

# Plot

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*, a **plot** in literature is "the arrangement of incidents" that (ideally) each follow plausibly from the other. The plot is like the pencil outline that guides the painter's brush. The main plot in a story is called the A-Plot. The B-Plot is another independent plot within the same story.

## Exposition (including inciting moment)

In the **exposition**, the background information that is needed to understand the story properly is provided. Such information includes the protagonist, the antagonist, the basic conflict, the setting, and so forth.

The exposition ends with the **inciting moment/initial situation**, which is the single incident in the story's action without which there would be no story. The inciting moment sets the remainder of the story in motion, beginning with the second act, the rising action.



## Rising action

During the **rising action**, the basic conflict is complicated by the introduction of related secondary conflicts, including various obstacles that frustrate the protagonist's attempt to reach his or her goal. Secondary conflicts can include adversaries of lesser importance than the story's antagonist, who may work with the antagonist or separately, by and for themselves.

## Climax (turning point)

The **climax**, or **turning point**, is the highest point of interest in the story. This point marks a change, for the better or the worse, in the protagonist's affairs. If the story is a **comedy**, things will have gone badly for the protagonist up to this point; now, the tide, so to speak, will turn, and things will begin to go well for him or her. If the story is a **tragedy**, the opposite state of affairs will ensue, with things going from good to bad for the protagonist. **Suspense** is very important at this point.

## Falling action

During the **falling action**, the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist unravels, with the protagonist winning or losing against the antagonist. The falling action may contain a **moment of final suspense**, during which the final outcome of the conflict is in doubt.

## Denouement or catastrophe/resolution

This is what happens to the character after overcoming all obstacles and reaching his goal. Comedies often ends with a **denouement** in which the protagonist is better off than he or she was at the story's outset.

Tragedies ends with a **catastrophe** in which the protagonist is worse off than he or she was at the beginning.

# Conflict

One of the chief sources of people's absorption in stories, has been their capacity to identify with people who are involved in conflicts. A **conflict** is a problem or struggle in the story that characters have to overcome. The conflict also helps to start the action. Dramatic conflict is created when a character is prevented from getting something he or she wants. Action is the result of conflict. Each character's desire prevents the other(s) from accomplishing his or her desire. The story is over when the conflict is resolved.

There are two forms of conflict:

**External Conflict** is when a character "battles" a forces outside of themselves. **Internal Conflict** is something our characters bring to the story. Something that's part of their psyche. Your characters might be unaware of it or it could be something they are aware of but have never - for various reasons unique to them – confronted until external conflict forces the internal conflict into the light. Resolving this internal conflict is how your characters grow. (And a character who doesn't grow in a book is static, and no one wants to read about her/him.) Without internal conflict, characters have no depth; without external conflict, there's no plot. Weaving them together makes up your story. To have a conflict, we have to have two things, and these things have to be not merely different or even opposite from each other but actively opposed to each other.

## Types of Conflict

1. **Man Vs. Man:** A character has a problem with one or more characters. Ex: Superman vs. Lex Luther
2. **Man. Vs. Nature:** A character has a problem with something in nature. Ex: Wind, mountains, floods, earthquakes, snowstorms, getting lost in the wilderness, etc.
3. **Man Vs. Himself:** A character goes through a personal struggle and has to decide what to do about a problem. Ex: Mental/internal struggle, mental illness, guilt, conscience, worry, etc.
4. **Man Vs. Beast:** A character has to fight some sort of animal or monster.
5. **Man Vs. Supernatural:** A character fights ghosts, witches, devil etc.
6. **Man. Vs. Time:** A character has limited time to accomplish something. Ex: Doesn't have long to live because of old age or disease, has only a certain amount of time to finish a test/exam, project, homework.
7. **Man Vs. Aliens/Outer Space:** A character has to fight Martians, UFO's etc.
8. **Man Vs. Technology:** A character has trouble with computer, televisions, satellites; machines are taking away his job, etc. Ex: Bank machines are taking away the jobs of the tellers.
9. **Man Vs. Fate:** A character fights against a problem that seems too big to control. No matter what he does, he seems to fail. The fates are against him.
10. **Man Vs. Society:** A character has a problem in school, with the community, or the traditional way of doing things.