



## Save-the-Cat Quick Reference Guide

Adapted from [Save the Cat! writes a Novel](#) by Jessica Brody.

Dear Author,

The Save-the-Cat beat sheet will help you write a truly compelling novel that resonates with your reader as well as create a logline and blurb, while the Save-the-Cat story genres will help you find comps for your book when pitching to an agent or readers.

If you've already read [Save the Cat! writes a Novel](#) by Jessica Brody, this quick reference guide to the Save-the-Cat beat sheet and Save-the-Cat story genres will be a helpful guide to keep on hand as you write your book and market it. If you haven't read Brody's book yet, I highly recommend doing so.

For more information on the various beats of storytelling and for a FREE fillable Save-the-Cat beat sheet, read my [Tips for writers](#) article titled [The Heartbeat of Story](#).

Your editor,

*Mandi Summit*  
*Red Quill Editorial LLC*

*PS:* when you're ready for editing, [Let's Discuss Your Manuscript](#) and secure your spot on Red Quill Editorial's calendar!



# Save-the-Cat Beat Sheet

## (Quick Reference Guide)

### ACT I (0 - 20%)

1. Opening Image (single-scene beat; 0 - 1%)
2. Theme Stated (single-scene beat; 5%)
3. Setup (multi-scene beat; 1 - 10%)
4. Catalyst (single-scene beat; 10%)
5. Debate (multi-scene beat; 10 - 20%)

### ACT II (20 - 80%)

6. Break Into 2 (single-scene beat; 20%)
7. B-Story (single-scene beat; 22%)
8. Fun & Games (multi-scene beat; 20 - 50%)
9. Midpoint (single-scene beat; 50%)
  - a. False Victory/Defeat
  - b. Raised Stakes
  - c. A-Story Meets B-Story
10. Bad Guys Close In (multi-scene beat; 50 - 75%)
11. All Is Lost (single-scene beat; 75%)
12. Dark Night of the Soul (multi-scene beat; 75 - 80%)

### ACT III (80 - 100%)

13. Break Into 3 (single-scene beat; 80%)
14. Finale (multi-scene beat; 80 - 99%)
  - a. Gathering the Team
  - b. Executing the Plan
  - c. The High Tower Surprise
  - d. Dig Deep Down
  - e. Executing the New Plan
15. Final Image (single-scene beat; 99 - 100%)



# Save-the-Cat Series Beat Sheet

## (Quick Reference Guide)

### *Trilogy*

#### **Book 1: Series Act I**

1. Opening Image
2. Theme Stated
3. Setup
4. Catalyst
5. Debate
6. Break Into Two

#### **Book 2: Series Act II**

7. B-Story
8. Fun & Games
9. Midpoint
  - a. False Victory/Defeat
  - b. Raised Stakes
  - c. A-Story Meets B-Story
10. Bad Guys Close In
11. All Is Lost
12. Dark Night of the Soul
13. Break Into Three

#### **Book 3: Series Act III**

14. Finale
  - a. Gathering the Team
  - b. Executing the Plan
  - c. The High Tower Surprise
  - d. Dig Deep Down
  - e. Executing the New Plan
15. Final Image

### *Quartet*

#### **Book 1: Series Act I**

1. Opening Image
2. Theme Stated
3. Setup
4. Catalyst
5. Debate
6. Break Into Two

#### **Book 2: Series Act II, Part A**

7. B-Story
8. Fun & Games
9. Midpoint
  - a. False Victory/Defeat
  - b. Raised Stakes
  - c. A-Story Meets B-Story
  - d. Midpoint Twist

#### **Book 3: Series Act II, Part B**

10. Bad Guys Close In
11. All Is Lost
12. Dark Night of the Soul
13. Break Into Three

#### **Book 4: Series Act III**

14. Finale
  - a. Gathering the Team
  - b. Executing the Plan
  - c. The High Tower Surprise
  - d. Dig Deep Down
  - e. Executing the New Plan
15. Final Image



## Save-the-Cat Story Genres (Quick Reference Guide)

### 1. Whydunit

- **3 Key Elements:** a detective, a secret, & a dark turn
- **Description:** Your protagonist, who may or may not be a professional detective, must solve a mystery, during which something shocking is revealed that spurs your protagonist to somehow break the rules in order to solve the case.

### 2. Rites of Passage

- **3 Key Elements:** a life problem, a wrong way, & a solution
- **Description:** Your protagonist must endure and overcome the mental and emotional growing pains of common life challenges, such as coming of age, divorce, death, or addiction. Usually, your protagonist attempts to ignore or avoid the problem at first, but eventually they have a coming-to-terms moment of acceptance.

### 3. Institutionalized

- **3 Key Elements:** a group, a choice, & a sacrifice
- **Description:** Your protagonist becomes or is already part of a group (i.e., family, institution, gang) and must make a decision whether to join, escape, or destroy it. This decision is complicated because they are usually born into it or it's all they've ever really known and loyalty to a group can often contradict common sense.

### 4. Superhero

- **3 Key Elements:** a hero with a special power, a nemesis, & a curse
- **Description:** Your protagonist must come to terms with being extraordinary in an ordinary world, where they are often misunderstood. Note that not all superheroes have to be magically inclined to fit this genre! They might simply be dedicated to going above and beyond in doing good in the world.



### 5. Dude with a Problem

- **3 Key Elements:** an innocent protagonist, a sudden event, & a life-or-death battle
- **Description:** Your average Joe protagonist must rise to the challenge of extraordinary circumstances when they are suddenly dragged into some major trouble. Their unique individuality and qualifications are what will save the day in the end, as well as the continued existence of one, many, or all.

### 6. Fool Triumphant

- **3 Key Elements:** an overlooked underdog, an establishment, & a transmutation
- **Description:** Your underdog protagonist with hidden worth is pitted against society or some kind of establishment. They are often overlooked or brushed aside and even try their best to fit in via a temporary transmutation, but in the end, they prove to everyone just how valuable they can be when they conquer the establishment.

### 7. Buddy Love

- **3 Key Elements:** an incomplete protagonist, a counterpart, & a complication
- **Description:** Your protagonist is transformed through meeting and loving someone else, whether romantic or friendship (the catalyst). This counterpart person, pet, or thing provides your protagonist with the companionship and sense of completion they have been missing. Unfortunately, there is a complication that keeps them apart (at least until your protagonist learns the theme), but in the end, love conquers all and they end up changing each other for the better.



### 8. out of the Bottle

- **3 Key Elements:** a hero deserving of the magic, a spell, & a lesson
- **Description:** Your deserving protagonist is temporarily gifted with something magical (i.e., a wish or curse). They may not know *how* the magic came to be, but they must know *why* it happened so they can grow to understand how to fix it, because they also must come to learn that reality is better.

### 9. Golden Fleece

- **3 Key Elements:** a road, a team, & a prize
- **Description:** Your protagonist goes on an adventure (e.g., road trip, heist, quest) with clear milestones in search of something specific, but winds up discovering something else entirely—the journey is far more valuable than the destination. which is a good thing, because your protagonist may not even succeed in obtaining the prize they had their sights set on in the first place.

### 10. Monster in the House

- **3 Key Elements:** a monster, a house, & a sin
- **Description:** Your protagonist must overcome some kind of monster that they are, at least partly, at fault for creating or releasing into the world. The monster functions outside the realm of natural human behavior, driven by a motivation that goes against the laws of nature, and the protagonist realizes that living with this monster is a fate worse than death.