

# Plot

The PLOT can be defined as the main events of the novel, short story, poem or play, and is often seen as synonymous with STORY. But in the word story, the emphasis is on the chronological sequence of events; in plot, it is on the causal links between the different events, on the way character, action and theme are woven together.

## **Related words**

- An INTRIGUE [in'tri:g] is a scheme secretly plotted by one of the characters. (e.g. Iago's plot against Othello)
- The sequence of events

Here are some of the major aspects of plots:

## 1. PROTAGONISTS

In most plots there is a PROTAGONIST [prəu'tægənɪst] (the main character, also called HERO or HEROINE), and often an ANTAGONIST [æn'tægənɪst] (the character he or she is in conflict with). The word ANTIHERO is used to describe a protagonist who lacks the heroic and noble qualities usually associated with a hero.

The CONFLICT which the protagonist is involved in, and which constitutes the basis of the plot, can also be a struggle against fate, society, nature or his/her own self.

## 2. UNITY OF ACTION

According to Aristotle, all the different incidents, events or episodes should contribute to the artistic effect of the whole, which should have a beginning, a middle and an end. The plot should "imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if anyone of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed."

Yet many plays or novels have DOUBLE PLOTS or SUBPLOTS.

e.g. | the Laertes-Hamlet conflict in *Hamlet*.

## **Related words**

- the main story-line  
the subsidiary / secondary story-line
- the underplot / the counterplot / the minor plot  
The mainplot and the subplot can be interwoven.



