There was once a poor man who had a son, and as the son grew up his father sent him out to look for work. The son traveled about looking for a place, and at last met with a man who arranged to take him as a shepherd. The man gave the boy a flute, and sent him out with the sheep to see whether he was fit for this kind of work. The boy worked hard, very unlike many lazy fellows. He drove
his sheep from place to place and played his flute all day long. Among the flock of sheep there was a lamb with golden fleece. Whenever the boy played his flute, the lamb began to dance. The boy grew very fond of this lamb and decided to ask his boss if he could have the lamb rather than his wages. When he returned home that evening, his boss waited at the gate. When he saw the sheep all there and all well-fed, he was very pleased. He agreed to hire the boy and began to discuss wages. The boy said he would watch the sheep for a year if he could have the lamb with the golden fleece. The farmer was very fond of the lamb himself, but knowing what a good shepherd the boy was, he agreed to give him the lamb.

The year passed quickly and the lad received the lamb for his wages. He set off home with it. As they journeyed, night set in just as he reached a village. The boy went to a farmhouse to ask for a night’s lodging. Now there was a daughter in the house who when she saw the lamb with the golden fleece determined to steal it. About midnight she stole into the room where the shepherd was sleeping, but the moment she touched the lamb, her hand stuck hard-and-fast to its fleece. When the lad got up he found her stuck to the lamb. He could not separate
them, and as he could not leave his lamb he took them both.

As he passed the third door from the house where he had spent the night he took out his flute and began to play. Then the lamb began to dance, and on the wool the girl. Round the corner a woman was putting bread into the oven. She looked up and saw the lamb dancing and on its wool the girl. Seizing the baking shovel in order to frighten the girl, she rushed out and shouted, “Get away home with you, don’t make such a fool of yourself.” As the girl continued dancing the woman called out, “What, won’t you obey?” and tried to knock the girl off the lamb with the shovel, which at once stuck to the girl, and the woman to the shovel, and the lamb carried them all off.

As they went they came to the church. Here the boy began to play again, the lamb began to dance and on the lamb’s fleece the girl, and on the girl’s back the shovel, and at the end of the shovel, the woman. Just then a priest was coming out of a church and seeing what was going on began to scold them, and told them go home and not be so foolish. As his words were of no avail, he grabbed the woman with his cane, when to his surprise the cane stuck to the
woman, and he to the end of his cane.

With this nice company, the lad went on. Towards dark, he reached the royal city and took lodgings at the end of the town for the night with an old woman. “What news is there?” said he. The old woman told him they were in a very great sorrow, for the king’s daughter was very ill, and no physician could heal her. “If she could be made to laugh,” said the woman, “she would get better at once.” And she went on to explain that the king had issued a proclamation that very day stating that whoever made his daughter laugh should have her for his wife and share the royal power.

The lad with the lamb could scarcely wait till daylight, so anxious was he to try his fortune. In the morning he presented himself to the king and stated his business and was very graciously received. The daughter stood in the hall at the front of the house. The lad then began to play the flute, the lamb to dance, on the lamb’s fleece the girl, on the girl’s back, the shovel, at the end of the shovel, the woman, on the woman’s back the cane, and at the end of the cane, the priest. When the princess saw this sight, she burst out laughing, which made the lamb so glad that it shook everything off its back,
and the lamb, the girl, the woman, and the priest each danced by themselves for joy.

The shepherd married the king's daughter, the priest was made court-chaplain, the woman court baker, and the girl, the lady-in-waiting to the princess.

The wedding festivities lasted more than a week, and the whole land joined in the celebration, and if the strings on the fiddle hadn’t broken, they might still be dancing now!
About Plot

**Plot** is the series of related events that make up the story.

Most plots involve resolving some kind of conflict, and proceed in this way:

- The introduction tells who the main character or characters are and what the conflict or problem is.
- Complications develop as the characters struggle with different possible solutions.
- In the climax, the main character or characters make a final decision that settles the conflict.
- The story ends with the resolution: the writer suggests what the characters feel or do, now that the conflict is over.

Developing a plot is no easy matter, especially when it comes to the climax and the resolution. (Most of us have seen—or, as kids, perhaps written ourselves!—that wonderful sentence that totally avoids the necessity of creating a climax and a resolution: “And then he woke up and it was all a dream.”)

To begin to ease your students into the skill, write the definition of plot on the chalkboard. As a preface to reading the story, lead students in a discussion of the plots in stories they’ve already read by asking questions such as the following: As the story opens, what kind of problem is the main character having? What kind of problem is the main character having? What complications does she or he face in attempting to solve the problem? How does the character finally solve the problem? What’s the result at the end of the story?

Point out to students that story plots can involve internal and external conflicts. When a conflict is external, it is between a character and some outside person or force. Sometimes the conflict is internal. A character may be wrestling with him- or herself.

The reproducible activities in this lesson will help students summarize what they’ve learned about plot and to plan plots for stories of their own.
This story has a merry plot.

**Introduction**
A young man finds a job as a shepherd. While diligently working, he plays his flute and becomes fond of the golden-fleeced lamb that dances to it. His employer loves the lamb, too, but eventually gives it to the boy, who heads toward home with it.

**Complications**
Along the way, various grouchy people reach out to touch the dancing lamb and become stuck to it or to the person who touched it previously. The shepherd seems happily accepting of all this and moves on, playing his flute, while the lamb’s captives struggle to escape. But will they ever succeed?

**Climax**
The young man, hearing that anyone who makes the king’s ailing daughter laugh will get to marry her, decides to go to the king’s house and play the flute. The daughter can’t help but laugh at the sight of all those people swinging about helplessly on the lamb’s back. And the lamb is so thrilled by her response that he shakes everyone off. Naturally, the shepherd and the king’s daughter get married.

**Resolution**
Their problem now over, the grumpy people who were stuck to the lamb cheer up, and get important jobs in the royal household.
That’ll Teach You a Lesson!

In stories with well thought-out plots, the main characters learn something important or change in some significant way.

In the space below, tell what you think the characters learn. Then discuss your conclusions with your classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERS AND STORY</th>
<th>LESSONS THE CHARACTERS LEARN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Shepherd,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in “The Lamb With</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Golden Fleece”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A story’s plot is closely related to its setting, that is, to the time and place in which the story happens.

Now imagine that “The Lamb With the Golden Fleece” is a story set in today’s world, even perhaps in your own city or state. How might the plot change? Use your imagination as you fill in the gaps below.

In the introduction, we meet a young man who works as

a _______________________________ , and is gifted at playing the

(Example: flight attendant)

______________________________ . As a reward for ______________________

(Example: piano)

______________________________ , the young man is given a lamb with

golden fleece. As he heads homeward, complications set in: people try
to ______________________________ the lamb, but instead

become entrapped in __________________________ . The climax occurs

when the young man gets everyone to __________________________

and is rewarded with __________________________ .

In the resolution of the story, our hero is so ________________________ that he
gives the lamb __________________________ .
Choose one of your favorite fiction stories—a different story from the one you just read. Then summarize the plot. At the bottom of this page, tell what you especially like about the book.

1. TITLE OF BOOK ____________________________________________
   Author ____________________________________________

2. PLOT SUMMARY
   In the introduction, ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   Here are the complications that occur: ________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   In the climax of the story, _________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
   This is the resolution of the story: _________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________

3. I like the book because _________________________________
   ________________________________________
   ________________________________________
Changing an Existing Plot

If you give just a slight tweak to a story—a little change to one part of the plot—the story will take a new direction. Try your hand at changing the plot of the story you just read.

Write your ideas in the boxes below. Then read them to a small group of classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Plot</th>
<th>New Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Complications</td>
<td>2. Complications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Climax</td>
<td>3. Climax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Resolution</td>
<td>4. Resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please Do Eavesdrop!

You’ve probably had the following experience: You’re out walking or standing in line someplace. You hear someone you don’t know telling about something that happened to her or him. You just hear a tiny part of the story, though, because you or the teller moves on. Yet the part you did hear intrigues you. You wonder what the whole story is.

Choose one of the five overheard remarks below. Then use it as the basis of a story plot. On the lines at the bottom of the page, write the outline of the story. Share your outline with some classmates and get their input.

Outline of My Story

Introduction __________________________________________________________

Complications ________________________________________________________

Climax ______________________________________________________________

Resolution ___________________________________________________________
Plot Storyboard

Creating a storyboard can help you think through a plot. Draw a picture in each box that illustrates each part of your plot. Then use the storyboard to write your story.

Now, on a separate sheet of paper, write the story.
Making Improvements

Like all writers, now and then you’re going to write a story that just doesn’t turn out the way you wanted it to. What went wrong? Can you fix it? Maybe so, if you take another look at the plot. Try the procedure that follows.

1. Briefly summarize the plot of your story.

2. Tell what part of the plot you like best.

3. What is it that you don’t like about your plot? Be specific.

4. Consult with a classmate. What are her or his ideas about how to improve that part of the plot?

5. On a separate sheet of paper, revise your story, using the ideas for improvement.