

Scriptwriting Skill Module

Plot

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify the elements of plot
- Use knowledge of plot elements to construct better scripts

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – All the Right Moves: Writing Plots that Work

Additional Online Support:

- www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com
- www.BlueNoseEd.com

Teach the Skill

1. Introduce Plot: Explain that the typical **plot** is made up of a series of related events that centers on a *main conflict*. This conflict is a *significant struggle* or *problem* that the main character either overcomes (in a comedy) or is defeated by (in a tragedy). Emphasize that without a significant conflict, a script will possess very little interest.

2. Teach Plot: start by reviewing the following Academic Vocabulary with the students.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

plot: the series of events in a story

exposition: first stage of the plot; introduces the characters and the setting

conflict: a struggle between opposing forces; drives the narrative forward

rising action: events that develop and build the conflict

climax: the high point of the conflict, when tension is greatest; this is where the decisions get made that resolve the conflict

falling action: events that result from the decision or act

resolution: the final outcome of the story

- Once the students have become re-familiarized with these terms, tell them the following story. Then, based upon the included examples, have them fill out the chart below, naming which parts of the story show the elements of **plot**.

EXAMPLE

“Jack and the Beanstalk”

Read: “Jack and his mother were extremely poor. One day, Jack set off to the market to sell their only possession, a cow. On the way to the market, however, he ran into a man who offered to buy the cow not for cash, but for some magic beans. Jack accepted, and thought he’d made quite a deal. But when he got back home, his mother called him a fool and threw the beans out the window. Heartsick, Jack went to bed. Overnight the beans grew into a giant beanstalk. In the morning, Jack climbed up the beanstalk and met an ogre, who took him to her home, where her ogre husband was counting his piles of gold. Jack grabbed all the gold he could carry and raced back down the beanstalk. This angered the ogres. Going up again, Jack stole a hen that laid golden eggs. Then, once more he went up the beanstalk, grabbing a harp that could sing. While running away, the harp cried out to its ogre master. The ogre woke up and chased Jack, but Jack raced to the ground, cut down the beanstalk, and both the ogres crashed to their deaths. With the magical hen and the harp in their possession, Jack and his mother became rich and famous.”

Plot Element	Examples from “Jack and the Beanstalk”
Exposition	Jack and his mother are poor. Jack goes to market with their cow.
Conflict(s)	One conflict is the Jack and his mother’s struggle against poverty. Another conflict is Jack’s conflict with his mother, who disapproves of his decision to sell the cow for some magic beans. But the main conflict is between Jack and the ogres.
Rising Action	
Climax	
Falling Action	
Resolution	

- **Plot at a Glance:** Another way to visualize plot is through the notion of a line that rises as the action rises, then starts falling after the climax. Read the following Greek myth to the students, and have them fill out the diagram below.

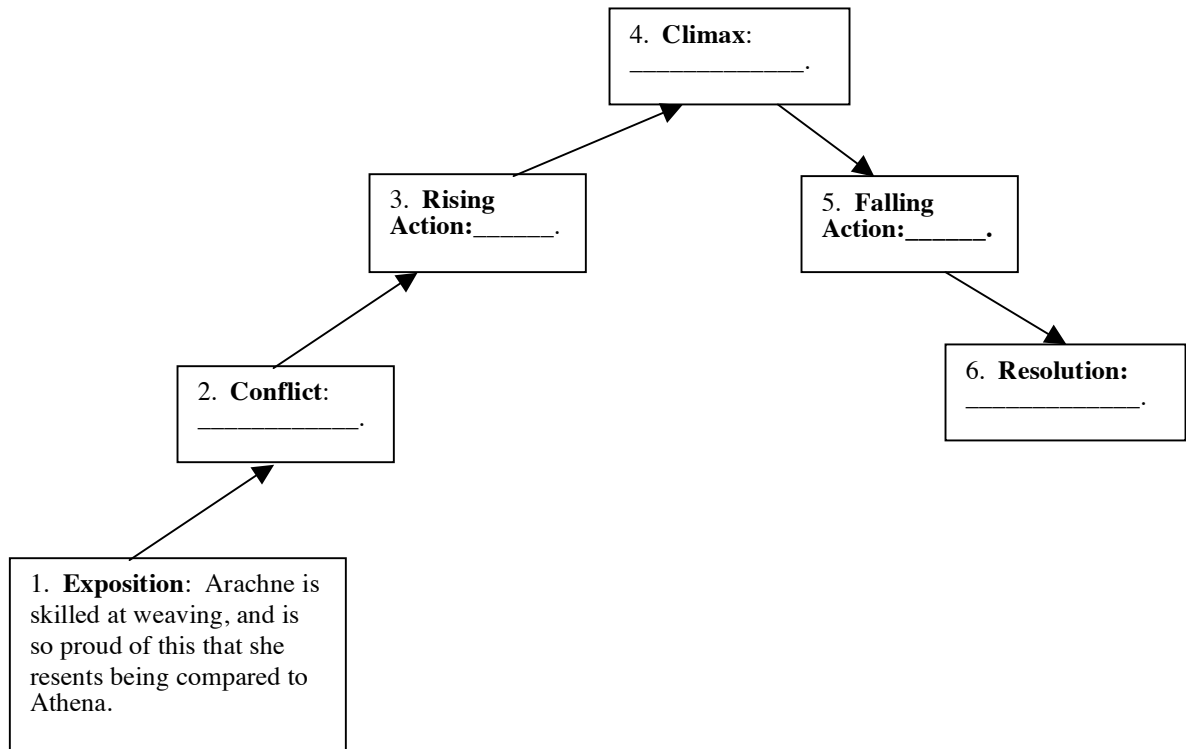
EXAMPLE

ARACHNE AND THE GODDESS ATHENA

The young Greek maiden Arachne was skilled at spinning wool into thread and then weaving that thread into beautiful fabric. She resented it when people said that the goddess Athena must have given her this talent. Arachne claimed that she could spin better than the goddess herself. Athena heard of this boast and decided to teach the proud girl a lesson. She appeared as an old beggar woman and scolded Arachne for insulting the goddess. Arachne replied that if Athena were offended, she should come down to earth and accept Arachne’s challenge to a spinning contest. The girl was stunned when the old beggar woman turned into Athena. Arachne knew she had gone too far, but refused to admit it.

A crowd gathered as the goddess and the maiden sat at large looms and started weaving. Arachne nearly matched Athena in speed and skill, but the goddess was quicker. Upset, Arachne wove into her fabric scenes in which the gods behaved badly. Seeing this, Athena grew so angry that she slapped Arachne. Insulted, Arachne declared that she would hang herself with her own thread. Athena told her that she would live a long time and do nothing but spin for the rest of her days. Then she transformed Arachne into a spider. The onlookers were shocked, and came away thinking that they must not compete with the gods, lest they risk Arachne’s fate.

PLOT AT A GLANCE: “Arachne and the Goddess Athena”



- 3. Apply Plot:** Hand out the You Try It! Worksheet: “Plot: All the Right Moves.” This exercise may be done individually or in small groups. After the students have finished the worksheet, work through the exercise as a class, encouraging them to come up with ever more creative answers.

QUICK CHECK Ask students to identify and explain the five main elements of plot. Make sure that they realize that it is necessary for their scripts to contain real conflict, and a resolution of that conflict, in order to be successful.

YOU TRY IT!

All the Right Moves—Making Plots That Work

GOAL

Plot is a key aspect of any good script, and becoming more aware of the elements of plot is a quick way to ensure that your script has the right level of suspense and conflict to compete strongly in the Blue Nose Scriptwriting Contest.

DIRECTIONS The best way to write plots that contain all the necessary elements is to practice doing it. Below are listed options for plots, with one or more of the elements filled in. Based upon what is included, imagine plot points that make the plot complete.

Example A: The Reluctant Vigilante

1. **Exposition:** Cecile, a young woman who believes strongly in non-violence, walks into a room where her beloved uncle has recently been murdered.
2. **Conflict:** Cecile goes to the police, but the police mock her and send her on her way. It's obvious to her that the police themselves are involved in the murder. Further, the town she lives in is full of cowards. There is no one in town brave enough to help her. Cecile must decide whether to pursue the murderer, or to follow her own beliefs in non-violence, and let it go.
3. **Rising Action:** _____.
4. **Climax:** _____.
5. **Falling Action / Resolution:** _____.

Example B: Coming of Age

1. **Exposition:** Adam is old enough to understand that sometimes his parents don't get along, but he is still surprised when he comes home from school one day, and his mother tells him that his father has left town.
2. **Conflict:** _____.
3. **Rising Action:** _____.
4. **Climax:** _____.
5. **Falling Action / Resolution:** _____.

Example C: Start from Scratch, and Make Up Your Own Plot!

1. **Exposition:** _____.
2. **Conflict:** _____.
3. **Rising Action:** _____.
4. **Climax:** _____.
5. **Falling Action / Resolution:** _____.

Self-Check

Look back over the plots you have outlined above. Do any of your plots strike you as something you can build on? Which parts of the process of plot-construction are easiest to you, and which parts come a little harder? As you work on your script for the Blue Nose Scriptwriting Contest, be sure that your plots contain all the main elements that you have worked on in this exercise.