

# SIX EMOTIONAL STORY ARCS

The six most common story arcs, inspired by research\* examining 1,327 stories.

\* Reagan, A.J., Mitchell, L., Kiley, D. et al.

The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes.

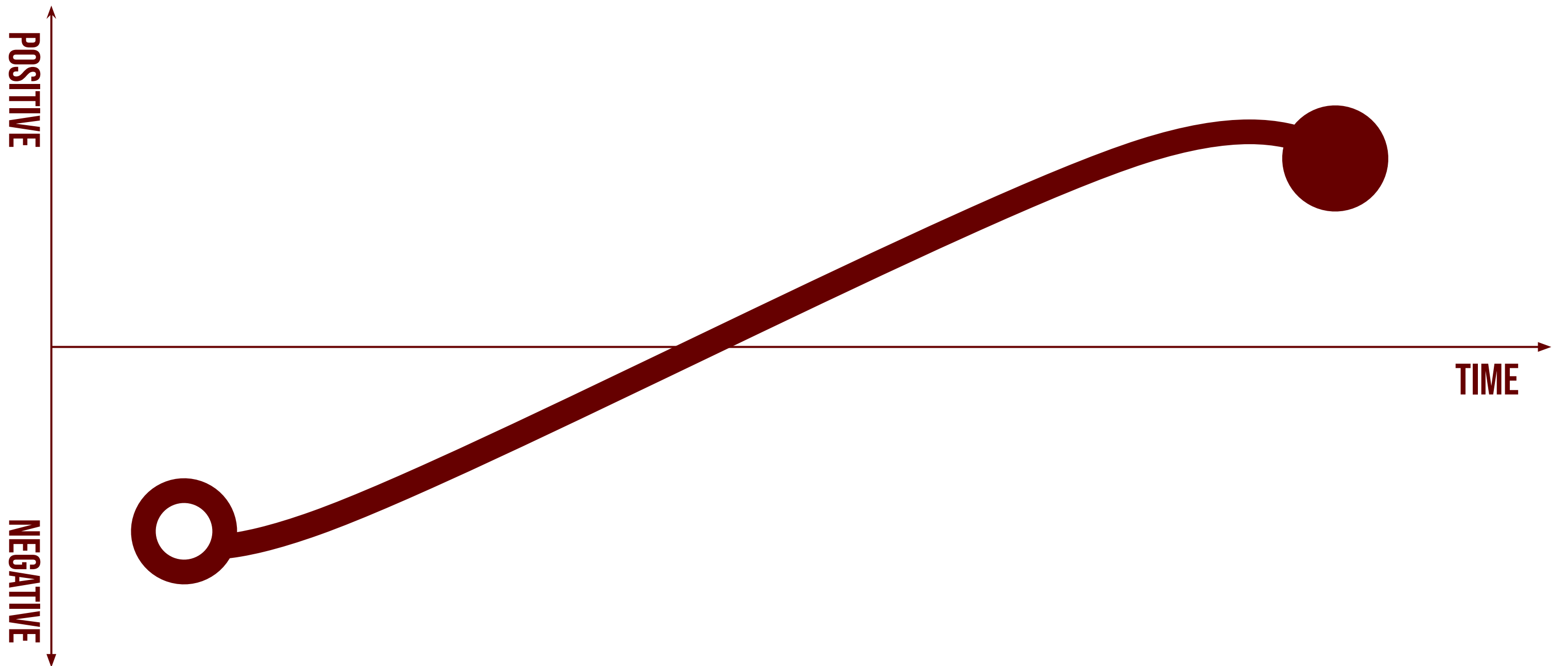
EPJ Data Sci. 5, 31 (2016).

<https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-016-0093-1>



# RAGS TO RICHES

A story arc that develops from negative to positive.



# RAGS TO RICHES: EXPLANATION

## WHAT IS A STORY ARC?

A story arc is a way to show the intensity or mood of a story in the form of a diagram. The arcs in this collection focus on whether the mood and development is positive or negative throughout the story.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “RAGS TO RICHES” STORY ARC

The protagonist of the story starts out in a negative situation but manages to gradually improve their circumstances. Similar to a Cinderella story arc (number 5 in this list).

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

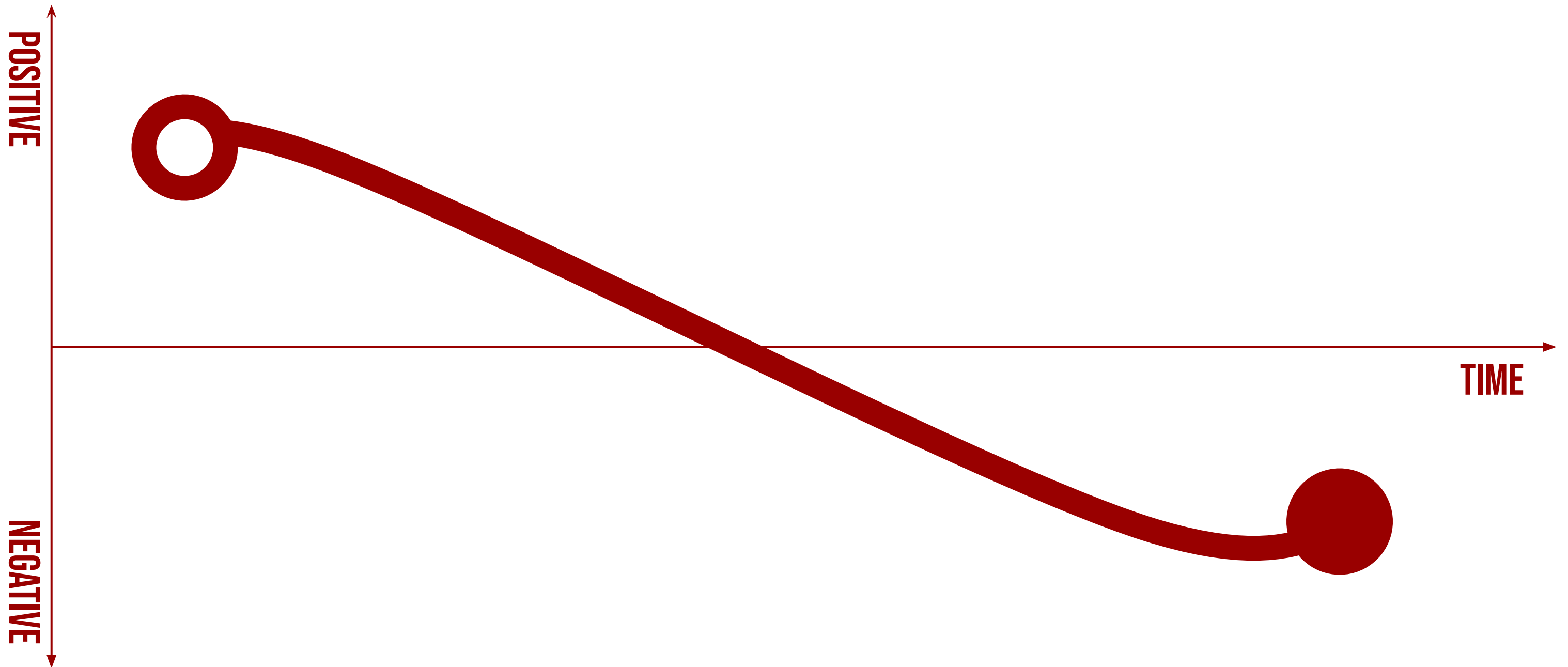
- Oliver Twist
- The Secret Garden
- Pygmalion

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- The Pursuit of Happiness
- Aladdin
- Slumdog Millionaire

# TRAGEDY

A story arc that develops from positive to negative.



# TRAGEDY: EXPLANATION

## WHAT IS A STORY ARC?

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “TRAGEDY” STORY ARC

The protagonist of the story often starts out positive, but the plot gradually progresses towards catastrophe. Often, the reader knows or can guess that a story is a tragedy before the protagonist is aware – a good example of dramatic irony.

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

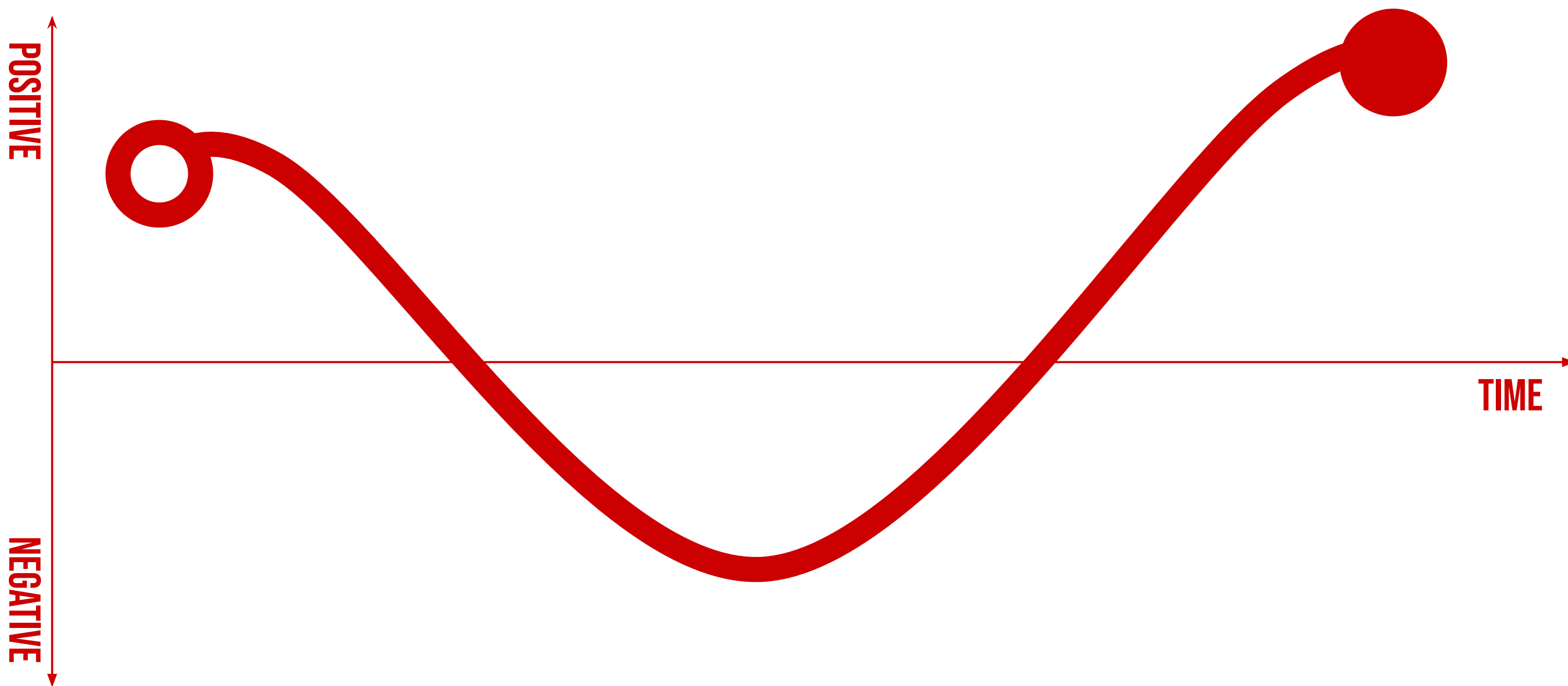
- Beowulf
- Hamlet
- The Picture of Dorian Gray
- Of Mice and Men

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- The Fault in Our Stars
- The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

# MAN IN A HOLE

The protagonist gets in trouble, but gets out again,





# MAN IN A HOLE: EXPLANATION

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “MAN IN A HOLE” STORY ARC

The "man in a hole" story arc depicts a protagonist's journey from a state of normalcy into a crisis ("the hole"). They struggle, reach a low point, and then find a way to climb back out, emerging changed by the experience.

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

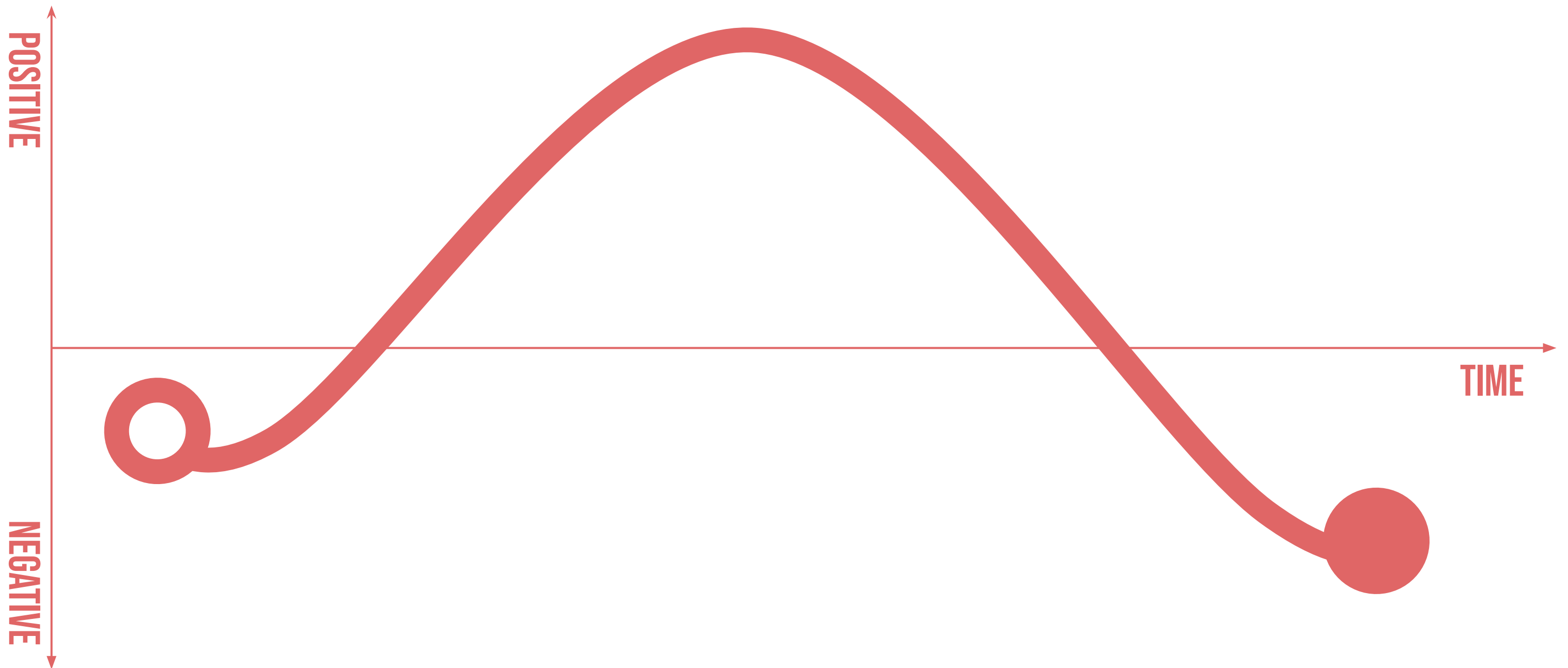
- The Odyssey
- The Lord of The Rings
- A Christmas Carol

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- The Shawshank Redemption
- Finding Nemo
- Black Swan

# ICARUS

The protagonist flies too close to the sun and is burned.





# ICARUS: EXPLANATION

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “ICARUS” STORY ARC

The Icarus arc tells the story of someone who, driven by ambition and pride, flies too close to the sun, only to suffer a devastating fall. It's a cautionary tale about the dangers of hubris and overreaching.

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

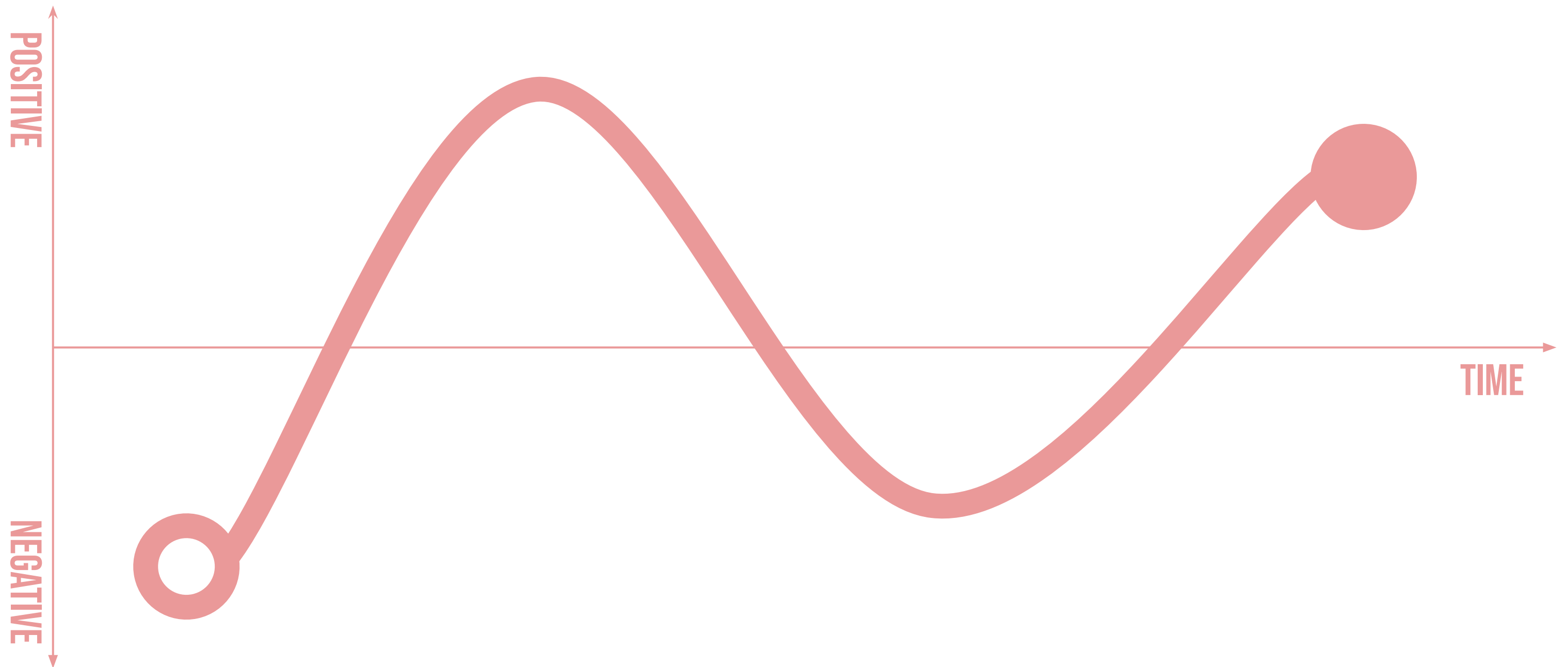
- The Great Gatsby
- Paradise Lost
- Macbeth
- 1984

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- Dead Poets Society
- Scarface

# CINDERELLA

A rags-to-riches story with additional complications.



# CINDERELLA: EXPLANATION

## WHAT IS A STORY ARC?

A story arc is a way to show the intensity or mood of a story in the form of a diagram. The arcs in this collection focus on whether the mood and development is positive or negative throughout the story.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “CINDERELLA” STORY ARC

The Cinderella arc follows an underdog protagonist who experiences a rise in fortune, followed by a setback or betrayal, before ultimately achieving their dreams and rising to a higher social standing. It's a story of resilience, hope, and overcoming adversity to find recognition and happiness.

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

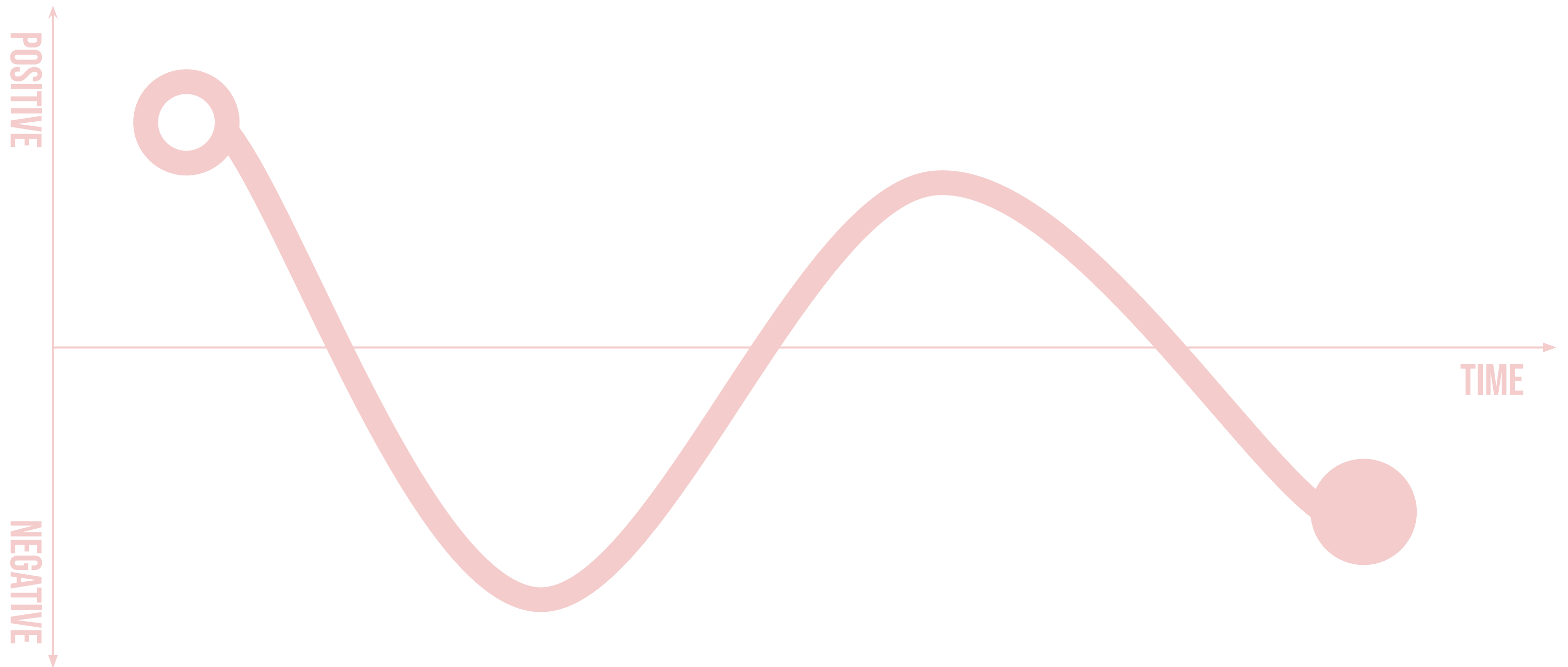
- Cinderella
- Pride and Prejudice
- Jane Eyre

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- Pretty Woman
- Ratatouille
- Gone Girl

# OEDIPUS

A tragedy where the protagonist creates their own downfall despite trying to avoid it.



# OEDIPUS: EXPLANATION

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A “OEDIPUS” STORY ARC

The Oedipus arc depicts a protagonist destined for tragedy, often unknowingly fulfilling a prophecy that leads to their downfall despite attempts to avoid it. It explores themes of fate, free will, and the consequences of unintended actions.

## NOVELS THAT FIT THE ARC

- Oedipus Rex
- Things Fall Apart
- The Remains of the Day

## MOVIES THAT FIT THE ARC

- Seven
- Arrival
- The Godfather: Part II