

What Makes a Good Story?

Can the hero save the city from danger? Will the lost hikers find their way home? Good stories have the power to capture our attention and to keep us wondering about what will happen next. Read on to discover the parts behind all good stories, whether those stories unfold on television, in conversations with friends, or on the pages of our favorite books.



READING STANDARDS
B.1.1.A.1 Analyze character
B.1.1.B.1 Analyze the setting
B.1.1.C.1 Analyze elements of the plot

Part 1: Parts of a Story

Think about two very different stories. One is about a city detective in charge of solving an important case. The other is about strange aliens that invade the planet. Even stories as different as these have something in common—the parts that make them tick. These parts are the setting, characters, and conflicts, which are described in the chart.

BASIC PARTS	EXAMPLES
<p>SETTING Setting is the time and place of the action. The time can be the past, present, or future. It can also be a particular season or time of day. The place can be anywhere in the world or in your imagination.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a rainy day on the planet Venus • a tropical island in the present day • a city park in the year 2086 • a palace in England in 1547
<p>CHARACTERS Characters are the people, animals, or imaginary creatures who take part in the action. The most important characters are main characters. Less important characters are minor characters.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 12-year-old girl • a wizard with mysterious powers • a baseball coach • a family's pet dog
<p>CONFLICT A conflict is the struggle that a character faces in a story. The struggle can be between characters or between a character and a force of nature, such as the weather. A conflict can also be within a character, as he or she struggles with difficult choices.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A girl is made fun of by her friends. (girl vs. friends) • A family seeks shelter from a storm. (family vs. storm) • A boy must decide between telling the truth and lying to protect his friend's feelings. (telling the truth vs. lying)

