

Writing About a Chance Encounter

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: Notetaking, Prewriting, Drafting, Role Playing, Think-Pair-Share



WORD CONNECTIONS

The root of **encounter** is the Latin *contra-*, which means “against.” It appears in *counteract*, *contradict*, and *contrast*.

The prefix *en-* means “to bring into the condition of” or “to cause to be.” This prefix occurs in *enrage*, *encourage*, and *enact*.

The word *chance* has multiple meanings. One of its meanings is risk (to take a chance). Another is an unpredictable event (as in a chance encounter).

In Langston Hughes’s story “Thank You, M’am,” the dialogue describes a chance encounter.

“Was I bothering *you* when I turned that corner?” asked the woman.

“No’m.”

“But you put yourself in contact with *me*,” said the woman. “If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming.”

In this story, Roger’s chance encounter with Mrs. Jones may have a great impact on his life.

Story Starter

Your teacher will provide a picture for you to use to start a story that begins with a chance encounter. Look closely at the picture.

1. Describe the person in the picture.

2. Think of the person in the picture as a character in a story and start creating a background for the character.

- Name:
- Age:
- Favorite hobby:
- Favorite food:
- Worst fears:
- Greatest accomplishment:
- Your own ideas:

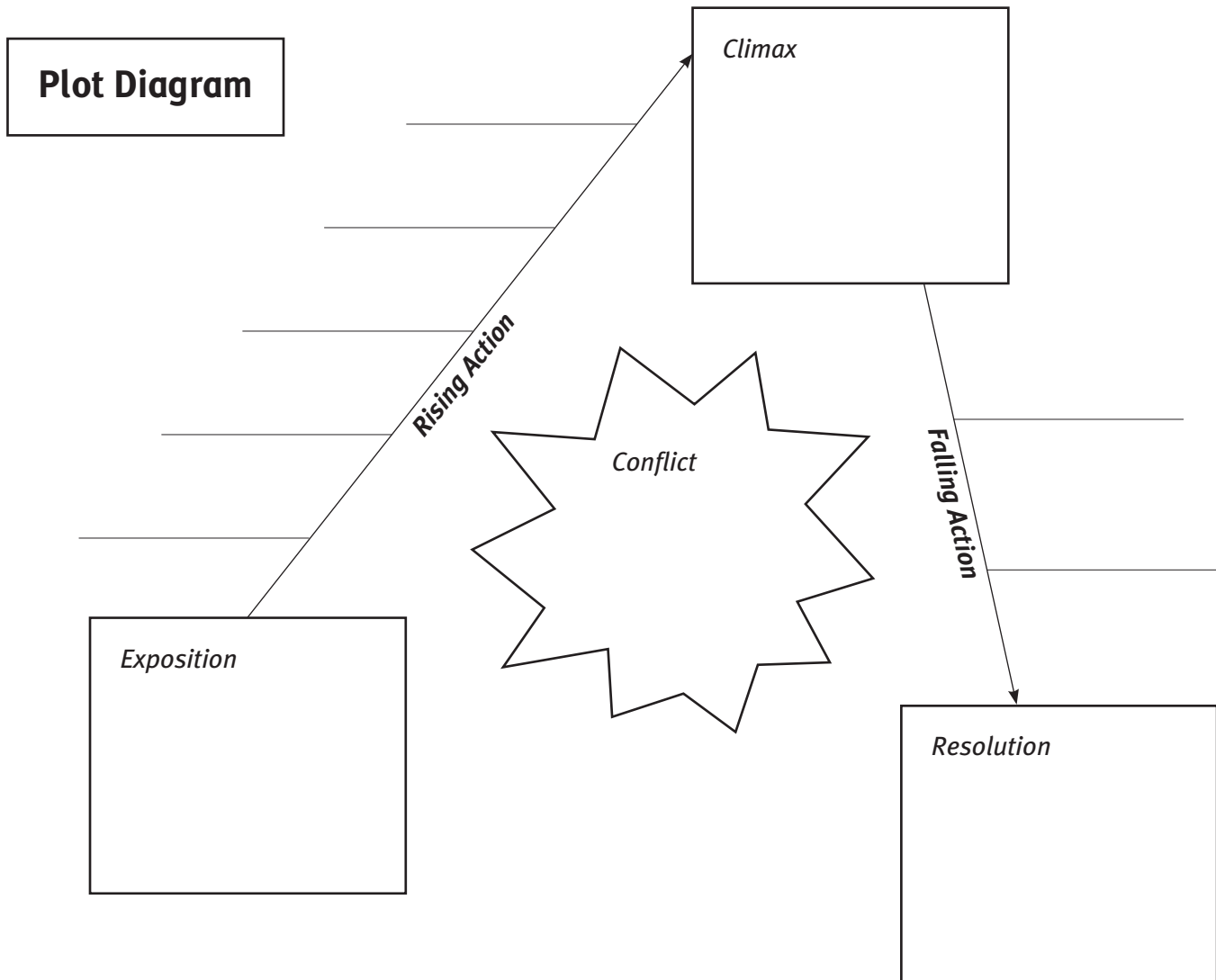
- 3. Look at your classmate’s picture, and listen carefully to the description of the character in the picture. List information about that character.

- 4. With your partner, brainstorm a list of places (settings) where the two characters you have created might have a chance encounter (such as a crowded street, the grocery store, a movie theater’s concession stand, and so on).

- 5. Choose one of the settings from your list and write a description of this setting. You might refer to Activity 2.8, “Picturing Green Gables,” for ideas about describing a place.

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- Brainstorm possible conflicts that might arise between your two characters, or conflicts that might put your two characters together in some way. Think of how a story might unfold to reveal a conflict. Take notes below or on your own paper.



7. Role play for a few minutes a dialogue that might happen between your two characters. Your dialogue should reveal one of the conflicts you have been talking about. Try out different ideas about what the two characters might say to each other. You can even try out different conflicts. Feel free to stop and start over. You are just trying to get some ideas right now. Take some notes to help guide your writing later.
8. Starting a story can be difficult. Your goal is to *hook* your reader; in other words, you want to make your reader want to continue reading. Sometimes writers begin a story in the middle of action or with a dialogue; other times they begin with a description of the setting. Look at the beginnings of some of the texts you have read in this unit.
 - “All I’ve ever wanted is for Juli Baker to leave me alone.” (“Diving Under,” Bryce’s first chapter from *Flipped*)
 - “The first day I met Bryce Loski, I flipped.” (“Flipped,” Juli’s first chapter from *Flipped*)
 - “It was broad daylight when Anne awoke and sat up in bed staring confusedly at the window through which a flood of cheery sunshine was pouring and outside of which something white and feathery waved across glimpses of blue sky.” (“Morning at Green Gables,” from *Anne of Green Gables*)
 - “Dear Richard, Don’t invite me to your birthday party because I’m not coming.” (“The Southpaw”)
 - “She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but a hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o’clock at night, dark, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse.”

Story Starter Writing Prompt: On your own, choose one of the ideas you explored with your partner or another one that has occurred to you. Looking at the examples, try some ways to begin the story of a chance encounter that results in a change in the main character’s life, attitude, or situation. Save this Story Starter in your Working Folder.
