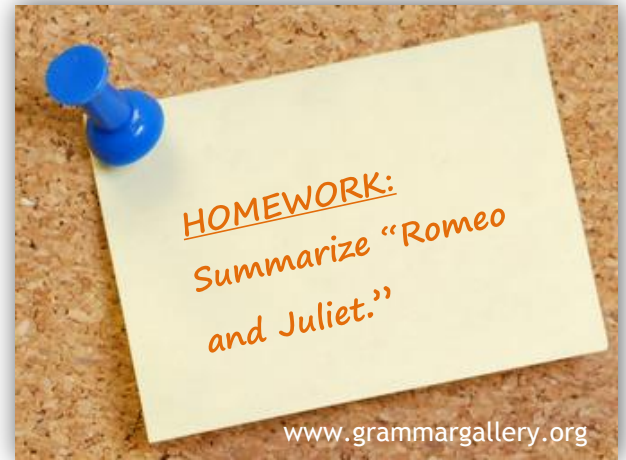


Summarizing a Plot

Academic Support Resources for the Common Core State Standards

As students deepen their understanding of literature and literary terms, they are confronted with the issue of plot—the way in which a story or drama unfolds in a series of episodes. The importance of plot is reflected in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Beginning in grade 6, for example, the standards for Reading (Literature; see RI.6.3 and RI.6.5) require students to consider the way in which a plot unfolds and the overall structure of a plot.

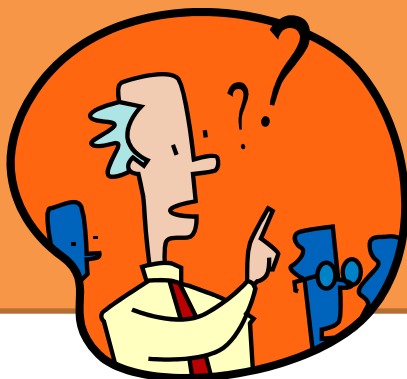


By the time they are in high school, students are asked to summarize and analyze plots. To satisfy the requirements of these kinds of assignments, students must understand how plots are structured and identify relevant information to briefly convey the key plot points.

When you are ready to review or relay for the first time what you are looking for when you ask students to summarize a plot, display the following pages and discuss the information. Print out a copy and encourage students to refer to this reference.

Saying Punctuation

Coming in October 2014



Grammar Gallery users ...

[Click here](#) to go to the Reading Gallery and have students practice summarizing plots.

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Summarizing a Plot

Every story or drama unfolds in a series of episodes that we call the plot. The plot refers to the way in which the author organizes the events in a story or drama. If your teacher asks you to summarize the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, you should provide relevant information that *briefly* conveys the key points of the plot. Generally, a plot contains the following five key parts.

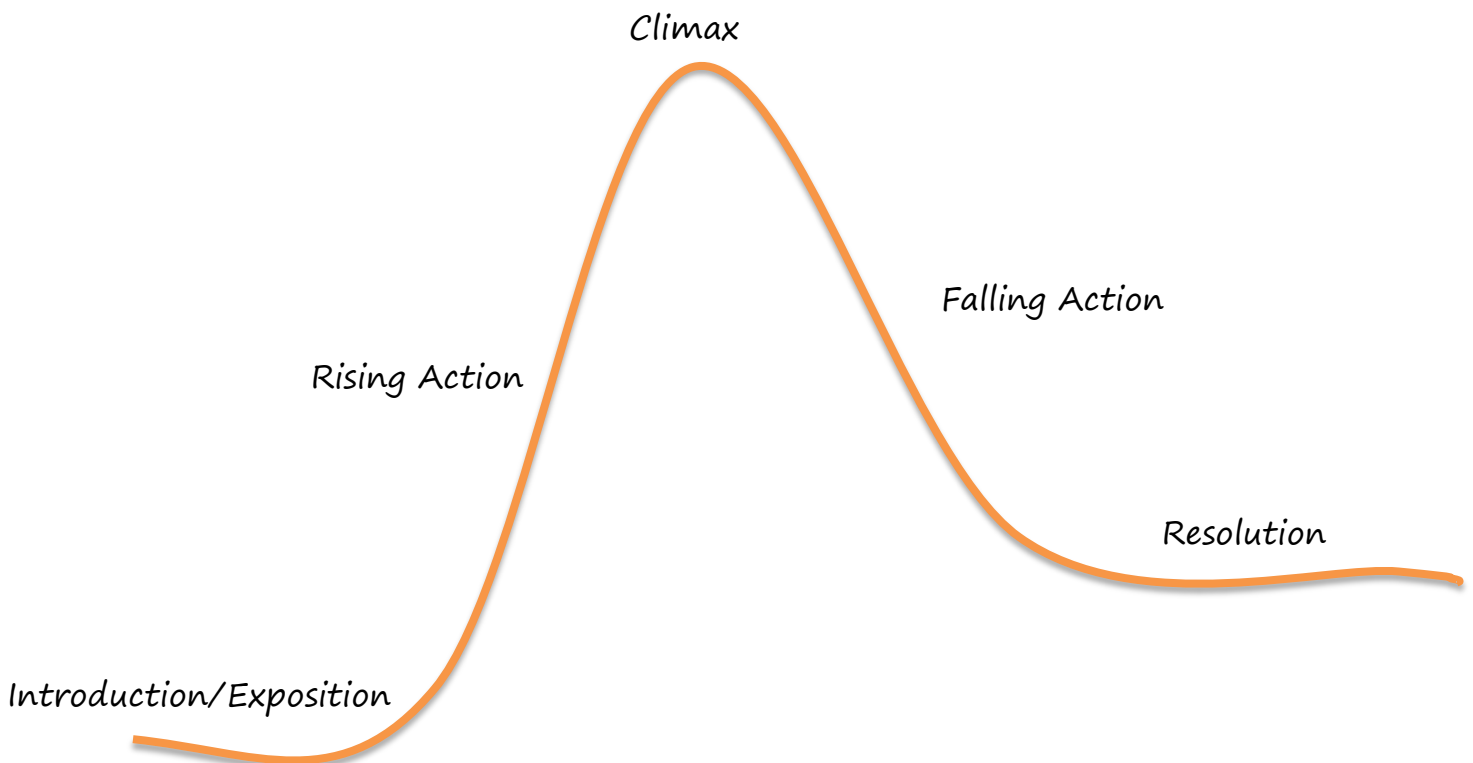
Introduction/Exposition. The author introduces the reader to the setting, characters, and problem.

Rising Action. The author presents a series of events or complications that lead to the climax of the story.

Climax. The climax is the high point and most intense part of the story.

Falling Action. This refers to the series of events that lead to the conclusion of the story.

Resolution. In this final part of the story, the author wraps up or “resolves” the points of the story and makes a final statement. Sometimes this part of the story is called the solution or conclusion.



When asked to summarize a plot, you should tell what happened in each of these parts. For *Romeo and Juliet*, your plot summary might sound something like this.

Introduction/Exposition. The play is set during the Renaissance in Verona, Italy. Two noble families—the Montagues and Capulets—are involved in a feud that constantly erupts in violence and disturbs the peace of the town.

Rising Action. Romeo, a Montague, sneaks into a feast that is attended by Juliet, a Capulet. Romeo falls in love with her at first sight. Before they are formally introduced, they kiss. When they realize they are from warring families, both are upset. Ultimately, they pursue their romance. Members of the two families get into a duel and Romeo’s friend is killed. In anger, Romeo kills Juliet’s cousin.

Climax. Juliet’s father insists she marry another man immediately. With the help of a friar, she comes up with a plan. She will drink a potion that makes it appear she is dead. Later, Romeo will come get her and they will live away from the feuding families. But the friar’s message telling Romeo about the plan never reaches him. He believes she is dead. He goes to her tomb, sees her “dead” body, and drinks poison to kill himself. When Juliet awakes and realizes what has happened, she stabs herself with Romeo’s dagger.

Falling Action. The families of Romeo and Juliet arrive and realize what has happened.

Resolution. The families agree to end their long feud.



◀ *This painting by John Opie illustrates a scene from Act IV, Scene V.*