Lesson 6 Part 1: Introduction

Analyzing the Interaction of Story Elements

A bicycle without wheels, pedals, and brakes wouldn't be complete or possible to ride. Similarly, a story wouldn't be complete or interesting to read without all of its parts working together. These parts, called story elements, include its characters, settings, and plot.

Analyzing a story means figuring out how its elements interact with each other. For example, you can analyze how the setting of a story shapes its plot. A story's plot includes a conflict, or a problem the characters must respond to, and a resolution, in which the problem is solved.

Look at the picture below. It shows the moment of conflict in an adventure story. Consider the importance of this setting to the story's conflict.

![Image of rafters navigating through rapids and a waterfall]

What is the setting? It is a river with rocks, whitewater rapids, and a waterfall.

What is the relationship between the setting and the story’s conflict?

The setting is the cause of the story’s conflict. The problem the character must face to solve is the danger posed by the rocks, rapids, and waterfall.

How do you think the characters will resolve the conflict? Could vary.

They might land on shore, anchor themselves to the rock, or go over the waterfall.

Just as a bicycle can't move forward without all of its parts working together, stories don't go anywhere without the interactions of their characters, settings, and plots. By analyzing a story, you're figuring out how its parts relate to each other—and you might be learning a new way to enjoy the stories you read.
Black Sunday  by Taryn Trina

It was April 14—one day before Cora's sixteenth birthday—and she felt the air change as she took the laundry down from the clothesline. The sky darkened over the Oklahoma plains and the wind threatened to blow the laundry away. Cora froze for a moment and then shouted "Dust storm!" loudly enough for everyone inside to hear.

Cora held the cellar door open for her mother and the younger children as they descended into the cool darkness. Cora's mother called for her to join them, but Cora was determined to find her father and brothers.

Cora saddled the old mare and rode across the fields, calling for her father until she finally spotted him. He was already riding back with her brothers, the storm creeping up the horizon nearly fast enough to overcome them. They tethered the animals in the barn stalls and sealed the doors to keep the precious livestock safe.

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Explore how to answer this question: "What is the relationship between the setting and the conflict in this story?"

Before you can analyze the relationship between setting and conflict, you need to be certain what the setting and conflict actually are. First, identify each of these elements on the lines below.

What is the setting of this story? A farm on the Oklahoma plains

What is the conflict in this story? A powerful dust storm has moved across the plains. It is dangerous to both people and animals

Now that you've identified the setting and the conflict, start thinking about how they are related. Ask questions such as, "Does the conflict somehow change the setting?" Or, "Is the setting the cause of the conflict?" Asking these questions will help you analyze the relationship between story elements.

On the lines below, describe the relationship between the setting and the conflict in this story. Use details from the story to support your answer.

The approaching storm creates conflict for the family by putting them and their animals in danger. Cora's mother and siblings find safety by taking shelter in the cellar.
Continue reading “Black Sunday.” Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

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“What about your mother and the other children?” her father shouted over the increasing roar of the wind, clearly alarmed.

“They’re already in the cellar,” Cora answered. “Follow me, everyone. We can make it, but we have to move now!”

Soon they were all together, huddled around a lamp as the storm rattled the boards of the house overhead. That day would later become known as Black Sunday because of the epic storm that blew over the plains. But Cora would remember it best as the day before her sixteenth birthday, when she helped lead her family to safety.

Circle the correct answer.

Which sentence from the passage best shows that Cora’s ability to take charge in a dangerous situation will lead to a happy resolution?

A  “Cora froze for a moment and then shouted ‘Dust storm!’ loudly enough for everyone inside to hear.”

B  “Cora held the cellar door open for her mother and the younger children as they descended into the cool darkness.”

C  “Follow me, everyone. We can make it, but we have to move now!”

D  “That day would later be known as Black Sunday because of the epic storm that blew over the plains.”

Show Your Thinking

Explain how the sentence you chose demonstrates Cora taking charge and a happy ending.

Responses will vary.

With a partner, discuss how Cora’s actions and the plot events, including the resolution, help reveal her character.
Read the scene below, in which a beggar boy sets off a surprising chain of events at a London castle in the year 1547. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

**As I read, I’m going to think about how the setting, characters, and plot interact. I’ll note details that help me understand how the characters’ actions move the plot forward.**

**Close Reading**

1. …Poor little Tom, in his rags, approached, and was moving slowly and timidly past the guards, with a beating heart and a rising hope, when all at once he caught sight through the golden bars of a spectacle that almost made him shout for joy. Within was a comely boy, tanned and brown with sturdy outdoor sports and exercises, whose clothing was all of lovely silks and satins, shining with jewels; at his hip a little jewelled sword and dagger; dainty buskins on his feet, with red heels; and on his head a jaunty crimson cap, with drooping plumes….

2. Tom’s breath came quick and short with excitement, and his eyes grew big with wonder and delight. Everything gave way in his mind instantly to one desire: that was to get close to the prince, and have a good, devouring look at him. Before he knew what he was about, he had his face against the gate-bars. The next instant one of the soldiers snatched him rudely away, and sent him spinning among the gaping crowd of country gawks and London idlers. The soldier said,—“Mind thy manners, thou young beggar!”

3. The crowd jeered and laughed; but the young prince sprang to the gate with his face flushed, and his eyes flashing with indignation, and cried out,—

4. “How dar’st thou use a poor lad like that? How dar’st thou use the King my father’s meanest subject so? Open the gates, and let him in!”

5. You should have seen that fickle crowd snatch off their hats then. You should have heard them cheer, and shout, “Long live the Prince of Wales!”

6. The soldiers presented arms with their halberds, opened the gates, and presented again as the little Prince of Poverty passed in, in his fluttering rags, to join hands with the Prince of Limitless Plenty.
Hints

Think about what Tom wants and how his attempt to achieve his goal causes trouble.

Which choice describes why a main character acts to change another's situation?

What problem does the guarded gate pose for Tom? What details show this problem? And how is the problem resolved?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1. Which sentence best shows how one character can set the events of a story in motion?
   A. "Tom's breath came quick and short with excitement, and his eyes grew big with wonder and delight."
   B. "Everything gave way in his mind instantly to one desire: that was to get close to the prince..."
   C. "The soldier said,—'Mind thy manners, thou young beggar!'"
   D. "Within was a comely boy, tanned and brown with sturdy outdoor sports and exercises..."

2. Which sentence best describes how story events influence a main character's actions?
   A. The prince sees Tom being mistreated by the soldiers and takes pity on him.
   B. At first the crowd jeers and laughs, but then they snatch off their hats and begin to cheer for the prince.
   C. The soldiers make certain that Tom and the prince remain separated by the gate.
   D. The country gawkers and London idlers shame the prince into doing something to help Tom.

3. In this passage, the setting of the guarded gate is an important cause of the main conflict. Write a paragraph supporting this idea. Use at least two details from the passage to support your response.

   The guarded gate is an important cause of conflict because it prevents Tom from seeing the Prince. The setting and conflict's relationship is made clear when Tom presses "his face against the gate-bars and is then thrown back by the guards. The conflict is resolved when the Prince sticks up for Tom and the guards open the gates, leading to a change of setting."
Think back to your childhood. What life lesson did you learn from stories such as “Little Red Riding Hood” or “Snow White”? Here’s a hint: They both have the same **theme**, or main message, which is “Good wins out over evil.”

**Study the image and headline below. Think about the theme they suggest.**

![Bobcat Bulletin - Issue 20](image)

**Bobcat Bulletin**

*Daily Practice and Encouragement Transform Struggling Team into League Champions!*

Circle the most important words in the headline. Then read the chart below to see how organizing details can help you figure out the message of the illustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning of Season</strong></td>
<td>The team struggles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of Season</strong></td>
<td>The team succeeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason for Change from Beginning to End of Season</strong></td>
<td>The coaches encouraged the team to practice more and work hard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as a winning team develops over time, an author develops a theme over the course of the story. As you read, note clues such as how characters change or how story events develop to help you identify the theme, or lesson about life, that the author is trying to share.
A Different Day  by Rachel O'Meara

"Hand over your lunch money, kid!"

Mick stopped daydreaming and looked in the direction of the voice. In front of him was an all-too-familiar scene. Aaron was picking on Jake, just as he did every day at recess. But that was okay with Mick, because at least Aaron was not picking on him. It was also fine because everyone picked on Jake—that was just how things were around here, the accepted norm. In fact, every school Mick had ever attended had had a kid like Jake—someone who was an obvious target, easy to tease and bully.

Today was different, though, because Jake was standing tall, acting brave, and trying to stick up for himself. Aaron responded by getting nastier and louder as he hurled insults at Jake. He pushed forward, forcing Jake backwards and jabbing him in the chest. Jake looked terrified, and Mick could see that Jake’s lips were stretched thin as he tried not to let anyone see he was close to yelling for help—or worse, sobbing. But to Mick’s surprise, Jake still wasn’t backing down.

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Explore how to answer this question: "What theme is being developed in this part of the story?"

Mick’s feelings and observations about the other boys’ actions offer clues about the theme.

Find story details that tell how Mick thinks and feels, some of which are shown in the chart below. Add details from the text, and complete the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point in Story</th>
<th>Important Events</th>
<th>Character’s Words, Actions, and Feelings</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Aaron demands Jake’s lunch money.</td>
<td>Mick watches Aaron pick on Jake. Mick feels that the situation is okay because everyone picks on Jake.</td>
<td>It is usually safer to avoid conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Jake is standing up to Aaron.</td>
<td>Mick watches Aaron jab Jake in the chest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continue reading the story. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

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As he watched from a few feet away, Mick slowly began to fill with anger toward Aaron and compassion for Jake. What was happening wasn't right, and somebody ought to do something. But, on the other hand, Aaron was a nasty character. And when dealing with someone like that, it might be best to lie low and not interfere.

"Hand it over! Now!" insisted Aaron impatiently.

Aaron faked a swipe at Jake, and then laughed loudly when Jake jumped back and cringed. The laughter was even crueler and more hurtful than the words. Today is different, thought Mick, and he forced his feet toward the conflict.

"Not today, Aaron," shouted Mick. "Leave Jake alone!"

Circle the correct answer.

Which statement best states a theme of the story?

A Only someone who has been bullied can understand bullying.
B It's best to stay out of trouble and never get involved.
C It's important to take a stand against bullies.
D Bullying will always be a problem that affects many teenagers.

Show Your Thinking

Look at the answer you chose above. Tell which details in the story led you to choose that sentence as the theme.

Answers will vary, but should support the theme.

With a partner, take turns summarizing the story. Then discuss which story events have the strongest impact on the story's theme.
The Substitute by Bailey Sebastian

1. When Laila walked into math class on Thursday, the room was in an uproar. Although the students usually took their seats immediately and opened their books quietly, today they were gathered in groups, chatting loudly, and laughing.

2. Laila stopped just inside the doorway, but then quickly spotted the reason for the change. Instead of Ms. Vasquez, a rather short, older gentleman with glasses perched crookedly on his nose stood at the front of the class. Laila did a double-take—the man was her neighbor, Mr. Marrero! She and her family had gone to pay their respects after his wife had passed away last year, and she remembered him telling an amazing story about surviving an emergency landing during a transcontinental flight.

3. “Hey, Laila, wasn't Teen Idol awesome last night?” yelled Jason.

4. “Y-yeah,” stammered Laila. Jason didn’t usually talk to Laila. The popular kids just wrote her off as “that quiet girl.”

5. Laila bit her lip; she wanted to keep talking, but she felt bad for Mr. Marrero, and she was embarrassed by her class’s behavior. Without realizing it, Laila reached over and flicked the light switch, just like Ms. Vasquez did when the class was unruly.

6. Suddenly silent, every classmate turned to stare at her, and Laila’s cheeks burned bright red. But then she smiled at the substitute and said, “Hello, Mr. Marrero—”

7. Mr. Marrero focused, and then recognition dawned and he responded, “Oh, my neighbor… Laila, right?”

8. Laila heard someone snicker and knew it was time to blend back in or help Mr. Marrero. She took a deep breath. “Mr. Marrero, will you tell us about the time you were on a jet that crash-landed in the ocean?”

9. Thirty mouths gaped open, and sixty eyes looked with curiosity at Mr. Marrero, soon to be their new favorite substitute.
Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1. Which statement best describes Laila at the beginning of the story?
   A. Laila is a quiet student who appreciates an orderly classroom.
   B. Laila enjoys chatting with her friends before class.
   C. Laila likes to be the focus of attention in all of her classes.
   D. Laila dislikes the popular kids who ignore her.

2. Which sentence best states an important theme about human behavior as described in “The Substitute”?
   A. Choosing to take action requires courage.
   B. Older people often have wisdom to share.
   C. A quiet person isn’t necessarily a shy person.
   D. Being popular isn’t as important as being kind.

3. Select two pieces of evidence from “The Substitute” that support your answer to question 2.
   - “him telling an amazing story about surviving an emergency landing”
   - “The popular kids just wrote her off”
   - “that quiet girl”
   - “she wanted to keep talking, but she felt bad for Mr. Marrero”
   - “every classmate turned to stare at her”
   - “knew it was time to blend back in or help”
   - “she took a deep breath”
   - “tell us about a time when you were on a jet that crash-landed in the ocean”