

Plot Elements Defined

Exposition

This is the beginning of the story where the author lays the groundwork for the story by revealing the:

- Setting
- Relationships between characters
- Situation as it exists before conflict begins

The exposition ends with the inciting incident, or conflict.

Rising Action

As the story progresses, complications and problems arise for the main character. These difficulties create suspense.

Climax

This is the turning point of a story. It is the moment where it seems like the main character is in danger or could even possibly fail at resolving the conflict. It is the highest point of interest or drama in the story.

Falling Action

The tension has been relieved and the conflict is resolved. The results of actions that the main character has taken are presented, as well as the results of decisions that have been made, whether good or bad for the character.

Resolution

Loose ends are tied up, outcomes are revealed, and a happy or sad ending takes place. As many of the final actions have already taken place, a resolution can be made up of a just a summary of where the main character will end up in the future, instead of including any more active events.

Conflict

The struggle between two or more forces that creates a tension that must be resolved (although in some stories, as in real life, it isn't). The traditional breakdown of conflict is:

- Man vs. man (external)
- Man vs. nature (external)
- Man vs. self (internal)
- Man vs. society (external)

Conflict is important to literature because it provides the basic materials for the construction of the plot. Without conflict nothing would happen. Also, the conflict within a piece may be central to the author's view of life or the point he or she is trying to make.

Other Important Terms

Theme

The central message revealed; author's meaning for the story, lesson about life.

Protagonist

The central character and focus of interest who is trying to accomplish or overcome an adversity.

Antagonist

The character opposing the protagonist; can be a person, idea, or force.