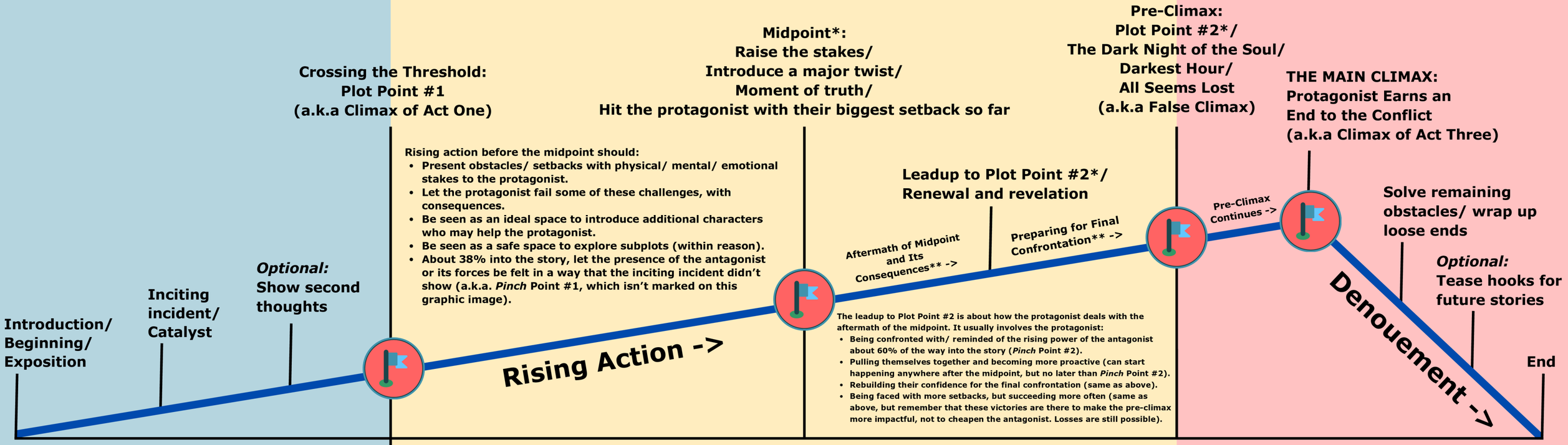
The Three-Act Structure



Rising action before the midpoint should:

- Present obstacles/ setbacks with physical/ mental/ emotional stakes to the protagonist.
- Let the protagonist fail some of these challenges, with consequences.
- Be seen as an ideal space to introduce additional characters who may help the protagonist.
- Be seen as a safe space to explore subplots (within reason).
- About 38% into the story, let the presence of the antagonist or its forces be felt in a way that the inciting incident didn't show (a.k.a. *Pinch* Point #1, which isn't marked on this graphic image).

The leadup to Plot Point #2 is about how the protagonist deals with the aftermath of the midpoint. It usually involves the protagonist:

- Being confronted with/ reminded of the rising power of the antagonist about 60% of the way into the story (*Pinch* Point #2).
- Pulling themselves together and becoming more proactive (can start happening anywhere after the midpoint, but no later than *Pinch* Point #2).
- Rebuilding their confidence for the final confrontation (same as above).
- Being faced with more setbacks, but succeeding more often (same as above, but remember that these victories are there to make the pre-climax more impactful, not to cheapen the antagonist. Losses are still possible).

Act One (The Setup)

Act Two (The Confrontation)

Act Three (The Resolution)

* Although "Plot Point #2" often refers to the end of the second act, writing professionals aren't in full agreement on this count. Some refer to this moment as "Plot Point #3" instead, with the midpoint (or even some point in its aftermath!) being counted as the "second" plot point. Just something to be aware of when seeking help in writing circles!

** After the midpoint, remember to start tying your subplots back into the main story! This way, subplots that aren't solved before Act Three can still be naturally solved alongside the main climax.

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