**Plots of Fortune  
Cause and effect come from events rather than purposeful action.**

**The Action Plot**

**Protagonist:** Strong character who conquers every and any obstacle.

**Cause/Effect:** No doubt the hero will tackle each new challenge, the story is about how they do it.

**Works best for:** people with a strong record of awards, publications, and practice or outreach. Your letters must present evidence that you are remarkably talented.

**Select events that:** demonstrate your achievements. Reviewers are unlikely to love you unless the events chosen introduce tension that creates shared meaning. Rely on significant achievements to make them trust you if this is the case.

**Along the way, we want the reviewers to:** recall the pleasures of their own success They should wonder, “What will they do next to top that last achievement?!?”

**At resolution:** They need to feel wowed. We want them to feel that giving you the award is the only rational choice. These plots win when your record is so brilliant that emotional connection is unnecessary.

**Example:** *Mission Impossible*, *Die Hard*, *Black Panther*

**The Sentimental plot**

**Protagonist*:*** The sympathetic underdog. The odds are stacked against them, but they find a way to make it through.

**Cause/Effect*:*** Event(s) that causes the protagonist to struggle which leads to events that show them pushing through in spite of it all.

**Can be effective for*:*** people who struggled with circumstances (such as low-GPA, slow progress, changed majors) because of poverty, first generation students whose families didn’t value education, etc.

**Select events that:** Strengthened you without your realizing it at time.

**Along the way, we want the reviewers to feel:** Hope you’ll survive, fear you won’t make it.

**At resolution:** We want them to feel relief that you got your just reward.

**Example:** *Forest Gump*, *Holes*, *Slumdog Millionaire*

**Plots of Character  
Cause and effect come from purposeful choices.**

**The Maturing Plot**

**Protagonist:** Inexperienced character or someone who experiences a misfortune(s).

**Cause/Effect:** inexperience or misfortune causes protagonist to make choices that force them onto the right path.

**Can be effective for:** most people. Ideal for people who drifted onto their present course.

**Select events that:**show how you unintentionally grew in skill and character, or revealed your motivation.

**Along the way, we want the reader to feel:**Hope that you’ll do the right thing.

**At resolution:**We want the reader to feel satisfaction that you did what he/she would have done.

**Example:***The Breakfast Club, Sixteen Candles*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

**The Reform Plot**

**Protagonist:** Character who makes some big mistakes.

**Cause/Effect:** Makes choices that get them back on the right path when forced by circumstances.

**Can be effective for:** people who have recovered from epic failures.

**Select events that:** forced you onto the right path and which you internalized to motivate you and establish new goals.

**Along the way, we want the reviewers to feel:** impatient at how far things went before you changed.

**At resolution:** We want the reader to feel satisfaction that you did what they would have done or what they think was right.

**Example:** *Catch Me If You Can, Return of the Jedi*

**Plots of Thought  
Cause and effect come from reflection.**

**The Education Plot**

**Protagonist:** Character starts off with unsophisticated or confused beliefs.

**Cause/Effect:** Reflection prompted by events leads beliefs to change.

**Can be effective for:** many people. Well-suited for people who changed majors or schools or wove together a bunch of individual lessons without following a formal program.

**Select events that:** explain the change: moments of disillusionment, discovery of alternatives, etc.

**Along the way, we want the reader to feel:** Fear, hope, and wonder how the threads will come together.

**At resolution:** We want the reviewers to feel relief and pleasure.

**Example:** *Spirited Away, Silver Linings Playbook*, *How to Train your Dragon, Encanto*

**The Revelation Plot**

**Protagonist:** Someone unaware of their situation.

**Cause/effect:** events help them discover the truth.

**Very effective for:** people who were led onto their path by an advisor or mentor, people who discover best use for skills or perfect way to pursue deepest values.

**Select events that:** explain how events revealed facts/lessons that set you on your path.

**Along the way, we want the reader to feel:** If your events are benign, they feel comfortable with your progress; if your events are dangerous, they fear something will go wrong and then hope you will survive.

**At the resolution:** We want the reviewers to feel relief.

**Example:** *Dead Poet’s Society, Creed, Empire Strikes Back*