

- RL.6.3** Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- RL.6.10** By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- CCR.R.3** Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of the text.



**Understand the Standards**

Analyzing a story isn't new to you. You've been doing it at least since someone first told you a story. In school, you've been asked to read and talk about short stories. You'll keep analyzing stories, too, throughout your school years and, in fact, all your life. Every time you go to the movies or watch TV programs, you're analyzing a story, whether or not you're doing it consciously.

To talk or write about a story, it helps to understand a few terms and ideas.

- **Characters** are the people in a story. Sometimes, animals or even objects can be characters. The most important character in a story is the main character, who may be called the **protagonist**. The main character may be in conflict with another character, who is called the **antagonist**. The main character may change as events in the story unfold.
- **Plot** is the series of events that happen in a story. The plot is set in motion by a problem or **conflict** faced by the main character. This is usually revealed in the **introduction**, or beginning of the story. There are many different types of conflicts in a story.

Person versus self is a conflict that involves the struggle between the character and his or her own conscience.

**Example:** A student decides whether to do his chores first before completing his homework.

Person versus nature is a conflict that involves a struggle between the character and the elements of nature.

**Example:** A man is caught in a terrible snowstorm.

Person versus person is a conflict that involves a mental or physical struggle between two or more characters in the story.

**Example:** Two students debate about a controversial topic.

Person versus society is a conflict that involves the struggle between a character and rules or laws that govern the society in which he or she lives.

**Example:** A woman is trying to get to work quickly and runs a red light.

- The plot is made up of the events that happen as the character responds to the conflict. As the plot moves forward (these events are referred to as the **rising action**), the suspense steadily increases until the **climax** is reached. The climax is the most exciting point in the story. After the climax, the story draws to a conclusion or **resolution**.

**Words to Know**

characters  
protagonist  
antagonist  
plot  
conflict  
introduction  
rising action  
climax  
resolution



## Guided Instruction

Read this story. Then re-read it and look for the following literary elements: protagonist, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution.



### Skateboard Lesson

“No one promised you this was going to be easy, Livy,” Jasper said in response to my scream of despair.

I knew that, of course, but it didn’t make my frustration—or the painful bruises I was collecting from falling—any easier to swallow. I was in a skateboard park doing my level best to learn to do an ollie, and my best was getting me nowhere. Jasper was an accomplished skateboarder and was trying to teach me, but my lack of agility and poor sense of balance were obstacles I couldn’t overcome.



“Okay,” I said, “and I really mean this—I quit!” And I picked up the skateboard and headed for the exit. Jasper tried to get me to try some more, but I know when I’m beaten, and besides, he wasn’t the one getting the beating.

I went home and soaked in a hot bath and consoled myself with the knowledge that skateboarding was one more thing I didn’t have to master. I’d tried it, I’d failed, and now I was done with it.

I had a fitful night sleeping, though. Somehow, I couldn’t quite let go of this skateboarding thing. So the next morning—hours before I normally get up—I was out of bed, dressed, had my badly abused skateboard under my arm, and was headed to the park. I had decided to give it one more try, this time without the critical view of my instructor.

Of course, I fell and fell, and then I fell some more, but then, unexpectedly, something magical happened: I did an ollie, and I didn’t fall. It was the most amazing thing I’d ever done. I did it and then I did it again and I just kept doing them. I do admit there were a few falls in between, but the point is, I’d become a skateboarder. It was one of the proudest moments of my life up to that point. I was a skateboarder and would no longer have to make excuses when my friends grabbed their boards and headed out to the curbs and sidewalks.

### Guided Questions

How do the first two paragraphs establish the plot’s conflict?

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Livy sounds definite when she says “I quit.” How do you know that this scene is part of the rising action of the story, and not the climax?

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Complete the following activities.

1. Who is the main character?

2. What problem does the protagonist have?

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3. When does the climax occur?

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4. How does the character change as a result of the plot?

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5. What is one obstacle that stands in the way of solving the problem?

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6. Which answer best describes Livy's conflict in "Skateboard Lesson"?

- A conflict with herself
- B conflict with a group of characters
- C conflict with a force of nature
- D conflict with another character

7. Which event happens first in the story?

- A Livy does her first ollie and feels proud of herself.
- B Livy decides skateboarding isn't something she has to learn.
- C Livy goes to the park by herself to practice.
- D Livy gives up, takes her skateboard, and leaves the park.

8. Why do you think Livy goes to the park by herself the next morning instead of with Jasper?

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**Elevate**

9. What kind of person is Livy? How did you analyze Livy's character? Use details from the story to explain your answer. Write your answer on a separate piece of paper.

10. How does the main character finally solve the problem?

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## On Your Own

Read the following retelling of a Welsh fairy tale. As you read, apply what you have learned about plot and characters.



### Tommy Pritchard by Peter Henry Emerson

Tommy Pritchard was going to school one day, and on his way he thought he heard somebody singing on the other side of a stone wall by the road, so he climbed up and looked over, and there underneath a stone he saw a sixpence, so he took it.

Every morning after that, when he went to school, he used to look in the same place, and he always found a sixpence.

His father noticed he was always spending money in the sweet-shop, so he began to think Tommy was stealing from somebody, and one day he asked him where he got the money. Tommy wouldn't tell at first, ... then he told him where he got his sixpences.

Next morning he went to look in the same place for his sixpence, and he found nothing but a cockleshell. And he never saw anything but a cockleshell there afterwards.

Answer and discuss these questions about "Tommy Pritchard."

1 What problem does Tommy Pritchard have?

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2 When does the climax occur in "Tommy Pritchard"?

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3 What is the resolution of this story?

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4 Who are the protagonist and antagonist in this story?

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- Elevate** 5 One of the most important characters in this story is never mentioned at all, only implied. Who—or what—do you think this character is? How does this character contribute to the plot of the story?

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Read the following retelling of one of Aesop’s fables. Compare the characters and look for the elements of plot.

### The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse

There was once a Country Mouse who invited a Town Mouse to visit. They enjoyed the visit, but the food was poor; they went into a nearly barren field and chewed at wheat stalks and roots.

“You live a life of poverty,” the Town Mouse said. “Come to town, and I will show you every luxury.”

So the Country Mouse visited the Town Mouse, who gathered a luxurious meal of bread, barley, beans, dried figs, raisins, and cheese. As they prepared to eat, a human entered the room, and the frightened mice scurried into a crack to hide. When the human left, the mice returned to their feast, but soon another human and his dog entered, and the terrified mice ran from the dog, escaping under the bureau at the last moment. And so it went as they tried to eat.

“My friend,” said the Country Mouse, “town life is too frightening. I must return to the simpler life of the country where food is poor, but where I am at peace to enjoy what I have.”

Answer and discuss these questions about “The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse.”

- 6 Who is the main character?

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- 7 How do the outlooks of the two mice differ?

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- 8 What is the conflict or problem?

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- 9 How is the conflict finally resolved?

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