

The Secret to Making Plotting Easier



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Part 1. A story is...

A Guided Experience



(think genre)

Part 2. A Core Part of the Experience

Trigger, Build, Deliver

3 Things to Trigger

Hopes and Fears

Anticipation

Mystery



Dramatic, juicy, tantalizing

–Extraordinary

–Novel

–Surprising

–Dangerous

–Humorous

–Devastating

–Wonderful

–Full of conflict

–Romantic

–Tender

–Horrific

–Puzzling

–Revelatory

–Etc.

Part 3. The Story Setup (The Engine)

1. Genre
2. Compelling Character
3. THOM
4. Concrete goal
5. Formidable Obstacles

Engine 1: Grandma Kick Butt



Story Setup

Genre	Action thriller
Compelling Character	Female, Roxie, sixties, gun-toting, tractor-driving, horse-riding, tough-as-nails widow rancher. Loves spending time with her little cow girl, ten-year-old granddaughter.
THOM	Gets a call that neighbor's dog has mauled yet another one of her calves. Goes over to demand dog be put down. Interrupts drug dealer and goons murdering neighbor for punishment. They come after her.
Concrete Goal	Escape these murderers.
Formidable Obstacles	Doesn't have phone, out in a rural area. She's in an old pickup. They're in a new SUV. The granddaughter pops up from backseat, having sneaked in to surprise her.

Setup Summary

1. In this [genre]
2. [Character] is an [adjectives, vocation] working for [hope or dream]
3. When [THOM enters].
4. Will she be able to [goal]
5. When she must [struggle against formidable obstacle]?

Grandma Kick Butt

1. In this action thriller
2. Roxie is a mid-sixties, gun-toting, tractor-driving, horse-riding, tough-as-nails widow rancher who loves spending time with her 10-year old granddaughter.
3. When she interrupts a drug cartel killing, the bad guys come after her.
4. Will she be able to escape them

Grandma Kick Butt

5. When she is outmanned, outgunned, cut off in the middle of nowhere with her granddaughter, and more of the cartel roadblocks her exit?

Engine 2: Grandma Warrior



Story Setup

Genre	Heroic fantasy
Compelling Character	Female, Roxie, sixties, washed-out from mage training, but knows some small magics and just wants to see her granddaughter grow.
THOM	People begin vanishing from the vale. And then they find evidence a korog (ancient monster) is dragging them away.
Concrete Goal	Destroy the korog, save the people, especially her granddaughter
Formidable Obstacles	Korog's are dark, shadowy, and powerful. And when they send their best warriors to go outside for help, it kills them all. They are trapped in the vale.

Grandma Warrior

1. In this heroic fantasy
2. Roxie is a mid-sixties, bawdy grandmother who wants nothing more than to enjoy her granddaughter.
3. And then people begin vanishing from the vale.
4. Will she be able to save her village and granddaughter

Grandma Warrior

5. When their three best warriors have been killed and they discover that they're up against a korog, a dark, shadowy, and powerful killer, and there's no way out of the vale.

Engine 3: Grandma Monster Hunter



Story Setup

Genre	Contemporary fantasy
Compelling Character	Female, Roxie, sixties, trailer park grandma who used to ride with a motorcycle gang. She's just trying to live in peace and raise her granddaughter to be a good woman who didn't make the mistakes grandma did.
THOM	Her granddaughter starts seeing dark beings before people are attacked.
Concrete Goal	Find out what the creatures are and stop them.
Formidable Obstacles	She has no idea what's going on or who might. Doctors diagnose as a mental illness. DFS is giving her crap. And then the dark creatures begin to stalk her granddaughter.

Grandma Monster Hunter

1. In this contemporary fantasy
2. Roxie is a mid-sixties, ex-biker, trailer park grandma who is trying to raise her granddaughter.
3. When her granddaughter begins seeing dark beings, she's diagnosed with a mental illness, but then Roxie finds evidence the creatures are real and are killing people.

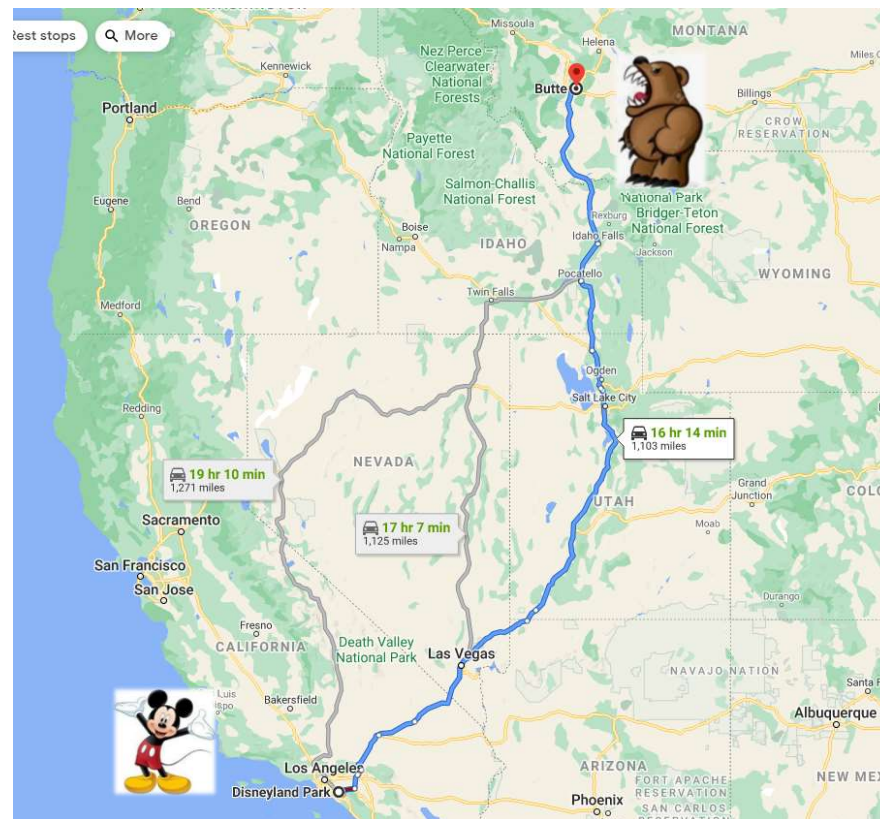
Grandma Monster Hunter

4. Will she be able to stop the creatures
5. When DFS wants to take the child away and then the creatures begin to hunt her granddaughter.

Get an Engine in Your Car!



Part 4. Plot Patterns



(not the 3, 4, 5, 7, or 9 act plot, Hero's Journey, or anything like that)

Part 5. Action Reaction Cycle

Reaction

1. Emotion
2. Thought/Discussion
3. Decision

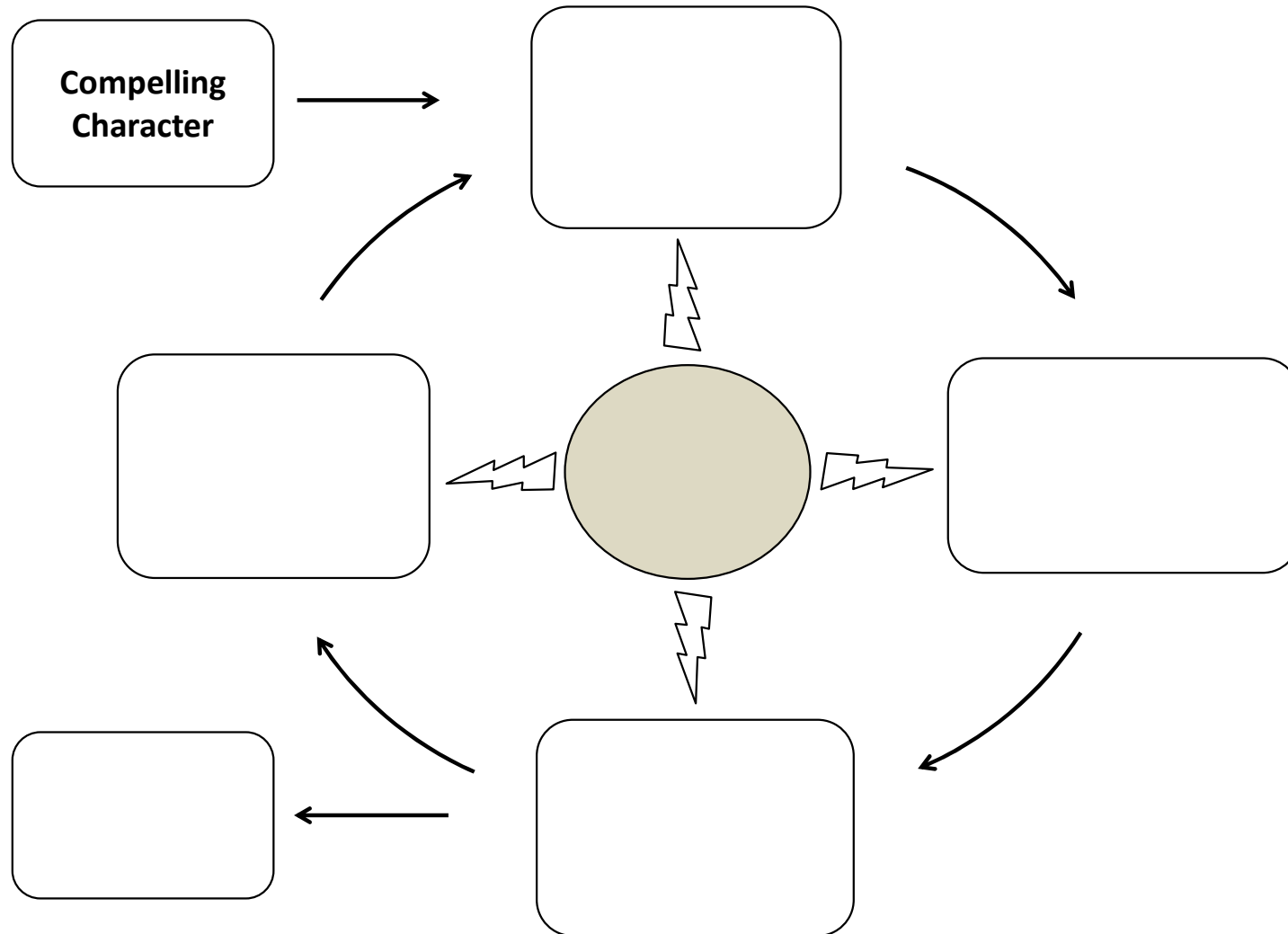
Action

1. Concrete Goal
2. Action
3. Result

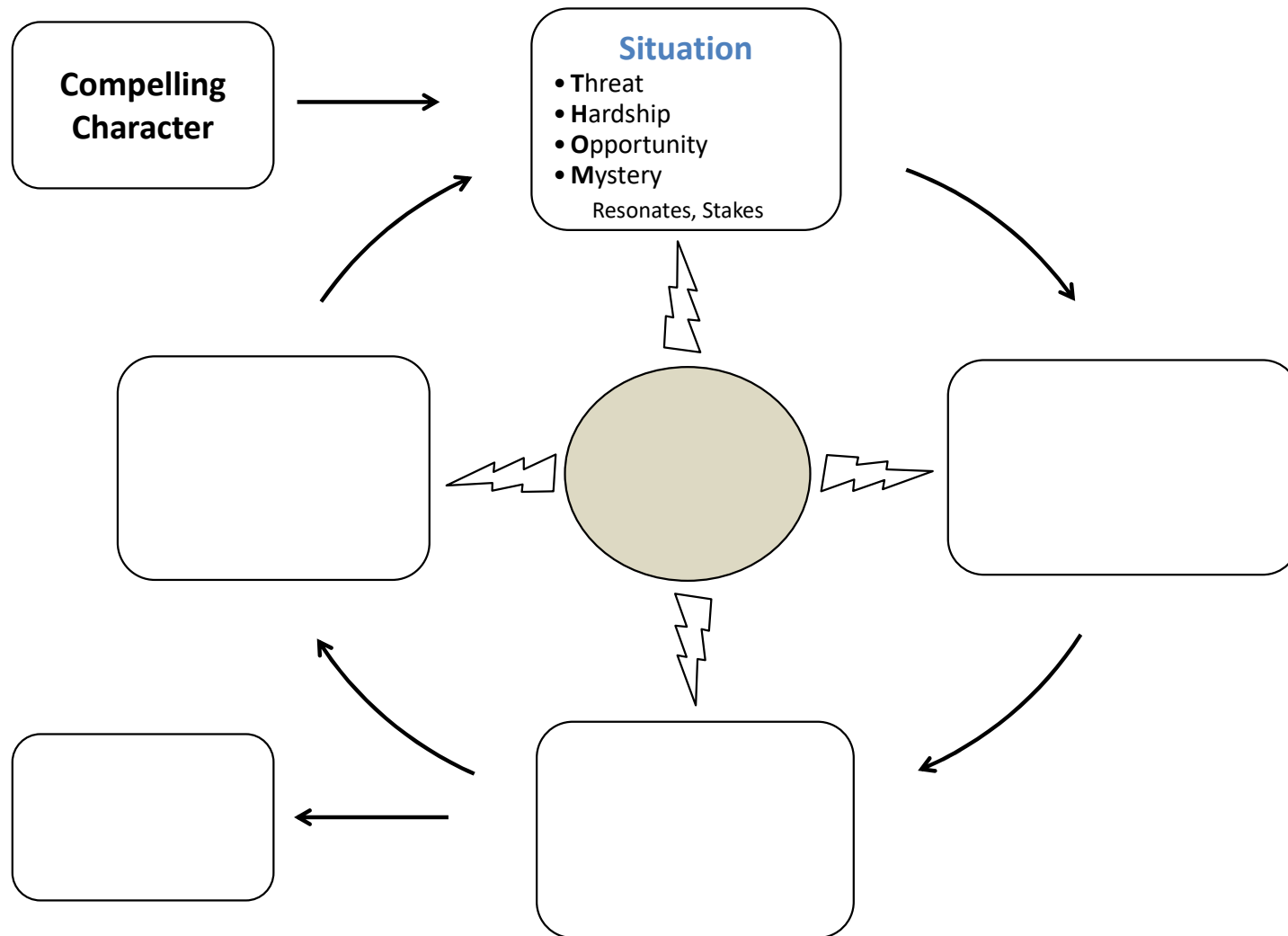
Result

1. No
2. No, but
3. No, furthermore
4. Yes, but
5. Yes (sub-step)

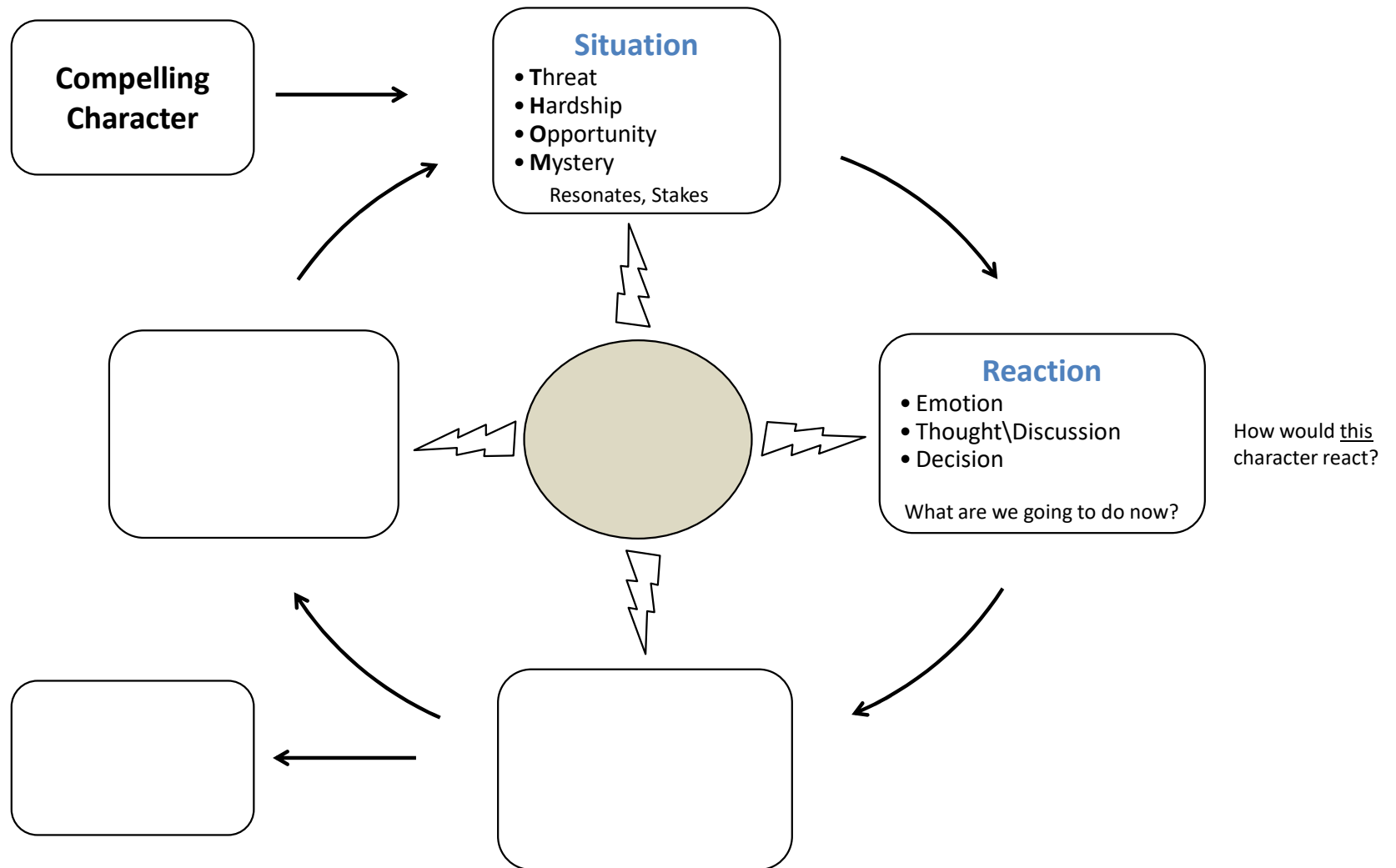
The Action Reaction Cycle



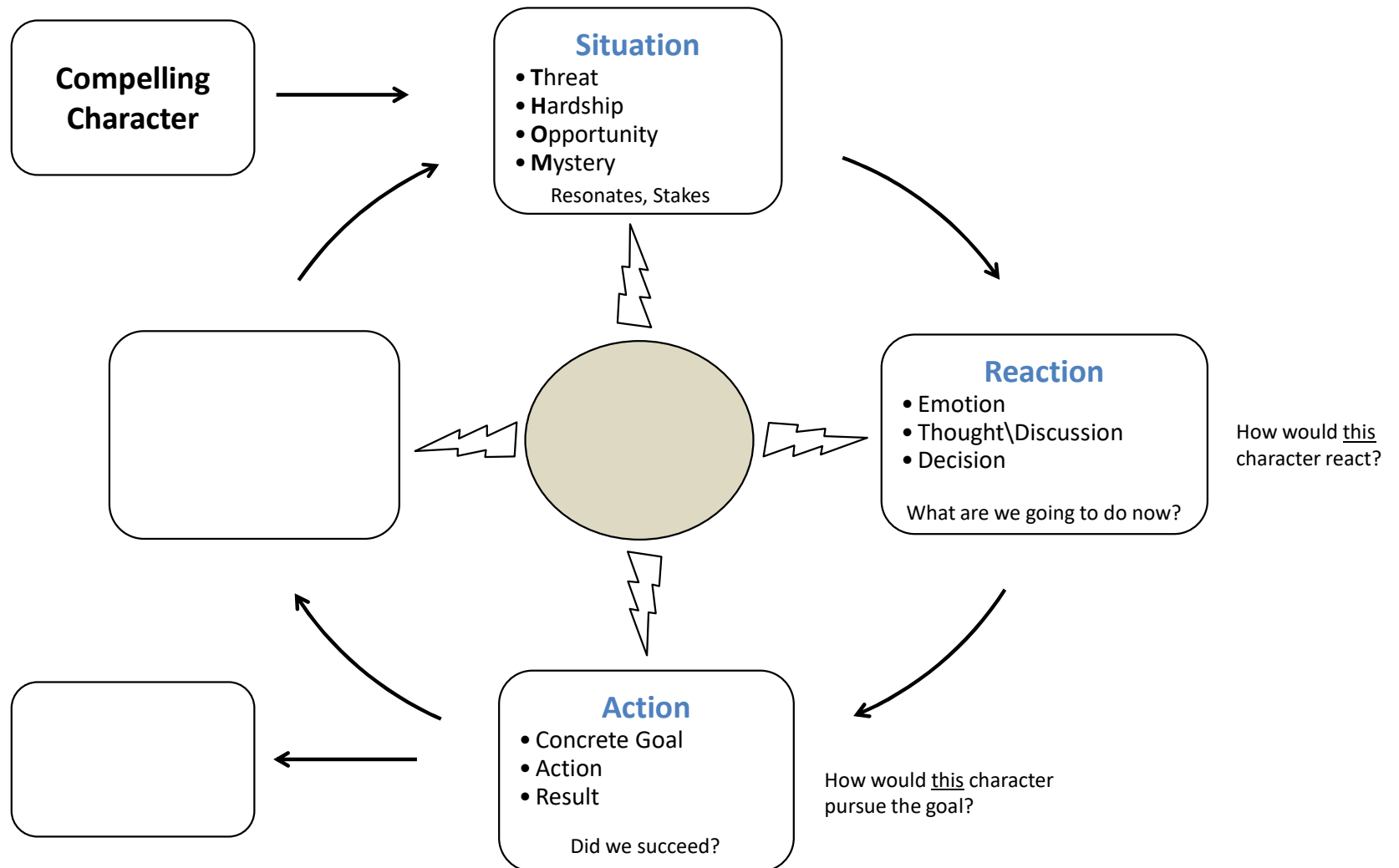
The Action Reaction Cycle



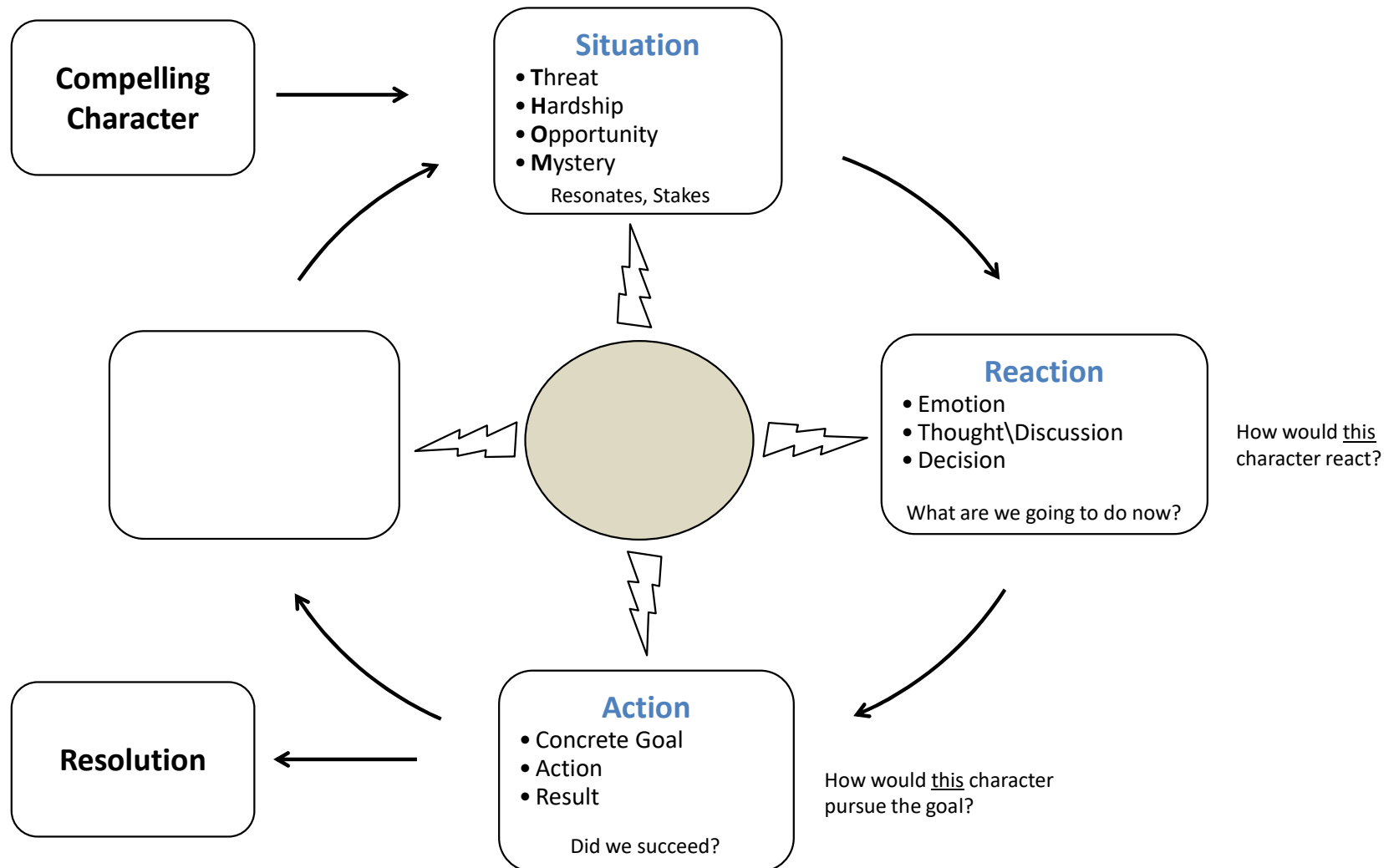
The Action Reaction Cycle



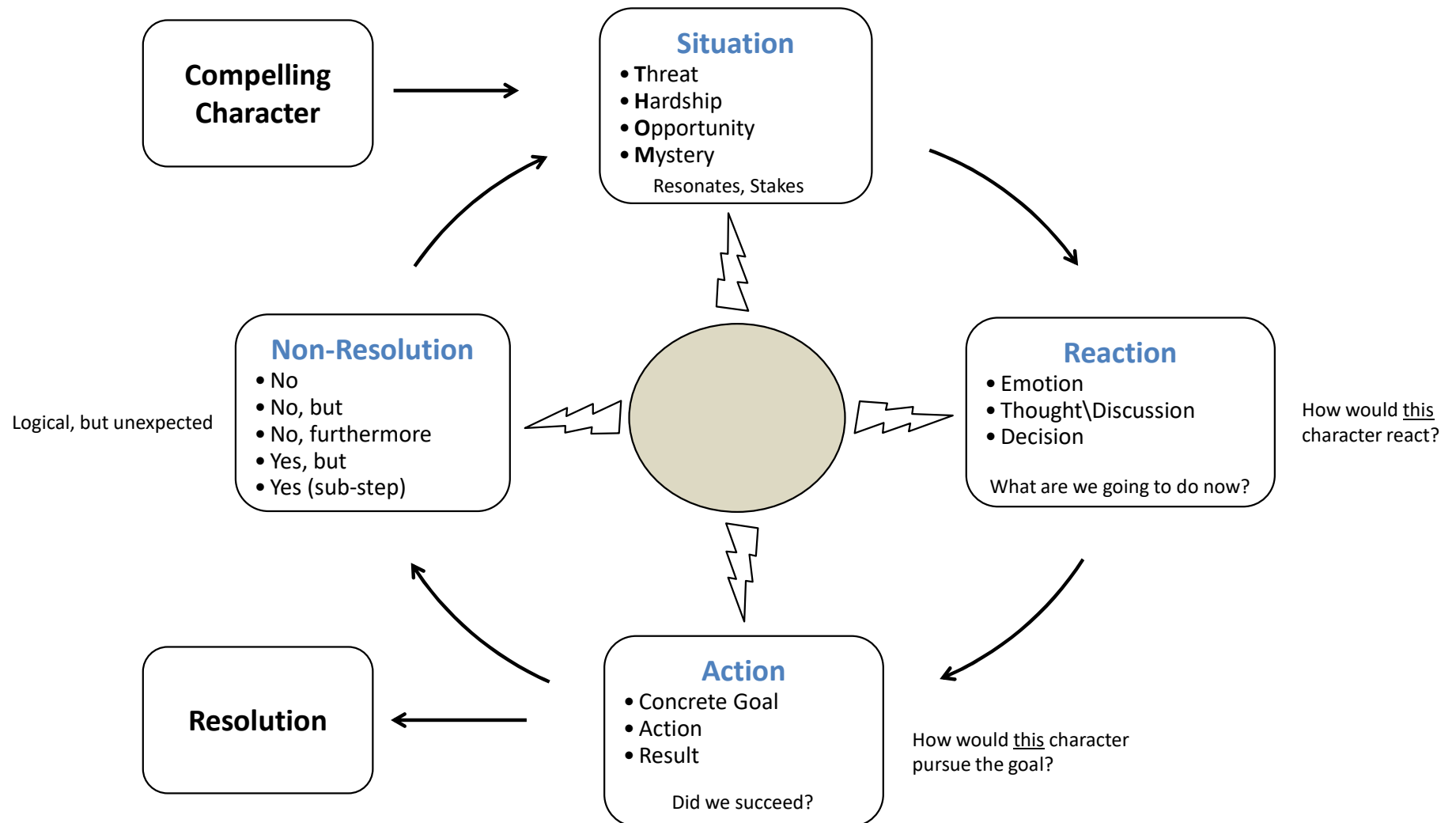
The Action Reaction Cycle



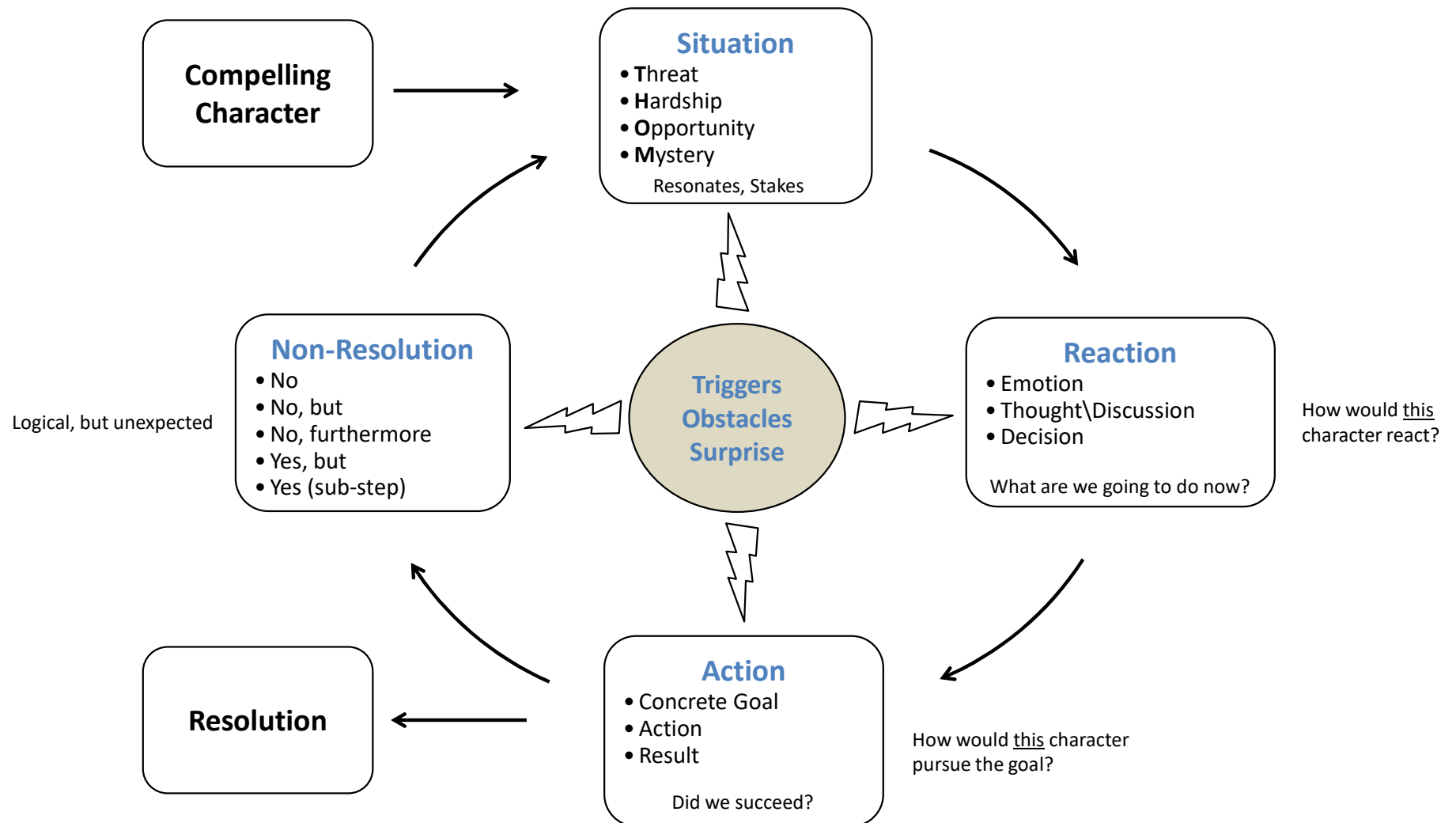
The Action Reaction Cycle



The Action Reaction Cycle



The Action Reaction Cycle



The John Brown **Story** Framework

1. A story is a guided experience



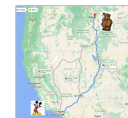
2. A core part of that is Trigger, Build, Deliver



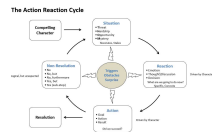
3. The Story Setup is the engine



4. Plot Patterns tell you where to go



5. The Action Reaction Cycle helps you with specifics



The John Brown **Study** Framework

1. What makes this type of experience cool?
2. What triggers, builds, and delivers?
3. What makes characters, THOMs, goals, and obstacles compelling?
4. What are some plot patterns for this goal/THOM?
5. How does the Action Reaction work in plots I love?

Books to Help

