Hollywood Plots and Cliches Worksheet

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1) What are the 6 standard plots in Hollywood? (List them and explain what they are in a sentence or 2)

Rags to Riches

The "Rags to Riches" plot typically follows a character who starts in a disadvantaged state, often lacking wealth, beauty, love, or power, and then rises through trials and successes to acquire these things.

Riches to Rags

"Riches to rags" describes a situation where someone transitions from a state of wealth, privilege, or good fortune to one of poverty, disadvantage, or misfortune.

Man in a Hole

A character starts off in an okay or good situation, then suddenly falls into trouble (the “hole”) — but by the end, they figure out how to climb back out, ending better than they began.

Icarus

A character rises higher and higher (usually gaining success, power, or confidence), but because of their overconfidence, arrogance, or ignoring warnings, they often fall dramatically and end up worse off than where they began.

Cinderella

A character starts off in a low, difficult, or unfair situation (poverty, abuse, being overlooked), but through some sudden change of fortune often combined with their own goodness or effort — they rise to happiness, success, or love.

Oedipus

A character’s journey starts well, they rise to power or success, but eventually they fall and end up worse off because of a tragic flaw or something they unknowingly caused themselves.

2) What are some examples of these from movies, TV, etc.?

Rags to Riches

Cinderella (a poor girl becomes a princess), Slumdog Millionaire (a poor boy wins a game show and gains love and fortune)

Riches to Rags

Citizen Kane(Kane builds a media empire but ends up isolated and empty), The Social Network(Mark Zuckerberg gains billions but loses his closest friendships)

Man in a Hole

The Lion King(Simba starts happy, falls into guilt and exile after his father’s death, but rises again to reclaim the throne), Iron Man(Tony Stark is a rich, carefree genius, then gets captured and nearly killed, but climbs back to become a hero)

Icarus

The Wolf of Wall Street(Jordan Belfort rises quickly through wealth and power but falls hard due to his greed and reckless behavior), Scarface(Tony Montana builds a drug empire but loses everything because of his arrogance and violent choices)

Cinderella

Rocky(A small-time boxer gets a chance to fight the champion and rises to fame), Aladdin(A poor street rat gains a chance at wealth and love through magic and courage)

Oedipus

The Great Gatsby(Gatsby’s obsession and illusions lead to his demise), Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith(Anakin Skywalker’s choices, influenced by fear and anger, lead to his transformation into Darth Vader and the fall of the Jedi)

3) Watch “Attack of the Hollywood Cliches” on Netflix. What are the cliches discussed? (List them and explain what they are in a sentence or 2)

Cinderella

Cliches : The “Ugly Duckling” or “Hidden Beauty” who transforms through love or magic.

Characters who are overlooked or mistreated but reveal their true worth and win love or acceptance.

Icarus

Cliches : The Overconfident Hero whose pride or arrogance leads to their downfall.

Characters ignored warnings, think they are invincible, and then suffer dramatic consequences.

Rags to Riches

Cliche : The Poor but Pure character who suddenly rises to fame, wealth, or love through some lucky break or kindness.

A character starts with nothing and, despite obstacles, ends up living a glamorous life—often with a romantic subplot attached.

Can you find some examples of your own?

The Damsel in Distress

A female character who needs to be rescued by a male hero, often lacking agency or depth.

The Chosen One

A protagonist who is destined to save the world or defeat evil, often with special powers or lineage.

The Love Triangle

Two characters compete for the affection of a third, creating romantic tension and drama.

References

Every story in the world has one of these six basic plots –<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20180525-every-story-in-the-world-has-one-of-these-six-basic-plots>

7 Types of Stories: Rags to Riches - <https://www.firstdraftpro.com/blog/rags-to-riches-plot>