LESSON 5
STUDENT LESSON SUMMARY
COPYMASTER

Elements of Plot

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

plot: the series of events in a story
exposition: the first stage of plot, introducing the story’s characters and setting
conflict: a struggle between opposing forces; drives the narrative forward
rising action: events that develop and build conflict, increasing interest
climax: the high point of the conflict, when the tension is greatest
falling action: events that result from the decision or action of the climax
resolution: the final outcomes in the story

HERE’S HOW

Step 1: Identify the exposition. The plot’s exposition introduces the story’s characters, setting, and basic situation.

EXAMPLE Snow White lives with her stepmother, a wicked queen, who is so vain that she insists on being the most beautiful woman in the land.

Step 2: Look for the conflict. The important conflict is the biggest problem or struggle that the story presents—usually to the main character.

EXAMPLE Snow White’s beauty eventually outshines that of the queen. The jealous queen hires a hunter to kill Snow White.

Step 3: Observe how the rising action develops. The rising action is the events in the story that enlarge the conflict and increase reader interest.

EXAMPLE The hunter tells Snow White to run away. She hides in a cottage with seven little men. The queen tricks her into biting a poison apple. The men chase the queen to her death and guard Snow White’s sleeping body.

Step 4: Look for the climax. The climax is the turning point of the story.

EXAMPLE A handsome prince learns about the sleeping princess. He finds Snow White and kisses her. She wakes from her deathlike sleep.

Step 5: Recognize falling action and resolution. After the turning point, the original conflict decreases or resolves, although new ones may be introduced.

EXAMPLE Snow White marries the prince and they live happily ever after.

Step 6: Understand how the plot elements affect meaning. Does the plot affect your emotions or make you laugh? How? Events in the plot may give an insight.

EXAMPLE The plot of Snow White shows that jealousy can be poisonous and goodness is a path to happiness, although it can be a bumpy one.