*SCBWI Winter Conference Intensive*

*Plot and Structure in Fiction*

*Kate Messner: Inventing the Tools We Need*

[*www.katemessner.com*](http://www.katemessner.com)

*Finding the Heart of Your Story…*

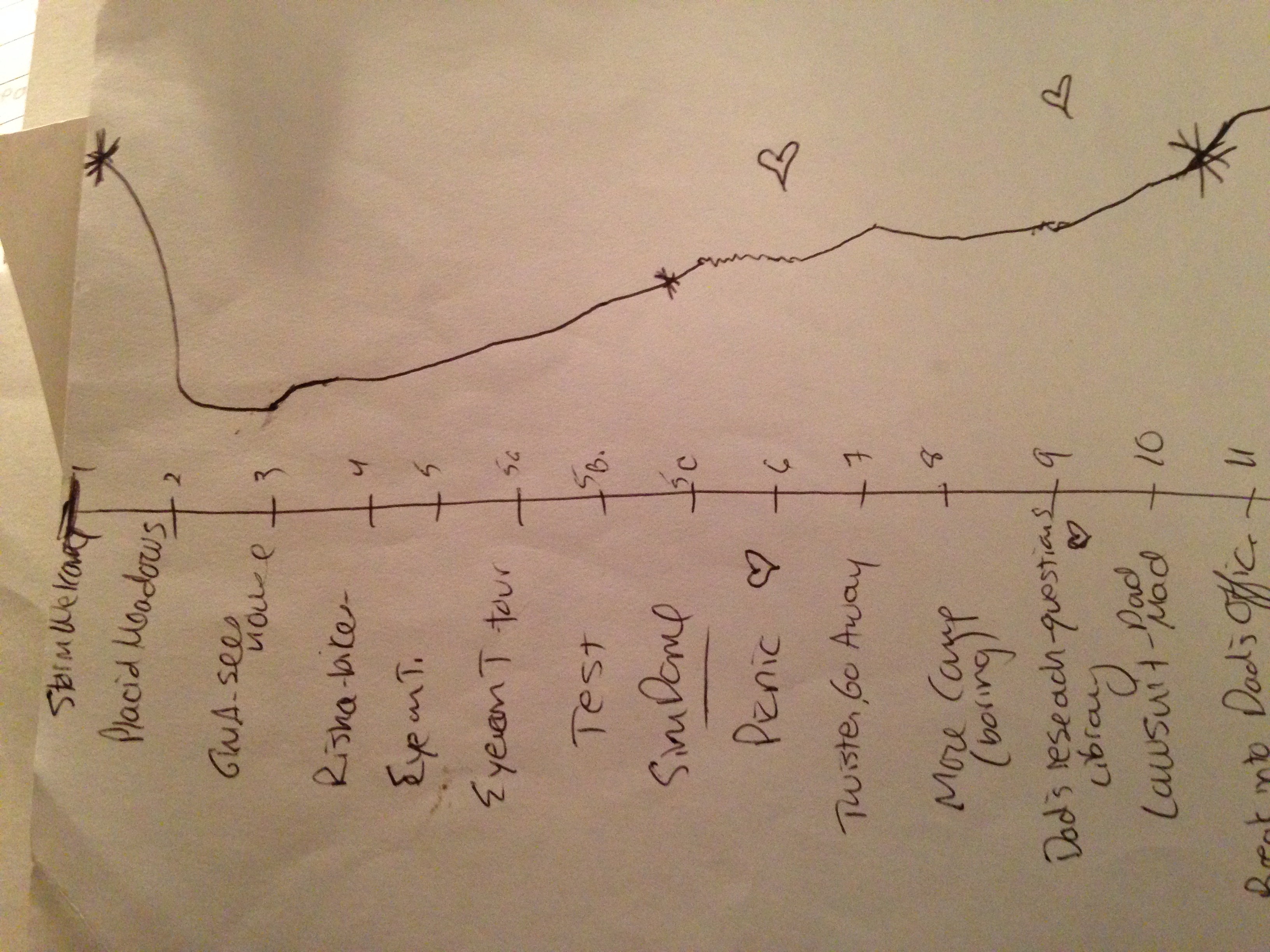
My book is about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But underneath that, it’s really about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Whatever you do with plot, structure, and revision, ask yourself:*

* *Does this element/change strengthen the heart of my story?*
* *Does this element/change serve my story’s underlying theme?*

*Using Mentor Texts:*



What books that you admire have the same general feel as your work-in-progress? These are your mentor texts – the stories that you might study to learn about the kinds of plot and pacing that will help you reach your goals. Try creating chapter by chapter charts that illustrate where the inciting incidents, peaks and valleys, climax, and resolutions of those mentor texts take place. Then, do the same for your current draft. What do you notice? Are there places you might tighten things up or draw things out to increase suspense?

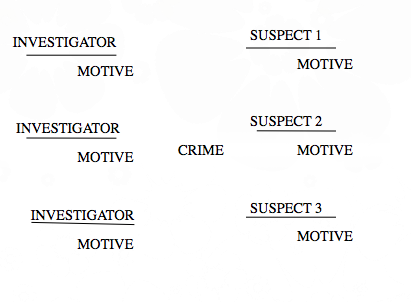
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 ----

Mentor Text:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 ----

My manuscript:

Planning Mysteries:

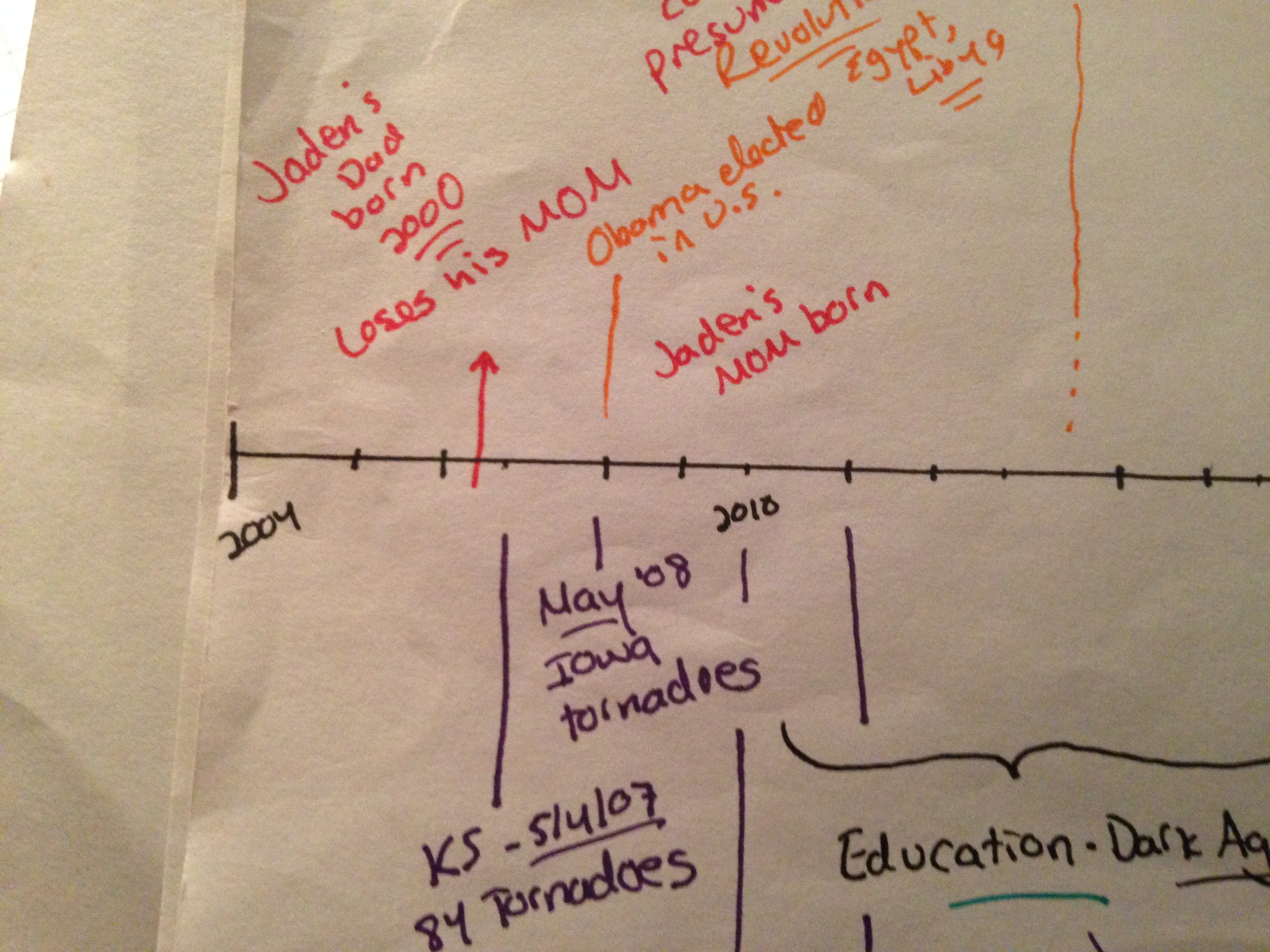


Clues?

False clues?

*Futuristic Fiction – Timelines*

Blend actual events in society with personal events’ in characters’ lives. Start in the present & work forward…



2014….. Year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_??

*Real World Timelines:*

*A student’s school day*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Period | Main Character’s Class | BFF’s class | Enemy/love interest’s class |
| Homeroom |  |  |  |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |
| After school |  |  |  |

*Plot and Setting: Are your locations varied?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter | Main plot points | Settings |
| 1 |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |
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| 11 |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |
| 13 |  |  |
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| 15 |  |  |
| 16 |  |  |
| 17 |  |  |
| 18 |  |  |
| 19 |  |  |
| 20 |  |  |

*Character Development Chart*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter | What MC *does* | What MC *says* | What MC *feels* |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |
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| 19 |  |  |  |
| 20 |  |  |  |