



## Plot, Scene Beats, and In Medias Res

English 10 Term 1 - Unit 2 Literary Form and Craft

This reviewer explains how plot works, how stories can be divided into scene beats, and how a story may begin in medias res. These ideas help students understand a selected text and prepare it for a drama, theater, or short film adaptation.

### Target Competencies

**ENG-G10-T1-U002-C008:** Identify and explain plot as a literary craft choice.

**ENG-G10-T1-U002-C009:** Identify and explain in medias res as a way of opening a story.

**ENG-G10-T1-U004-C003:** Use appropriate structure when composing or adapting a literary text.

### Main Idea

A story is not only a list of events. A writer arranges events so that they make sense and understands the result.

### Adaptation Link

When a story becomes a performance, plot becomes scene order. Scene order is what the audience can see.

Use this guiding sentence for the whole unit:

*We are not only studying the story. We are preparing the story for performance.*

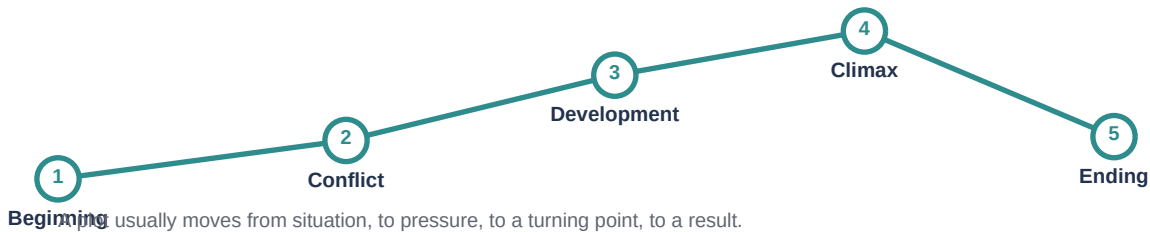


# 1. What Is Plot?

Plot is the shaped order of important events.

Plot is the way a story's events are arranged. It answers the question: **What happens, and how does one event lead to another?**

A plot usually begins with a situation, introduces a conflict, develops pressure, reaches an important turning point, and ends with a result. Different stories may not follow this order exactly, but most stories still need a clear movement from problem to result.



## Story Events

These are the things that happen in the text. Example: A person is revealed.

## Plot

This is how those events are arranged to create meaning. The writer chooses and where the turning point happens.

## Simple Example

**Event list:** A student loses a notebook. A classmate finds it. The student thinks someone stole it. The classmate returns it.

**Plot effect:** If the return happens at the end, the story creates worry first, then relief. The order changes the audience's feeling.



## 2. Common Parts of Plot

Use these terms to talk about the movement of the story.

| Part           | Meaning                                                                 | Adaptation Use                                    |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Exposition     | The opening information about characters, place, situation, or problem. | Decide what the audience must know early.         |
| Conflict       | The main struggle or pressure that pushes the story forward.            | Show what the character wants and what blocks it. |
| Rising Action  | Events that make the problem stronger or more complicated.              | Choose scenes that increase tension.              |
| Climax         | The turning point or strongest moment of pressure.                      | Make this scene clear and memorable.              |
| Falling Action | Events after the turning point.                                         | Show the result of the major choice or event.     |
| Resolution     | The ending or final situation.                                          | Help the audience understand what changed.        |

### Important Reminder

Not every adaptation must include every small event from the original text. A group may compress events, combine scenes, or remove details, but the main conflict and meaning should remain recognizable.

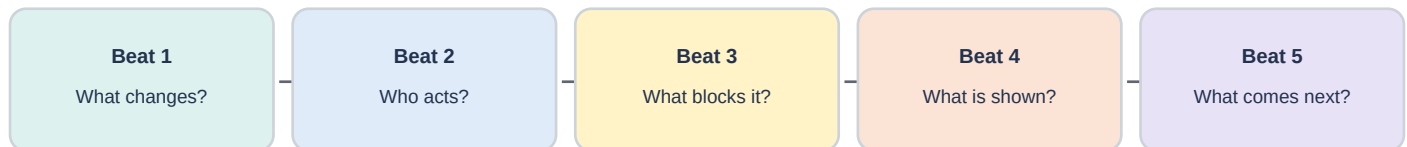


### 3. What Are Scene Beats?

Scene beats are the small steps that make a scene move.

A scene beat is one important action, choice, reaction, or change inside a scene. If plot is the whole road, scene beats are the steps along the road.

In a performance task, scene beats help a group avoid a confusing script. Each beat tells the actors what must happen next and why it matters.



Scene beats are smaller than the whole plot. Each beat should show one clear action, choice, or change.

#### Weak Scene Plan

The group writes: 'They talk. Then they fight. Then it ends.' The scene.

#### Stronger Scene Beat Plan

Beat 1: A character asks for help.  
Beat 2: Another character refuses.  
Beat 3: A secret is mentioned.  
Beat 4: The first character changes strategy.

A good beat can usually be stated with an action verb: arrives, asks, refuses, hides, discovers, admits, chooses, leaves, returns, gives, loses, remembers, or reveals.



## 4. Turning Plot Into Scenes

Adaptation means changing page events into performable moments.

A written story may explain many things through narration. A performance must make meaning visible and audible. That means the group must decide which events become scenes, dialogue, movement, props, or camera/stage focus.

### The Basic Conversion

**Story event:** something important happens in the text.

**Scene beat:** the event is broken into a visible action or change.

**Script moment:** the action becomes dialogue, stage direction, movement, narration, or camera focus.

| Text Detail                    | Scene Beat                                               | Performance Choice                                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| A character waits for someone. | The character checks the road and becomes worried.       | Actor looks outside, pauses, and speaks more softly.          |
| A secret is revealed.          | One character says something that changes the situation. | Use a pause before the line and have others react.            |
| A gift is discovered.          | The character understands the sacrifice behind it.       | Focus on the object, then on the character's face or silence. |
| A false story is believed.     | The listener accepts the lie as true.                    | Let the speaker stay calm while the listener becomes tense.   |



## 5. What Is In Medias Res?

Some stories begin in the middle of action or pressure.

*In medias res* is a Latin phrase that means 'in the middle of things.' In literature, it means that a story begins during an important action, conflict, or tense moment instead of starting with full background information.

### Chronological Opening

The story begins at the earliest point: who the characters are and what problem grows.

### In Medias Res Opening

The story begins when something is already happening: an argument, a conflict, or a tense moment.

### Simple Comparison

**Chronological:** 'Mina woke up early because it was examination day.'

**In medias res:** 'Mina ran through the hallway, holding the torn permit in her hand.'

The second version begins with pressure. The audience asks: Why is she running? Why is the permit torn?

In medias res can create interest quickly, but it can also confuse the audience if the missing background is never explained. A group may use a narrator, flashback, dialogue, or visual clue to help the audience understand.



## 6. When Should a Group Use In Medias Res?

It is a choice, not a requirement.

### Use It When...

The story has a strong conflict early.  
A tense moment can hook the audience.  
The group can explain missing background later.  
The opening scene is clear enough to perform.

### Avoid It When...

The story needs careful background first.  
The audience will be lost without setup.  
The group cannot show why the moment matters.  
The opening becomes exciting but unclear.

A good in medias res opening still needs evidence from the text. The group should not invent a new conflict that changes the story. The opening may be rearranged, but the main struggle and meaning should stay connected to the source text.

### Adaptation Test

Before using in medias res, ask: **Will the audience understand the central conflict faster, or will they become confused?** If the answer is confusion, begin in a simpler chronological order.

### Useful opening choices:

- Begin with a character already facing pressure.
- Begin with a meaningful object, sound, or image.
- Begin with an important line of dialogue.
- Begin near the climax, then explain how the story reached that point.
- Begin with silence, movement, or a visual clue if it clearly points to the conflict.



## 7. Using Plot and Scene Beats in Adaptation

Keep the source story clear while making it performable.

When adapting a selected text, the group may adjust scenes, setting, characters, or lines to fit the student-actors and available materials. However, the core story should still be recognizable.

### What May Change

A group may shorten scenes, combine minor characters, change the setting, modernize some lines, use narration, add stage directions, or adjust roles so members can perform.

### What Should Stay

The major conflict, main character choices, important turning point, and final meaning should remain connected to the original text.

### A complete adaptation plan should be able to answer these questions:

- What is the central conflict of the source text?
- What are the 5 to 7 most important story events?
- Which events will become actual scenes?
- Where will the adaptation begin?
- Will the opening be chronological or in medias res?
- What scene beat shows the turning point?
- What ending will help the audience understand the story's meaning?



## 8. Key Terms to Remember

Use these terms when explaining group decisions.

| Term          | Short Meaning                                                                     |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plot          | The arranged order of important events in a story.                                |
| Scene         | A part of a performance that happens in one place, time, or situation.            |
| Scene Beat    | One small action, choice, reaction, or change inside a scene.                     |
| Exposition    | Background information the audience needs.                                        |
| Conflict      | The main struggle or pressure that moves the story.                               |
| Climax        | The strongest turning point of the story.                                         |
| Resolution    | The ending or result after the main conflict.                                     |
| In Medias Res | Beginning in the middle of action, tension, or conflict.                          |
| Adaptation    | Changing a written text into another form, such as drama, theater, or short film. |

### Sentence Frame for Explaining a Production Choice

We arranged the scene this way because the text shows \_\_\_\_\_. This helps the audience understand \_\_\_\_\_. We changed \_\_\_\_\_, but we kept \_\_\_\_\_ so the main story remains clear.

This reviewer prepares the group for scriptwriting, storyboard planning, rehearsal, and the adaptation rationale.