Lesson Skill: Identifying elements of plot structure

Strand Reading—fiction

SOL 6.5
7.5
8.5

Materials

- A fiction book that students have read and that follows the basic plot structure
- Copies of the attached Narrative Plot Structure worksheet
- Short stories for student reading from which student groups may choose
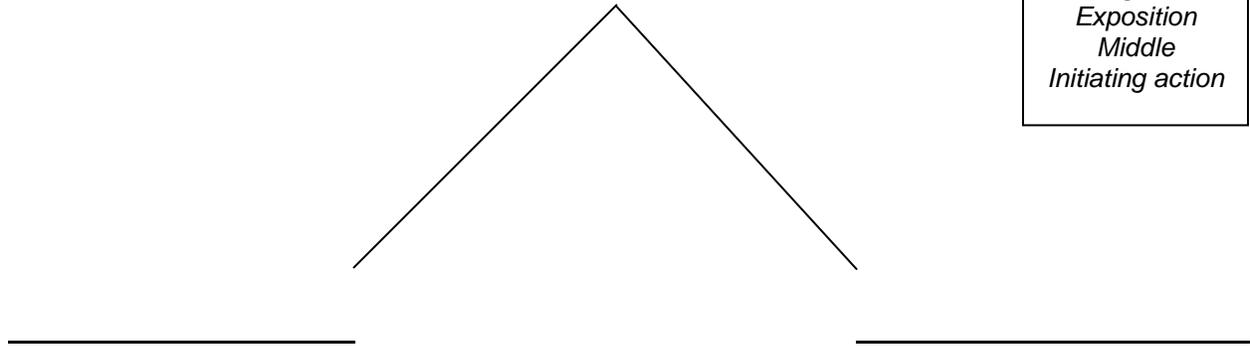
Lesson

1. Ask students to think about the selected novel that they recently read. Ask the following questions:
   - What information about the book did you find out in the very beginning? (Answers should include such things as the characters' names, problems, where and/or when the story takes place.)
   - How would you have felt about the book if you had not gotten this information in the beginning?

2. Explain that the first part of a story is called the "Exposition" or "Initiating action," and it is here that the characters, setting, and conflict are revealed. Review the meaning of the terms *characters, setting,* and *conflict,* as needed.

3. Explain that most stories follow a specific pattern known as a *plot*. Distribute copies of the Narrative Plot Structure worksheet, and have students fill in names of the parts. Review with students the various parts of the diagram, but focus mainly on the Exposition or Initiating action.

4. Put students into groups of three, and have each group read a short story of their choice.

5. After groups have read their story, allow them time to identify the characters, setting, and conflict and write the data on their worksheets.

6. Have students switch stories with another group and do the same activity again.

7. Lead a discussion about narrative plot structure, asking the following questions:
   - What would a story be like if the characters, setting, and conflict were not revealed in the Exposition?
   - How does it help the reader to find out this information in the beginning?

Narrative Plot Structure

<table>
<tr><td>Word Bank</td></tr>
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1. The line shown below is a diagram of a plot. Label the parts of the plot diagram, using the eight terms in the word bank at right.

Word Bank
End
Rising action
Climax
Resolution
Beginning
Falling action
Exposition
Middle
Initiating action

2. After reading the short story, fill in the chart below.

Title of Story	
Characters	
Setting	
Conflict	

3. After reading the second short story, fill in the chart below.

Title of Story	
Characters	
Setting	
Conflict	