

ROCKY (1976)

Written by Sylvester Stallone
Directed by John G. Avildsen
Running Time: 119 mins.

BASIC STORY MAP

PROTAGONIST: Rocky Balboa, a washed up fighter and loan shark muscle

Misbehavior: His good heart

Skill: Hard head - able to withstand punishment

Achille's Heel: Lack of self-esteem

EXTERNAL GOAL: Become a champion

INTERNAL GOAL: Win Adrian's love

MAIN DRAMATIC CONFLICT: Rocky's low self-esteem and all those who underestimate him (Mickey, Paulie, Jergens, Apollo)

THEME: Never give up on your dreams or love.

CENTRAL DRAMATIC QUESTION: Will Rocky find love and become a winner?

ENDING: Rocky goes the distance with Apollo Creed and wins the love of Adrian.

ARC: Rocky goes from a lonely loser to finding self-respect and love.

LOGLINE: A lonely, washed-up boxer struggles to find the confidence and love he needs to fight the Heavyweight Champion of the world.

STORY ENGINES

ACT 1:

Rocky struggles as a washed-up boxer and an incompetent loan shark as he tries to get shy Adrian to go out with him.

ACT 2A:

Rocky and Adrian grow closer as he is chosen to fight for the title against Apollo Creed.

ACT 2B:

Rocky trains hard for the title fight and bonds with Adrian as he drifts from Paulie.

ACT 3:

Rocky sets the goal to go the distance with Creed -- he achieves this goal and wins Adrian's love.

FULL STORY MAP

ACT ONE:

0 - OPENING IMAGE: Jesus Christ (sacrifice, rebirth, redemption)

4 - OPENING: Rocky wins a fight in a low-rent club and gets paid only forty dollars.



5 - Rocky walks home, and seems to be liked in the neighborhood but he lives a lonely existence in a tiny apartment.

10 - INCITING INCIDENT (Internal): Rocky visits the pet store to see shy Adrian. She doesn't respond to his jokes.

11 - INCITING INCIDENT (External): On the docks, Rocky collects money from a Bettor but can't break the guy's thumb like he was told. [THIS IS PUSHING HIM AWAY FROM LOANSHARKING AND TOWARDS HIS TRUE DESTINY]



17 - STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD (External): Rocky loses his locker at the gym. Mickey tells him to think about retiring.



22 - STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD (Internal): Paulie, Adrian's brother, invites Rocky for thanksgiving dinner.

25 – Rocky sees Apollo Creed, world champion boxer on TV, hyping his next fight. The bartender calls him a clown and Rocky defends him, saying that Apollo took his shot and he became a champion.

28 - Apollo Creed learns that his big July 4th centennial fight will be canceled unless he can find an available contender. He's spent a million dollars in promotion and can't afford to miss this fight.

30 - END OF ACT ONE (PP#1) TURN: Apollo Creed decides to give an underdog the opportunity to fight for the title.

31 - Gazzo drops off Rocky and gives him some money for his date with Adrian.

33 - END OF ACT ONE (PP#1) DECISION: Apollo Creed picks Rocky Balboa "The Italian Stallion" for his next fight; his trainer warns him against fighting a southpaw (leftie) but Creed ignores him.

[NOTE: ALTHOUGH APOLLO CREED IS NOT THE PROTAGONIST, ACT ONE STILL ENDS WITH A STRONG DECISION AND PROPELS US INTO THE NEW DRAMATIC TERRITORY OF ACT TWO. THIS UPS THE STAKES AND GIVES MOMENTUM, SINCE WE KNOW THAT IT WILL INEVITABLY FORCE ROCKY TO DECIDE ON HIS FATE. AT THIS POINT, ROCKY IS STILL PASSIVE AND A VICTIM OF HIS OWN BAD DECISIONS SO HE MUST FIND THE STRENGTH TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES.]



[Note: Rocky is an older film so the act breaks occur a bit later than in a modern movie, but all the other signpost beats occur in the exact Story Map page ranges.]

ACT TWO-A:

40 - FIRST TRIAL/FIRST CASUALTY: Rocky and Adrian's date at the ice rink. They make a connection when Rocky says his father told him he had a body and no brain, and Adrian says her mother said she didn't have a body so she should develop her brain.

[POSITIVE: ROCKY PASSES HIS FIRST CRUCIAL TEST WITH ADRIAN, GETTING HER TO OPEN UP AND FINDING COMMON GROUND.] [NEGATIVE: THIS ESCALATES CONFLICT WITH PAULIE AND THREATENS ROCKY'S TRAINING. IT CREATES THE PUSH AND PULL OF "BOXING VS. LOVE" WHICH WILL DRIVE THE FIRST THREE ACTS AND WILL FORCE ROCKY TO INTEGRATE THE TWO FORCES FOR THE FINAL ACT.]



46 - Setup: Rocky is proud that his nose has never been broken in 64 fights. (Payoff: Apollo Creed will break his nose.)

52 - Rocky seduces Adrian.

53 - In front of the entire gym, Mickey tells Rocky he had talent but he wasted his life.

56 - MIDPOINT (External): Jergens (fight promoter) offers Rocky the title fight against Apollo Creed. Rocky initially turns him down, but Jergens sells the idea and Rocky reluctantly agrees.

60 - MIDPOINT (Internal): Rocky opens up to Adrian, deepening their relationship and showing that he needs her as his confidante.

ACT TWO-B:

61 - Gazzo gives Rocky five hundred dollars for his training expenses.

62 - 69 - Mickey asks Rocky if he can be his manager and they argue.



ROCKY STORY MAP CONTINUES in...

"Story Maps: How to write a GREAT Screenplay"

E-Book by Daniel Calvisi.

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