Conflict Study Guide

At the end of this unit you will be able to:
* define conflict
* point out the difference between internal and external conflict

The plots of most stories centers around conflict. A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. There are two main kinds of conflict in stories: ***external*** and ***internal***.

External Conflict

A struggle between a character and an outside force is an external conflict. Characters may face several types of outside forces. The outside force may be another character. It may be the character and the community. The outside force may also be forces of nature. For example, a story might be the main character struggling against the arctic cold.

* Man against man.
* Man against nature.
* Man against society

Internal Conflict

A struggle that takes place in a character's mind is called internal conflict. For example, a character may have to decide between right and wrong or between two solutions to a problem. Sometimes, a character must deal with his or her own mixed feelings or emotions.

*Man against himself.

The Importance of Conflict

Conflict is necessary to every story. In short stories, there is usually one major conflict. In longer stories, there could be several conflicts.

Conflict adds excitement and suspense to a story. The conflict usually becomes clear to the beginning of a story. As the plot unfolds, the reader starts to wonder what will happen next and how the characters will handle the situation. Many readers enjoy trying to predict the final outcome.

The excitement usually builds to a high point, or climax. The climax is the turning point of the story. Something has happened to resolve the conflict.

Reading for Conflict

As you read a story:
1. identify the main characters
2. decide what conflict(s) they face
3. look for steps they take to settle the conflict(s)
4. see if the steps cause other conflict
5. watch for clues and try to predict what the characters will do
6. enjoy the buildup of suspense
7. put yourself in the story
8. decide if you would have solved the conflict(s) in the same way