

# Dissecting Plot

Welcome to my installment about dissecting plot! You may analyze any piece of literature for this exercise, though it should have a rich and intriguing plot. You should read the entire book prior to analyzing it.

Books have **protagonists** and (sometimes) **antagonists**. The protagonist is the character that you are rooting for because his or her intentions are good. Generally, the protagonist wants favorable outcomes in the long run. The antagonist is the character who stands for everything the protagonist does not stand for. The main role of the antagonist is to be a thorn in the protagonist's side. Oftentimes, antagonists put protagonists in dire situations.

Books focus around **elements** that are unveiled as the plot unfolds. At first, you may be inferring what something may symbolize, though your metacognition often changes as you delve more into the heart of the book. Examples are the tesseract, IT, and the Black Thing in *A Wrinkle in Time*.

**Plots** focus around **problems** and/or **challenges**. You should know the difference between a problem and challenge. Battling a forceful army or encountering antagonists like "the one who shall not be named" from *Harry Potter* are a problem. Surviving in the wilderness, if perceived in a positive and adventurous manner, is a challenge. Winning a marathon or embarking on a cross-country adventure is a challenge.

**There are different kinds of struggles in books. You often can pinpoint more than one kind of struggle in a book.**

<b>Man vs. Man</b> This is basically where the protagonist and antagonist battle for whatever reason.	<b>Man vs. Nature</b> A good symbol you can think of here is Mount Everest or a blizzard. Adventure stories are based on this kind of struggle.
<b>Man vs. Self</b> Let's say a character struggles with his or her identity. The character may or may not succeed.	<b>Man vs. Society</b> Let's say a character desires to be immensely innovative, but that is not perceived by society well. Some inventors who put their innovative minds to work and made our modern day

	<p>luxuries possible were viewed very negatively at first. One may have thought, “Seriously? <i>Electric lights!</i>!” Think about how women did not originally have the right to vote, also. Imagine the struggle these suffragists encountered to make voting a possibility. Individuals like Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin also encountered “Man vs. Society” struggles and ultimately invoked change.</p>
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Books revolve around **themes**. A theme is a universal statement that revolves around a life lesson. Some themes revolve around one word, like ambition, betrayal, compassion, courage, jealousy, loyalty, and survival. Other themes revolve around sayings like, “Always respect your elders” or “Don’t judge others by their cover.” One time, one of my students related a piece of literature to the quote—“If at first you don’t succeed, then try, try again.”

Readers make **text-to-text connections** when they realize multiple selections they have read share a common theme. For example, there are multitudes of books out there that revolve around being courageous.

**Here are some tasks for dissecting plot—**

<p>How did the author begin the story? Did (s)he lure you right into the action, or did action show up later in the story? Did (s)he reveal a lot about the main character, problem, or challenge from the get-go?</p>	<p>Look at the main character in the story. Write down ten quotes or thoughts to self (s)he had over the course of the story. What do they reveal about his or her character?</p>
<p>What is one main symbol in this story? For example, a symbol in <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> is glasses. Sometimes, symbols are very ordinary objects that stand for extraordinary things. Why do you feel this symbol was an important element of this work of literature?</p>	<p>What are some quotes or thoughts to self from the story that revolve around the story’s main problem or challenge?</p>

<p>What is one of the underlying themes in this piece of literature? Note five or more specific points in the story that helped you to decide on this theme. (It's even better if you choose a quote rather than just one word.)</p>	<p>Where is one place in this story where you encounter one of these struggles—Man vs. Man, Man vs. Self, Man vs. Nature, or Man vs. Society? Explain how this struggle contributed to the richness of this piece of literature.</p>
<p>Do any other books you have read or movies you have watched remind you of this story?</p> <p>Explain. Note specific parallels.</p>	<p>What are some extraordinary words you learned by reading this book? Note at least five words. They should be interesting, unique words you never knew before delving into this literature.</p>
<p>If this book were made into a play or musical, realistically, not all elements could be included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How would you design the scenery for a specific scene? How would you adjust the lighting on the stage to enhance the scene's dramatic elements?</li> <li>- What kind of person would have to try out for the role of the protagonist?</li> <li>- Which scenes of action would you HAVE to include, no ifs, ands, ors, or buts?</li> <li>- How would you design the poster that promotes this musical or play? Which scene would you highlight?</li> <li>- If this story were to be converted to a musical, what are some song selections you would include?</li> </ul>	<p>Take one character from this story and have him or her encounter a character from another story. Take your protagonist, for example, and have him or her encounter an antagonist who is similar to the one in this story? What would happen?</p> <p>Very short explanations are not acceptable. ☺ Be creative!</p>