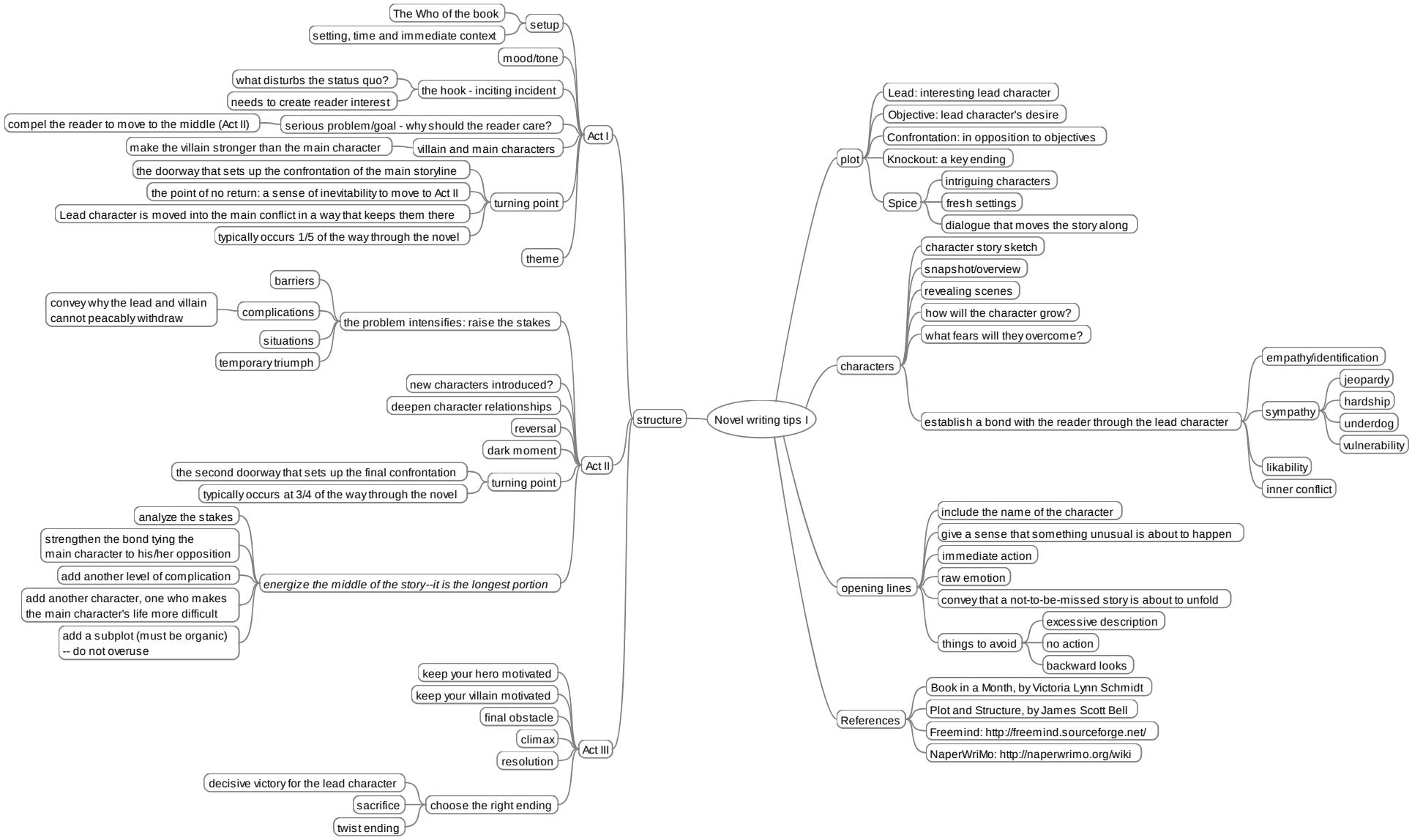
Novel writing tips I
structure
Act I
setup
The Who of the book
setting, time and immediate context
mood/tone
the hook - inciting incident
what disturbs the status quo?
needs to create reader interest
serious problem/goal - why should the reader care?
compel the reader to move to the middle (Act II)
villain and main characters
make the villain stronger than the main character
turning point
the doorway that sets up the confrontation of the main storyline
the point of no return: a sense of inevitability to move to Act II
Lead character is moved into the main conflict in a way that keeps them there
typically occurs 1/5 of the way through the novel
theme
Act II
the problem intensifies: raise the stakes
barriers
complications
convey why the lead and villain cannot peacably withdraw
situations
temporary triumph
new characters introduced?
deepen character relationships
reversal
dark moment
turning point
the second doorway that sets up the final confrontation
typically occurs at 3/4 of the way through the novel
energize the middle of the story--it is the longest portion
analyze the stakes
strengthen the bond tying the main character to his/her opposition
add another level of complication
add another character, one who makes the main character's life more difficult
add a subplot (must be organic) -- do not overuse
Act III
keep your hero motivated
keep your villain motivated
final obstacle
climax
resolution
choose the right ending
decisive victory for the lead character
sacrifice
twist ending
plot
Lead: interesting lead character
Objective: lead character's desire
Confrontation: in opposition to objectives
Knockout: a key ending
Spice
intriguing characters
fresh settings
dialogue that moves the story along
characters
character story sketch
snapshot/overview
revealing scenes
how will the character grow?
what fears will they overcome?
establish a bond with the reader through the lead character
empathy/identification
sympathy
jeopardy
hardship
underdog
vulnerability
likability
inner conflict
opening lines
include the name of the character
give a sense that something unusual is about to happen
immediate action
raw emotion
convey that a not-to-be-missed story is about to unfold
things to avoid
excessive description
no action
backward looks
References
Book in a Month, by Victoria Lynn Schmidt
Plot and Structure, by James Scott Bell
Freemind: http://freemind.sourceforge.net/
NaperWriMo: http://naperwrimo.org/wiki