

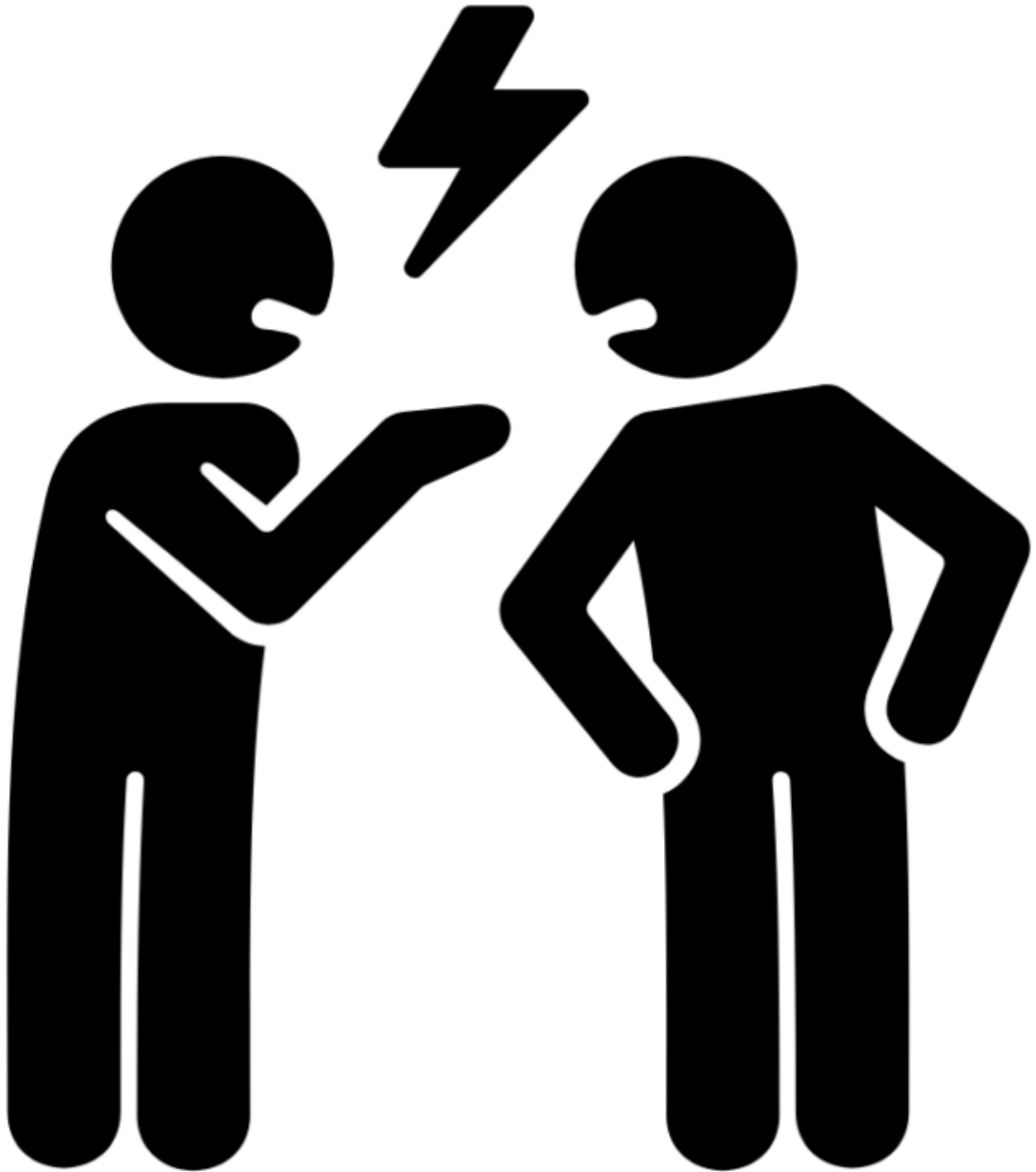


**JANICE THOMPSON, AUTHOR**

# The Role of C.O.N.F.L.I.C.T.

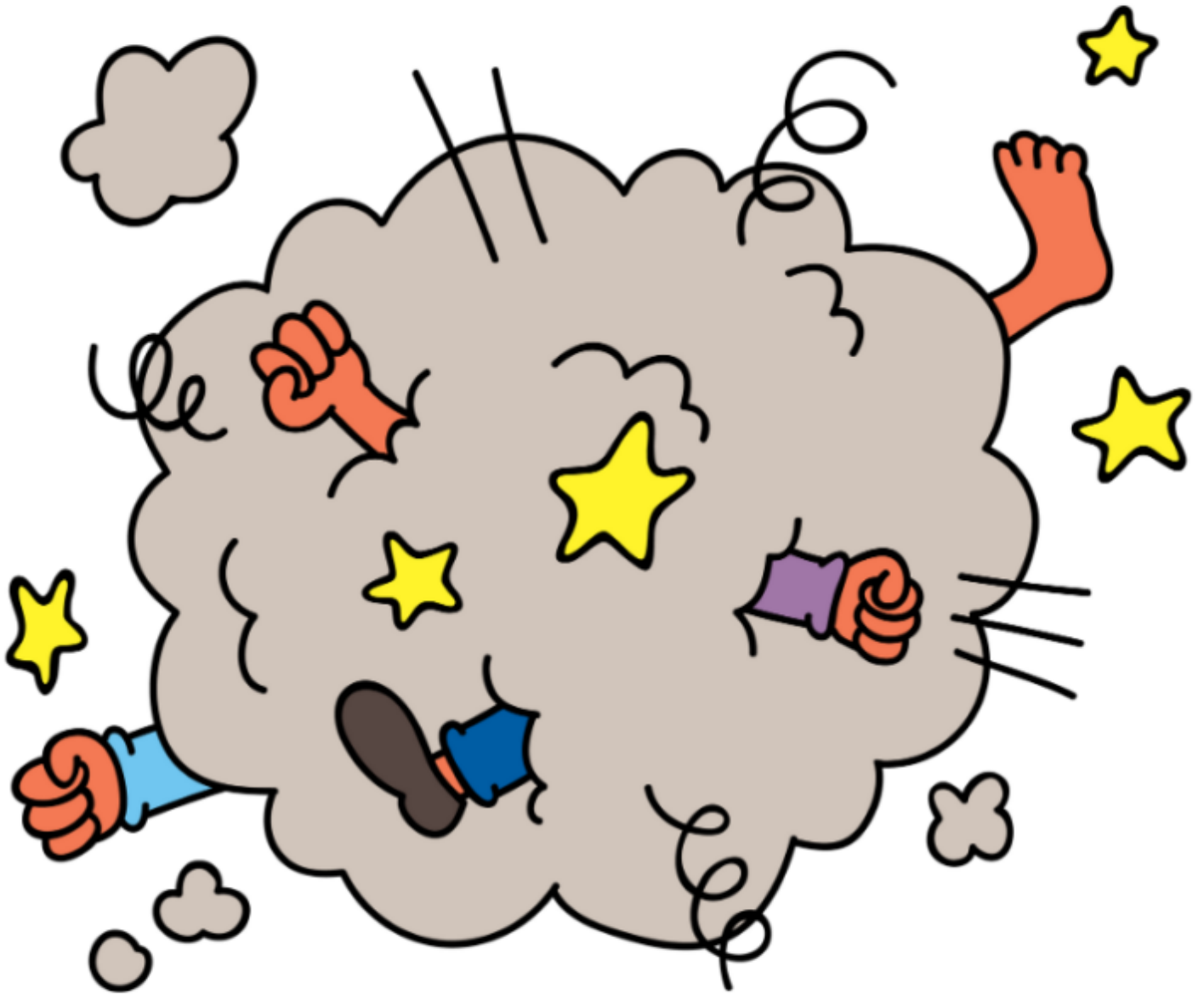
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In order to craft a story the reader won't want to put down, you must create conflict.

## **What is Conflict, Anyway?**



This might be man against man, man against nature, or any number of scenarios. But conflict is the thing. And conflict isn't always external (against a person or force). Indeed, some of the best conflicts (in character-driven novels or otherwise) are internal. In these types of struggles, the character often battles his mind/thoughts/fears.

As you consider the various types of conflict you can put your reader through, be mindful of his goals and his motivations. In fact, you might create a chart as you begin your plotting to look at each character's specific goals and motivations. These are the things that will move your plot along (and cause many twists and turns along the way).

## Ups and Downs

A [great plotline](#) moves up and down, in and out, leaving the reader guessing what's coming next. Nothing predictable or boring. You need high points and low points. And this has to start right away – with the very first line.

How you start your novel is critical because you must “hook” your reader right away. Be careful not to open with extended narrative or descriptives. These slow down the story. (The only exception to this would be your desire for a deliberate slow start, which would be rare.) In fact, your entire first paragraph should be crafted and re-crafted, to make it the best (and most interesting) it can be.

And you can't let the reader down after giving him/her a great start. Keep the action going. One way to accomplish this is to think of each chapter as a book unto itself. Each chapter has a beginning, middle and end, and each chapter ending should “tease” the reader, so that he/she doesn't put the book down.

This is quite a trick, but can be done. You should [pace the action](#), gradually building toward the climax (high point/crucial point) in the story. This is so important. Without the climax, the story will fizzle out and the reader will be extremely disappointed.

## C.O.N.F.L.I.C.T. Broken Down

# **C – Character (conflict with other characters)**

Man against man

Man against woman

Friend against friend

Parent against child Employer against employee

## **O – Obstacles (conflict with everyday obstacles)**

- Finances Health Housing Auto Job

## **N – Nature (conflict with nature)**

- Snowstorm Hurricane
- Tornado
- Volcano
- Earthquake
- Wildfire
- Extreme temperatures

## **F – Forces Unseen (conflict with forces unseen)**

- Mental Emotional Childhood issues Inner drive

## **L – Life Skills (conflict due to poor life skills)**

- Poor life skills on the job
- Poor life skills in communicating with others Poor life skills in a stressful situation
- Poor life skills in school
- Poor life skills in a social setting

## **I – Inner Desire (conflict due to unspoken inner desires)**

- Longing for more
- Secret dreams/goals
- Feelings that you're being cheated out of something Desire to be different than

you are

## **C – Change (conflict due to change)**

- Moving (from one location to another) Losing/getting a job
- Having a baby
- Getting married/breaking up
- Empty nest
- Change in family dynamic

## **T – Trauma (conflict due to trauma)**

- The death of a loved one
- Injury/accident
- Near death experience (yours or a loved one)

## **THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON THE POV CHARACTER:**

### **NEGATIVE:**

- Challenges expose our weaknesses (physical, emotional and spiritual)
- Anger
- Frustration
- Bad mood
- Deep sadness/feeling that you're missing out



- Off-handed remarks
- Withdrawal
- Strong body language
- Overcompensation (feelings of insecurity/poor life skills) Neglect (of others or self)
- Feeding your problems (with food/drugs)
- Suicidal thoughts

## **POSITIVE:**

- Strengthened inner resolve
- Determination
- Talking out your issues
- Addressing core issues
- Returning to your spiritual roots
- Acknowledging that you don't have all the answers/aren't perfect

## **WAYS TO ADVANCE PLOT/ADD CONFLICT:**

There are several ways to keep the plot moving along.

**ACTION:** A storm blows in off the gulf. Your character experiences the loss of a spouse or sibling. An injury takes place. Any or all of these "actions" would move the plot along.

**DIALOGUE:** An effective way to move the action forward is through dialogue. Let the

characters “show” the reader what’s happening through their conversations. Instead of a lengthy narrative about, say, an incoming tornado, let the frantic conversation of two characters convey the news. The pace of the story will be improved dramatically if you use this approach. And you’re advancing the story without lengthy sections of “telling.”

**NARRATIVE:** It is possible to use narrative to move the story forward, but do so carefully, avoiding passive verbs. You don’t want to “tell” the reader; you want to “show” him.

Of course, the ups and downs must all end with a satisfactory resolution. Otherwise, the reader won’t be keen on purchasing your next book.

**By JThompson**  
**March 22, 2024**

**Fiction Lessons**

Edit

**← Stop, Drop and Roll: Adding the Crisis Scene**

## Backstory Blues →

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