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.

*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?*

*How do you think the characters will resolve the conflict?*

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.
Read the first three paragraphs of this story.

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.

(continued)

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? ___________________________________________

What is the conflict in this story? ___________________________________________

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.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Continue reading “Black Sunday.” Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 54)

“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.

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.

from *The Prince and the Pauper*

*by Mark Twain*

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 darst thou use a poor lad like that? How darst 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.

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**

What event causes the prince to behave as he does? **Draw a box** around details that explain his actions.

How is the setting of the guarded gate important to the events? **Underline** any details that show the importance of the setting to the events.
Part 4: Guided Practice

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 soldier 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.

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L6: Analyzing the Interaction of Story Elements

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