

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Here are the primary theoretical frameworks:

1. Primary Theory is about Implementation of the 3 Act Structure by Myers (2025).
2. Supporting Theory is about the horror film theory by Bell (2020).

2.1 3 ACT STRUCTURE

So Bell (2020) explains the basic formula of a horror story is “Normality is threatened by a Monster or an uncanny”. However, this formula would only work well if we integrate it into the 3 Act structure. According to Fadhilah (2025), the three act structure is the skeleton of literature, theatre, as well as films. This would be an ecosystem where all the compounds interact with each other, such as the act, characters, conflict, scenes, and dialogs. They also highlight that the 3 Act Structure comprises three parts, Act 1, Act 2, & Act 3 (Juwita et al, 2021). Each act is divided into parts.

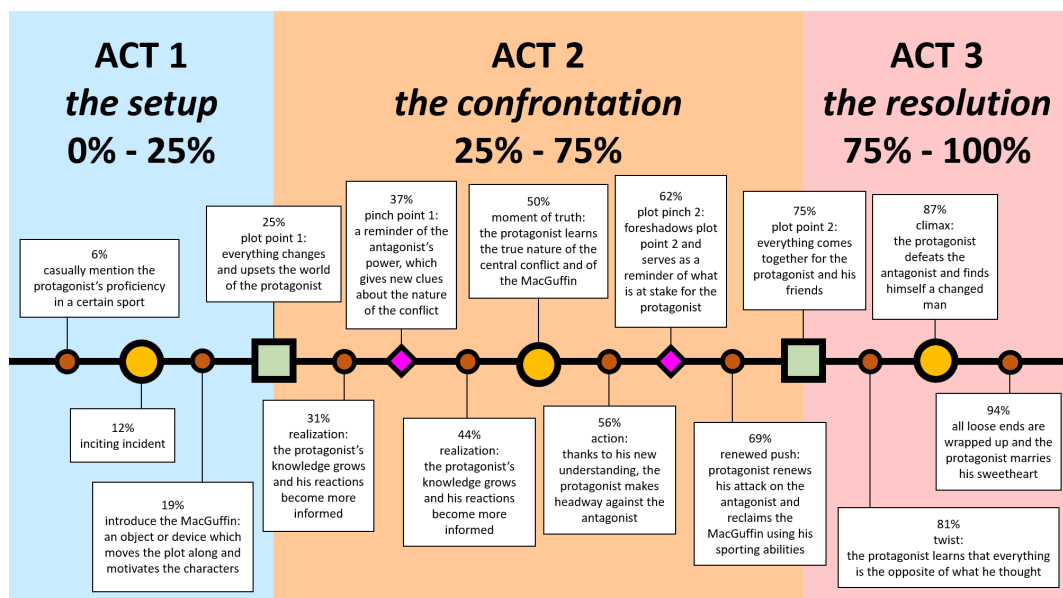


Figure 2.1 The Three Act Structure
(Source: Kenneth W. Myers, 2025)

2.1.1. Act I [The Setup]

According to Fadhilah (2025), Act I is the part of the narrative's orientation, that's why it's called The Setup. It introduces the audiences to the in-movie universe, character's hobby, his want, and the main conflict. The first act is divided into character introduction, inciting incident, introduction of MacGuffin, and Plot Point 1 (Myers, 2025). Myers (2025) stated that the orientation is the most crucial part of the story as it tells the audience who to care about. According to Bell (2020), the orientation is used to establish normality, which will be violated by the presence of the threat, or the genesis of the threat. The beginning needs to introduce who the characters are, their character's life, hobby, problem, and ultimately the key element of our character, his 'want' as well as how the protagonist perceives life, usually negatively. Yorke (2013) argues that in an archetypal story, if we make the audience sympathize with the character, the threat will be more suspenseful. It's also best not to introduce a new character in the second act, finish all the introduction in the first act.

The inciting incident is the beginning of the journey, which leads the protagonist to the next stage of the story (Myers, 2025). According to Bell (2020), the threat has to start already, whether the protagonist realizes it or not. Afterwards, we need to introduce the MacGuffin. MacGuffin is something that drives the narrative. It could be a physical object, a status, or a psychological urge. In the first plot point, the entire world needs to change already and the protagonist has to enter the point where the situation is already distressing.

2.1.2. Act II [Confrontation]

Fadhilah (2025) elaborates that Act II would be the lengthiest part of the narrative that introduces more conflicts. The function is to make the story more elaborate, and shows the challenge the character faces. The content revolves around the main character's confrontation journey throughout the conflict. It highlights his response to the conflicts. Myers (2025) argues that the Act 2 is the lowest point of the protagonist. The Act 2 is divided into realization, pinch point 1, moment of truth, action, plot pinch 2, renewed push, and plot point 2.

In Bell (2020) theory, the threat is the conflict that creates the new reality. With the more elaborate plots and problem solving methods, Act 2 would be the point where we confuse the audience who will survive or die. The realization is the point where the protagonist increases his knowledge (Myers, 2025). The protagonists will learn about the new rules and stakes after the new reality (Bell, 2020). These obstacles will challenge the protagonist's resolve, skills, and belief which lead to the character's change. In the pinch point 1, there will be a reminder of the antagonist's power (Myers, 2025), usually explained through signs, and leaves more clues. In the second realization, the protagonist learns more from the clues. Their knowledge about the antagonist increases more (Myers, 2025).

The moment of truth is the revelation of the true nature of the conflict which happens after the protagonist connected the dots through the clues and facts about the antagonist that he learnt. It also explains what's behind the MacGuffin. The action is the moment the protagonist attempts to attack the antagonist using the knowledge he knows. Plot pinch 2 is another reminder of the antagonist's strength and stakes, usually through defeat, or more horrifying signs. In the renewed push, the protagonist tries to upgrade his plan to attack the antagonist through the other knowledge he learnt in the plot punch 2. In plot point 2, the protagonist already finalized the big picture of the plan. Bell (2020) argues that this is the moment where the protagonist finally reveals or completely learns the mystery behind the threat, as well as its way to confront.

2.1.3. Act III [Resolution]

Fadhilah (2025) said that Act III is the resolution, the point that explains to the audience how the protagonist finally solves the conflict. In Bell's (2020) theory, this would be the moment the threat finally manifests itself. The protagonist will solve the conflict by confronting the threat in any way. He will either survive, change forever, or die. This is also the moment where the character has finally changed the way he perceives life. The Act 3 is divided into twist, climax, and the reorientation (Myers, 2025).

The twist is the moment where the protagonist learns the true nature of the antagonist that turns out to be the opposite of what he thought. Bell (2020) argues that this is the moment where the protagonist finally reveals or completely learns the mystery behind the threat. The climax is the final confrontation with the antagonist. The protagonist has to do a direct confrontation to the threat with the way he has learnt., or in any way. He will either survive, change forever, or die. This is where the protagonist's change begins to be apparent (Myers, 2025). The reorientation is the end, it explains whether the character finally succeeded or not. It explains the protagonist's transformation after the incident, usually positive as well as the consequence for each character (Myers, 2025), as well as the aftermath circumstance, whether it's a new normal, back to normal, or utter destruction (Bell, 2020).

2.2 HORROR THEORY

Hellerman (2024) explains that horror is basically a genre that narrates fears. The key characteristic of a horror genre is containing dark, primitive, or revolting traits that simultaneously repels us. Hellerman (2024) elaborates that horror is divided into subgenres. Those are Psychological, Killer, Gore, Monster, Paranormal, Folk, Lovecraftian, etc. Psychological horror is a subgenre that delves into the mental, emotional, and psychological states of human beings. What makes it distinct from a psychological thriller is it has more gores, violence, and paranoia. (Hellerman, 2024).

Bell (2020) argues that the fundamental elements of horror are uncertainty, boundary blurring, or binary breaking down. The pattern is reality disturbed by threat. Horror stories need to set up the main character's what-ifs of the character's childhood nightmare. We need to make a childhood trauma for the character. According to Bell (2020), the key compounds for a horror movie character are, his fear, his want, and the way he perceives life, which will affect the narrative. Bell (2020) also emphasizes that narrative structure matters in making a compelling horror story. Bell (2020) added that we need to identify what kind of threat is in horror, the subgenres aforementioned would help fabricate it.