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The Beat Sheet

Learn how to use Blake Snyder's story script writing tool.

What's your Story?

Storytelling is MOST important aspect of any communication product.

Its importance lies in its ability to:

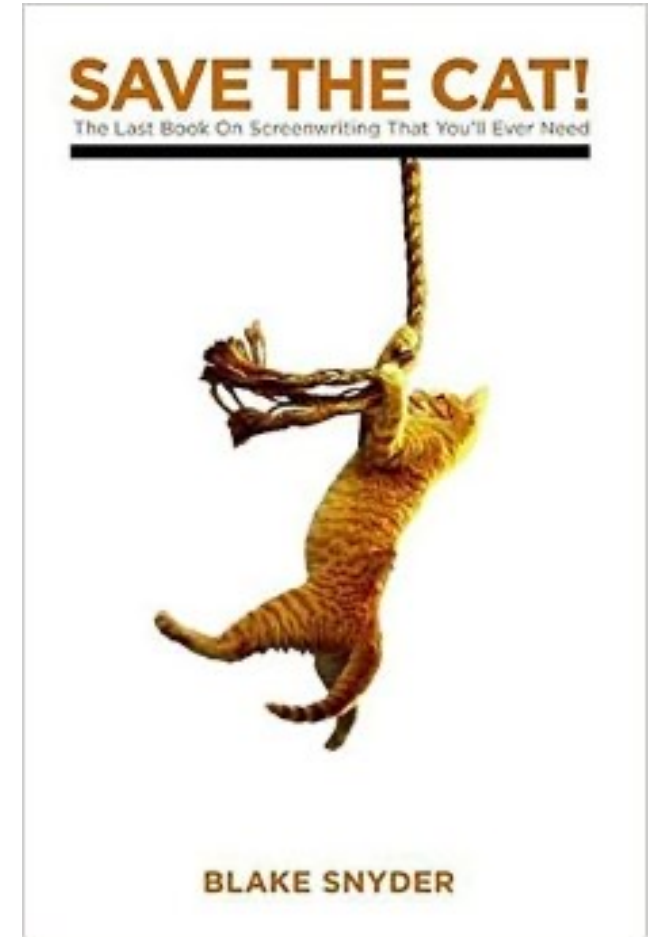
- convey meaning
- foster connection
- shape our understanding of the world
- educational, emotional,
- or entertainment purposes,

Storytelling plays a crucial role in our lives, but how do you start writing a story?

Introduction

We can look at Hollywood script writer, Blake Snyder's (1957-2009) ***Beat Sheet*** from his 2005 book ***Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need.***

- Blake Snyder was an American screenwriter based in Los Angeles
- Author of three books on screenwriting and story structures
- The beat sheet is a story writing tool



Open the Beat Sheet

Title	The Good Guy
Log Line	
Hero	Some guy...who's like this...
Villain	...is stopped by his nemesis...who does that...
Goal	...must do this...to survive.

Topics

Blake Snyder's Beat Sheet

Act I

- Opening Image
- Set-up
- Theme Stated
- Catalyst
- Debate

Act II

- Break Into Two
- B Story
- The Promise of the Premise
- Midpoint
- Bad Guys Close In
- All is Lost
- Dark Night of the Soul

Act III

- Break Into Three (PONR)
- Finale
- Final Image

Act I

Opening Image

- A visual that represents the struggle & tone of the story.
- Introduces audiences to the **setting**:
 - Place
 - time
 - Situation
 - struggle

Act I

Scene 1	Opening Image:
We See	Somewhere in space, a dark-suited man leads a group of soldiers using laser guns on a killing spree and then takes a princess captive some robots get away.
Shot 1	Key Images: Space Ships, Laser Gun Fight, Robots
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act I

Set-up

- Expand on the “before” snapshot of our Hero
- Who is our Hero?
- Give 1-2 descriptive words and say what our Hero wants.
- Presents our Hero’s world as it is
- what is missing, or what is good in our Hero life

Act I

Scene 2	Set Up:
We See	Our Hero, a naïve farm boy purchases the robots to help work on the farm only to find that one of them contains an important message from the princess.
Shot 1	Key Images: Boy/Youth, Gadgets, Wanting
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act I

Theme Stated

- What the story is about
- the message or the truth
- Usually, it is spoken
- Either to our Hero or in their presence
- they don't understand the truth
- not until our Hero has some personal experience and context to support it

Act I

Scene 3	Theme Stated:
We See	The message contains the plans of a great weapon capable of destroying whole planets and of a once great warrior (now and old man) who can deliver those plans to those, who can destroy the weapon.
Shot 1	Key Images: Princess, Warriors, Quest
We Hear	

Act I

Catalyst (Inciting Moment)

- The moment where our Hero's life as it is changes
- It is the telegram
- a loved-one cheating
- allowing a monster on-board the ship
- meeting the true love of your life, etc.
- The “before” world is no more
- change is underway

Act I

Scene 4	Catalyst (Inciting Moment):
We See	Our hero finds the old man who tells about the fight, the dark man and a truth about our hero's father. He also tells him about a special ancient magic our bad guys.
Shot 1	Key Images: Magic, Mystery, revenge
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act I

Catalyst (Inciting Moment) ***Important Note***

- This is the first turning point
- What action does our Hero take or what decision are to be made?
- Once our Hero crossed this line, there's no going back.

Act I

Debate

- Where the Hero resists the journey
- Questions their own abilities
- Do our Hero have what it takes?
- the last chance for our Hero to chicken out
- The audience begins to empathise with our Hero

Act I

Scene 5	Debate:
We See	At first our Hero refuses the quest because of his duties on the farm but then he goes back to find his home destroyed and family killed by the bad guys.
We See	He has no choice but to join the old man in his quest.
Shot 1	Key Images: Tragedy, Refusal, Loss
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

Break Into Two

- The main character makes a choice and the journey begins
- We leave the “Thesis” world
- enter the upside-down, opposite world of Act 2
- Our Hero meets new people
- experiences a new life
- meets the antagonist/villain

Act II

Scene 6	Break into Two:
We See	With the dark man's soldiers closing in, our hero, the old man and the robots plot an escape with help from a pilot and his hairy friend to deliver the plans.
Shot 1	Key Images: Meeting, Fleeing, Pursuit
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

B Story

- there's a discussion about the Theme
- the nugget of truth
- A discussion is between our Hero and another
- So, the **B Story** is usually called the “**love story**”
- **The audience begins to empathise with the theme**

Act II

Scene 7	B Story:
We See	Aboard the bad guy's ship, the group hash a new plan to save the princess as the old man sacrifices himself at the hand of the dark man.
Shot 1	Key Images: Fight, death, Acceptance
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

The Promise of the Premise

- This is the fun part of the story
- Our Hero explores the new world
- the audience is entertained
- the premise has been promised

Act II

Scene 8	The Promise of the Premise:
We See	Pursued by the bad guys, our Hero, the princess, the robots and the pilot and his hairy friend, fly away intent on delivering the plans to the resistance arm.
Shot 1	Key Images: Small victories, hope, desperation
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

Midpoint

- Dependent upon the type of story
- everything is “great” or everything is “awful”
- not everything we think we want is what we actually need in the end

Act II

Scene 9	Midpoint:
We See	Our hero saddened by the loss of his friend and mentor vows to avenge his death at all costs learns more about special power.
Shot 1	Key Images: Sadness, loss, hope
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

Bad Guys Close In

- Doubt, jealousy, fear,
- foes both physical and emotional regroup
- Our Hero's "great"/"awful" situation disintegrates

Act II

Scene 10	Bad Guys Close In:
We See	As the bad guys find out about the resistance plan, the attack begins. Our Hero flies into battle along side the others. They approach the target but are held back by the opposition.
Shot 1	Key Images: Exhilaration, action, Anticipation
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act II

All is Lost

- The moment our Hero realises everything gained is lost
- or nothing has meaning
- The initial goal now looks even more impossible than before
- something or someone dies
- makes way for a rebirth

Act II

Scene 11	All is Lost:
We See	The Rebels suffer heavy losses, and soon our hero is one of the few remaining fighters. Defeat of our Hero seems eminent as all attempts to destroy the weapon are failed.
Shot 1	Key Images: Despair, loss, frustration
We Hear	

Act II

Dark Night of the Soul

- The main character hits bottom
- wallows in hopelessness
- Mourning the loss of what has “died”
- the dream, the goal, the mentor character, the love of your life, etc.
- Rebirth has begun

Act II

Scene 12	Dark Night of the Soul:
We See	Our Hero doubts his abilities, bad guys hot on his tail, the opposition out numbers the resistance, the end is near.
Shot 1	Key Images: Doubt, death, despair
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act III

Break Into Three

- a fresh idea something remembered
- new inspiration, or last-minute advice
- Thematic return from the **B Story**
- usually the love interest
- Our Hero chooses to try again
- aka – **The Point of No Return**

Act III

Scene 13	Break into Three (PONR):
We See	From out of the blue (or black) the pilot and his hairy friend return blasting away the bad guys and allowing our hero to attempt the shot that will destroy the dark mans dangerous weapon.
Shot 1	Key Images: Surprise, strength, revelation
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act III

Finale

- Maximum tension
- the nugget of truth that now makes sense
- experience gained from the **A Story**
- and context from the **B Story**
- Our Hero Commence the battle, speech, puzzle etc..
- slayes the dragon, defeats the bad guy, wins the love
- **Act 3** is about Synthesis!

Act III

Scene 14	Finale:
We See	Guided by the ghostly voice of the old man, our hero abandons his technology and harnesses the magical power possesses and fires the single, critical shot that destroys the weapon and saves the galaxy.
Shot 1	Key Images: Concentration, magic, explosion
We Hear	
VO 1	

Act III

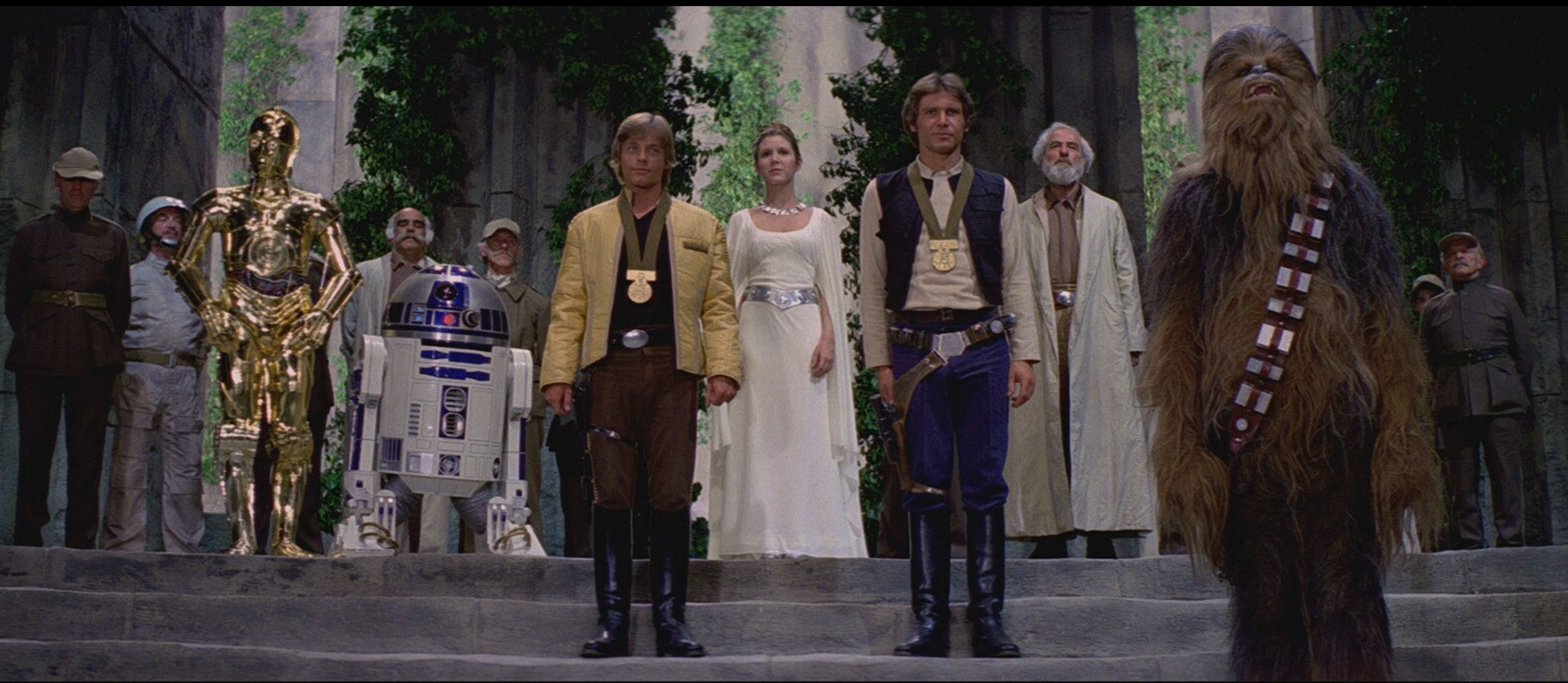
Final Image

- Opposite of Opening Image
- Visually proving a change has occurred
- The world is saved, Our Hero is changed!

Act III

Scene 15	Final Image:
We See	With the weapon destroyed and the bad guys defeated, the resistance hold a grand ceremony to honour our hero and his friends where the princess awards them with medals for heroism.
Shot 1	Key Images: grandeur, rejoicing, recognition
We Hear	
VO 1	

THE END



Guided Practice

In your groups, make your own Beat Sheet from the Disney/Pixar short film *Lava*:

- Download and open the Beat Sheet template
- Watch the short film
- Make notes of what is happening
- Write a short description in the corresponding the Beat field

A screenshot of a beat sheet template open in a word processing application. The template is divided into several sections for notes. The first section contains fields for 'Title', 'Log Line', 'Hero', 'Villain', and 'Goal'. The second section, labeled 'Scene 1', includes 'Opening Image:', 'We See', 'Shot 1', 'We Hear', and 'VO 1'. The third section, labeled 'Scene 2', includes 'Set Up:' and 'We See'. The application's interface, including a ribbon with tabs like 'Home', 'Insert', 'Draw', 'Design', and 'Layout', is visible at the top.

Summary

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Independant Practice

On you own, take 5 minutes to review what has been learnt today:

- In your working portfolios
- Write down in your own words
- what you understand about today's key topics

Resources

Literature:

- Snyder, B , Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need.

Web Sources:

- <http://www.savethecat.com>

Video:

- [On Story Structure \(and how Save the Cat ruined Hollywood\)](#)
[Screenwriting Story Structure Made Easy for Film - IFH 071](#)