

## Plot English 10



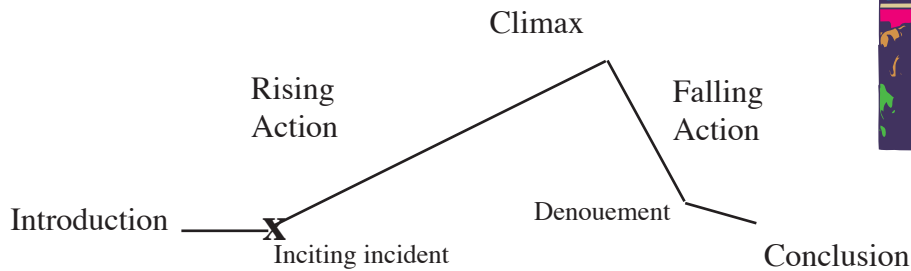
### Definition of Plot

*The sequencing of incidents or events which compose the story*

Plot is a series of connected events which are brought to some kind of conclusion -sometimes a happy one, sometimes an unhappy one, and sometimes an uncertain one. Most plots contain a problem to be solved; a conflict involving one or more characters; suspense; and a climax.

The first requirement for a plot is a problem that the main character faces and wants to solve. If the character can solve the problem quickly and easily, we say the story does not have a very complicated plot. But, if the main character must overcome a number of difficult obstacles to solve the problem, the plot becomes more interesting.

### **Traditional Plot Outline (Freytag's Pyramid)**



- introduction** -the plot usually begins with this exposition that introduces the setting, the characters, and the basic situation (hints at the main conflict). The reader's interest is aroused here. The conflict that drives the story's action is discovered at the end of the introduction with the inciting incident
- inciting incident** - the point of action that begins the main or central conflict
- rising action** - incidents, events, or actions that lead to the climax (this development of the action usually increases in intensity); can include crisis(es) and/or dilemma
- climax** - the point at which we learn whether the main character will fail or succeed in his struggle with the conflict -turning point in a narrative, the moment when the conflict is at its most intense -the conflict may be resolved or unresolved (see endings)
- falling action** - all action that leads from the climax to the conclusion (the plot begins to wrap up in this section)
- denouement** - solution or unravelling of the main conflict (the unknotting or untangling of the plot)
- conclusion** - the "winding up" of the story

Because the plot involves characters performing actions in incidents that comprise a 'single, whole, and complete' action, this relation involves conflict between opposing forces. Without conflict, plot hardly exists.

To solve the problem, the main character becomes involved in a conflict or struggle of some kind. A person can be in conflict with another person, or with some natural force (such as a tornado or a grizzly bear), or with society as whole, or even with different ideas or desires within himself herself. In some cases, the conflict may be with the supernatural fanastical elements such as ghosts or magicians.

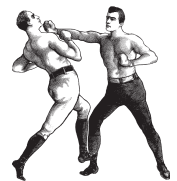


Usually an author makes the read-sympathize with one character in the story. We want this character succeed, but we are afraid he or she will fail. The point which we learn whether this character will fail or succeed the climax of the story. In a well-plotted story, the climax may be the point of greatest interest and emotional intensity. It is the moment toward which all the action in the story has led us.

### Definition of Conflict

- action to be meaningful usually comes from some sort of **conflict** (*clash of opposing forces be they actions, ideas, cultures, or wills*)
- the struggle within the plot between opposing forces. The protagonist engages in the conflict with the antagonist. Conflict is the heart of every story.
- a **protagonist** (*character that faces central problem and must overcome obstacles in order to deal with the conflict*) and an **antagonist** (forces that oppose the main character)
  - the protagonist may not always be the "good guy" or hero
  - the antagonist may be another character or a 'conflict' **within** the main character
- conflict is usually described as either internal or external
  - internal occurs when the struggle is within the protagonist
  - external occurs when the struggle is between the protagonist and some other element or person
- the traditional way to view conflict is as one of the following struggles:
 

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. human against human</li> <li>2. human against the environment (physical, society, 'fate')</li> <li>3. human against the supernatural</li> <li>4. human against oneself</li> </ol>	}	external    internal
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Conflict between people -if you have an argument with someone, if you get into a fight, or if you are playing a serious game of hockey, you are in conflict with other people

Conflict with society - if there is a dress code in your school and you choose to ignore it, you will soon come in conflict with your society. People who commit crimes or who violate the moral standards of a group are also in conflict with society. Different religions may be in conflict with one another or different groups in one religion.

Conflict with nature -when a story begins "It was a dark and dangerous night ...," you can probably expect a conflict with nature. People lost in the woods or at sea, suffering from an Arctic snowstorm, or surviving a prairie drought are in conflict with nature.

Conflict with fate or the unknown - some people seem beset with problems for no apparent reasons. They seem to be in conflict with their fates or destinies. In other fiction, people seem to be in conflict with some supernatural or mysterious force.

Internal or Inner conflict - inner conflict takes place when you have self-doubts or when you are torn between two important choices. You may want to be a teacher but secretly doubt that you have the personality to get along with students. As you try to decide what to do, you may go through tremendous torment (inner suffering).

In life and literature, human conflicts are not always easy to classify. Sometimes several kinds of conflict occur together. A person struggling across a desert will certainly be conflict with nature, but he or she may also be suffering an inner conflict or a conflict with fate.

- in some stories the conflict is single, clear-cut, one-dimensional
- in others the conflict is multi-dimensional (there are a variety of conflicts)
- however, there is usually one central conflict which helps one understand the protagonist and plot

Conflict in literature is presented by authors to develop their characters and to give you insight into the character's nature. Sometimes, authors use their characters' conflict to present certain ideas. In Alex Haley's book *Roots*, he uses the main character to point out the horrors of the slave trade.

### **Endings in Plots**

-there are three basic types of endings based on outcome of the main conflict:

1. **happy ending** - the conflict is resolved in favour of the protagonist
2. **unhappy ending** - the conflict is resolved in favour of the antagonist
3. **indeterminate ending** - the conflict doesn't appear to be resolved

### **Other Elements to be Considered with Plot**

#### **Setting**

-the setting may be stated clearly  
or inferred from textual clues (such as weather)

-there are two parts to a complete setting:

Emotional Setting - the mood or atmosphere

Physical Setting - the time, place, and physical conditions

- is the time and place in which the events of the story occur. In identifying the setting, one may start by naming the town and year in which the story takes place (if these are identified by the author), and then by identifying the more specific locations of the story where the action takes place, such as specific rooms in a central character's home, a school classroom, a local store, a barn, a woods, a city street, etc.

-other questions to consider when discussing setting are as follows:

Why has the author chosen this particular setting?

Could the story have been set somewhere else?

How does the setting affect the characters?

What images does the author use to describe the setting?

Do these images suggest a certain mood or suggest an opinion about the setting?

How does the setting contribute to the external and internal conflicts in the story?

-time is probably the most important element of setting. Many stories have multiple settings.



### **Use of Suspense**

-device used to develop plot and keep reader's interest (our feeling that we have to keep reading to

- find out what will happen next)
- composed of a number of feelings (curiosity, fear, worry, nervousness)
  - suspense achieved in variety of ways (some are)
    1. mystery ( unusual set of circumstances) - the unknown
    2. protagonist placed in a **dilemma** (*choice between two undesirable courses of actions*)
    3. setting (and atmosphere)
    4. dangerous situations and **crisis** (*turning point in action where character must make a decision so as to determine an outcome*)
    5. use of surprise, especially surprise endings
    6. use of **coincidence** (*chance occurrence of two events which have a peculiar correspondence or relationship*) and **chance** (*occurrence of an event which has no apparent cause in preceding events*)

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### Foreshadowing

- suspense is increased when the writer hints at what will happen later in the story -this is called foreshadowing
- to be foreshadowing, however, the hints and results must be significant to the development of the plot -when identifying foreshadowing, always state why it is foreshadowing

### Flashback

- occurs when a character thinks back to an event that happened before the story began or actual 'jump-back' in time
- it is usually used to help the reader understand the main character better

## Terms Related to Plot

plot  
fiction  
incident  
action  
plot outline

introduction  
inciting incident  
rising action  
climax  
falling action  
denouement  
conclusion

conflict

internal  
external

protagonist  
antagonist  
happy ending  
unhappy ending  
indeterminate ending

setting

emotional setting  
physical setting

suspense  
mystery  
dilemma  
crisis  
surprise  
coincidence  
chance  
foreshadowing



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