

English Department Summer Reading Study Guide. Numbered questions are to be answered in writing.

All stories depend on conflict, a struggle between opposing forces. Uncertainty about the outcome of the conflict, known as suspense, keeps readers interested in the story. The author will encourage readers to identify imaginatively with one or more characters (the protagonist/s). All literary protagonists want something. They try to achieve a goal or bring about a certain state of affairs. These main characters will be opposed by antagonists who will work to limit, slow or hinder their success. Antagonists may include other characters, forces of nature or even limiting personality traits within the protagonist.

1. Who is the protagonist? What does he/she want?
2. Who is the antagonist? What does he/she want?
3. What is the conflict in this story?

Characters have personalities. A “round” character is a multi-sided combination of good and bad qualities, like a real human being. A “flat” character, also known as a stereotype, is one dimensional, an exaggerated representation of a particular good or bad quality. Think about some general personality traits that might characterize the protagonist and antagonist. Here is a list of suggestions that could describe character. You may choose items from this list or use other terms that you choose.

friendly	ambitious	judgmental	kindly
introspective	humorous	quarrelsome	optimistic
greedy	malicious	reserved	honest
belligerent	pretentious	serious	rebellious
cheerful	arrogant	carefree	vulgar
ill-tempered	unemotional	generous	callous
principled	independent	cautious	cynical

4. List two words describing the character of the protagonist. Then, for each word, copy three quotations from the text that support this judgment of the character.
5. List one word describing the character of the antagonist. Copy three relevant quotations.

The largest part of a story is the middle section, the “complication,” where conflicts intensify. To heighten suspense, the author has to insure that the protagonist does not succeed too easily or fail too quickly. The usual way of maintaining tension is by structuring the plot so that some incidents point toward a favorable solution for the protagonist while other events suggest defeat.

6. Paraphrase five incidents in the plot that work towards success for the protagonist.

7. Paraphrase five incidents that hinder or slow the protagonist's progress.

The "climax" is the event that insures success or failure for the protagonist. From this point the story focuses on the success or failure of the protagonist.

8. What is the climax of this story?