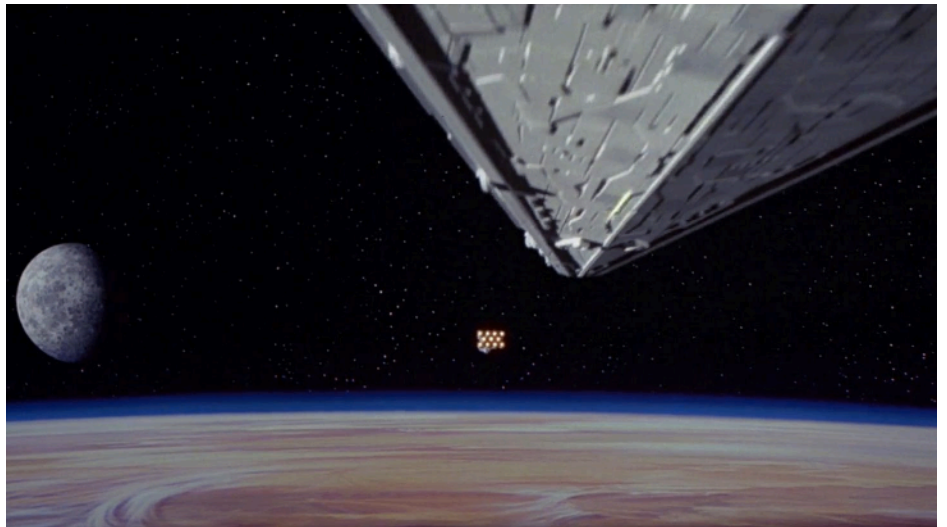


ABDCE:

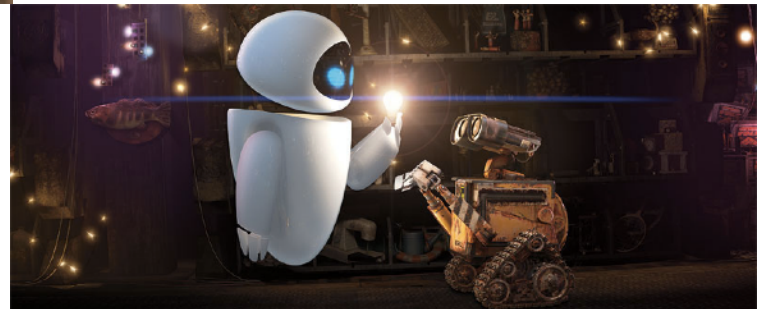
One of many ways to structure a short story (or any kind of story)!
Spoilers lurk below, beware!

ACTION: begin your story with a scene. This is an exciting way to introduce your reader to the world and its characters.

For example, *Star Wars: A New Hope* begins with a battle that introduces us to the villain Darth Vader and the courageous rebel, Princess Leia. This makes sense for an adventure film like *Star Wars*, but *your first scene doesn't have to be a battle.*

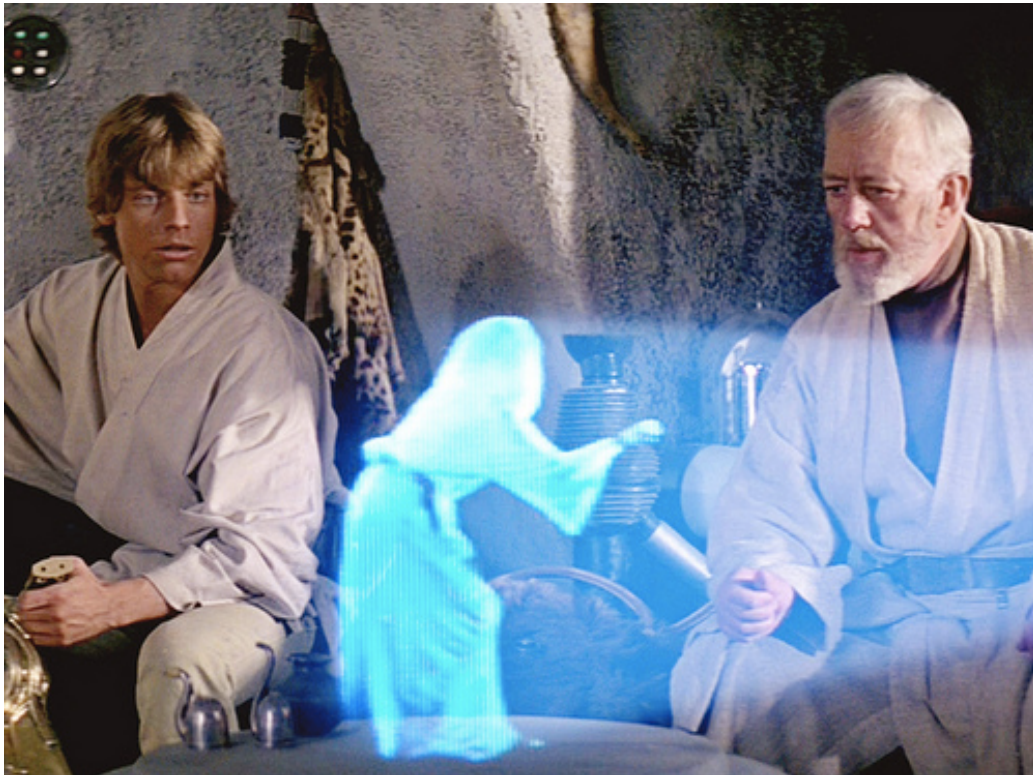


The first scene of *WALL-E* is also action, but the action is WALL-E compacting trash and exploring a post-apocalyptic world without humans. Here the action is showing WALL-E's cute and curious personality, but also his loneliness. This is important because it shows how meeting another robot is important to him—it's the perfect opening for a romance, which is what *WALL-E* is. Both are great beginnings!



BACKGROUND: provide just enough information so the reader knows what's going on, and why it matters. This is also sometimes referred to as **exposition**. It is information about the world and/or the characters that is related to the plot.

Because Star Wars is a science fiction film, there is a lot of exposition. But we get the most background from the holographic recording of Leia asking for help, and from Obi-Wan Kenobi, who tells us about the Galactic Empire and Luke's father, as well as providing Luke with his lightsaber.



A fantasy example is Hagrid explaining the magical world to Harry Potter in the first book, taking him to magical areas in London, like Diagon Alley.



DEVELOPMENT: Also referred to as the **rising action**, this is when your characters meet new challenges and obstacles in their way. Complications arise. Your characters are put under pressure that reveals who they are as people.

In the original Jurassic Park, after we get a tour explaining how the scientists were able to bring dinosaurs into life (and showing how curmudgeonly Dr. Grant is), the development begins when a power outage allows the dinosaurs to escape their enclosures and threaten the lives of everyone there. Dr. Grant shows himself to be a brave and intelligent hero—and because he doesn't like kids, of course he must work the rest of the movie to save two children!



In the first Percy Jackson novel, after finding out his true parentage and the existence of the gods, Percy has to overcome all sorts of mythical obstacles in order to return Zeus' lightning bolt. He learns to control his powers, and that what he thought were faults (dyslexia and ADHD) are not faults at all.

CLIMAX: this is the highest point of tension in the story. The most dramatic and intense part of the story, when the conflict is finally faced head-on.

In *The Dark Knight*, the Joker is all about pushing Batman's morality. On one level, it is to let go of his moral code not to kill people. The Joker has no codes, he is Batman's opposite. Time and again, the Joker shows that Batman can't answer every problem with the power of his fists, and that his black-and-white morality won't cut it. In the climax, the Joker sets up a moral dilemma for Batman: will Batman save Harvey Dent, the district attorney who seems capable of turning Gotham into a more peaceful place, or will Batman save his girlfriend, Rachel Dawes? Then it gets worse: he sets up explosive devices that test the morality of two ferries packed with people. They get a similar moral dilemma: will they be selfless, or self-interested? Will they blow up another boat full of people, if it means they get to live?

What kind of man is Batman, and what kind of people are the people of Gotham?

The stakes in the climax are at their highest point. It must soon come to an end, one way, or another.



END: this is the conclusion, also called the **resolution**, of the story. We reach a point at which the conflict has been solved (happily or tragically), and the characters are different from where they started. Often a couple loose threads are tied up. Generally endings arrive quickly after the climax, because otherwise things would get boring!



At the end of the first Matrix movie, Neo comes back to life, shows he can control the Matrix (including stopping bullets in midair), promises to free the world from the domination of machines, and flies off into the sky.



At the end of Knives Out, we find out that Blanc knew from early on that Marta was involved in Harlan's death, we tie up the Linda-adultery thread, and Marta watches the Thrombey's from what is now her mansion's balcony with her "my house, my rules, my coffee" mug.