Story Turns

John Brown

Movie Time

Story Turns . . .

- – Grab our interest
- – Make us want to turn the page
- – Control pace

Laffy Taffy

Q: What do you call a cow with no legs

A: Ground beef.

Q: Why was the tomato blushing?

A: Because she saw the salad dressing!

Story Turns Are . . .

Changes (or info) that raise, in the <u>reader</u>:

- **Curiosity**
- **Hope or fear** for a character
- **Anticipation** that something dramatic is about to occur

Dramatic

- Extraordinary
- Novel
- Surprising
- Dangerous
- Humorous
- Devastating
- Wonderful
- Full of conflict
- Romantic
- Tender
- Horrific
- Puzzling
- Revelatory
- Juicy, tantalizing

Readers Want to Witness

Story Turns:
- **Raise** a question or anticipation
- **Extend** one
- or **Satisfy** one

Readers Want to Puzzle and Worry

Extending turns
make readers **UNCERTAIN**
about outcomes or answers

It starts with a THOM
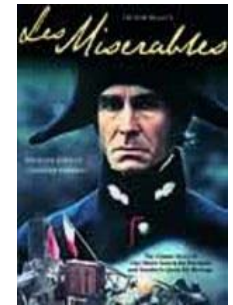
Threat

Hardship

Opportunity

Mystery

Then a CAT

- **Concrete Goal**

- **Action**

- **Turns**

  – Change the situation

  – Affect progress, or

  – Raise a question, or

  – Make us anticipate

  – Often surprise

The Story Cycle

Inciting Incident

THOM
- Threat
- Hardship
- Opportunity
- Mystery

Reaction
- Emotion
- Thought\Discussion
- Decision
- Goal

Conflict & Surprise

Trouble
- No
- No, but
- No, furthermore
- Yes, but

Action
- Goal
- Conflict
- Result (trouble)

Resolution

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Example: The Guy with the Car . . .

- **THOM** (**T**hreat, **H**ardship, **O**pportunity, or **M**ystery)
- **Concrete Goal**
- **Action**
- **Turns**
    - Change the situation
    - Affect progress, or
    - Raise a question, or
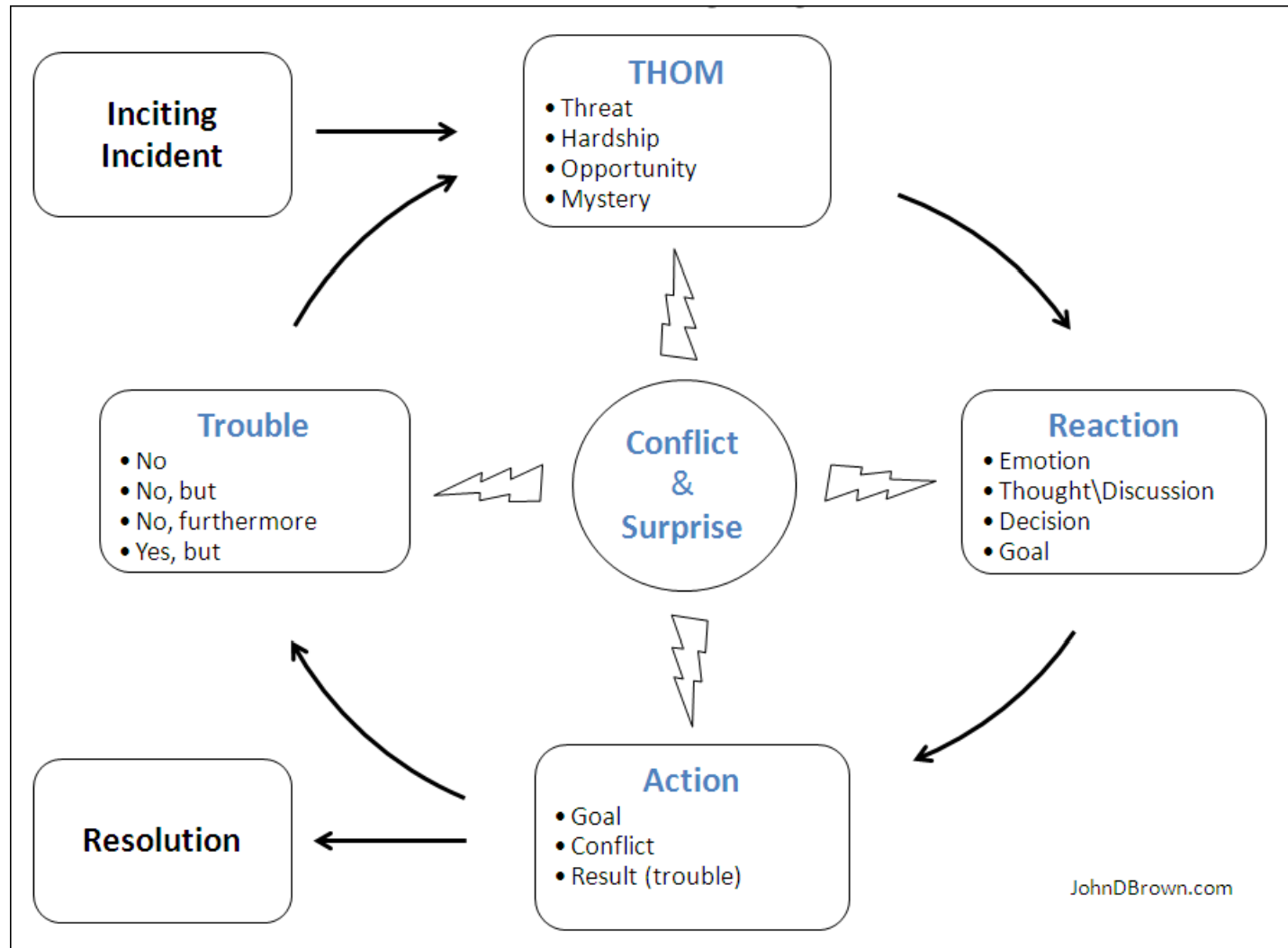   - Make us anticipate
    - Often surprise

Good News, Bad News

Good News, Bad News

Always back and forth?

Guy with car

- − Car rolls away with keys
- − Can't catch
- + Bike
- + Catches
- − Turn sign
- + Gets in
- − Steering wheel locks

Story Turns Have a Shelf Life

Example: *Hunger Games . . .*

- **THOM** (**T**hreat, **H**ardship, **O**pportunity, or **M**ystery)
- **Goal**
- **Action**
- **Turns**
  - Change the situation
  - Affect progress, or
  - Raise a question, or
  - Make us anticipate
  - Often surprise

Example: *The Good Guy . . .*

- **THOM** (**T**hreat, **H**ardship, **O**pportunity, or **M**ystery)
- **Goal**
- **Action**
- **Turns**
  - Change the situation
  - Affect progress, or
  - Raise a question, or
  - Make us anticipate
  - Often surprise

Example: *Pride & Prejudice . . .*

- **THOM** (**T**hreat, **H**ardship, **O**pportunity, or **M**ystery)
- **Goal**
- **Action**
- **Turns**
  - Change the situation
  - Affect progress, or
  - Raise a question, or
  - Make us anticipate
  - Often surprise

Example: *Pride & Prejudice* . . .

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

Example: *The Mentalist . . .*

- **THOM** (**T**hreat, **H**ardship, **O**pportunity, or **M**ystery)
- **Goal**
- **Action**
- **Turns**
  - Change the situation
  - Affect progress, or
  - Raise a question, or
  - Make us anticipate
  - Often surprise

Keep In Mind

Two Special Turns

The Beginning and Ending

For all questions and anticipations

Scene and Structure Level

Turns drive Pacing

NOT short sentences & paragraphs

Surprise

You think you know what's ahead. . .

Take the path less traveled . . .

Review

1. **Turns happen in the Reader**

2. **Raise, Extend, or Satisfy:**
   - Curiosity
   - Hope or Fear
   - Anticipation

3. **THOM CAT**

4. **+ - + + + - - - + - +**

5. **Shelf life**

6. **What's not expected? Surprise!**

Our Scenario?

Ana Carrillo

- Mid-twenties
- Deputy Sheriff who loves bowling
- Single mom one daughter

Ideas

- Bowling ball as weapon
- Undercover on him
- Drug lord who does Lord of the Flames, boots, bear chest and all

Jack Straw

- Florist

Tool 1: What kind of story is it?
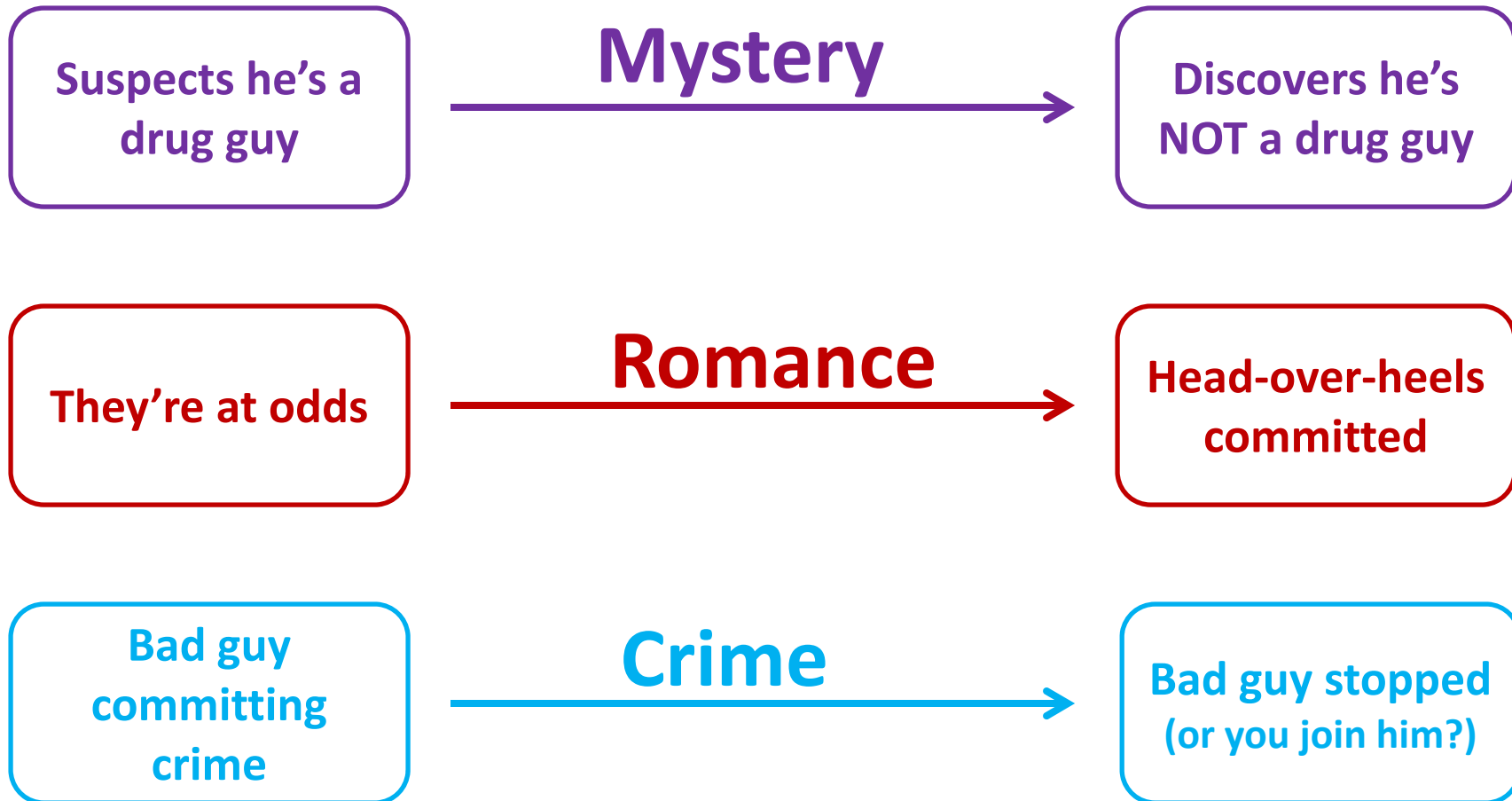
What's the main problem that needs to be solved?

What's our main question?

What's our main anticipation?

What's the main THOM?

- Mystery?
- Romance?
- Crime?
- Other?
- Multiple story lines?
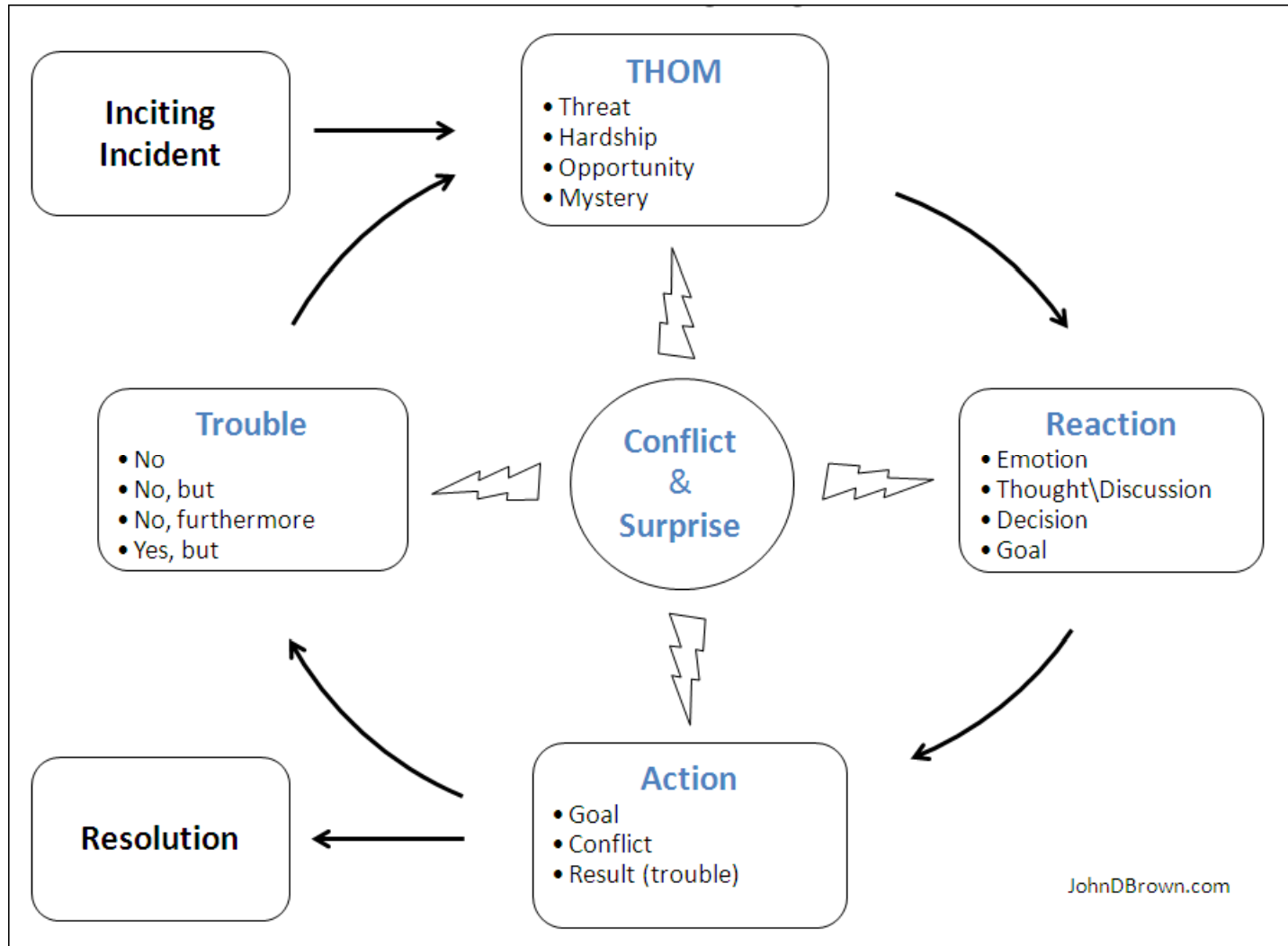
Tool 2: What is the End and Beginning State?

Suspects he's a drug guy → **Mystery** → **Discovers he's NOT a drug guy**

They're at odds → **Romance** → **Head-over-heels committed**

Bad guy committing crime → **Crime** → **Bad guy stopped (or you join him?)**

Tool 3: Progression Pattern

Different Story Types → Different Patterns

Tool 4: The Story Cycle

Tool 5: One-Man Chess

Next Steps

Get the Presentation

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Turn Options to Get You Thinking

1. **PRESENT THOM**
2. **PROGRESS & SETBACK**
- Plans go awry, Plans succeed
- A threat is eliminated
- Antagonist foils hero, hero foils antagonist

3. **TROUBLES & HELP**
- Unforeseen obstacle
- Obstacle way worse or different than expected
- Unexpected disadvantage or threat arises
- An unexpected external conflict arises
- A dilemma arises
- A threat we thought was eliminated isn't
- A threat becomes more intense (significant, immediate, probable, or specific)
- A time limit is introduced
- Antag gets info or takes steps that give him advantage
- Characters switch sides
- Unexpected help arrives—for hero or antag
- Hero or antagonist recruits help

4. **LOCKED ON**
- The hero makes a decision that will propel him into a dramatic event
- An event forces the hero into a dramatic event

5. **MYSTERY & INSIGHT**
- A new question or mystery is posed
- Something odd or puzzling happens
- Someone acts in unexpected way
- Hero finds a clue
- Hero finds that the clue really was nothing
- Hero was wrong
- Answer to question revealed
- A discovery leads to insight
- A discovery complicates the puzzle
- A discovery completely reverses what we thought was going on

Next Steps

MAKE YOUR OWN OBSERVATIONS
- **Scene**
- **Chapter**
- **Book**
- **Movie**
- **TV Episode**

READ SOMEONE ELSE'S INSIGHTS
- *The Secrets of Action Screenwriting* by William C. Martell
- *Master Class* at Ken-Follett.com
- *Writing and Selling Your Novel* by Jack M. Bickham
- *Scene & Structure* by Jack M. Bickham