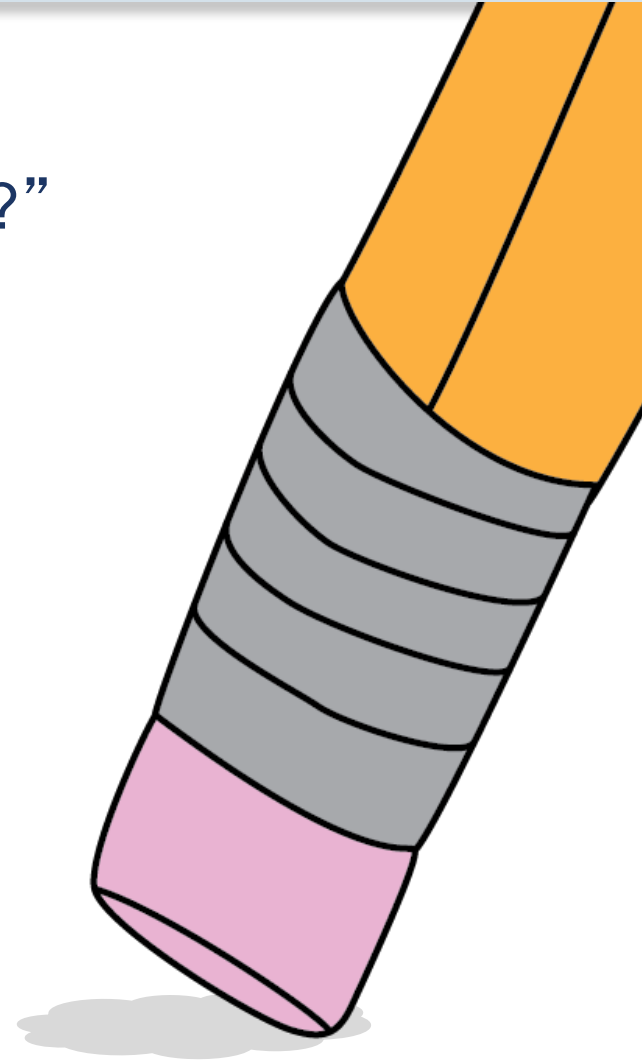
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Why should I care?



THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



1. Protagonist problems
2. No good answer to “Why should I care?”
3. Too much, too soon





The 10 Most Common Mistakes in Nonprofit Storytelling

#3: Too Much, Too Soon

Version 1

In September of 2007, Bonnie Simmons was sitting at her desk at the Stenton County Health Department when her phone rang. On the other end was Susan O'Brien. Susan was the manager at the Elmwood Park Apartments, which provided subsidized housing for the elderly and people with disabilities. Susan was calling to get more information as to how to address a tenant complaint.

The tenant was Bob Coughlin. Bob was an energetic, wiry 66-year old former marathon runner. He lived at the Elmwood Park Apartments and was recovering from bladder cancer. Susan told Bonnie that another tenant, Bob's neighbor, was a heavy smoker and the tobacco smoke was entering Bob's apartment through a living room window. He had taken measures to seal the windows but it was summer and the heat was intolerable. Bob was asking Susan for help to create a smoke-free environment. Susan called Bonnie that day to see if Bob was protected under Washington's Smoking in Public Places law. Bonnie told Susan that she would look into a solution. When Bonnie hung up the phone she discussed the conversation with her colleague, Steve Brown.

Version 2

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**How many
characters?**

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5
characters

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**5
characters**

**How many
locations?**

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5
characters

2
locations

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**5
characters**

**2
locations**

**How many
story
points?**

MOST COMMON MISTAKES Too Much, Too Soon



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**5
characters**

**2
locations**

**a whole
bunch**

(187 words)



The 10 Most Common Mistakes in Nonprofit Storytelling

#3: Too Much, Too Soon

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It was the steady stream of “uh-huhs” coming from the desk next to his that caught Steve Brown's attention. Steve worked in tobacco prevention and control at the Stenton County Health Department, and his co-worker, Bonnie Simmons, was on the phone, talking to someone who clearly wasn't letting her get too many words in edgewise.

Bonnie saw Steve looking her way and shrugged her shoulders, letting him know she was stuck in one of “those conversations.” When she finally hung up a few minutes later, Steve didn't even have to ask. “You know the Elmwood Park Apartments,” Bonnie said as she scribbled down the last notes from her call. “That was the manager. She's got a heavy smoker living next door to a non-smoker.” Steve could fill in the rest: it was summer, closing windows wasn't an option, so the manager had at least one unhappy tenant on her hands and was looking for help. The kind of help that only Bonnie and Steve could offer.

HOW IS THIS
VERSION
DIFFERENT?



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2 characters

MOST COMMON MISTAKES Too Much, Too Soon



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2
characters

2
locations

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**2
characters**

**2
locations**

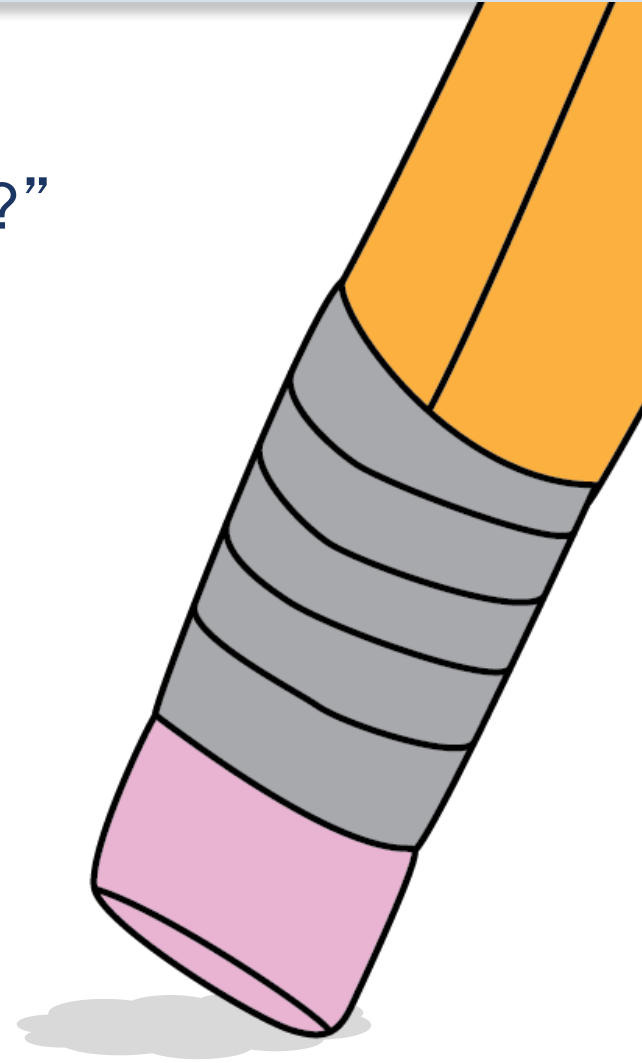
**fewer
story
points**

(166 words)

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING

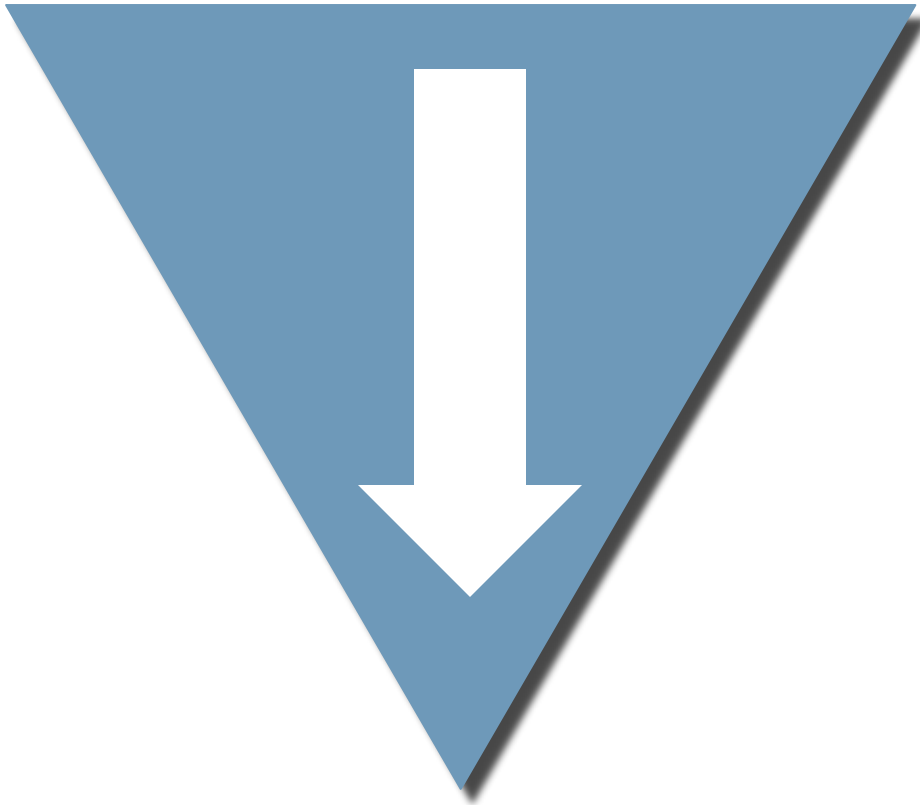


1. Protagonist problems
2. No good answer to “Why should I care?”
3. Too much, too soon
4. Journalistic structure and quotes



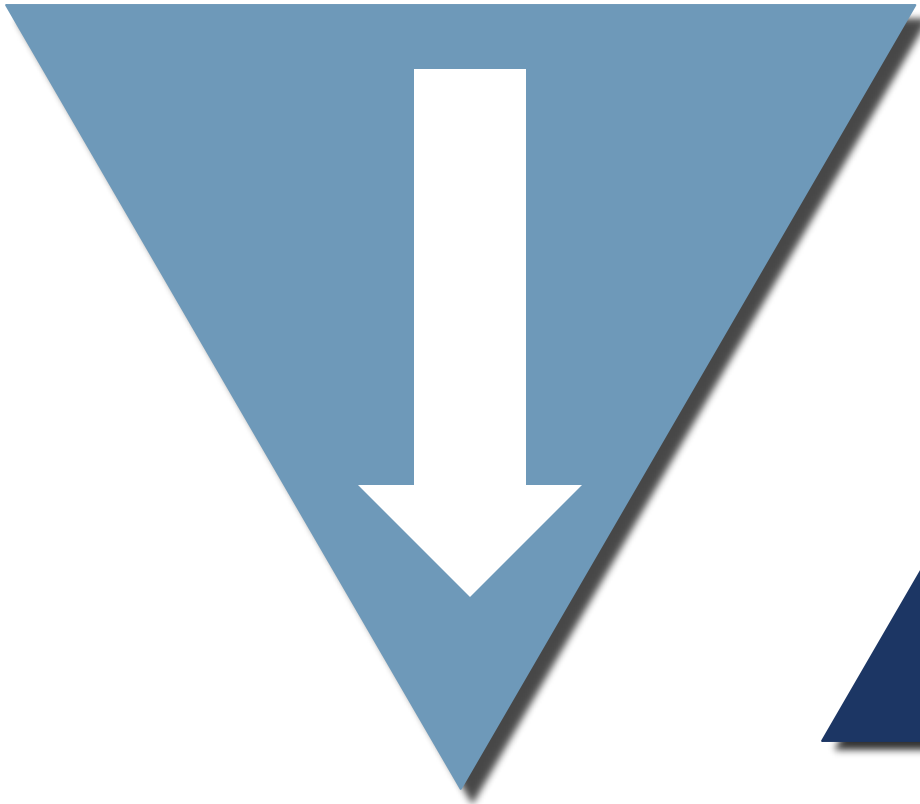


JOURNALISM

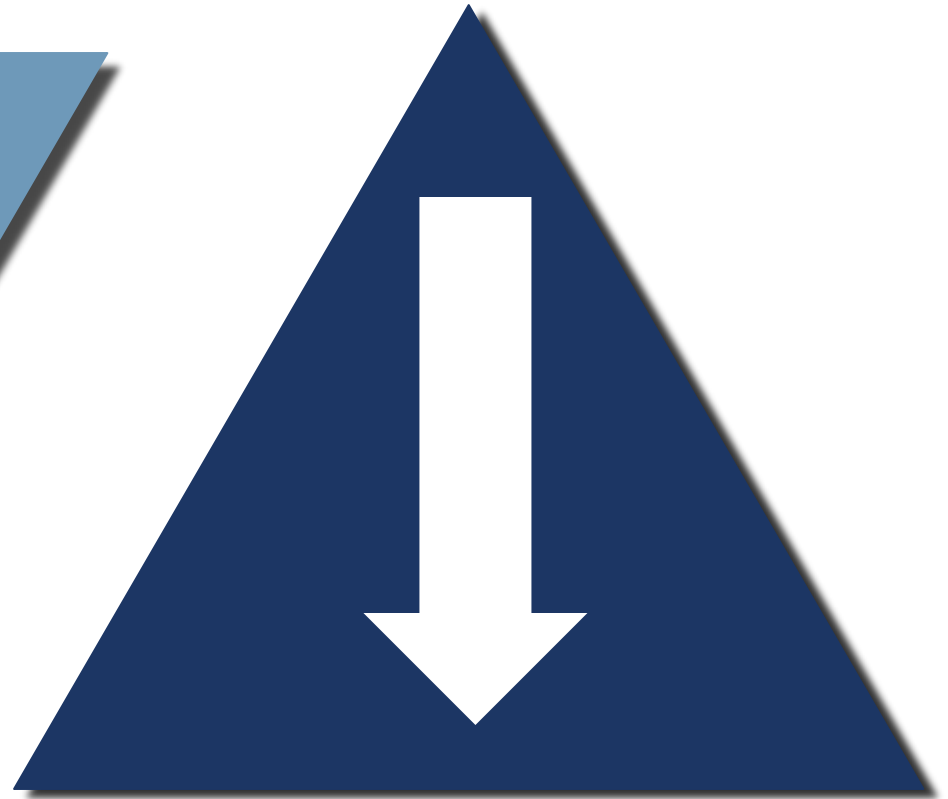




JOURNALISM



STORYTELLING





“When I first met Karen, she was shy and quiet, which is typical of young girls when you first meet them,” says Hillary.

As for Karen's take on their first meeting? “I felt scared,” she says. “I didn't know what to do.”



Nurse-Family
Partnership

Helping First-Time Parents Succeed



Great Moments in
Cinematic
Storytelling

AS WRITTEN BY JOURNALISTS

A journalist might have written it this way...



Jerry Maguire's assistant, Dorothy, informed him that he was providing more information than necessary to prove his affection for her.

But a scene needs dialogue, so...



But a scene needs dialogue, so...



“You had me at hello.”

A journalist might have written it this way...



Frustrated that previous entreaties had been rebuffed, Mr. Corleone recommended a new negotiating strategy that was guaranteed to end the impasse.

But a scene needs dialogue, so...

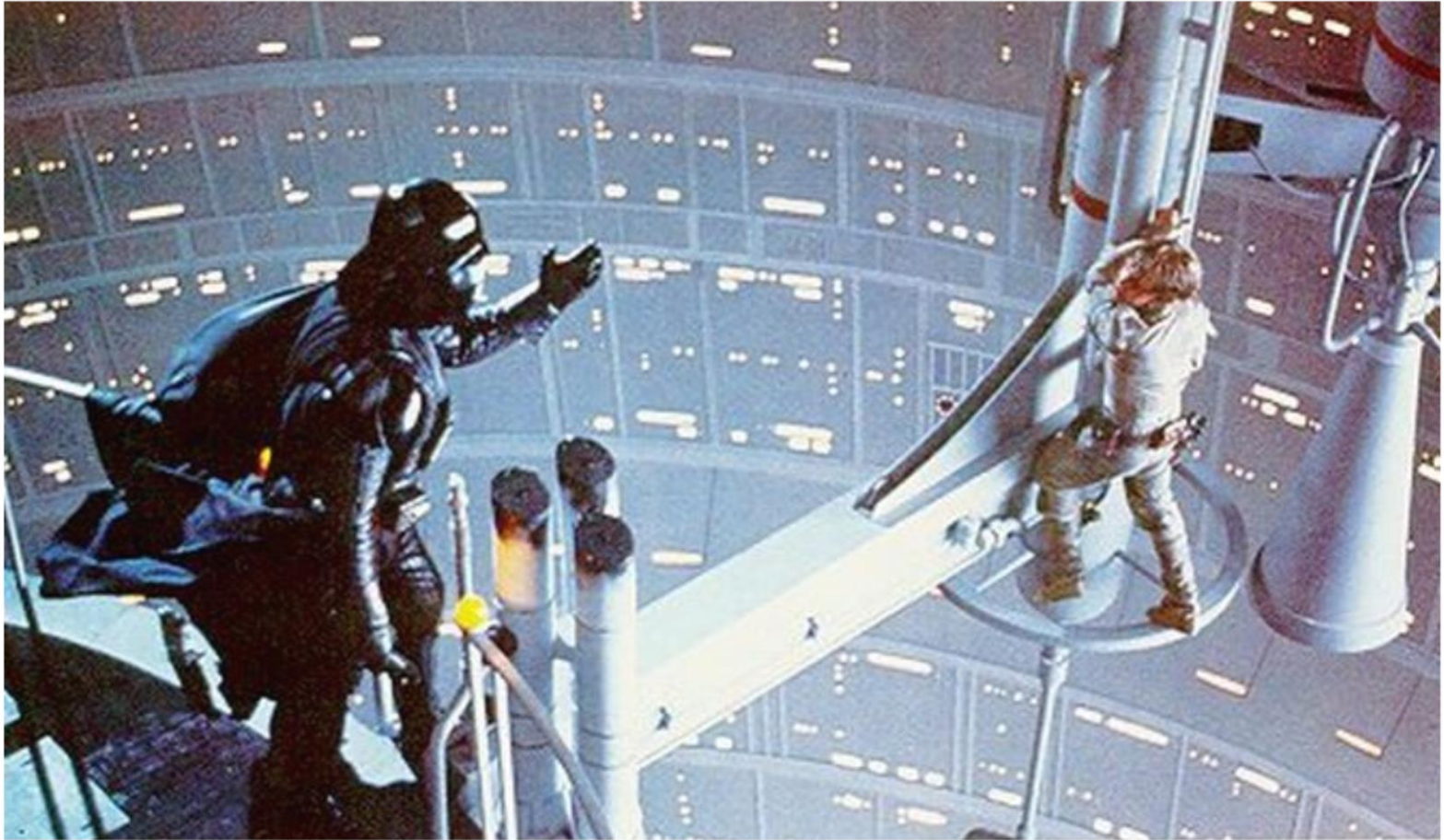


But a scene needs dialogue, so...



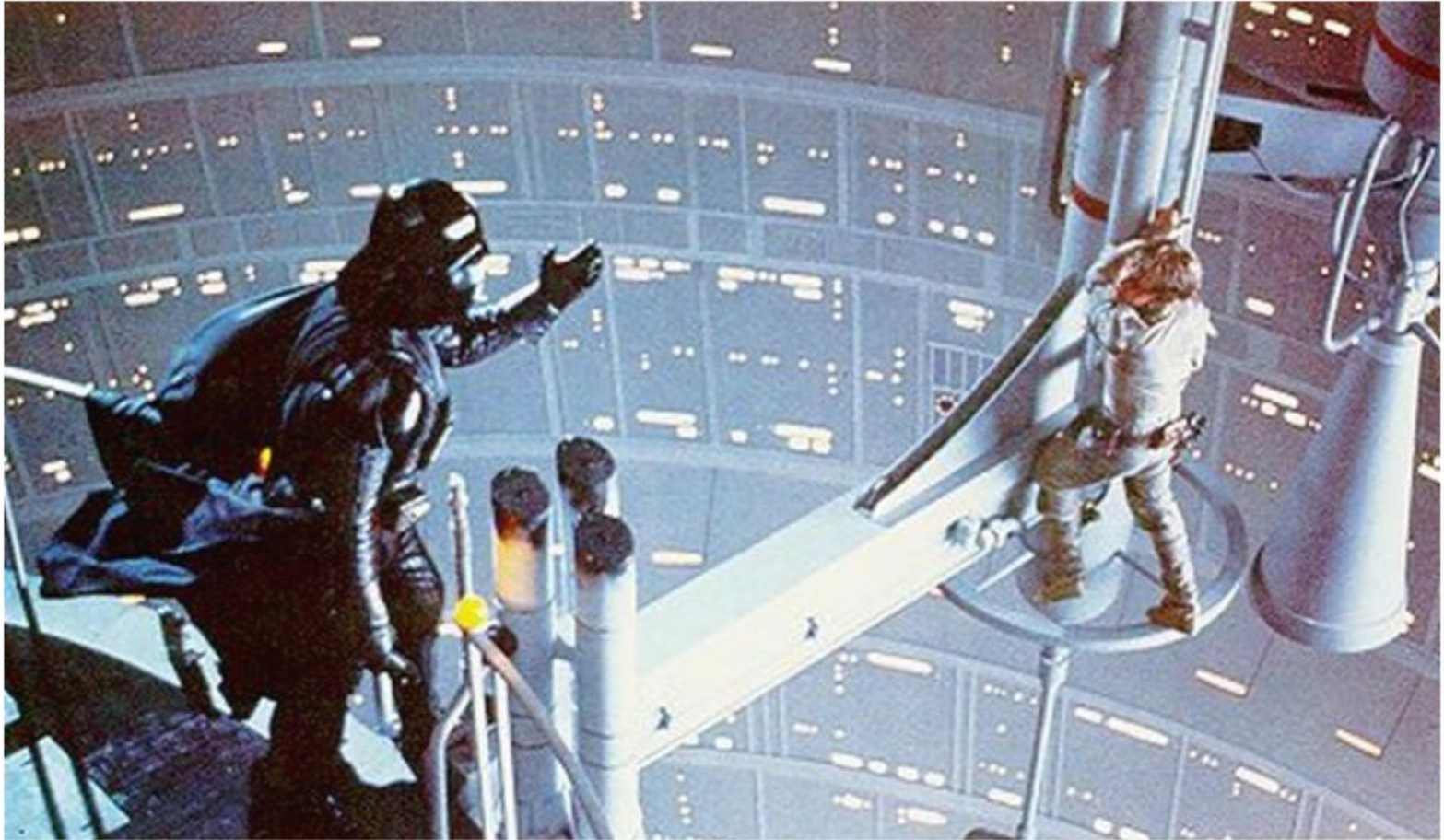
“We'll make him an offer he can't refuse.”

A journalist might have written it this way...

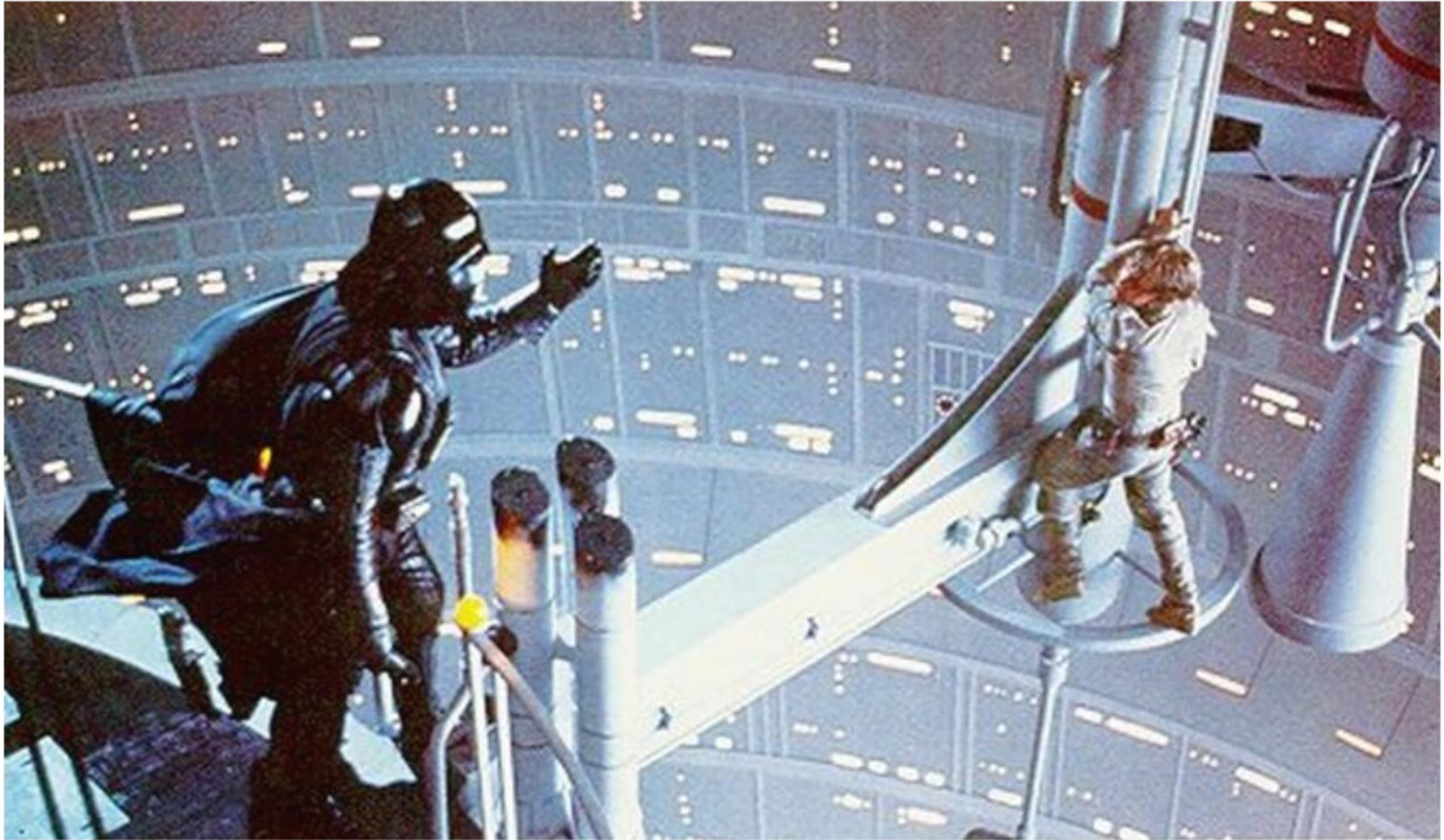


Darth Vader interrupted the altercation to inform Luke of their surprising familial connection.

But a scene needs dialogue, so...



But a scene needs dialogue, so...

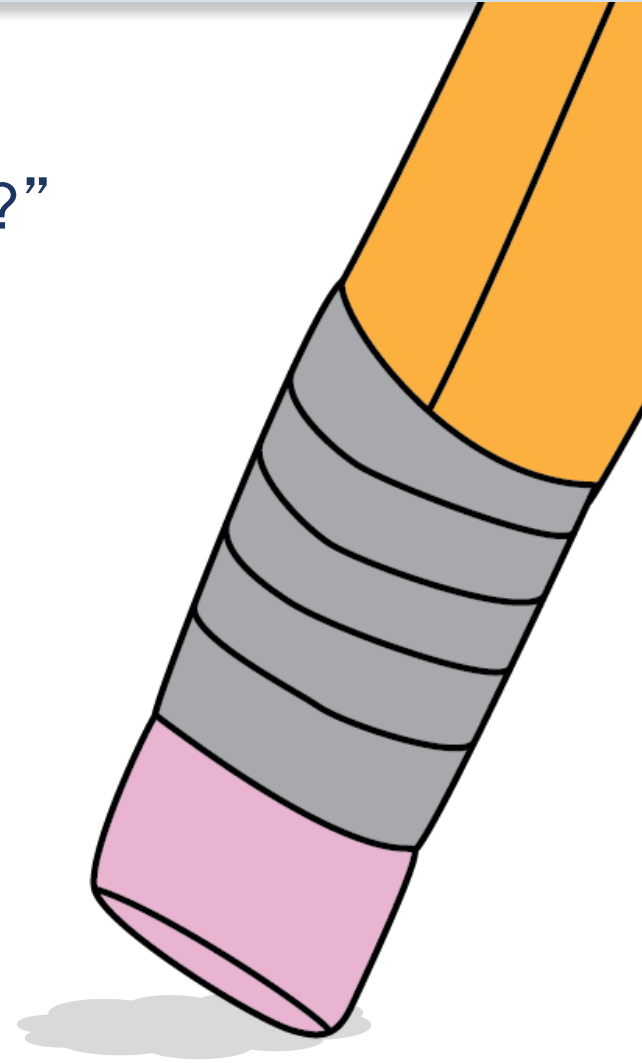


“I am your father!”

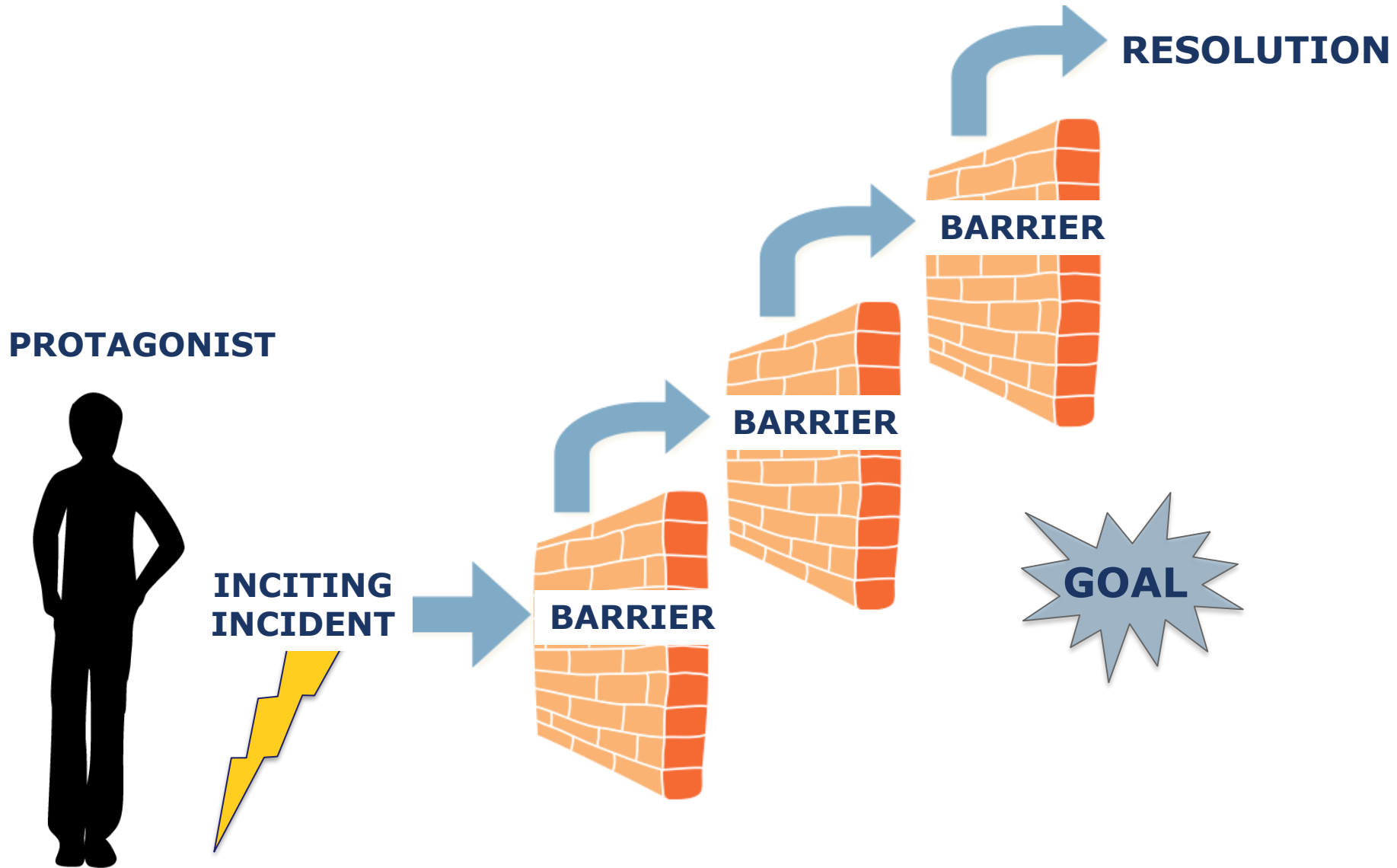
THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



1. Protagonist problems
2. No good answer to “Why should I care?”
3. Too much, too soon
4. Journalistic structure and quotes
5. No real barriers



MOST COMMON MISTAKES No Real Barriers

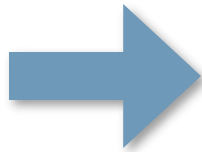
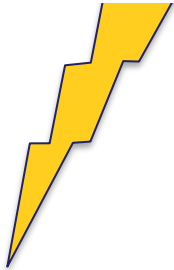




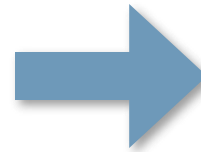
PROTAGONIST



**INCITING
INCIDENT**



**PURSUES
GOAL**





PROTAGONIST



**INCITING
INCIDENT**

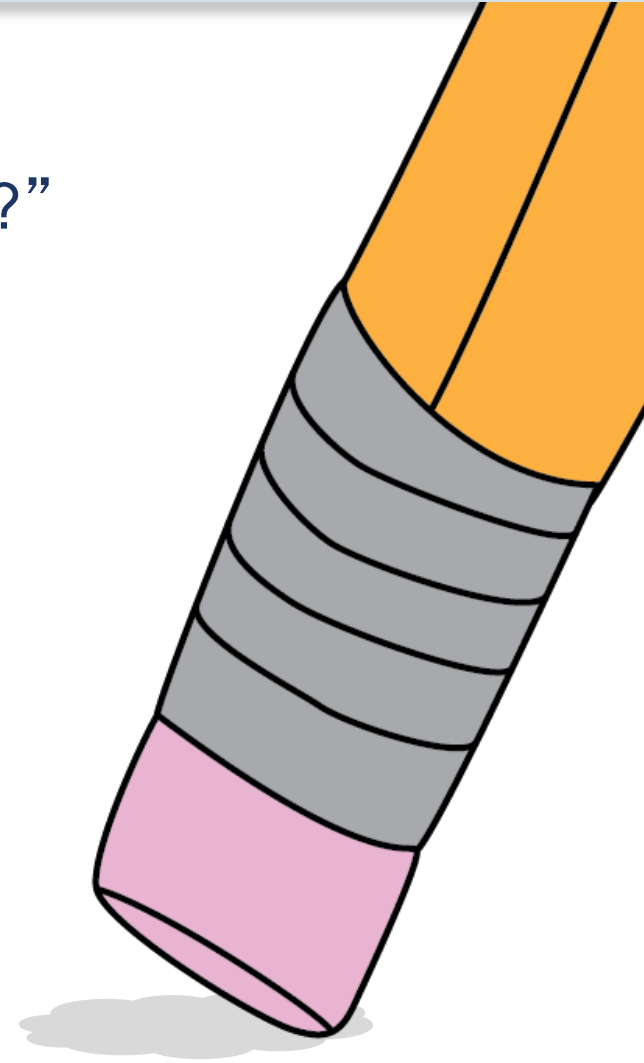


**In most cases,
you don't truly
have a story
worth telling
until “I want”
runs into “You
can't.”**

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING

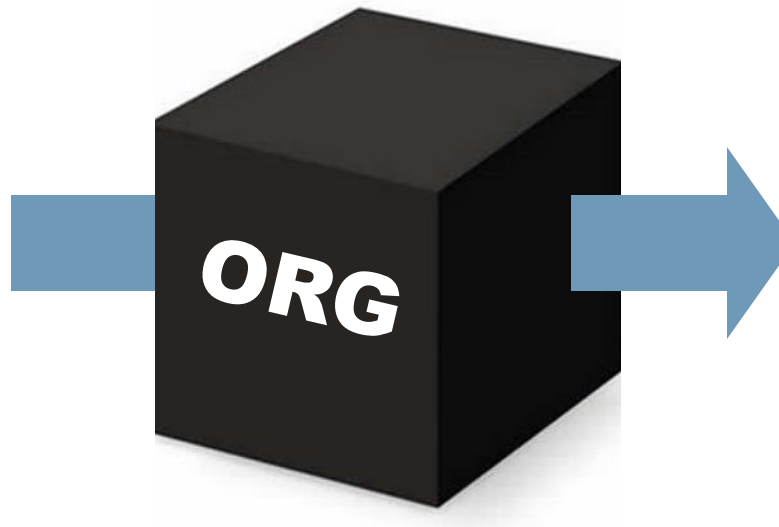


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3. Too much, too soon
4. Journalistic structure and quotes
5. No real barriers
6. “Black box” storytelling





**INTRACTABLE
PROBLEM**



**ELEGANT
SOLUTION**

MOST COMMON MISTAKES The Black Box



Health
Leads

Better health.
One connection at a time.



What We Do Where We Are Who We Are What's New Get Involved

➔ Project HEALTH is now Health Leads

Project HEALTH changed its name to Health Leads on November 8, 2010.

To read more about our new name, [click here](#).

Health Leads' Annual Campaign

Our annual year-end fundraising campaign is now underway! Please [click here](#) to support Health Leads today.

A New Vision for America's Healthcare

Every day in America, doctors prescribe antibiotics to patients who have no food at home or are living in a car. Of course, medicine alone won't solve these problems, and many of the patients will return with more serious – and more expensive – illnesses. But, for the most part, doctors don't have the time or knowledge to address patients' basic resource needs.



Volunteer: Justin Dittmeier; Photographer: Better Walker

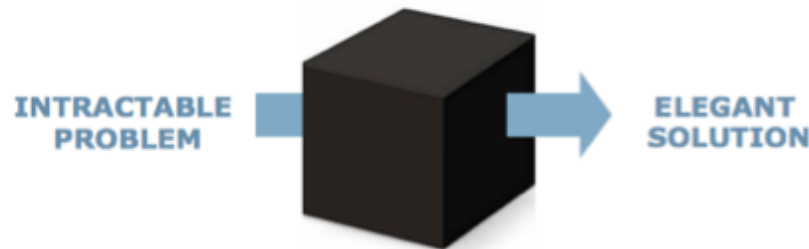
Recent Press Articles

- ➔ The Johns Hopkins University Gazette: ["Connecting Families and Resources"](#) (January 10, 2011)
- ➔ Harvard Global Health Review, The Geopolitics of Health: ["Project HEALTH: Advocates for Healthcare Beyond the Clinic"](#) (Winter 2010)
- ➔ CommonHealth: ["Health Reform That No Judicial Ruling Can Stop"](#) (December 14, 2010)
- ➔ The Brown Daily Herald: ["Publicity spurs a name change for Project Health"](#) (November 30, 2010)
- ➔ DenverPost.com: ["Your ZIP code and your life expectancy"](#) (November 11, 2010)
- ➔ CommonHealth: ["Health Leads: A New Name, But An Unchanged Mission To Care For Low-Income Families"](#) (November 9, 2010)
- ➔ Chicago Maroon: ["Project HEALTH opens new South Side location"](#) (October 29, 2010)
- ➔ Maternal Health Task Force Blog: ["A New Beginning"](#) (October 8, 2010)
- ➔ Johns Hopkins Dome: ["Healthy Choices"](#) (September 2010)



The 10 Most Common Mistakes in Nonprofit Storytelling

#6: The Black Box



During a brutally cold week in November, the Jackson family arrived at the Harriet Lane Clinic at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, panicked by their three year-old's escalating asthma attacks. During the visit, the Jacksons disclosed to Dr. Peterson, the child's pediatrician, that they lived with their three young children and 11 other people in a dilapidated Baltimore apartment, amid asbestos and peeling lead paint. Unable to find regular work, the Jacksons stretched their income as far as possible, but often ran out of food at the end of the month. A week prior, the utilities company cut off their heat and gas, precipitating their son's increasingly frequent asthma attacks.

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Protagonist
(Jacksons)

MOST COMMON MISTAKES The Black Box



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Protagonist
(Jacksons)

Goal
(Heal 3-yr. old)

MOST COMMON MISTAKES The Black Box



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Protagonist
(Jacksons)

Goal
(Heal 3-yr. old)

Barriers
(Apartment,
Income,
Weather)



After talking with the family, the doctor prescribed medicine for the child's asthma and a visit to Health Leads in the clinic waiting room. Sonia Sarkar, then a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University and a Health Leads volunteer, tackled the case.

Within a few weeks, her advocacy had yielded remarkable results: With Sonia's help the entire Jackson family enrolled in health insurance, reducing their reliance on expensive emergency room visits. The family also obtained financial assistance to turn back on their heat and buy healthy food for their children, and Mrs. Jackson enrolled in a job training program, putting her family on the path to financial stability and good health.



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**First
Barrier**
(Medicine)



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**First
Barrier**
(Medicine)

**Second
Barrier**
(HealthLeads)

MOST COMMON MISTAKES The Black Box



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**First
Barrier**
(Medicine)

**Second
Barrier**
(HealthLeads)

Resolution
(Insurance,
Financial Aid,
Job)



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**Black
Box**



**INTRACTABLE
PROBLEMS**



**ELEGANT
SOLUTION**

“Her advocacy had yielded remarkable results.”



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Freddie's Story

A Friend by Her Side

Freddie was six years old when she was selected for Friends of the Children New York. She was consistently getting into fights with her peers, had trouble staying focused in school, and was often disrespectful to her teachers.

Freddie lived with her mother and sister in one of the local housing projects. In the third grade, the family moved in with a close friend as Freddie's mother's health began to fail. In 7th grade, her mother passed away. Throughout this difficult time, Freddie's Friend was there by her side, supporting and encouraging her.

Freddie graduated with honors from Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, and is now a sophomore at Syracuse University majoring in communications. She is working while going to school and is living independently in an apartment near campus. This past fall at Youth INC's twentieth anniversary Celebration, Freddie was named the first recipient of their Youth Achievement Award.

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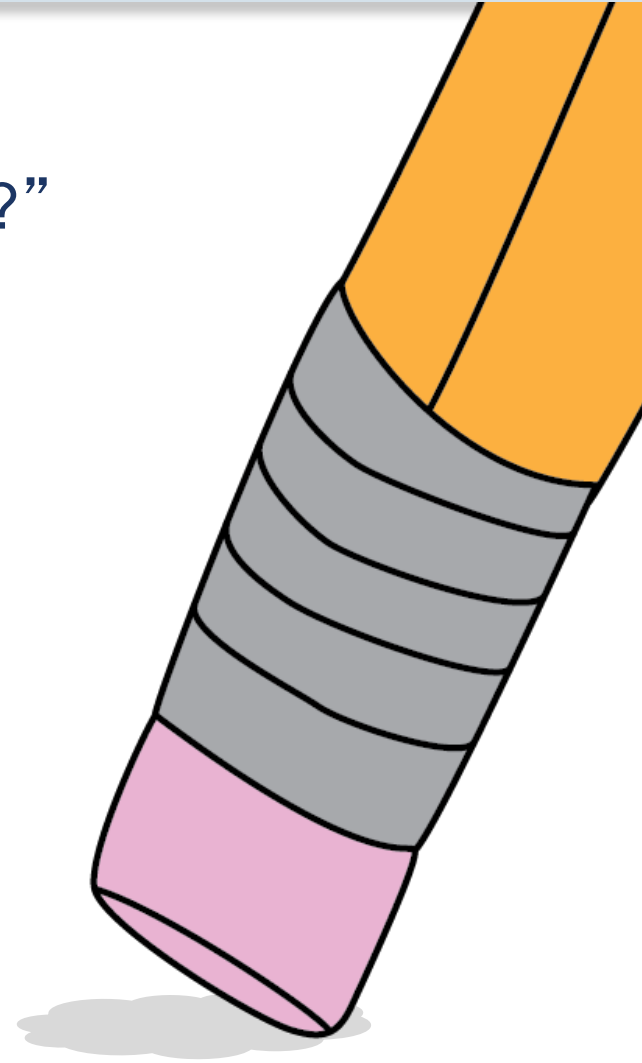
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THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING

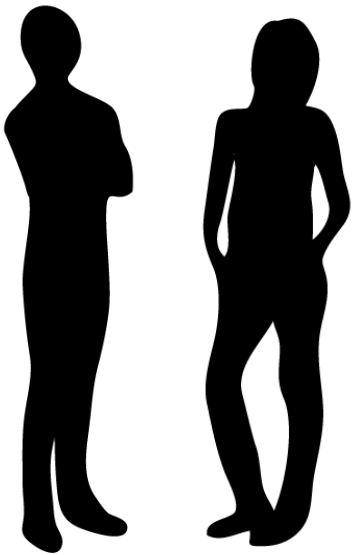


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7. All summary, no scenes



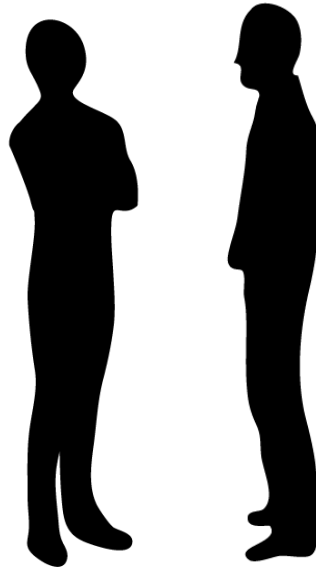


SCENE 1



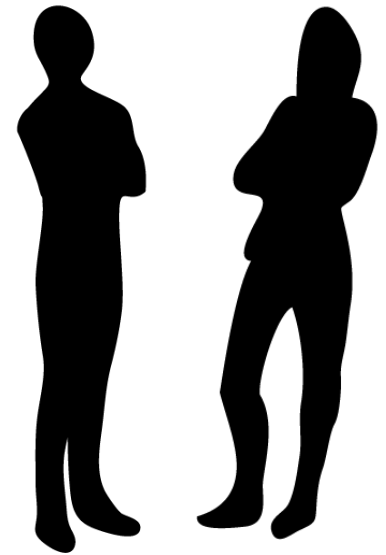
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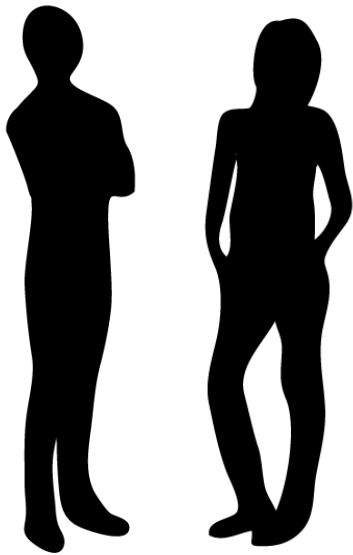
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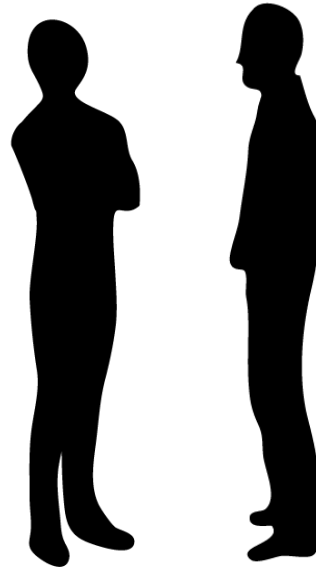


SCENE 1



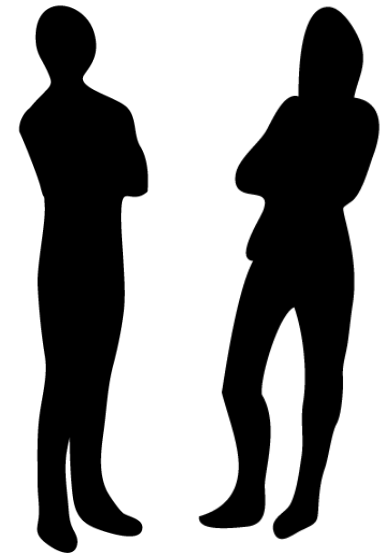
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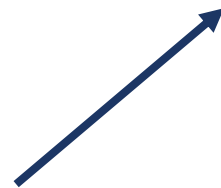
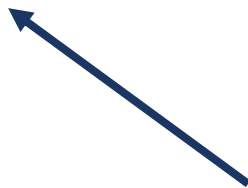


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SCENE 3



Details, Dialogue, Immediacy



MOST COMMON MISTAKES All Summary, No Scenes



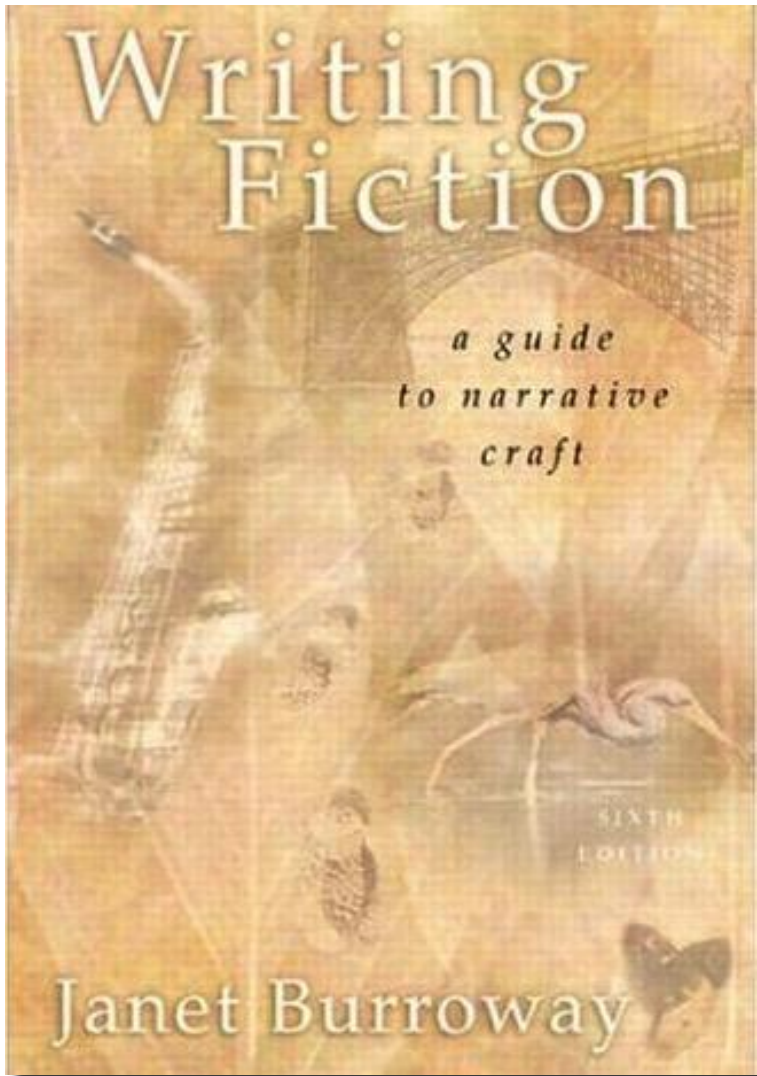
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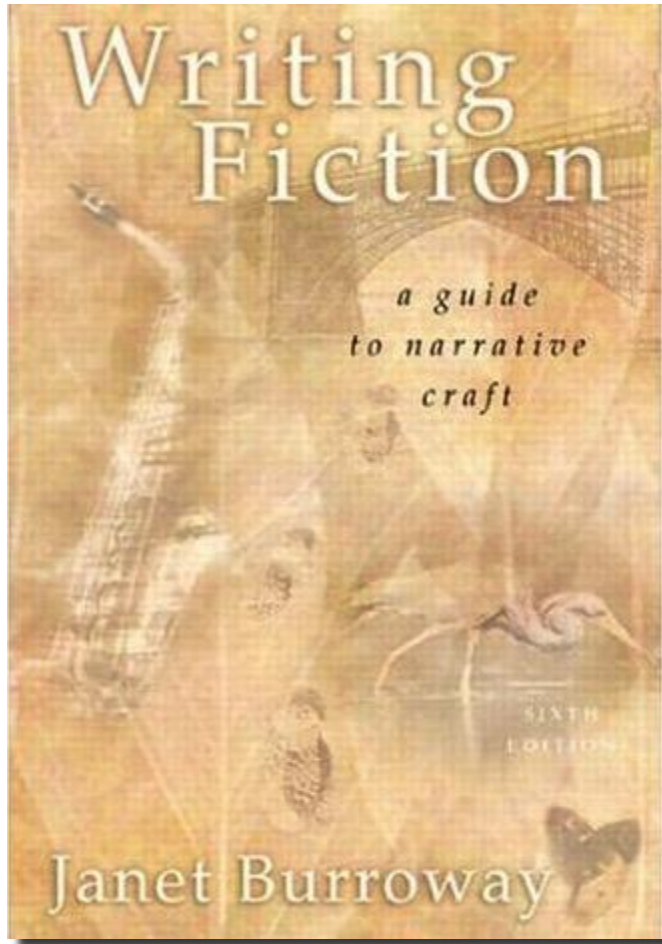
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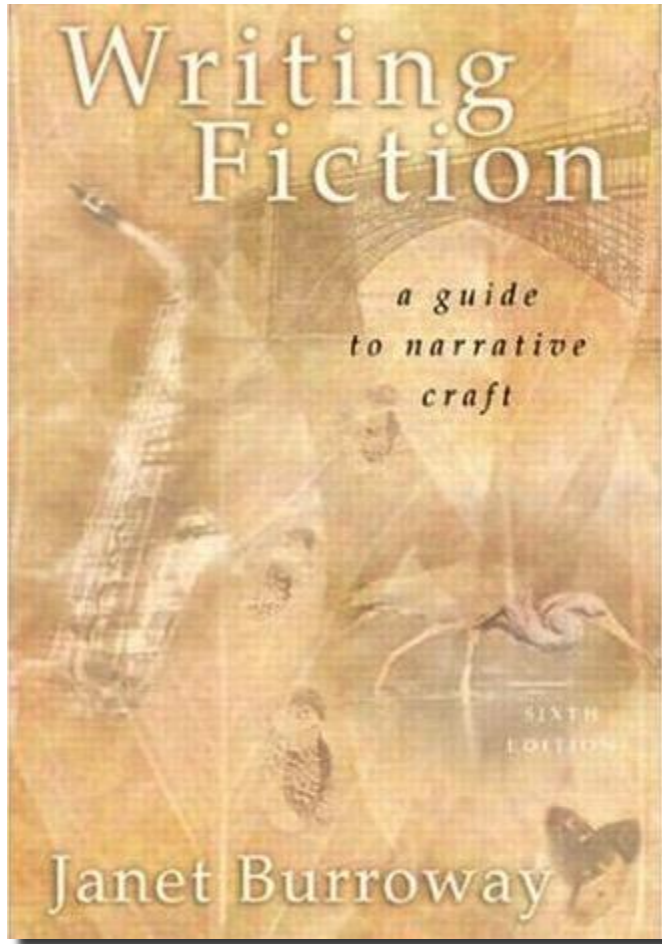


**Writing Fiction: a guide
to narrative craft**

Janet Burroway
(Longman © 2000)



Summary and scene are methods of treating time in fiction. A **summary** covers a relatively long period of time in relatively short compass; a **scene** deals at length with a relatively short period of time.



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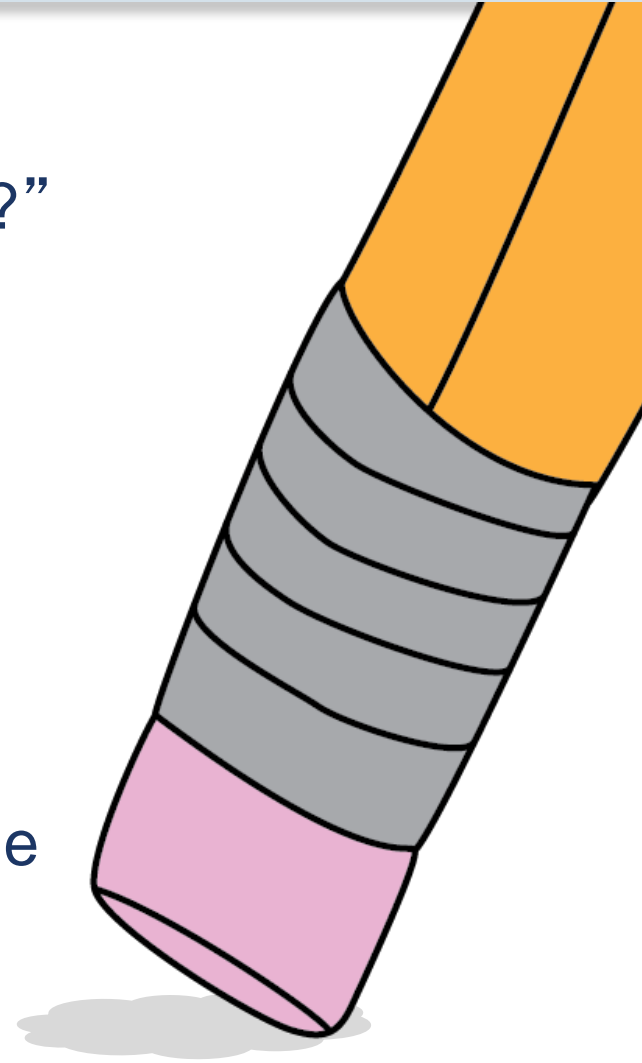
It is quite possible to write a short story in a single scene, without any summary at all. It is not possible to write a successful story entirely in summary.

Janet Burroway

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



1. Protagonist problems
2. No good answer to “Why should I care?”
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6. “Black box” storytelling
7. All summary, no scenes
8. Jargon, abstract, and technical language





The client, who was 17, was struggling to keep up with her one-year old son. He was extremely active and was into everything he could get his hands on. By the end of the day, the client was very frustrated and distraught.



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**ABSTRACT
WORDS DO NOT
HELP AUDIENCE
VISUALIZE**



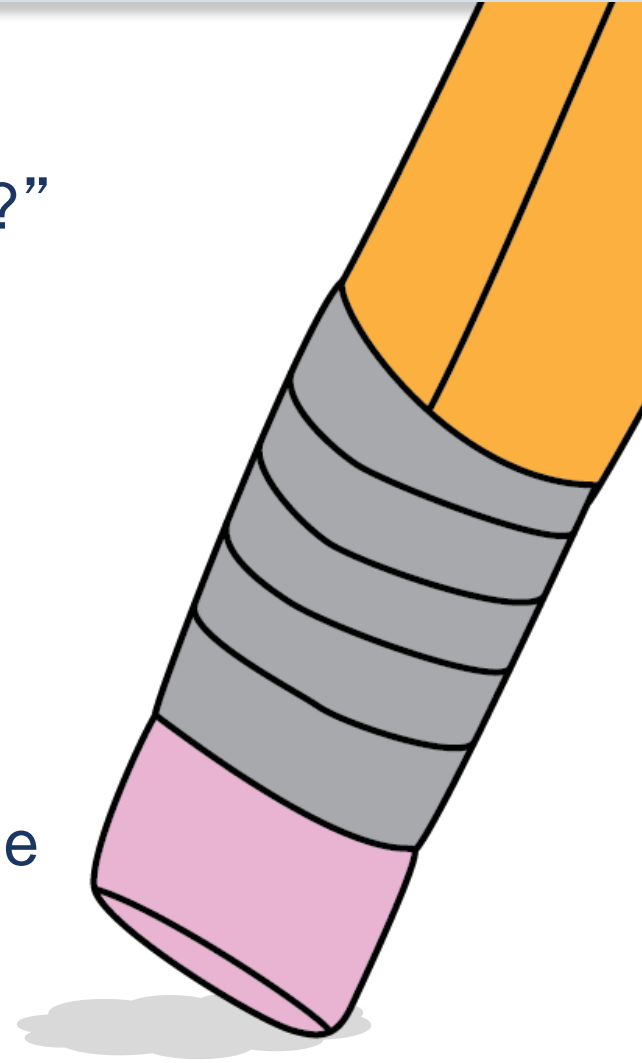
The client, who was 17, was struggling to keep up with her one-year old son. He was extremely active and was into everything he could get his hands on. By the end of the day, the client was very frustrated and distraught.

Karen, 17, struggled to keep up with Marco, who had just turned one. He would frequently climb all over her, open her purse, and dump its contents on the floor. By day's end, Karen would often have tears streaming down her cheeks.

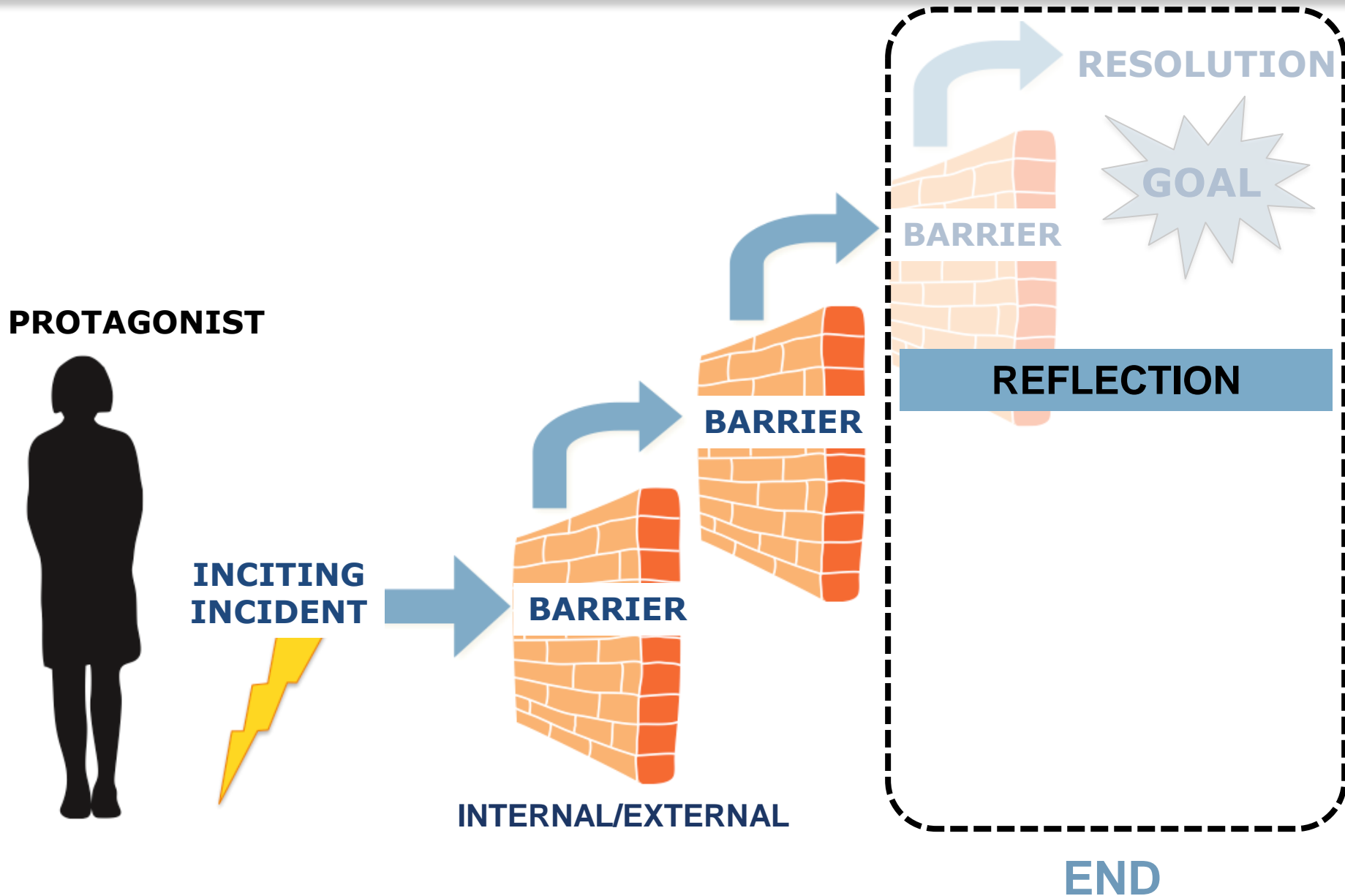
THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



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8. Jargon, abstract, and technical language
9. Didactic, heavy-handed resolution



MOST COMMON MISTAKES Didactic resolution



A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a dark t-shirt with a yellow graphic, sits on a grey couch. A light-colored dog is lying on the couch next to her, looking happy with its mouth open. The background is a dimly lit living room with a lamp and a vase of flowers.

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Sarah McLachlan: 'I Change The Channel' When My ASPCA Commercials Come On

🕒 05/05/2014 02:42 pm ET | Updated May 05, 2014

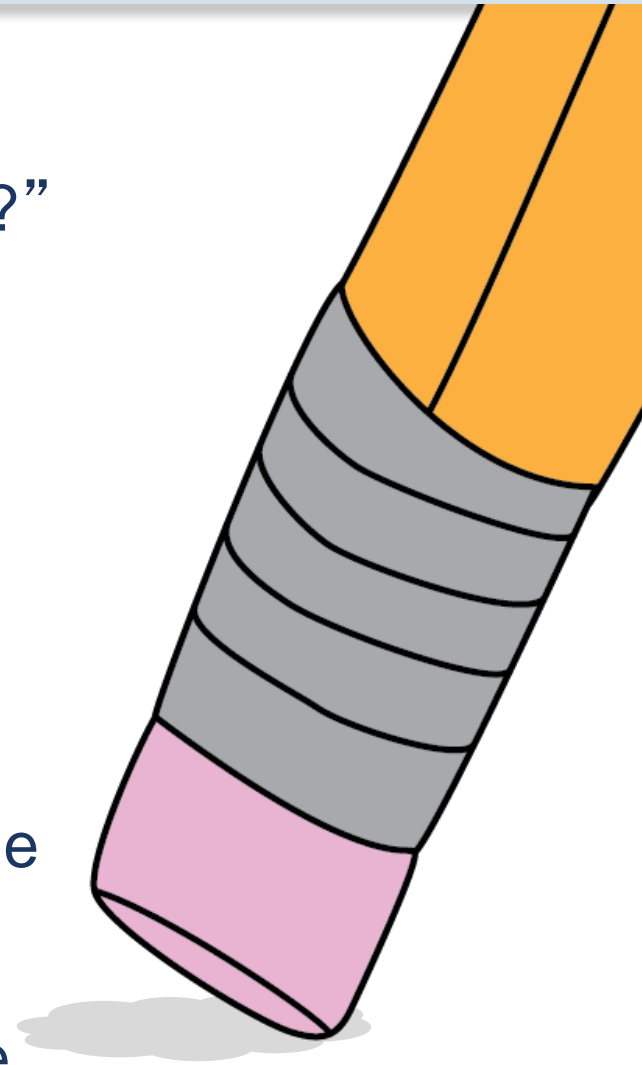
Even Sarah McLachlan changes the channel when her notoriously gut-wrenching ASPCA commercials come on.

The famed singer has lent her voice to numerous commercials sponsored by the [American Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty to Animals](#) that feature sad-looking animals desperate for a home. The PSAs have taken on [a life of their own](#) because of how hard they can be to watch. When she spoke with HuffPost Live's [Caitlyn Becker](#) about the release of her new album, "Shine On," McLachlan added that she too avoids the commercials.

THE 10 MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN STORYTELLING



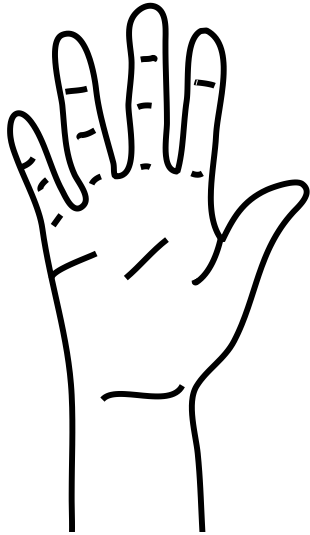
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8. Jargon, abstract, and technical language
9. Didactic, heavy-handed resolution
10. Problem solved – what do you need me for?



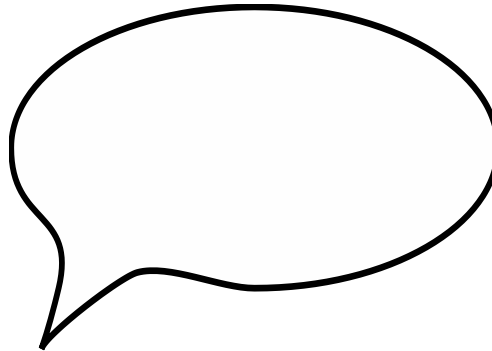
MOST COMMON MISTAKES Problem Solved!



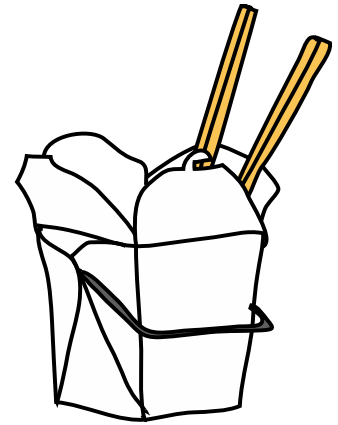
Darrell's Story - CSH Returning Home



Questions



Comments



Take-Aways



Review: The structure of a well-told story

The 10 Most Common Mistakes


How to Get the *Whole* Story

**Short on Space or Time? Try
“Connecting Narrative Moments”**



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- Optimized for iPod viewing
- Presentations reside on the PC and or iPod. Your sales people can get the slides and audio anytime they want, not just when online
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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES How to Get the Whole Story



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Well, I'll never forget this one young woman. She came from an underserved community, and she was just so shy, but I knew right away UDM would be a good fit for her. So, I stayed after her until she applied, and then we helped her apply for financial aid so her family could afford to send her. And now she's a junior, she's doing great, and she's starting to think about a career in health care.





- **Don't accept jargon.**



Tim Keelan, Founder
StoryQuest



Okay, hold on right there for a second. When you say “underserved,” what do you mean exactly?

Well, like I said, Tina came from an underserved community, and...





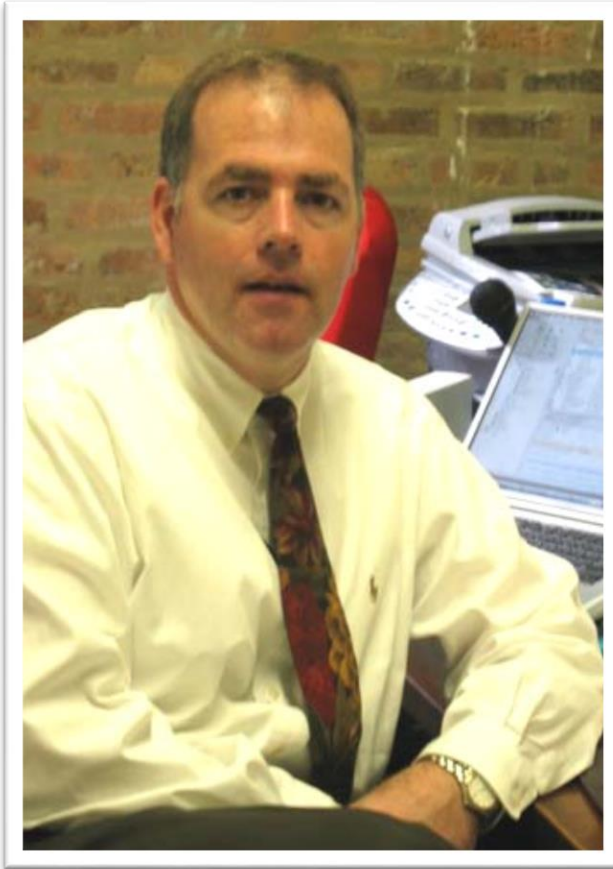
Oh, well, the recession had hit her neighborhood pretty hard. There were a lot of empty storefronts, and a couple of schools had closed. In fact, her high school was so overcrowded, they parked a couple of double-wide trailers on the football field and used them as extra classrooms.





Oh, well, the recession had hit her neighborhood pretty hard. There were a lot of **empty storefronts**, and a couple of schools had closed. In fact, her high school was so overcrowded, they parked a couple of **double-wide trailers on the football field** and used them as extra classrooms.





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StoryQuest

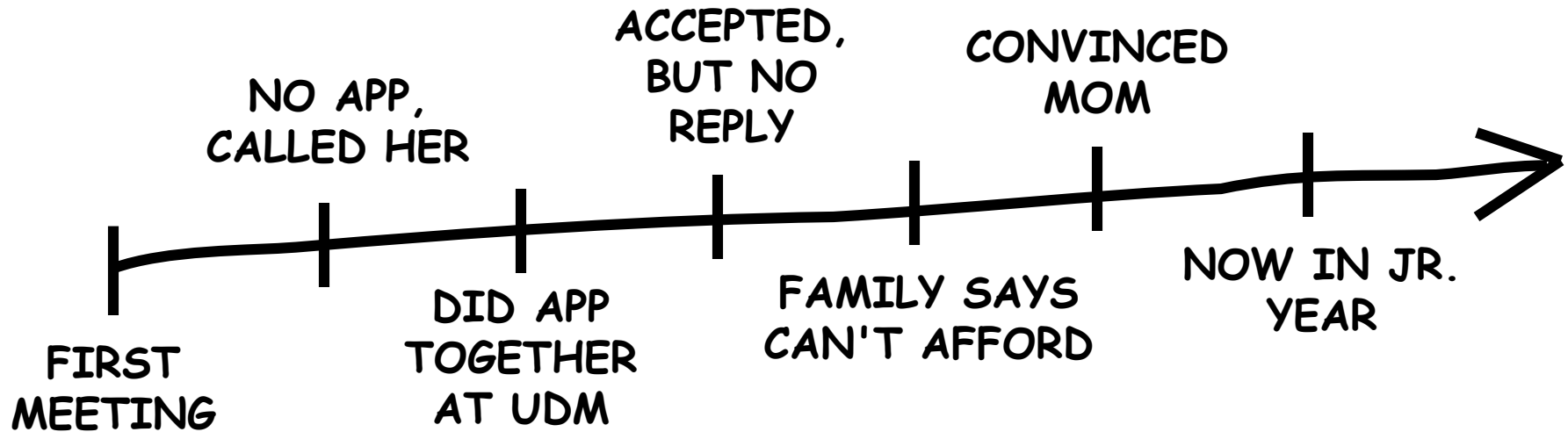
- **Don't accept jargon.**
- **Map out a timeline of the story.**

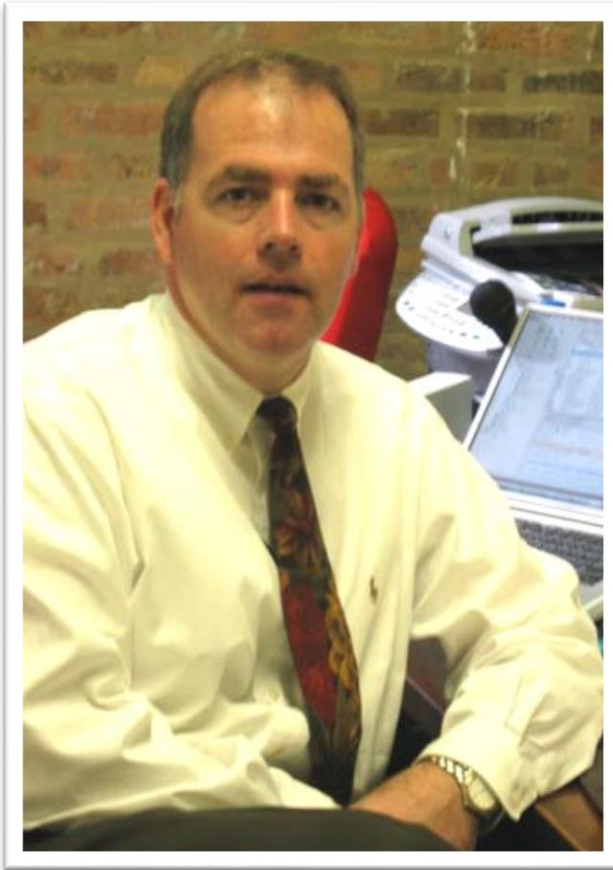


**Sounds good, but let's
take it one step at a time.
First, tell me about
how you met Tina.**

**But like I said, we really
worked with her because
we could all see her
potential.**







**Tim Keelan, Founder
StoryQuest**

- **Don't accept jargon.**
- **Map out a timeline of the story.**
- **Don't accept “we.”**



**And when you say "we,"
who else was working
with you to help Tina?**

**Once we convinced
Tina's mom that the
application process wasn't
that complicated, the rest
was mostly paperwork.**

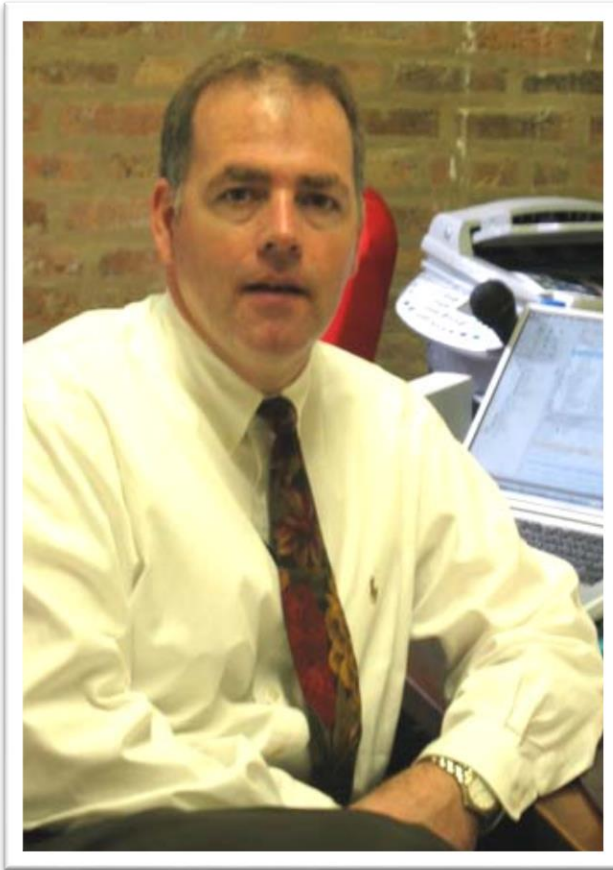
**Oh, that would
be Ted.**





At first, Tina's mom was pretty adamant about not accepting any aid, but when we showed her the figures about the number of students on scholarship, she finally agreed.





Tim Keelan, Founder
StoryQuest

- **Don't accept jargon.**
- **Map out a timeline of the story.**
- **Don't accept “we.”**
- **Look for moments of vulnerability.**



SUPERMAN
- KRYPTONITE

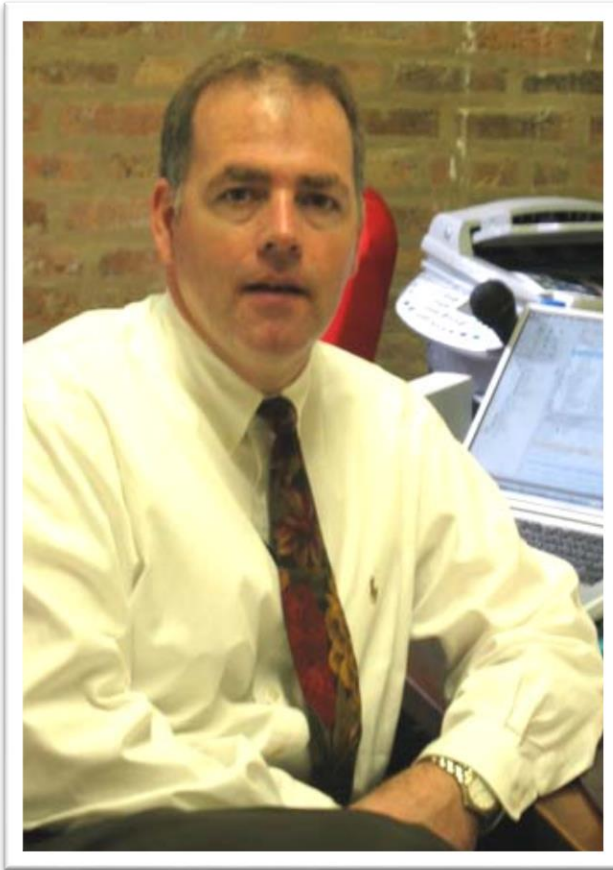
BORING



And when Tina's mom didn't want to deal with the financial aid process, how did you feel?

Honestly, I started to get discouraged. I mean, her daughter has a chance to go to college, and she just doesn't want to deal with it!?!





**Tim Keelan, Founder
StoryQuest**

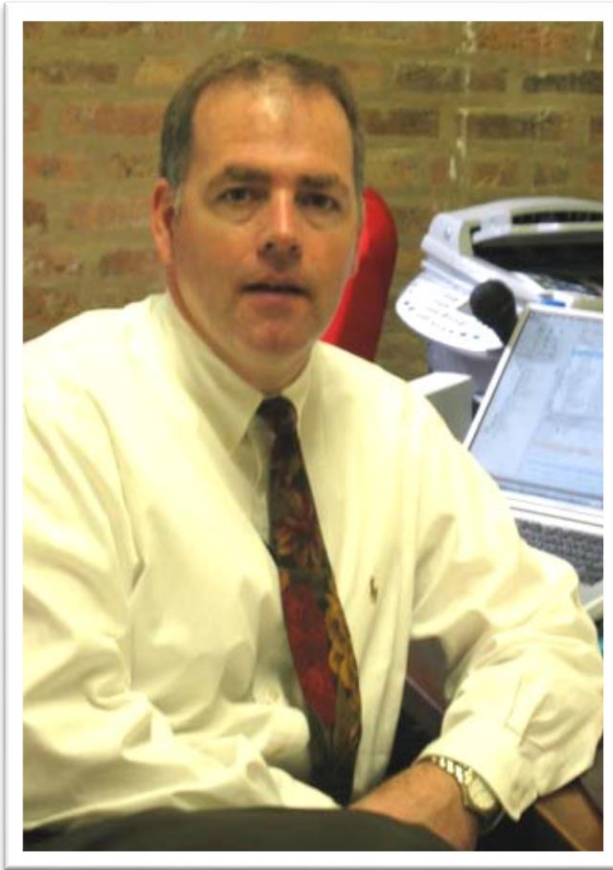
- **Don't accept jargon.**
- **Map out a timeline of the story.**
- **Don't accept “we.”**
- **Look for moments of vulnerability.**
- **Press for direct quotes.**



Yeah, she said, “This family has never taken any handouts and we're not about to start now”.

**Ted said Tina's mom was “pretty adamant”.
Do you remember what she said?**





Tim Keelan, Founder
StoryQuest

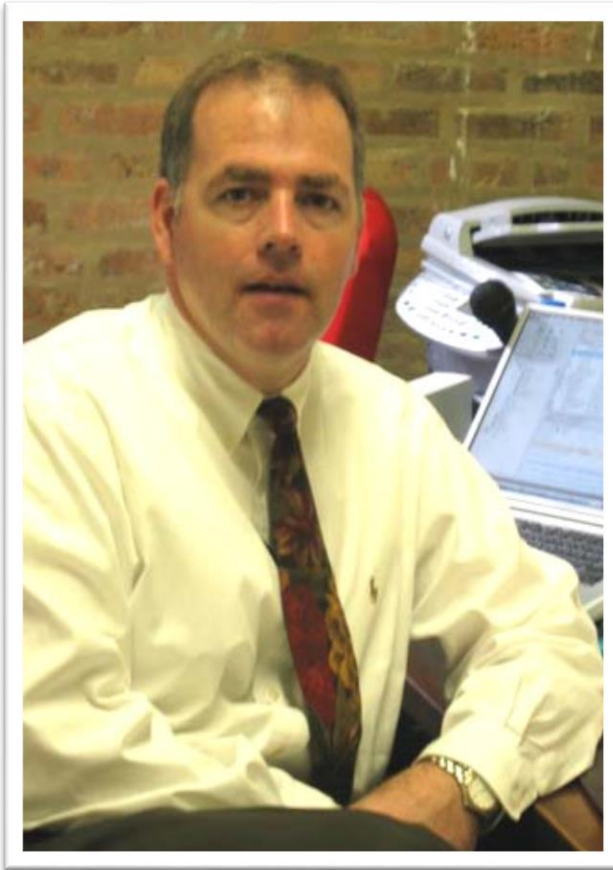
- **Don't accept jargon.**
- **Map out a timeline of the story.**
- **Don't accept “we.”**
- **Look for moments of vulnerability.**
- **Press for direct quotes.**
- **Ask for surrounding details.**



Actually, I saw Tina and her mom on campus last week, and her mom came up to me, took my hand, and said, "Thank you for helping my daughter."

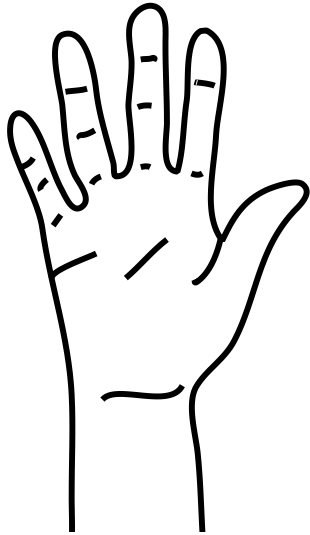
Anything else we should know about Tina's story?



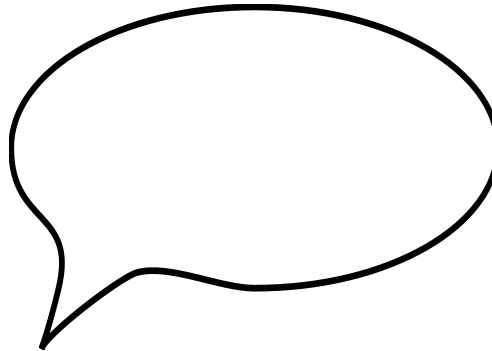


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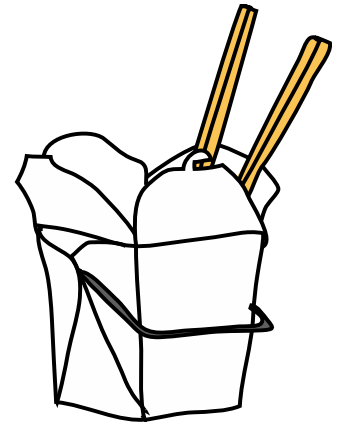
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Questions



Comments



Take-Aways



Review: The structure of a well-told story

The 10 Most Common Mistakes

How to Get the *Whole* Story

**Short on Space or Time? Try
“Connecting Narrative Moments”**



The Way We Write is All Wrong:



*A Profile of and Prescription for Fixing
The Broken Discourse of Fund Raising.*

Frank C. Dickerson
Ph.D.

www.thewrittenvoice.org



Issue

Genetically
Modified Food

Objective

Attract people to
meeting

Dear Friend:

During the past few months, you probably have read or heard in the media about the experimental foods created through a controversial new technology called genetic engineering.

We invite you to join us for an evening with the experts on this critical issue so that you can find out how this technology touches your family and learn about current legislation.



Issue

Genetically
Modified Food

Objective

Attract people to
meeting


Dear Friend:

Picture a shopper pushing a cart down a supermarket aisle. Like everybody else, she grabs different items from the shelves: a can of soup, a jar of peanuts, a few ears of fresh corn, a gallon of milk.

Unlike everybody else, however, this particular shopper is *wearing a blindfold*. Although she's blithely filling her cart, she doesn't really know what she's putting in it. And here's the surprise ending: that shopper is *you*.


Connecting narrative moment



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FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN

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[Antonio's Story](#)[Corrine's Story](#)

"Corrine* was just starting first grade when I met her a little over a year ago. At that time she could not read, write or even count to 10. When her teacher asked her to read aloud in class, Corrine burst into tears of embarrassment and shame.



Corrine had a pretty challenging start in life. She was born to a teenage mother and every male member of her family has spent time in prison. Her family's eviction from her modest home was devastating to Corrine.

When I spend time with Corrine, I always remind her that my number one job is to make sure she grows and

Connecting narrative moment



The Purpose Prize

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Starting first
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read aloud in
years of
me.

Challenging start
teenage
member of her
family has spent time in prison. Her
family's eviction from her modest
home was devastating to Corrine.

When I spend time with Corrine, I
always remind her that my number one
job is to make sure she grows and

what food is healthy to eat or how to
wash your face. Helping me tend a
community garden plot this past
spring has helped Corrine learn about
nutrition, taking care of herself and
caring for other living things.

During each visit to the garden, she
crouched down close to the growing
seedlings. She cupped each little
sprout in her hand, sang to them and
told them it was her job to make them
grow and make sure they stay safe.

I can't help but smile knowing that is
exactly how I feel about Corrine."

Connecting narrative moment



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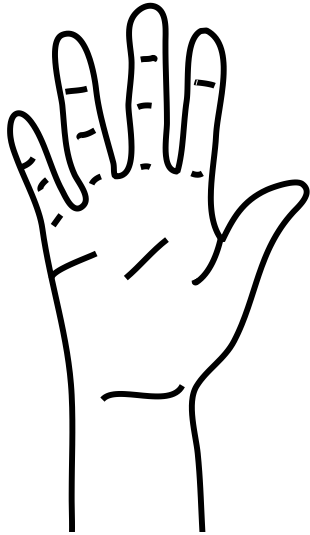
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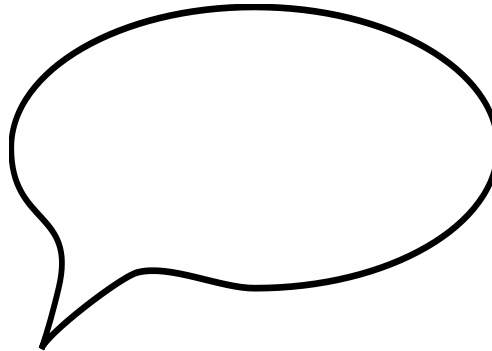
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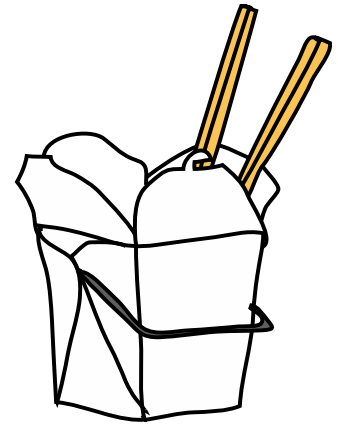
When I spend time with Corrine, I always remind her that my number one job is to make sure she grows and



Questions



Comments



Take-Aways

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE, PLEASE...



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black marker, writing the words "Thank you" in a cursive script on a white surface. The marker is positioned at the end of the word "you".

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