

Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution

Teacher Talk

What?

The author creates the plot by arranging events in the story in sequential order to achieve a certain effect. In storybooks the plot, or sequence of events, is usually presented in a straightforward chronological order. Plot usually centers on a problem or conflict, generally a problem that the reader can recognize and relate to. As the character works to solve the problem, the plot unfolds into an event or series of events that lead to a solution. In historical fiction there are many facts which may overburden a story. Although the facts must be accurate, they should not bog down the plot. Instead, they should help propel the narrative line. The themes that are developed through facts and narrative often reflect both a macrocosm of the era and the microcosm of the story. In biography a subject's personality and accomplishments are more understandable when they are presented against a rich and vivid depiction of the social details of life.

Why?

The plot is the author's blueprint, or master plan, for the story. In order for the reader to think critically, he or she must see the plan and be able to connect the components of the plot and use information from each to build comprehension at both literal and inferential levels. As students write stories, the understanding of plot becomes a tool used to prepare blueprints and build their stories. Students need to know and understand literary elements in order to understand how literature works and to become critical readers and writers. Reading materials containing the problem and resolution pattern may also increase the reader's understanding of the problem solving process.

When?

Readers start early in the story to look for the setting, characters, order of events and main problem in the story. During reading, readers notice events that lead up to conflict(s) or problems, and how characters solve problems.

How?

At the beginning of the story readers look for information about the story elements. As they move to the middle of the story readers look for patterns of conflict and complications as they reach a high level, which is the climax or the peak, and the turning point of the story. At this point readers can many times predict the outcome. As readers conclude the resolution there is a sense that the story is ended and complete.

Research

Conle (2003), in "an Anatomy of Narrative Curricula" *Education Research*, Vol. 3 (3), pp.3–15, explored story plot and concluded that there is a gap in research. There is a need for teacher guidance as they help students use their knowledge of narratives to create narrative forms in writing. The understanding of plot in stories read is the first step.

According to Veronica Boix-Mansilla and Howard Gardner (2008) content area teachers should emphasize teaching disciplines and discipline thinking. The goal of this approach is to instill in the students the disposition to interpret the world in the distinctive ways that characterize the thinking of experienced disciplinarians: historians, scientists, mathematicians, and artists. This view considers the necessity of examining and reading the plot and problem resolution in any subject matter as a writer would read it.

Activating Prior Knowledge



5 minutes

Materials: Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Quick Link Reproducible (DR3-CD)

- Display the quick link prompt shown below.
- Use the quick link before reading to connect to prior knowledge. Read the prompt aloud and have students respond to the questions.
- Response Options: a. Discuss questions as a group. b. Have students turn and talk to their partner about their connections.

Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Quick Link

“Why are you wearing that hat? I’ve never seen you wear a hat before!”

Abby didn’t answer Leah’s question. She just slunk down further in her bus seat and pulled her coat up so far that Leah couldn’t even see her face. Abby was usually very talkative and confident. This was not like her. Leah knew something was wrong.

“Abby! Tell me!” Leah begged her friend. “What is it? Are you sick?”

Ask: ***What are the problems or conflicts in the text?
How are the problems solved?***

Step 1

Introduction of Strategy



10 minutes

Materials: Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Definition Reproducible (DR3-CD)

- Introduce the strategy using the definition reproducible. Steps for introducing a strategy are located on page 21.
- Name and define the strategy including why and when to use the strategy during reading.



ELL

By purposefully activating prior knowledge, ELL students are able to link new content and language learning with known experiences and concepts. The Quick Link can be adjusted to meet the language needs of the students by reading it aloud and/or clarifying language as needed.



ELL

When introducing the strategy, use the definition reproducible as a linguistic visual aid for ELLs. Using and pointing out the key phrases from the definition reproducible during the introduction helps to build the academic language identified with the strategy.

Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Definition

A plot is what happens in the story.

The plot includes:

- a beginning where the setting, main characters, and the problem or conflict is introduced
- a middle where the character tries to solve the problem or conflict
- an ending where the problem may be resolved

Recognizing the plot, story problem, and resolution of a story leads to a deeper understanding of the text.

Key Phrases:

- The problem of the story is _____.
- The problem was solved (by, when, because) _____.



Think About Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution

When reading:

- Identify the main character(s) and the problem(s).
- Make connections to your life or something else you've seen or read.
- Predict how you think the problem(s) will be solved.

After reading ask:

- What are some of the problems the character(s) faced in the story?
- What was the main problem the character(s) faced?
- Why was this problem bigger than the others?
- How was the problem solved?
- What do you expect to happen in the future?

Step 2

Modeling



10 minutes

Materials: Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Definition Reproducible (DR3-CD)
Text selection *Judy's Clubhouse* (DR3-CD)
Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Graphic Organizer #1 Reproducible (DR3-CD)
Sticky notes

- Review the suggested text and the prepared script for the think-aloud provided below to model the strategy. Set up the text for the think-aloud by writing the prepared script on sticky notes and placing them in the appropriate places.
- Option: Use the text provided or a familiar text to think aloud. Steps for preparing and using a think-aloud are located on page 22.
- Model the strategy using the think-aloud and record your thinking on the graphic organizer.
- Today I am going to use Judy's Clubhouse to show you plot, story problem, and resolution. Remember, the plot includes events from the beginning, middle, and end of the text and includes the story problem, or conflict, and how the characters deal with the problem. To record my thinking, I will write it down on my graphic organizer.***



ELL

When planning a think-aloud for the strategy, language can be modified and adjusted to meet the needs of ELLs. Think-aloud modeling should be concise using repeated target language identified with the strategy.

Optional Titles for Modeling



- ***The Other Side***
by Jacequeline Woodson
- ***Too Many Tamales***
by Gary Soto
- A complete list of titles (DR3-CD)
- Additional Leveled Text CD

- e. Read the whole selection to the student and then reread and stop at the stopping points to think aloud.

Judy's Clubhouse

Judy's dad built a clubhouse for her and her best friend Kim. The clubhouse sat on a branch of a big oak tree in the backyard. There were wooden steps so Judy and Kim could climb up to the clubhouse. It was just big enough for five people. The girls loved the clubhouse. They decorated it with pictures of horses and puppies.

One night a big storm blew in. The wind blew very hard. The next morning the girls discovered that their clubhouse was damaged. Some of the boards were broken and the rain had ruined all of their pictures. Judy and Kim were very sad to see the clubhouse in such bad shape.

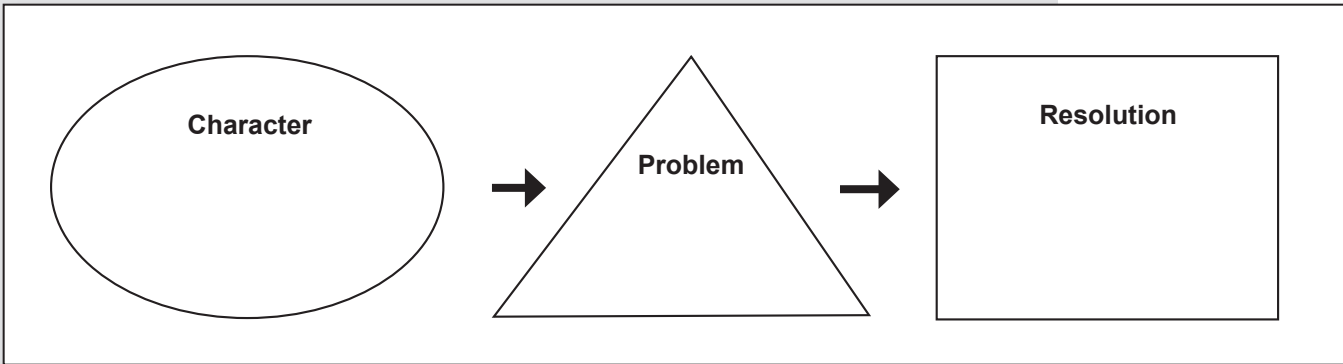
Dad had an idea. He replaced the broken boards and added a new door. He sealed all the wood with a special protector that would keep the rain out. The girls were very happy. They found new pictures of horses and puppies and decorated their new, improved clubhouse.

- f. ***I know that as I am reading, I need to think about the important details as I start reading and continue to look for details about the setting, characters, and the problem, or conflict, throughout the text. Remember, the plot includes events from the beginning, middle, and end of the text and includes the story problem, or conflict, and how the characters deal with the problem. To record my thinking, I will write it down on my graphic organizer.***
- g. Stopping points for the think-aloud are listed below.

Hmm, I know that the characters in the story are Judy, her dad and her friend Kim. I will keep reading to see what happens to them.

Hmm, now I see that the problem for Judy and Kim is that a big storm blew in and really damaged their clubhouse. Now I will keep reading to see how it is resolved.

Hmm, the problem was resolved when Judy's dad helped fix the clubhouse and the girls redecorated it.



- h. **Now it is your turn to give it a try.**
- i. Use Step 3 below to allow students to practice the strategy.

Step 3

Give it a Try – Turn and Talk 5 minutes

- a. **Now it is your turn to give it a try.**
- b. Allow students just enough time to discuss their thinking with their partner. Invite several students to share their thoughts with the class and add their responses to the graphic organizer.

4. Turn to your partner and say, “The characters, problem, and resolution of the story were _____.” Be ready to share your thinking with the group.

Step 4

Small Group Guided Practice 15-20 minutes

*Materials: Instructional reading level text for small group
Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Graphic Organizer #1
Reproducible (DR3-CD)*

- a. Once students are engaged in independent practice, work with small groups and practice the strategy using guided reading texts.
- b. Suggestions for conducting a small guided group are located on page 24.
- c. After reading complete the graphic organizer as a group or independent activity.
- d. **Option: Now we are going to talk about plot, story problem, and resolution with the text we just read and answer some questions about our reading.**



ELL

When students are asked to turn and talk, they should be prompted to begin their talk with a key phrase stem. This reinforces academic language growth and helps ELLs direct their thinking to the target strategy. The key phrases found on the definition reproducible can be used as turn-to-talk stems.

- Ask: ***What happens at the beginning?***
What do the characters do?
What is the main problem?
Why is it a bigger problem?
What happens at the end?
How is the conflict resolved?

Step 5

Independent Practice



15-20 minutes

*Materials: Text at students' independent reading level
Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Graphic Organizer #1
Reproducible (DR3-CD)*

- Have students select and read a text at their independent reading level.
- Have students work independently or with a partner to complete the Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Graphic Organizer #1.
- Have students share their graphic organizer with a partner.
- After you have read independently and practiced the strategy, you will share what you have learned today about plot, story problem, and resolution. We will discuss when, why, and how you used the strategy.***

Step 6

Reflection



5 minutes

*Materials: Graphic Organizer or Share Sheets used in independent reading
Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Reflection Reproducible
(DR3-CD)*

- Use the graphic organizer or share sheets from independent reading to share example(s) of students' thinking using the strategy.
- Use the reflection reproducible to discuss and write the students' responses and post it in the room.

- Ask: ***What have you learned today about plot, story problem, and resolution?***
Why is this important to know as a reader?

Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Reflection

When did you use the strategy?

Why did you use the strategy?

How did you use the strategy?

How did the strategy help you understand the text?

Quick Check Assessment



5 minutes



ELL

Materials: Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Definition Reproducible (DR3-CD)
Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Quick Check Reproducible (DR3-CD)

- Display the quick check prompt shown below.
- Use the quick check after reading to assess mastery of the strategy. Read the prompt aloud and have students respond to the questions.
- Response Options: a. Discuss questions as a group. b. Have students turn and talk to their partner about their connections. c. Use as an assessment and ask students to use a graphic organizer or student response journal to write responses.
- Lesson plans for students who require additional practice are located on the (DR3-CD).

The Quick Check can be used to assess both language and concept mastery for ELLs. Students should show correct usage of the target academic language (including key phrases and stems) as well as correct application of the target strategy. The Quick Check can be used to identify areas in need of additional practice for both language and strategy usage.

Plot, Story Problem, and Resolution Quick Check

Seamus, a pot-bellied pig, was found abandoned on a large farm. The owners of the farm lived in town. The pig had built a home in an old, round bale of hay. He was careful to stay away from the dogs and foxes.

During the fall the farm was rented to hunters and the men began to tease Seamus. They would fire their guns at Seamus and make him run and jump. The small pig became ill.

Some kind people discovered him in a barn with the cats. These people heard about a sanctuary and called the director. The people from the sanctuary went to the barn and found Seamus. Seamus was so afraid that the men worked two days to rescue him.

Seamus now lives in his own one acre field with 19 other pigs his own size. He shares hay with five of his friends. He no longer fights, even when the other pigs try to push him around. Seamus is now a slow, gentle pig.

- Ask:
- What person was the text written in?***
 - What words are used to help you know who is narrating the story?***
 - How does the author feel about the subject?***
 - How does the author want me to respond to his message?***

Additional Practice

- Lesson plans for additional practice are located on the (DR3-CD).
- Leveled passages for grades 2–5 are located on the Additional Leveled Text CD.

Standardized Testing Stems



These are a sample of the standardized testing stems common to most states high stakes assessments.

1. Which of these best describes how the (characters) _____ feel (when) _____?
2. Which of these best tells about _____ in paragraph _____?
3. How does _____ feel after/when _____?
4. From paragraph _____ the reader can tell that _____ is _____.
5. How do _____ thoughts /feeling change after _____?
6. Why does _____ want to _____?
7. The author discovers that _____ is _____.
8. How do _____'s feelings change at the end of the story?
9. From paragraph _____ of the report, the reader can tell that _____.
10. How do _____'s thoughts change after _____?

Writing Connection



These are a sample of writing and talking stems that help students respond to their reading.

1. The characters in the story were _____.
2. I think _____ (character) was _____. I think this because _____.
3. The picture I see in my mind of _____ (character) is _____. The words that painted this picture in my mind were _____.
4. I think the plot was affected by _____ (character) because _____.
5. I think the character felt _____ because _____.
6. I would like to ask the author _____ about _____ (character).
7. I understand why _____ (character) acted the way he/she did because _____.
8. I think _____ (character) related to the people around him/her by _____ because _____.
9. I think the plot was affected by _____ (character) because _____.
10. I think the _____ (character) changes because at first he/she _____ then _____.

A Step Beyond Activities and Station Ideas



These are a sample of activities that can extend students' thinking in the target strategy.

1. Have students write about a friend or family member. Character traits and motives for actions can be included. The writer's relationship with the friend or family member can be analyzed. Students can organize their thoughts on one of the graphic organizers for character traits/emotions/motives found on the DR3-CD.
2. Use a small part of a movie to introduce a character. Have students discuss/write about what they know about the character after viewing the clip. Students can organize their thoughts on one of the graphic organizers for character traits/emotions/motives found on the DR3-CD.
3. Conduct a role-play activity where students select a favorite character and prepare a short talk from the perspective of that character. Students can then guess the characters being presented. Students can organize their thoughts on one of the graphic organizers for character traits/emotions/motives found on the DR3-CD.