

# Plotting with the Grinch

by Mary Blow

**Overview:** You can use many other Christmas books, but I chose to use *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* by Dr. Seuss to review elements of plot with my students.

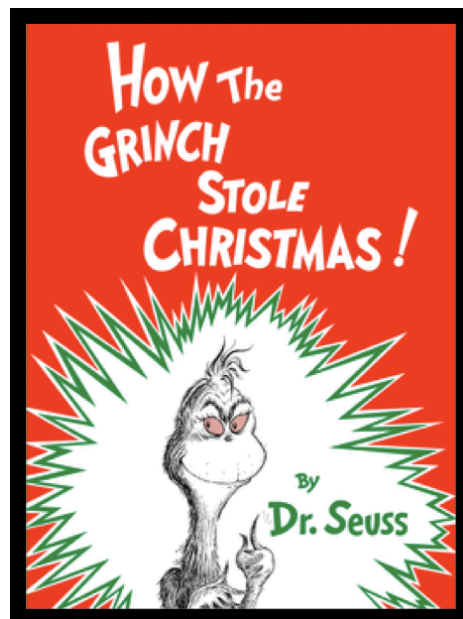
**I can statement:** I can apply my understanding of academic vocabulary to analyze how the author develops plot.

**Grades:** 6-8

**Common Core Standards:** RL.3, L.6, W.3

## Materials

- *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* by Dr. Seuss
- List of discussion questions
- Grinch Gram Hearts (reproducible or die cuts)



## Before Reading

Think about and discuss the question: What does it mean when a person is described as having a big heart?

## During Reading

Read *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* to the students. Students listen, identifying the elements of plot and thinking about the purpose these elements serve in the development of the story.

## After Reading Discussion Questions

Students can work in groups to discuss the questions. However, I didn't have a lot of time, so I asked a question, provided time for think-pair-share, and then students responded. Since this is their first experience with applying academic vocabulary to analyzing a story, they were encouraged to reference their notes during the discussions.

1. Identify the exposition in the "*How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*" [*The main character, the Grinch, is introduced. The setting is Mt. Crumpit, just north of Who-ville. The main conflict is that the Grinch hates Christmas and wants to stop it.*]
2. Why is the Mt. Crumpit setting important to the development of the plot or story. [*It is isolated, revealing that the Grinch is aloof. He doesn't like people. He lives 3,000 feet above Who-ville, which suggests that he looks down on the Whos as though they are beneath him.*]
3. How does the settings contribute to the mood? [*The Mt. Crumpit setting creates a desolate, eerie mood. It is 3,000 feet above Who-ville, so high up that it would deter anyone from visiting. Despite being the holiday season, it lacks Christmas decorations.*]

*It is snow covered and cold, a reflection of the cold, heartless Grinch. In contrast, Who-ville is peaceful and welcoming. The homes are decorated for Christmas and the people are peacefully sleeping. The settings combined are a reflection of the characters' hearts.]*

4. What types of conflicts are revealed in the story? *[Man versus society is revealed when the Grinch dislikes the tradition of celebrating Christmas and wants to prevent Christmas from coming. Man versus self is depicted at the end of the story when the Grinch's puzzles over the Whos' happiness despite his stealing Christmas. His hatred toward Christmas changes when he realizes that it is much more than presents.]*
5. What does the Grinch's attempts to solve his problem reveal about his character? *[He is untrustworthy and conniving. He makes a Santy Claus suit to pass himself off as Santa Claus. When he can't find any reindeer, he disguises Max as a reindeer and forces his dog to be a part of his evil plan.]*
6. What other details reveal that the Grinch is a mean character? *[The Grinch hates Christmas and all the Whos down in Who-ville. He is described as having a "sour, Grinchy frown," which suggests he is miserable all the time. He breaks into the Whos houses and steals their gifts. He lies to Cindy-Lou.]*
7. Cindy-Lou is a flat character, an innocent little girl. Why do you think the author wrote the story with an innocent child questioning the evil Grinch as he steals the gifts? *[Having the Grinch interact with an innocent child character emphasizes the Grinch's evilness or meanness.]*
8. Which part of the story is the climax? *[The climax occurs when the Grinch breaks into the home and steals the gifts. He escapes, leaving the reader waiting for the Whos to find out that he stole Christmas.]*
9. In the falling action, the main character usually learns a lesson (theme). What lesson does the Grinch learn? *[The Grinch learns that you cannot prevent Christmas from coming. He realizes that it does not come from a store. It is found in our hearts, our values, and our beliefs shared with family, which is why the Whos are singing despite the lack of presents.]*
10. The resolution or ending of the story often gives you a peek into the future. What can you infer about the Grinch's future? *[The Grinch is not only having Christmas dinner with the Whos, but he is carving the roast beast, a food he detests, but obviously now enjoys. We can infer that he becomes a part of the Who-ville society and becomes friends with the Whos.]*
11. Is the Grinch a static character or a dynamic character? *[The Grinch is a dynamic character. After his heart grows three sizes, he changes from mean to amiable. He returns the gifts, trees, and food, and then he joins the Whos in their Christmas celebration.]*

12. The Grinch's heart grows three sizes on Christmas day. What does this symbolize?  
(A person with a big heart is kind, generous, and thoughtful. The Grinch's growing heart symbolizes these positive characteristics and that he has changed.)

### Grinch Grams Extension Activity

Students send Grinch Grams, a gift of words, this holiday season to their classmates. They learn that words have the power to make hearts grow – just like the Grinch's heart grew. Have them draw classmates' names. Give each student a heart. The hearts on my bulletin board are made with die cuts that I triple layered (red, gold, and white) to symbolize how the Grinch's heart grew three sizes. You certainly can do this, but if you want to save class time, download "Grinch Gram Hearts" to use in your classroom.



The students think about the person whose name they drew and write one positive comment, a sentence or two, on the heart. As an example, I created Grinch Grams for my homeroom students and put them on my hallway bulletin board for the holidays. When students are finished, they give their hearts to their classmates. My sixth graders love to decorate lockers on birthdays and holidays, so they jump on the opportunity to decorate their lockers with the Grinch grams.

Below are other Christmas picture books that you might like use in your middle school classroom while exploring literary elements.

- *Christmas Day in the Morning* by Pearl S. Buck, illustrated by Mark Buehner
- *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* by Susan Wojciechowski, illustrated by P.J. Lynch
- *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry, illustrated by P.J. Lynch
- *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Andersen, illustrated by Rachel Isadora
- [Owl Moon](#) by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr
- *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg
- *Christmas in the Trenches* by John McCutcheon, illustrated by Henri Sorensen
- *Christmas Tapestry* by Patricia Polacco
- *Christmas from Heaven: The True Story of the Berlin Candy Bombers* by Tom Brokaw, illustrated by Robert T. Barrett
- *A New Coat for Anna* by Harriet Ziefert
- [Home for Christmas](#) by Jan Brett