The Roller Coaster Ride is just that—a story that takes the audience on a ride of tension and suspense, never letting up on the gas.

Instead of having one major Climax at the end of the story, as with Traditional Structure, this structure has several Climaxes throughout the story. Each one builds upon the previous one, holding the reader in its thrall until the very end. Slowly the train climbs up the hill. It reaches the peak and then dives toward the ground where it starts up once again.

There is still a sense of a clear three-act beginning, middle, and end to it, but the acts themselves have their own mini acts:

Act I Act II Act III

This structure is very plot driven. Just as a roller coaster moves people around the track—and not vice versa—the events of a Roller Coaster plot move the story forward—not the characters.

The characters are compelled to react to the events around them because failure to do so would mean disaster. They are at the mercy of the story events and have virtually no time to think things over. They can formulate plans of action but they are not able to stop the events from happening. They are only able to deal with events once they are already in motion. (They can’t keep the Villain from planting a bomb, but they can try to stop it from going off.)

Elements of Plot: See class notes

### Act I Questions
- How many Main Characters and Supporting Characters will you have in the story? Are they all introduced here?
- How will you introduce the Villain? What do you want the reader to know right away about the Villain? How will you show it?
- What does the Main Character want? How do the events of the plot cut short his true plans? (For example, in *Independence Day*, Will Smith just wants to be with his family and live a normal life. In fact, when he catches an alien, he yells that he should be “relaxing at a barbecue right now.”)
- How soon will the time element come into play?
- How many Mini-Climaxes will you have here? Are they all justified and organic to the story?

### Act II Questions
- How many Mini-Climaxes will you have? Are they too similar to Act I or Act III?
- How will the Stakes get higher?
- How can you use what the Main Character cares about against him?
- How far will the Villain need to be pushed to be villainous? Is there anyredeeming quality about him? Why is he doing what he’s doing?
- What kind of Secondary Time Element can you put in?

### Act III Questions
- Will you have several Mini-Climaxes here? Or just one big one? Why?
- Should the Time Element intensify? Will it enhance the plot? Will it make things harder on the Main Character?
- How has the Main Character’s life changed from this story? Is his true Goal the same? Have his priorities changed in any way? (For example, in *Independence Day*, Will Smith decides to propose to his girlfriend because family has become the most important thing to him and he realizes life is too short to play around.)
Examples

*Jurassic Park*, MICHAEL CRICHTON
Scientists clone dinosaurs to populate a theme park that suffers a major security breakdown, releasing the dinosaurs to wreak havoc.

*Independence Day*, ROLAND EMMERICH
Aliens come to Earth and their Goal is to invade and destroy. Fighting superior technology, a group of men try to figure out how to save Earth as the countdown to invasion begins.

*Speed*, JAN DE BONT
A young cop must save the passengers of a bus that has a bomb set to explode if the bus goes below fifty miles per hour.