

# The Strange Orchid

Based on the story by H. G. Wells

Part 1

Arthur Wedderburn was a lonely man, and his life was very boring. To pass the time, he had his own greenhouse, and he liked to go to orchid sales. Buying orchids gave him a secret thrill. He could buy a brown, dried-up root, not knowing what kind of orchid it would be. Then, if he was lucky, it might grow into a spectacular new kind of flower.

One morning Wedderburn was eating breakfast with his housekeeper, Lucille. As he wiped his mouth, he said, "I have a feeling that something is going to happen to me today."

"Oh, don't say that!" she said. Lucille always thought that saying "something happening" meant trouble.

"I don't mean that anything bad will happen," he said. "It's just that there's an orchid sale in London today. They're selling some plants that a man named Batten found in the East Indies." He continued, "I wonder why nothing exciting ever happens to *me*. Things happen to other people. Batten was only 36 when he died. He died shortly after finding the orchids. By then, he'd been married twice. He almost died of malaria four times. Once he was shot with a poisoned dart. In the end, jungle leeches killed him."

"I'd rather not have so much excitement," said Lucille.

Part 2

When Wedderburn got back from the orchid sale, he showed Lucille several orchid roots that he had bought. As he touched one of the roots, he said, "No one knows what kind of orchid this is, but it was the last one that Batten ever collected."

"It looks like a spider playing dead," said Lucille, making a face.

Wedderburn smiled and said, "It may turn out to be a very beautiful flower." Then Wedderburn frowned a little. "They found Batten lying dead in a swamp with one of these orchids crushed under his body. He'd

*(Continued on next page)*

Use with page 311.



## The Strange Orchid *(Continued)*

had some kind of fever, and I guess he must have fainted. By the time they found him, jungle leeches had drained every drop of blood from his body.”

Part 3

When it began to grow, Wedderburn brought Lucille out to the greenhouse to see it. “This is a bud,” he pointed out. “Soon there will be leaves over here, and those little things are roots that grow above the soil. Perhaps it will make me famous.”

After one more visit, Lucille refused to go into the greenhouse anymore. By then, the outside roots of the orchid had grown about a foot long. They reminded her of the long arms that reached out after her in her worst nightmares.

Part 4

Some days later, Wedderburn went inside the greenhouse and noticed a rich, sweet smell in the air. He hurried over to the orchid, which now held three great white blossoms. Wedderburn was so happy, but he also felt strange, almost dizzy. He took a step—the whole greenhouse seemed to swing sideways as he fainted.

At 4:30, Lucille had tea ready, but Wedderburn did not come in as usual. She went to the greenhouse, opened the door, and called his name. Then she saw Wedderburn lying on the brick floor, the outside roots of the plant clinging to his chin, neck, and hands. A drop of blood trickled down his cheek.

Lucille snapped off two of the leech-like roots, and their sap dripped red. The smell of the blossoms began to make her dizzy. She knew she must not faint, so she quickly dragged Wedderburn and the clinging orchid outside. With garden shears, she cut the sucker roots. Wedderburn was free, but he was very pale and was bleeding.

Upstairs, the next day, Wedderburn was bright and lively, talking about his adventure. At last, something had happened to him.

Use with page 311.

### Resource Links

1 RDI Book 1: p. 371

SAM Keyword: Plot

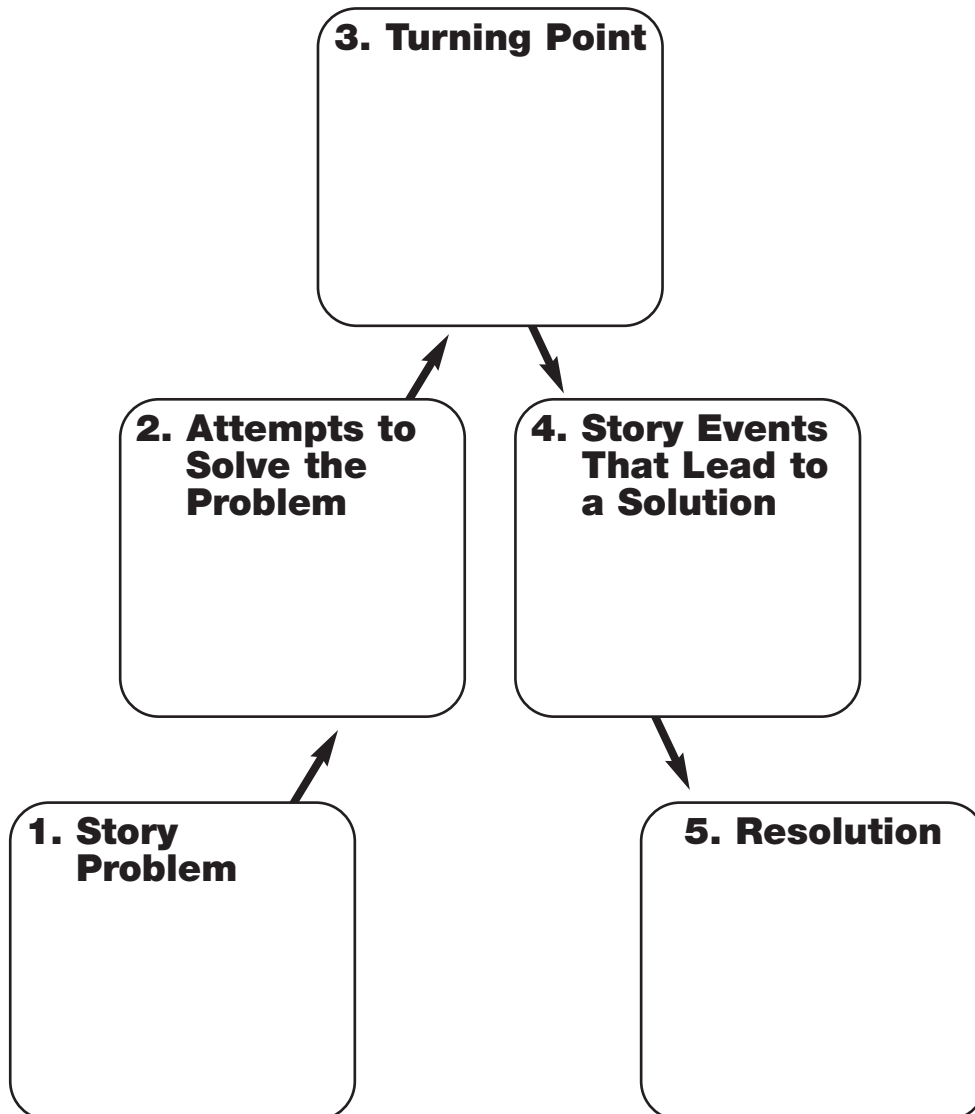


## Analyze Plot

The **plot** includes all of the events that take place in a story. A story's plot often focuses on a problem that the main character faces and tries to solve. The *turning point* is usually the most exciting part of the plot.

Fill in this chart to help you analyze the plot.

Passage: \_\_\_\_\_



Use with page 311.

