

The Lion King (1994): The Movie Structure

By Lewis from The Novel Smithy

Act 1 (1%-25%)

Hook: Simba, a young lion, is presented to the animals of the Pride Lands in a ceremony led by the shaman Rafiki, confirming his royalty and status as heir to the throne.

Mufasa introduces Simba to his right to kingship when he is a bit older, but warns him that there are still places he cannot go.

Inciting Event: Simba and his friend Nala elude their babysitter and sneak off to the Elephant graveyard thanks to encouragement from Scar. In the graveyard, Scar's hyenas try to kill the cubs but Mufasa saves them.

Key Event: Scar tricks Simba into entering a deep gorge where Scar leads a wildebeest stampede, trying to kill Simba. Scar alerts Mufasa to Simba being in danger and when Mufasa gets stuck on a ledge above the stampede Scar throws him into the herd. Mufasa is killed, but Simba survives.

1st Plot Point: Scar convinces Simba that he is responsible for his father's death and drives him from the pride. Scar sends the hyenas to kill Simba, but they let him go at the last minute. Scar informs the pride of Simba and Mufasa's deaths, leaving him as the sole heir to the throne.

Act 2 (25%-75%)

Simba is found far from Pride Rock by Timon and Pumbaa, who raise Simba in their "Hakuna Matata" lifestyle in a distant oasis.

1st Pinch Point: Simba has grown into a young lion now and saves Timon and Pumbaa from a young lioness who turns out to be Nala. He and Nala explore their romance, but Nala refuses to stay in the oasis with him and demands he takes his rightful place as king of Pride Rock. She informs him of the destruction of his homeland by Scar, but Simba refuses to return home.

Midpoint: Rafiki finds Simba and tries to soothe Simba's guilt over his father's death. Rafiki helps bring Simba to the ghost of his father who tells him, "Remember who you are," pushing Simba to do as Nala says and retake the throne. Simba agrees to do so and sets out with Timon, Pumbaa, and Nala.

2nd Pinch Point: Upon arriving at Pride Rock, Simba and his friends find it in a desolate state, overtaken by famine. Simba also watches as Scar beats his mother.

3rd Plot Point: After announcing his return to the pride, Simba is publicly shamed by Scar, who forces him to admit to killing Mufasa.

Act 3 (75%-100%)

Climax: Scar tries to kill Simba, but before doing so he whispers to him that he killed Mufasa, not Simba. Enraged, Simba turns the tables and raises the pride to battle with Scar and the hyenas.

Climactic Moment: Simba corners Scar and gives him the chance to flee the Pride Lands, going into exile, and Scar tries to back down by blaming Mufasa's death on the hyenas. Simba and Scar enter a duel and Simba wins when he pushes Scar over a cliff into a pit of the resentful hyenas, who turn on Scar.

Resolution: Simba retakes the throne and the Pride Lands undergo a miraculous recovery, with the film closing on Rafiki presenting Simba and Nala's cub to the animals of the Pride Lands, mirroring the opening scene.