

# Exploring plot structure through reading and writing in class

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6th Extensive Reading World Congress  
Denpasar, Indonesia  
August 9, 2023



# The classes I teach

Popular culture , media, English Language  
(to English majors)

- ER (MReader) 30 mins. ER in class for 1st years, ER out of class 2nd years
- 4-skills language activities based on various printed and online reading texts
- ER goals for 1 semester :
  - 100,000 words for 1st years
  - 233,000 words for 2nd years



# What is plot structure?



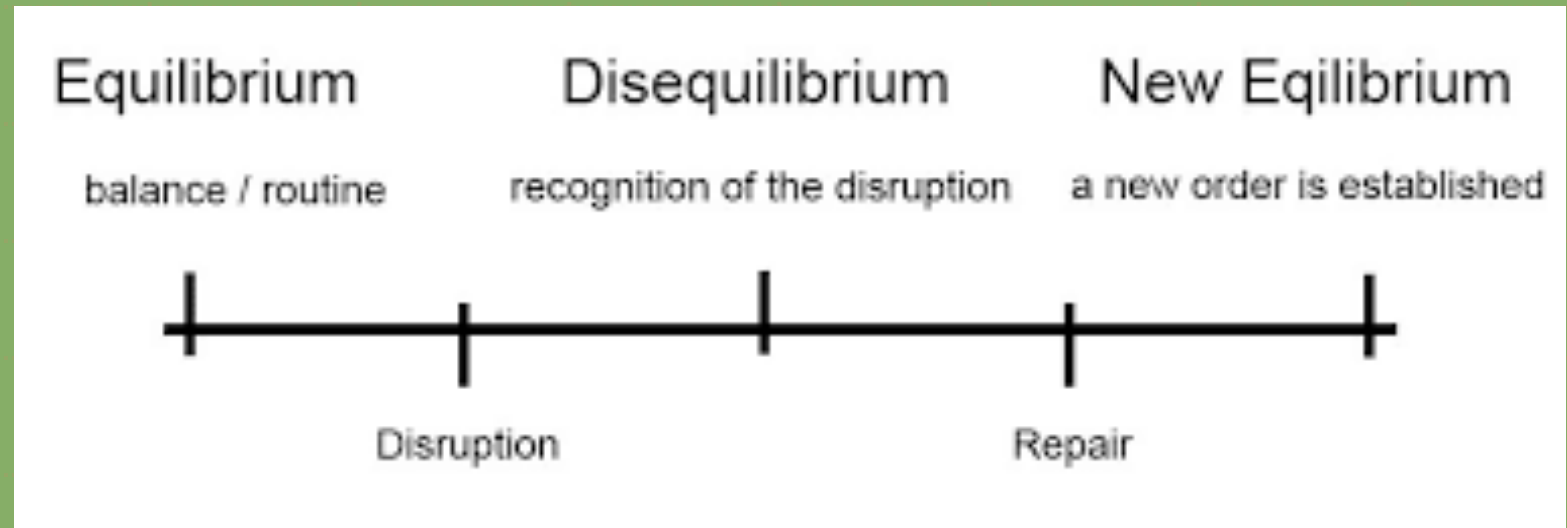
How did Cinderella change from this person to this person?



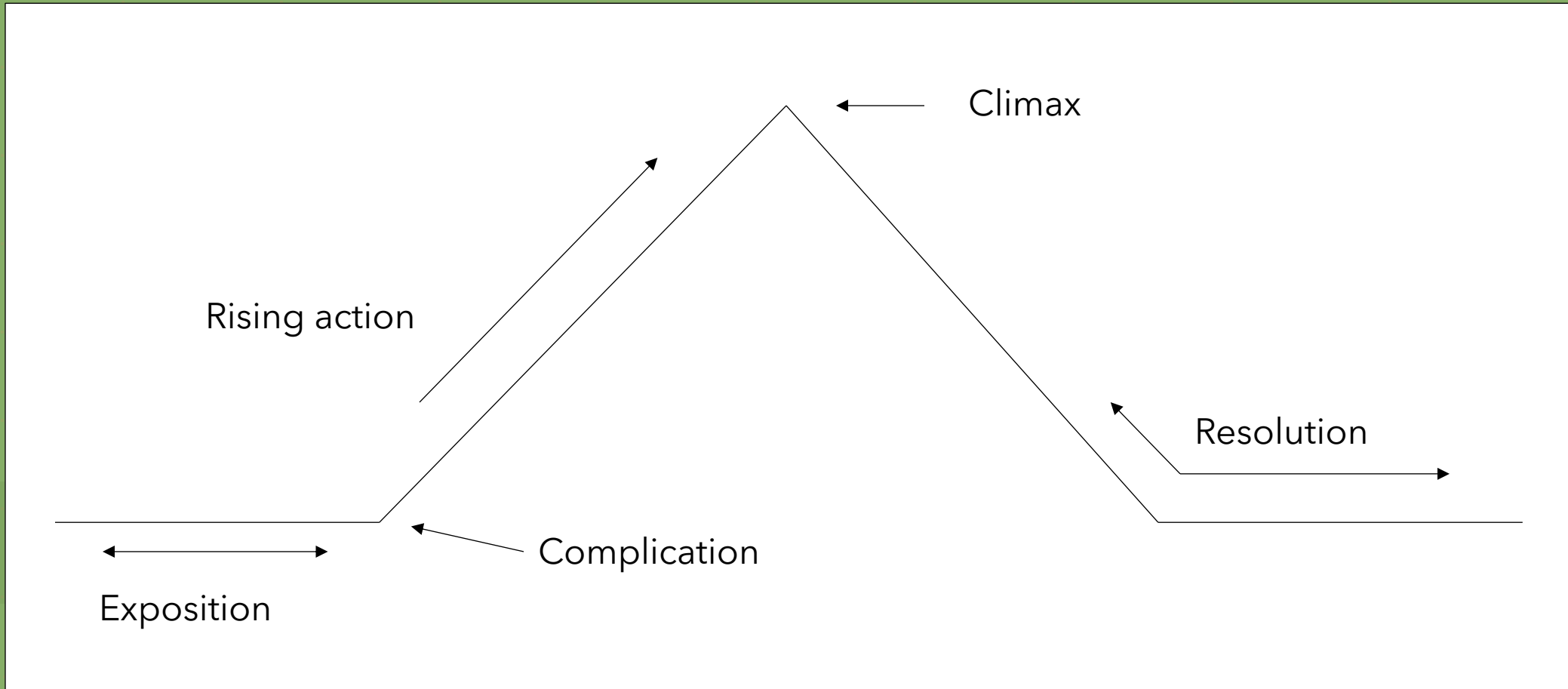
# Tzvetan Todorov



## Equilibrium Theory



# Plot pyramid

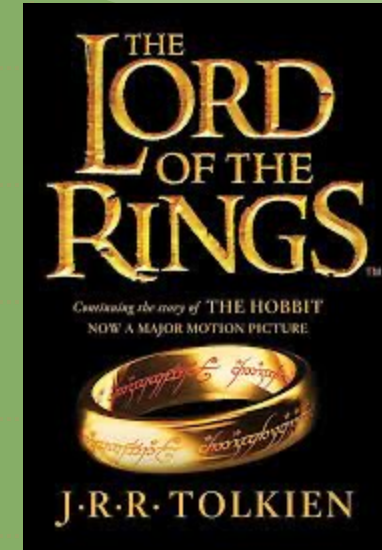


How about a  
traditional  
Indonesian  
story?



# Plot types

- Overcoming the Monster
- Rags to Riches
- The Quest
- Voyage & Return
- Comedy
- Tragedy
- Rebirth



# Story genres: Which ones do you enjoy?

Mystery  
(detective fiction)

Thriller (action,  
adventure)

Horror (ghosts,  
vampires,  
werewolves, etc.)

Historical

Romance

Science fiction

Fantasy

Realist

Comedy

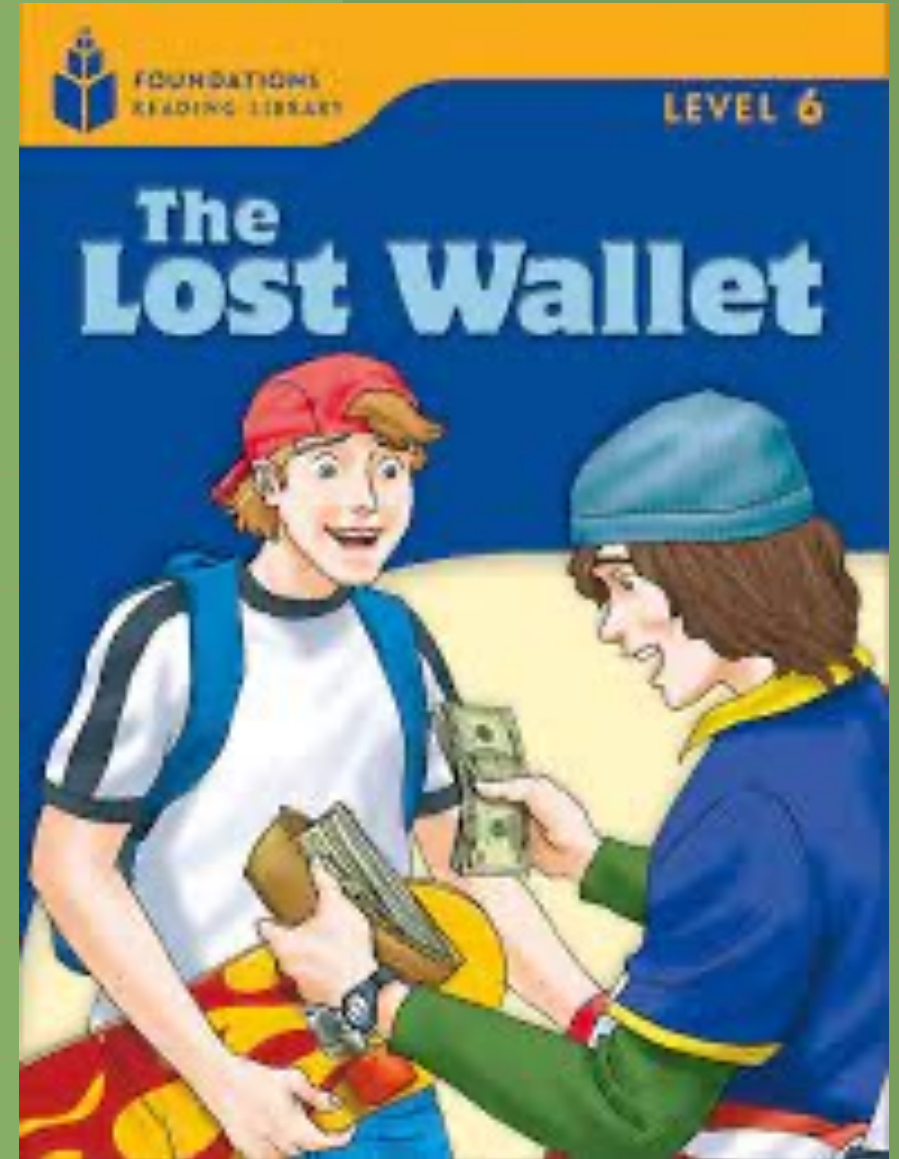


# Caution!

**When using these activities keep in mind the maturity levels and reading experience of your students.**

# Activities to identify plot structure

1. Read a story together as a class and students work in pairs or groups to identify the 5 stages of the plot.



## 2. Music videos that tell stories



A-Ha  
Take On Me

Daniel Powter  
Bad Day



Olly Murs  
Busy

# Additional activities when using music videos

1. Pairwork: Students read the song lyrics and discuss questions.

Some examples:

- ❖ Is this a sad or a happy song? Why do you think so?
- ❖ Do you think this is sung fast or slow?
- ❖ Is it rock, pop, a ballad, a folk song, or another genre of music?
- ❖ What musical instruments are played?
- ❖ How long ago was this a hit?



## 2. One student watches the video, the other listens to the audio.

- ❖ The student who watched has to retell the story of the video.
- ❖ The student who listened has to give the “correct” answers to the questions they discussed earlier.
- ❖ Then they identify the stages of the music video plot structure together.



# Class collaboration stories

1. Choose the story genre.
2. Write the Exposition (E.g., the main characters, their situation).
3. Another student writes the Complication.
4. A third student will writes the Rising Action.
5. A fourth student writes the Climax.
6. A fifth student writes the Resolution.
7. A sixth student gives the story a title.

A

### Writing our own stories using a plot pyramid

Last lesson, and for homework, we looked at how stories follow a similar structure. Today, you are going to create your own stories using the stages of a plot pyramid as a guide. First, choose the genre of the story that you will start.

The genre of this story is: Romance x Horror

#### Exposition:

Main character is "Philip". He is from England.

He is 17 years old and high school student.

His life was so boring, but a new student who is very cute girl come to his school.

Her name is Sheila. He fall in love at first sight.

However, she had a secret she couldn't tell anyone.

#### Complication:

One day, he went to her house and watched a movie.

The mood was great and they huddled together. Then, they kissed.

However, he suddenly felt pain in his mouth, and there was blood.

Then, he said "Who are you, exactly?"

#### Rising action:

She said "sorry". Then, she started to explain her secret.

Actually, she is a vampire. But she is really in love with him.

Vampires have some rules. One of rules is that don't fall in love with human.

Sheila decided to break the rule and live with him.

# Next lesson ...

Read and evaluate from 1 - 5

1 = poor

2 = so-so

3 = OK

4 = good

5 = very good

Read each story and give it a score from 1 ~ 5.

1 = poor 2 = so-so 3 = OK 4 = good 5 = very good

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| A 4 | K 4 |
| B 4 | L 5 |
| C 5 | M 4 |
| D 4 | N 5 |
| E 5 | O 5 |
| F 4 | P 5 |
| G 4 | Q 5 |
| H 4 | R 5 |
| I 4 | S 5 |
| J 4 | T 5 |
|     | U 4 |

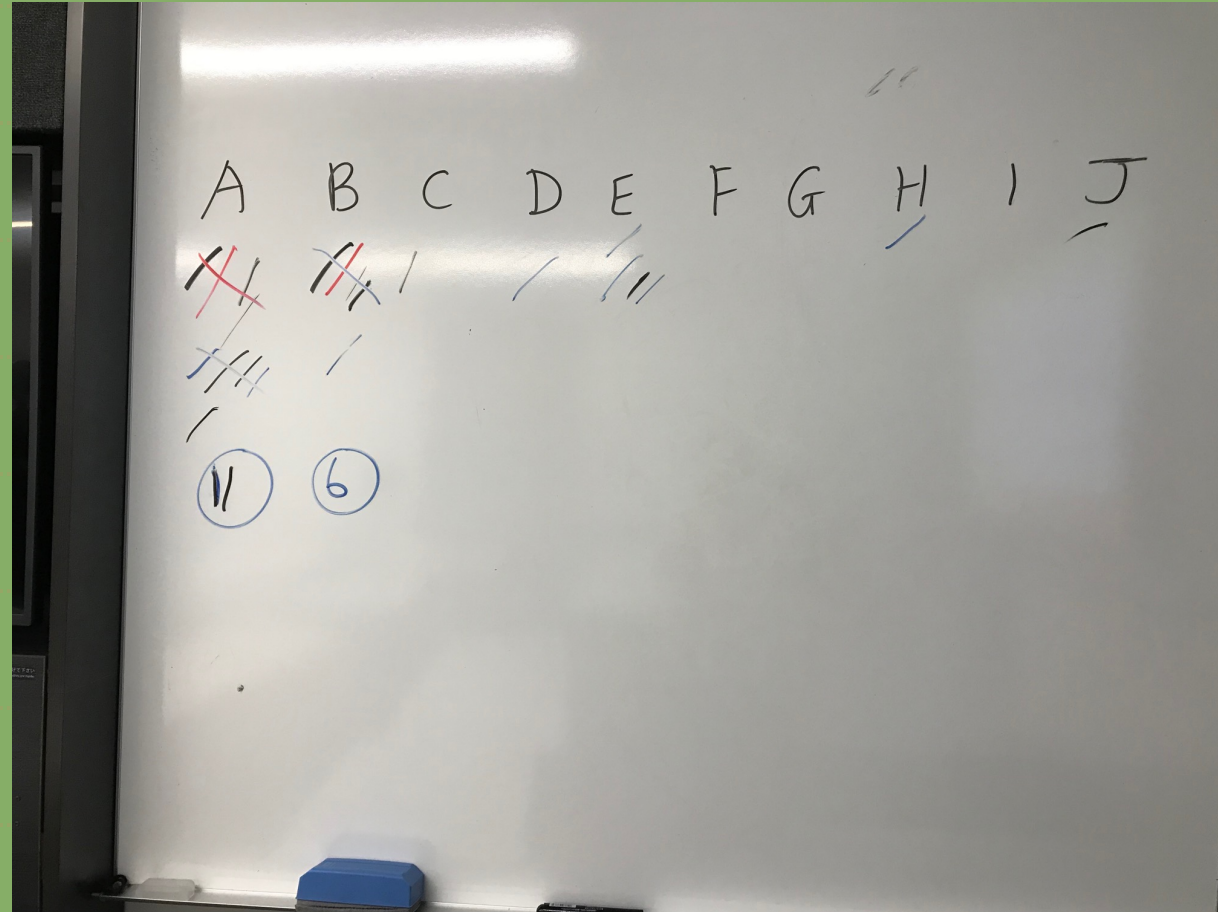
Read each story and give it a score from 1 ~ 5.

1 = poor 2 = so-so 3 = OK 4 = good 5 = very good

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A Ben's accident - 3                                | K The Dead Man - 5                                      |
| B Castle and the Tree Suspicion <sup>prop</sup> - 3 | L Who top your shoulder? - 5                            |
| C Was It Just dream? or... - 5                      | M Zombie knows the world - 2                            |
| D Black People Mystery - 4                          | N The tale of the moment of tragedy changing comedy - 2 |
| E Ruins story - 3                                   | O A Really Important Thing - 4                          |
| F Love starts by band - 5                           | P A letter - 1  |
| G Mysterious Train - 4                              | Q A strange drink - 4                                   |
| H Such a wonderful magic! - 3                       | R Misae and Kenichi's love history - 5                  |
| I The Ghost House - 3                               | S Real Family - 5                                       |
| J A man's adventure - 2                             | T Young police officer's good fight (4)                 |
|   | U King of Animal - (5)                                  |



# Read and choose favourite 3 stories.



Would you like to see some  
of the most popular stories?

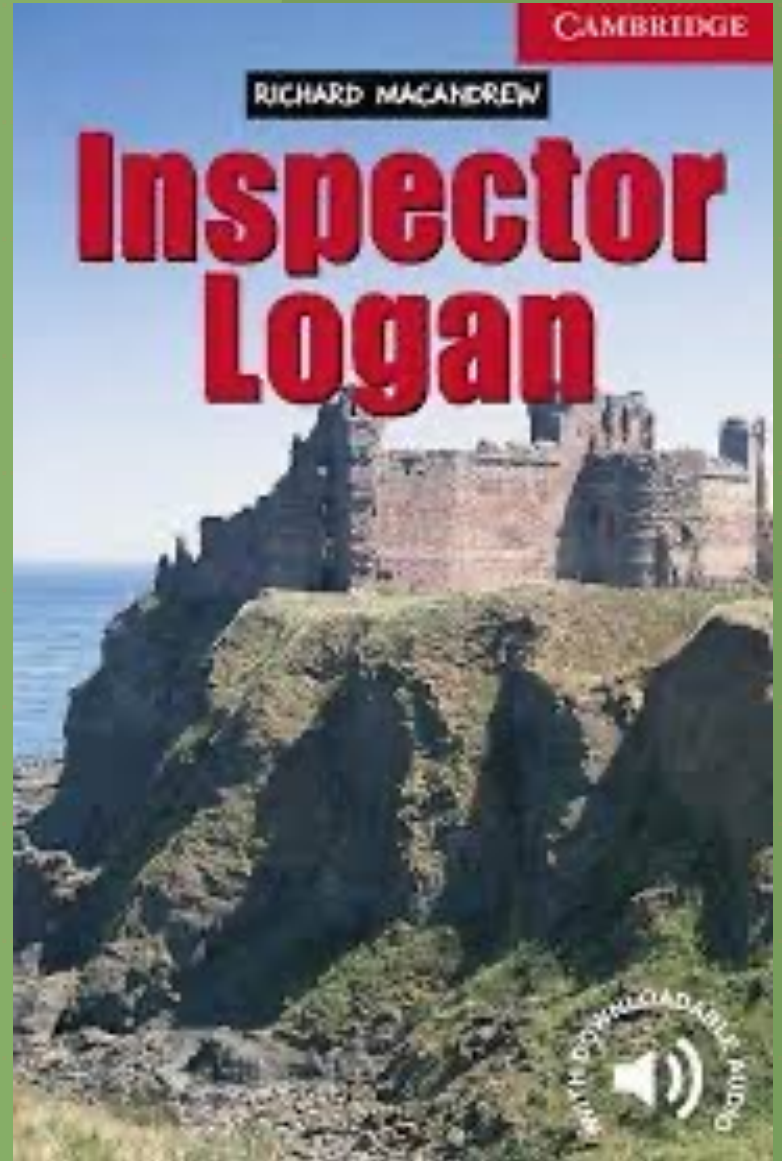
# Alternative methods

- Students work in groups of 6 and each of them contributes a part to each of their 6 stories.
- Students work in groups to write each part of one story collaboratively. They share their stories with the class.
- Any other suggestions?

# Additional activity for working with plot structure

## Storyboards

- Used a class set. Detective story.
- Groups read the story with discussion activities.
- Next lesson turned the story into a TV drama using a storyboard.



The background features a repeating pattern of colorful speech bubbles in shades of yellow, red, purple, and grey, each containing a dark blue question mark. These are set against a light blue background with a faint white grid. The text "Do you have any questions?" is centered in a white, sans-serif font.

Do you have any questions?

The background of the slide is a complex network diagram. It consists of numerous small circular nodes connected by thin, light-colored lines. The nodes are colored in shades of green and black. The overall pattern is dense and interconnected, resembling a social network or a data network. The background is split into two main sections: a dark green section on the left and a white section on the right, separated by a curved boundary.

# Thank you for participating!

Please contact me if you  
would like some of these class  
handouts.

[agillis@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp](mailto:agillis@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp)