

## LESSON | Plotting Your Story

What makes a good page-turner? Unpack the finer points of storytelling with author Sayantani DasGupta.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will apply plot terms to a story and plot their own stories, paying attention to character growth.

### TIME

45 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Plot Elements video at [scholastic.com/writingthefuture](https://www.scholastic.com/writingthefuture)
- Plot It Out activity sheet
- Read-aloud book by Sayantani DasGupta

### BOOKS BY SAYANTANI DASGUPTA

- *The Serpent's Secret*
- *Game of Stars*

### Supporting All Learners

#### → Level up

Ask students to think of another way to diagram plot. Could a plot ever be represented with a spiral? A staircase?

#### → Level down

Have students include fewer plot labels (for example: introduction, problem, solution, and conclusion).

#### → To support English language learners

Preview terms: exposition, rising action, turning point, etc. While you read aloud, stop and remind students of the terms as you reach relevant plot points.

**1 Show** the video of author Sayantani DasGupta discussing how she comes up with plots for her stories.

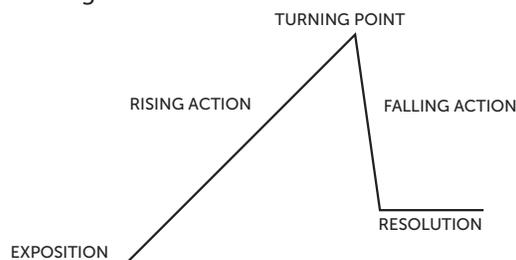
**2 Read** aloud a portion of a book by Sayantani DasGupta, if possible. Ask what connections students noticed between what the author shared in the video and the sample of her writing you read. Tell students that later in the lesson, they will come up with ideas for their own stories, but first they will review what makes an engaging plot.

**3 Remind** students that characters often change in response to the plot. Can students think of a time they or a character became stronger, meaner, kinder, more cautious, less shy, etc., based on what happened to them (or what they did)?

**4 Review** the plot terms with the following exercise, making an “auditory diagram” that shows the level of dramatic tension and excitement occurring at each plot stage:

- Model saying *exposition* in a whisper, *rising action* in a regular voice that gets louder, shouting *turning point*, saying *falling action* in a regular voice that gets lower, and whispering *resolution*.
- Have the class mimic this “auditory diagram” a few times as a group.

**5 Draw** a visual plot diagram on the board with no words. Ask how the diagram connects to the auditory model. Have students figure out which plot terms go where.



Check out an interview with Sayantani DasGupta at [scholastic.com/writingthefuture](https://www.scholastic.com/writingthefuture).

**6 Use** plot points from a book the class read recently (or another story the class knows well) to annotate the diagram, discussing as you write. For each segment, ask the class to characterize the main character’s feelings or personality at that point in the story (“curious,” “shy,” etc.). To go further for older students, explain that *exposition* includes characters and setting, and *rising action* includes tension and conflict.

**7 Distribute** the Plot It Out activity sheet. Review the completed sheets as a class. Tell students they will now plan their own original stories. (If needed, students can first use the Find Your Story! activity sheet—or another storytelling organizer—to help them think of ideas.) Remind them that during story planning, they can go “out of order,” i.e., they might think of the turning point or rising action first, then fill in the exposition.

**8 Wrap up** by having students share their ideas in small groups. Reconvene as a class to discuss and share.

### EXTENSION

Have students write the story they plotted. They can begin with a planning chart for characters and setting, then outline, draft, revise, share with a peer, and polish.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# PLOT IT OUT

Use this planner to practice identifying the story elements you've learned.

**PART A** List two things in each box: plot stage and how the character is feeling. Use the Plot Terms box on the right to help you label the story.

## PLOT TERMS

- Exposition
- Rising Action
- Turning Point
- Falling Action
- Resolution

**PLOT STAGE**

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**CHARACTER IS FEELING**

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**Riley had the best job.** Her friend Jonah was on vacation, and she was feeding Jonah's hamster, Twister.

Riley laughed when she saw the note Jonah had taped on the shelf. It had a big red arrow on it pointing to the food. She grabbed the food and opened the cage. In the blink of an eye, Twister climbed out of the cage and dashed out of the room!

Riley ran through the house looking everywhere, but there was no sign of Twister. *Oh no, she thought. I can't lose Jonah's pet on the first day!* The more she searched, the more panicked she became. She was terrified that Twister was lost forever. Her heart started pounding so hard that it hurt her chest.

She decided to try to be brave. She forced herself to take deep breaths and think confident thoughts. Pretty soon, she had an idea. She found a shoebox in Jonah's closet, put some food inside, and placed it on the floor.

Out of nowhere, Twister ran down the hall and right into the box!

Riley put Twister in his cage and closed the door tightly.

"Now we won't have to give Jonah bad news!" she said to Twister with a sigh of relief.

**PLOT STAGE**

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**CHARACTER IS FEELING**

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**PLOT STAGE**

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**CHARACTER IS FEELING**

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**PLOT STAGE**

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**CHARACTER IS FEELING**

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**PLOT STAGE**

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**CHARACTER IS FEELING**

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**PART B** On a separate sheet of paper, write one sentence about what Riley learned and how she changed as a result of the conflict in this story. Then create your own story using the five stages of plot. Be sure that your character changes as the plot advances.