

Problems with Plot

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I. The Well-Plotted Novel

II. Defining Plot

III. The Contract with the Reader

1. There will be a story—and it will have a plot.
2. Every story is a mystery story.

IV. Managing Suspense

1. Delay
2. Long lines and short lines
3. Foreshadowing
4. The principle of the ticking clock
5. Tips

V. The Line of Compulsion

VI. The Nature of Conflict

1. Conflict and confrontation
2. Conflicts must be personal
3. Conflict should be unrelenting, and it has to hurt the characters you care about

VII. Three approaches to plotting

VIII. Plot Structure

1. Where to begin
2. A resonant close

3. A wealth of alternative plot structures

IX. Common Mistakes in Plotting

1. Taking too long to get to the primary conflict
2. Giving away too much too soon
3. The episodic plot
4. Plotting too neatly; wrapping things up too completely