


# Tent Pole Revision Process

with Rona Gofstein, Developmental Editor and Book Coach



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## Tell me about you

• Pop in the chat:

- Where you are in the writing process (drafting, revising, polishing, etc)
- How you feel about revisions (love 'em, hate 'em, meh)
- Is there something in particular you hoped to learn today?

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## This is me!

- Certified book coach with Author Accelerator. My superpower is keeping writers inspired throughout the writing process and helping them create vivid characters with strong narrative arcs.
- Author! First published in 1997. Currently self publishing. Seven book contemporary romance series completed in April. First book of the spin-off series releases in December
- Released 8 novels (with three publishers), edited and contributed to 9 anthologies, and had stories published in several more.
- Past president of Broad Universe and the New Hampshire Chapter of RWA. Current member of IWWG, NERW, Alli, and the board of my local cultural council.
- Please, don't talk to me before I've had my morning coffee.

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## What Will Be Covered

- What your main characters need to carry them through the story.
- The “Tent Pole” scenes that hold up your manuscript.
- How to use them to edit your book and how this helps the next round of revisions.
- And two bonuses!



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First of all...



You finished writing a book!!



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## Most writers

- Start editing on a page-by-page basis, going through the book linearly and focusing on language over structure.
- Are so close to their work, they miss the bigger picture of where the book isn't holding together.
- Frequently get bogged down at the beginning and don't get to the end.



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## What is the Tent Pole Revision Process?

A way to:

- Do a first pass revision that allows you to get a higher-level vision of your book.
- “Detach” from the flow to really look at the structure.
- Move through the full manuscript faster so that you see potentially bigger issues.

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## Some disclaimers

- No one process works for all writers.
- If you edit while you write, consider taking time to stop when you get to these tent pole scenes
  - This might help you to keep moving forward
- Take what works for you... disregard the rest!

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## Things your characters need:

- Goal – what the character wants
- Motivation – why the character wants it
- Conflict – what's getting in their way
- Stakes – what will they lose (or fear they will lose) if they don't get the goal

INTERNAL and EXTERNAL – readers need to see both on the page.

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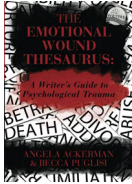

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## Things your characters need:

- Wound – The time/moment that hurt them and created a false belief. Key component of backstory.
  - Example: Loss of someone special when they were young.
- Lie – The false belief that grew out of the wound.
  - Example: I'll never find my place in the world. No one wants me. Or – nothing lasts.
- Learn – something they need to learn about the world or themselves that will help them get their internal and external goals.
  - Example: Family is where you find it. Or – What can be found in the moment is precious.

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## Pixar Rules of Storytelling – Rule #4

- Once upon a time there was \_\_\_\_.
- Every day, \_\_\_\_\_. One day \_\_\_\_\_.
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Until finally \_\_\_\_\_.
- And ever since that day \_\_\_\_\_.

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## Pixar Rules of Storytelling – Rule #4

- Once upon a time there was \_\_\_\_\_. (OPENING SCENE)
- Every day, \_\_\_\_\_. One day \_\_\_\_\_. (HOOK/INCITING INCIDENT)
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. (RISING ACTION)
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. (MIDPOINT)
- Until finally \_\_\_\_\_. (DARK MOMENT)
- And ever since that day \_\_\_\_\_. (HAPPY ENDING)




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Take a moment to...

Write your own answers to Rule #4.

One or two sentences describing those key scenes.



- Once upon a time there was \_\_\_\_\_. (OPENING SCENE)
- Every day, \_\_\_\_\_. One day \_\_\_\_\_. (HOOK/INCITING INCIDENT)
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. (RISING ACTION)
- Because of that, \_\_\_\_\_. (MIDPOINT)
- Until finally \_\_\_\_\_. (DARK MOMENT)
- And ever since that day \_\_\_\_\_. (HAPPY ENDING)



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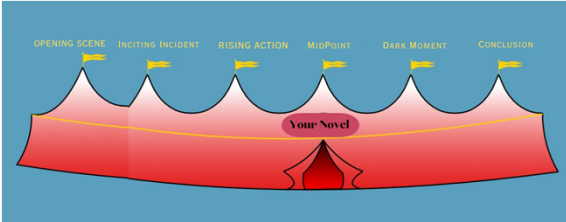

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What it looks like

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Warning – I am going to repeat:

“Is it on the page?”



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## Opening Scene

**What needs to happen:** Introduce your MC (possibly your villain)

**Look at:** Who are they at the beginning?

- Do we see their goal? Motivation? A hint at the conflict in their lives?
- Have you given the reader a reason to connect with and like/understand the MC?
- Is it clear where (and when?) we are?
  - Give the reader a chance to see the MC.

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## Hook – Inciting Incident

**What needs to happen:** The MC is put in motion.


**Look at:**

What is the MC's goal and how is it affected by this?

- is that on the page?

What decision does the MC make because of this moment that will draw the reader forward?

- is it compelling?
- and is it on the page?



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## Rising Action

**What needs to happen:** The MC makes an important decision (usually something under their control)

**Look at:**

- Is this decision in-line with their Goal and their Wound/Lie (which they still believe at this point)
- How this is affecting both internal and external G/M/C
- Is the decision the MC makes something that will keep the reader turning pages?
  - Is it compelling? And is the emotion of the decision on the page?



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## Stop!

After each of these tent poles – you want to take a minute to think back to the Pixar Storytelling Model and three key words:

**BECAUSE OF THAT**

Does what happened in your Rising Action/Adhesion Plot Thrust follow logically (yes, even though there are some scenes missing) from the Hook/Inciting Incident?

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## MidPoint – Mirror Moment

What needs to happen: A big change in direction

Look at:

- If things going well for them - how high can you take them (so that when it falls apart it's more dramatic?)
- Or is this a moment where they look at what they've been doing and realize, it's time for a change.
- They should be pressed up against their Goal and Motivation and it should be made harder by the lie and what they (still) need to learn.



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## Dark Moment

What needs to happen: Character is about to lose everything (things may be feel completely out of their control)

Look at: Is this moment as intense as you want it to be? Have you pushed your main characters to their most emotional point?

Use your GMC:

- Are they up against their internal goal? How is what they most desire at odds with their (original) external goal?
- What must they face (and do) to learn their lessons and reach their goals?
- Is their motivation strong enough to get them through this moment?
- Is the overall conflict compelling and arrived at logically?



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# Conclusion – Big Finish

What needs to happen: And they lived....

Look at:

- Internal Goal – has what the characters most desire been achieved (and is it on the page)?
- Have you shown that the lesson is learned, the wound is healed, the lie released?
- Is the conflict resolved?
- Have you delivered to the reader what they came for?



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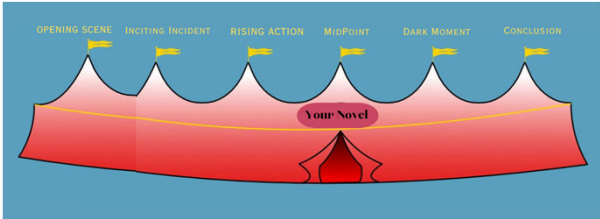

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# Putting it all together – What’s next?

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# Some bad (?) news...

We’re writers... of course we create an arc for more than one character.

This means that you may choose to look at more than one scene for each of these tent poles.

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**BONUS TIME!**

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**Bonus One: Create a synopsis**

If you write one paragraph for each tent pole:

- Opening scene
- Inciting incident
- Rising action
- Midpoint
- Dark moment
- Ending

You've got a strong beginning for your synopsis!

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**Bonus Two: When You're Stuck**

If you aren't sure how to move forward:

- Look at the last tent pole scene you wrote and write the words: because of that?
- Think about what the next tent pole scene is. What would it take to get your character there?

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How are you feeling?




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So...




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Want more support?

SPECIAL FOR PWA SCI-FI WEEK ATTENDEES

- Review your tent poles & your Rule #4 answers
- Personalized Feedback
- 45 minute follow up call to discuss and get clear on next steps
- Regularly \$149

**\$49!!**

- Just email the tent poles and Rule #4 answers to [RONA@RONAGOFSTEIN.COM](mailto:RONA@RONAGOFSTEIN.COM) and we'll go from there!



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**Stay in touch**

- Questions - Email me at [rona@ronagofstein.com](mailto:rona@ronagofstein.com)
- Schedule a free Discovery Call through my website ([www.ronagofstein.com](http://www.ronagofstein.com))
- Sign up for my newsletter to get a free download of *5 Things To Check When Revising A Full Manuscript* (intended for later revisions!) and get bi-monthly support, craft insight, and industry news (<https://bit.ly/ReviseYourBook>)



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**Thank you!**



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