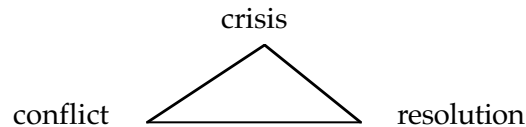
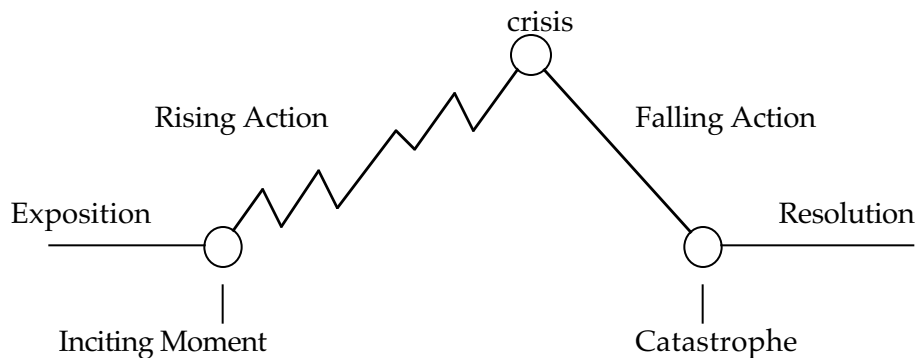


## Traditional Plot Pattern

Aristotle's idea of plot as set forth in *The Poetics*, and particularly as modified by the Elizabethans (Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and others) was described schematically by the German literary critic Gustav Freytag in 1863. His description came to be called "Freitag's triangle" or "Freitag's pyramid":



Subsequent students of literature have elaborated upon the original pyramid:



Exposition: The opening scenes which give background information about characters and which establish the setting and existing situation.

Inciting Moment: The beginning of conflict.

Rising Action: Also called the "complication" or "nouement" (French for "knotting up"). The conflict increases in complexity and intensity as obstacles are introduced to thwart the main character's objectives. Often the protagonist will, despite setbacks, be in control of the action.

Crisis: A turning point, the moment of greatest emotional intensity for the spectator or reader. The protagonist usually makes a decision here, and as a consequence of the decision, the rest of the action is inevitable. At this point, the central dramatic question is answered.

Falling Action: The protagonist has lost control to the antagonist. The end becomes increasingly inevitable. During this action the main character experiences *anagnorisis*, or "recognition" or "discovery" or "disclosure" of something to which he or she had been blinded before. Often the depressing nature of this part of the story is made more palatable by "comic relief," scenes, episodes, or incidents to lighten the mood.

Catastrophe: The protagonist is overcome. The event is logical, if not welcome.

Resolution: Also called "denouement" (French for "unknotting"). The unraveling of the plot's complications.