

Plotting Through the Middle

I found an interesting article titled "[Plotting the Novel's Tricky Middle](#)" by Harvey Chapman. The author explains that most of the things we do in life are broken down into smaller steps. The same is true for a character in a novel – the way they achieve their overall goal is to break it down into a series of mini goals. Each mini goal is one element of a mini plot:

1. The character decides to act on a goal.
2. They encounter conflict.
3. The scene reaches a resolution.
4. The character reacts emotionally.
5. They come up with a new goal (this is actually the first step of the next mini plot).

For those non-organic writers out there, a good exercise would be to make a list of the flaming chainsaws for each character and a list of the mini goals leading to the overall goal.

Workshop Exercise: Mini Plot – what is your protagonists' main goal, and what are the mini goals he/she needs to take to get there?

Flaming Chainsaws

It seems like the beginning and the end of a novel are easy – it's that long stretch in between that's the hard part. How do you keep it interesting? How do you keep the story going and growing?

I came across a very interesting post by [Heather Severson](#) on LinkedIn to an article called "[The Dance of the Flaming Chainsaws](#)" by Benjamin Percy.

The author explains that a flaming chainsaw is an element of trouble – the more characters you have, the more flaming chainsaws. The protagonist will have several. The chainsaws are juggled throughout the novel, each one coming around again after a span of a few chapters, providing a constant, rotating threat. Each time a chainsaw passes through your hands, it gains speed and becomes more perilous until extinguished at the end of the story.

Workshop Exercise: Flaming Chainsaws – what is troubling your protagonist? Or, what problems are other characters having that are affecting the protagonist?