

# AUTHOR SALON

## PLOT, SETTING, AND CONFLICT OUTLINE

FOR NOVELS AND NARRATIVE NON-F

### **PSCO Story Acts and Plot Briefs**

The PSCO is a new way of writing a long and detailed plot synopsis about your novel or narrative non-fiction. It focuses on the development of the story, i.e., the major plot line(s), breaking up the synopsis into sections while prompting each writer to consider crucial specific elements such as setting and conflict.

The PSCO is composed of two primary parts: the first which contains the story statement, hook line, and the writer's profile pitch synopsis, followed by the second which contains summaries of the six novel or narrative non-fiction acts, defined here as STORY ACTS.

Each Story Act in turn consists of two primary parts. First, an opening summary of the entire Act with plot as the focus, and second, an appropriate subset of PLOT BRIEFS that further elaborate on the progression of the story in the Act and which touch on the most important and relevant elements and events involving the major characters, especially the antagonist and the protagonist.

Each Plot Brief in each Story Act must contain the following four items:

1. Summary statement
2. Conflict notes
3. Setting notes
4. A list of relevant major plot-conflict elements (reversals, plot points, etc.)

For more examples, links, and definitions related to the terms and elements noted below, reference the SATG web page on AS:

<http://www.authorsalon.com/page/general/sixact/>

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## Part I : Story Summary for PSCO

- Your Story Statement (*see definition in Act II, SATG*)  
One short sentence
- Restate your hook line from your profile. Examples in AS Profile Guide.  
<http://www.authorsalon.com/page/general/profileguide/>
- Restate your synopsis pitch from your profile. Examples in AS Profile Guide.  
175 words max.

## Part II : Acts Zero to Five

### Act Zero

- Address according to criteria in the Act Zero portion of the SATG. No plot Briefs necessary here. 100 - 150 words

### Acts One to Five

1. A concise summary or synopsis of what happens, plot-wise, in each Act. 100 - 150 words (keep it succinct and plot related)
2. Three to six Plot Briefs (no more than six!), per Act, which combine to define the major events and plot elements of each Act. Each Brief concisely explains the plot high points of the story, what is happening to the character(s), actions they take, plans set against them by the antagonist, and so forth. The total number of plot briefs will depend on the length of the work.

Note: Plot Briefs are not designed to be chapter-based, only meant to keep the writer focused on the pure flow of the story and its elements.

#### Plot Brief Template

Each Plot Brief contained in each Act must include these four sub-parts.

1. 50 to 100 words summarizing what is taking place relevant to the forward movement of the plot line(s).
2. Conflict levels: a concise summary that addresses the three levels of conflict (see AS Profile Guide) as appropriate - 50 words max.
3. Setting: a concise statement indicating the nature of the setting, esp location and circumstance (click on Setting links in SATG) - 50 words max.  
<http://www.authorsalon.com/craft/view/97/>
4. Note and define which specific plot elements are present, if appropriate, for example:

"Inciting incident: X character does AB which later leads to Plot Point I"

"Complication: Y character encounters problem B."

"Minor Reversal: Protagonist stalled by ABC issue."

"Resolving Minor Reversal: Protagonist resolves via ABC."

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## A Plot Brief from TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

### Plot Brief Summary

At school, Scout gets flak from her classmates because her father, a lawyer, has taken on a new client, an African-American man named Tom Robinson. Atticus tells her that a lot of people think he shouldn't defend Tom because of his race, but that it's the right thing to do. At his request, Scout stops fighting her classmates to defend her father's honor, even though they call her a coward.

### Conflict Levels

Interpersonal: Scout conflicts with classmates

Inner: Scout troubled by the circumstances as a whole as well as by her classmates

Inner: Scout in turmoil over being called a coward

### Setting

Scout's house, school and school yard.

### Plot Elements

Plot Point: Atticus decides to defend Robinson.

Complication: Scout taunted by classmates and gets in fight.

Complication: Scout retreats at father's urging and is called a coward.

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