

**Honors Literature and Short Stories****Week 3****Plot**

The skeleton of any fiction story is its plot. Plot is what happens in the story – the retelling and unfolding of a dramatic situation. It draws the reader into the story and helps the reader understand the choices the characters make. It will contain several elements:

***Introduction***

The introduction, or beginning of the story that sets the scene and provides any background for the story, as well as introducing the characters.

***Conflict and sub-conflicts***

Conflict in a story includes the problems or issues and complications that will be faced and overcome in the story. The conflict provides the suspense or mystery, and pulls the reader into the story as they read to find out what will happen next. If there is no conflict, there is no plot.

**Two types of conflict exist:**

*External conflict* – this conflict is with an outside force. This outside force could be another character or group of characters, or society. It can also be a conflict with forces of nature, such as a survival in the wilderness story.

*Internal conflict* – this conflict takes place in the character's mind or heart. The character must make some type of decision, resist some type of temptation, overcome physical or emotional pain, or other things.

**Four kinds of conflict fit within the types of conflict:**

*Man vs. Man* (physical conflict): This is a type of *external* conflict. The main character must physically struggle with other characters or forces of nature. A survival story is an example of this.

*Man vs. Circumstances* (physical or emotional conflict): This may be an external or internal conflict, depending on what the circumstances are. In this type of conflict, the main character must struggle against fate or circumstances which face him or her. A story about a teenager trying to overcome his poverty stricken life and attend college would be an example of this.

*Man vs. Society*: This is typically an external conflict. The main character must struggle and overcome the societal ideas, practices and expectations. A story about a girl in a Saudi Arabian family who fights to be allowed more freedoms than her culture allows, would be an example of this type of conflict.

*Man vs. Self*: This is internal conflict. The character must overcome his or her own internal struggles. This includes right and wrong, physical limitations, choices about what will be best for him or her, etc.

***Rising action***

Rising action includes the complications that occur to build and intensify the conflict in the story. It increases the reader’s anticipation and builds tension and suspense.

***Climax***

The climax, or crisis point, is the high point of the story. It is usually the most exciting part, and the turning point of the story. What will happen to the character will be determined here. To understand this, think of the three steps of the climax:

1. the main character somehow receives information that has not been revealed to him or her before, or that makes everything become clear.
2. the main character then accepts this information, although he or she may not necessarily agree with the information.
3. the main character then makes the choice to act on this information, which will determine whether he or she reaches a resolution of the conflict that has been building in the story.

***Falling action (denouement) and Conclusion***

The falling action is when the resolution has been made or solution achieved and the tension subsides. The plot then moves towards the conclusion. The conclusion is the resolution of the whole story – the wrap-up.

A very easy way to present the plot to include all of these is to use the Somebody – Wanted – But – So chart to illustrate the story. By using this, you will create a simple outline of your plot, which you can then fill in later with a few more details.

- **Somebody** is the character who wants or needs something.
- **Wanted** is the thing that character wants or needs.
- **But** is the problem that is getting in the way of what the character wants or needs.
- **So** is the solution to the problem.

<b>Somebody</b>	<b>Wanted</b>	<b>But</b>	<b>So</b>
Cinderella	To attend the ball given by the prince	Her stepmother and stepsisters insisted she do chores, stole her only gown, and left her at home while they attended the ball.	Cinderella’s fairy godmother transformed her into a beauty and transported her to the ball where she met and married the prince..

When we write about plot, we discuss these elements of the story. As mentioned in the beginning, the plot is the skeleton of the story, therefore, when you write about plot, you will not be telling all of the details of the story.

**Example of telling all the details:** The character becomes lost in the woods because he loses the path while exploring. He keeps trying different paths and trips over a tree branch and has to sit down and rest for awhile. While he is sitting there, a skunk wanders by and is startled by the character, and there is a tense moment when the character thinks he will be sprayed. He gets up and wanders for another hour in the forest until he faces a raging river and finds he is unable to get across it.

**Summarizing this part:** The character becomes lost in the woods and faces many challenges as he tries to find his way home.

*Notice that the **summary** of this part of the plot does not include all the minor details.*

### How to write about plot:

- ❑ Write in the PRESENT TENSE
- ❑ Introduce the title and author in the opening

### *Writing the paragraph about plot STEP-BY-STEP*

1. Begin with a topic sentence with a one line “total summary” of the book. This will include the author’s name and title of the book.
2. Write one or two sentences introducing the main character or characters (you don’t need to include the names, unless there is just one main character) and the setting of the book (where it takes place). Do NOT start your sentences with: The characters are.... Or the setting is.... Simply introduce the characters and setting. (*This is the **Somebody** part of your chart from above.*)
3. Next, write one or two sentences describing the conflict. This will not be detailed, but will simply tell what the main problem or problems are. Do NOT start your sentences with: The conflict is...(*This is the **Wanted** part of the chart*)
4. Now write one or two sentences describing the rising action. Again, not detailed, but simply telling the main ideas as the story builds. (Remember earlier I gave the example of summarizing the character lost in the woods. Refer to that.) *This is the **But** part of the chart.*
5. Now write one or two sentences about the climax of the story. Not detailed, again, but telling what the turning point or the crisis point is. *This is part of the **So** part of the chart.*
6. Summarize the falling action and the conclusion in one or two sentences. Once again, not detailed, simply showing the resolution. (*This is the remainder of the **So** part of the chart.*)

7. Write a closing sentence which will refer once again to the author – by last name only this time – and a reference to your first sentence overview of the story – in different words.

“Cinderella,” by Charles Perrault, tells the story of a young girl who must overcome external obstacles to achieve happiness. Cinderella is the young lady who is at the mercy of her stepmother and stepsisters after her father dies. Cinderella wants to attend a ball that the Prince is giving in the hopes of finding a wife. However, her stepmother and stepsisters throw obstacles in her way to keep her from going to the ball, in order to eliminate competition for the Prince’s attentions. As Cinderella attempts to complete the tasks that the stepmother and stepsisters assign, she begins to feel hope. However, even after completing the assigned household tasks and showing that she has appropriate attire, the family destroys her gown and leaves her to attend the ball without her. Cinderella’s fairy godmother appears, and magically transforms Cinderella into a well-dressed princess. She also magically transports her to the ball, where Cinderella catches the eye of the prince. Heeding the warning of the fairy godmother that all will return to rags at midnight, Cinderella rushes from the ball at the stroke of 12, losing her glass slipper along the way. The prince demands that she be found, only to be deterred by the evil stepfamily. Cinderella finally comes forward and matches her foot to the glass slipper, proving that she is the “princess” that caught the eye of the prince. Of course they marry and live happily ever after. Perrault’s version of “Cinderella” builds an exciting tale to show how good triumphs over evil.

## Assignments

1. **Read the following short stories:**

*The Most Dangerous Game* by Richard Connell

<http://www.classicreader.com/read.php/sid.6/bookid.1317/>

*The Interloper* by Saki

Download available with this week's lesson.

Write a paragraph on each, briefly writing about the plot, as you have learned. Be sure to identify the conflict clearly. Note in your paragraph what *type* of conflict and what *kind* of conflict. Be careful! Really determine the underlying conflict that the author is trying to show. **Due this week. 40 points each.**

2. **Weekly Shorts: 5 points**

3. **Journal: 10 points** Finish reading *Watership Down*. Use the Close Reading handout to respond to what you are reading. Hive entry #3: *see the Close Reading handout for description of what you should be including*. Be sure also to note allegories and symbols.