

COMMON CORE

Grade 6

English Language Arts

CLINICS

Reading Literature

 Options™

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Character and Plot

Learn About It

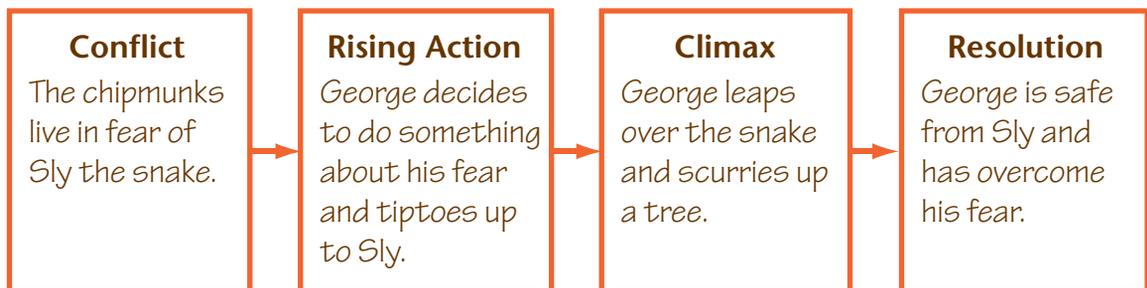
Characters are the people, animals, or other creatures in a story or drama. A **plot** is the sequence of events that tells a story from beginning to end. The **conflict** is the problem that a character must resolve. The **rising action** is the time during which the character works to resolve the problem. The **climax** is the turning point in the story, and it is usually the most exciting part. The **resolution** is the time when the conflict is resolved, which is at the end of the story. As the plot unfolds, the characters respond and change before the conflict is resolved. For example, a timid character may change to act heroically in the story.

Read the passage. As you read, think about how the characters make the plot move forward.

Sly was the most ruthless snake in the forest. The chipmunk family had always lived in fear of him.

But George was tired of living in fear. He tiptoed up behind Sly, and then broke into a run. He leaped over Sly and scurried up a nearby tree. He was safe before Sly had even noticed him.

“Take that, Sly!” said George. “You do not rule this forest!”



Try It

Read the passage. Underline the character names and words that help you identify elements of plot, such as conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution. Use the questions to help you.



A Tired Soccer Star

When Lori put on her cleats that morning, she was exhausted. She had been up half the night with her crying baby brother. Her parents kept telling Lori to go back to bed, but that was much easier said than done. She had always been a light sleeper, and a screaming baby was definitely not what she needed the night before her big soccer game. She finally just joined her parents in Aaron's bedroom and helped to sing him back to bed.

Now she was paying for it on the soccer field. Her coach called her name and she barely heard it because she was in such a daze. After another call, she finally heard it. They were all calling her name! Lori looked up and saw the ball flying toward her. She sprang into action and thought as quickly as she could. She pulled her knee up to hit the ball and to keep it from passing her on the way to the goal. But her efforts weren't enough. She missed the ball, and it bounced past her. She could hear groans and shrieks from the audience. She looked down in embarrassment. She knew that nobody in the stands would care that she was tired and was up late last night. The players around her rushed for control of the ball.

Which character in the story does Lori blame for being tired during her soccer game?

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She looked around to see people's disapproving looks. But then she noticed her parents and baby brother in the stands. They were here to see her work hard, not to sulk. They were just as tired as she was, she thought to herself. She took another quick peek at them and saw her mother's friendly wave. It was as if she were trying to signal to her that things were not that bad. Lori looked around the field and decided to get her head back into the game. No use letting a little tiredness and a silly mistake get her down.

Lori ran toward the ball and jumped into the game. Her mind sprang back to life and she no longer felt tired. Two of her teammates cheered her name and clapped for her. They knew she was back in the game. "Over here!" she yelled to her friend Mackenzie. "I'm open!" Just then, Mackenzie passed her the ball and Lori kept control of the ball until she nearly reached the opposing team's goal. She heard the stands erupt with cheers.

For a split second, she wondered whether she should pass the ball to Mackenzie to take a shot at the goal or if she should try to make the shot herself.

"Do it!" she heard Mackenzie yell next to her. "Take the shot!" Lori took all the strength she had and focused it on getting that ball past the goalie. She shut her eyes as she made the final kick. She was almost afraid to open them again, but she knew she had made it when she heard the crowd roar.

On the way home from the game, Lori fell asleep in the car next to her baby brother. They had both made the most of the day, and now it was time for a nap.

What is the rising action of the story?



Why does Lori decide to work hard and "get her head back into the game"?

Apply It

Read the drama. Ask yourself questions about the characters and how they change as the plot moves toward a resolution. Answer the questions that follow.

Friend or Foe?

Act I Scene 1

Setting: Curtain rises, showing two friends doing their homework together. Jason and Nick are both boys about 12 years old.

JASON: (*frustrated*) I just don't understand this homework, Nick. There are too many fractions, and they make my head spin.

NICK: (*encouraging*) Don't worry, Jason. Just take each step one at a time, as if it's the only problem you are looking at. Then, do the next step when you're ready.

JASON: Well, that sounds easy, but this is really hard stuff. Can't I look at your paper and see how you did it?

NICK: I can help you, but you can't look at my paper. That would be cheating.

JASON: Why would that be cheating? We're not taking a test. This is our homework. We're supposed to learn the right way to do things. You're a really good math student, so you should let me look at your paper.

NICK: Sorry, dude. I can't let you copy my paper. I am going to help you, step by step. You'll get the same answers if you do it right, and you'll learn at the same time.

JASON: (*angry*) You think I'm just trying to copy you? I can't believe you. I don't even want your help anymore. (*stands up*)

NICK: (*surprised*) Hold on there, buddy! What's going on? I am trying to help you. You told me the work was hard, and I offered to help you. But now you're angry at me for not just giving you my paper? Am I supposed to just give you my homework because you're my friend?

JASON: Well I thought I was your friend. But a friend of mine would let me look at his homework.

NICK: (*angry*) Well, a friend of mine would not demand that I give him my homework answers!

JASON: Well, then I guess we are not friends! (*storms out*)

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COMMON CORE

Grade 6

English Language Arts

CLINICS

Reading Informational Text

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Main Idea and Supporting Details

Learn About It

The **main idea** of an informational passage is what it is mainly about. The **supporting details** help to explain the main idea.

Read the paragraph. As you read, think about the main idea and supporting details.

In very basic terms, an evergreen tree is a tree that keeps its leaves through all four seasons of the year. There are many kinds of evergreen trees, such as pines and other trees that have cones. Some oaks and holly trees are also evergreens. Some rainforest trees are also considered evergreens since they stay green all year because they do not go through a frost.



Try It

Read the passage. Underline the main idea and circle some supporting details of the text. Use the questions to help you.

Asteroids Ahead!

Our solar system has many objects in it, such as planets, moons, and asteroids. Asteroids are rocky, metallic objects that orbit the sun, but they are not large enough to be planets.

In the past, asteroids have confused even the brightest scientists. Until rockets and space probes were invented, we could only see space through telescopes that sit here on Earth. The first asteroid, Ceres, was spotted in 1801 through a telescope, but it was thought to be a planet. Newer technologies have allowed us to get a closer look at the solar system. As scientists keep learning more about space, we can continue to understand more about asteroids.

The asteroid Ceres, for example, is also considered a dwarf planet because it has a diameter of about 950 kilometers, which is nearly 600 miles across! In fact, it is the largest known asteroid in our solar system. Other asteroids are so small that they are the size of pebbles. Most asteroids, however, are somewhere in between these two sizes. The average asteroid is less than 1.6 kilometers, or one mile, across.

Asteroids travel in a counterclockwise direction around the sun. If a rocky object is found in space but is not orbiting the sun in a counterclockwise direction, it cannot be considered an asteroid. Space objects that glow or shine like a star also cannot be considered to be asteroids.

Asteroids can be found anywhere in space, but most are concentrated in one area. They are found in the asteroid belt, which is an area between Mars and Jupiter.

For many years, scientists thought asteroids were leftover pieces of planets that had collided and exploded in space. But over time they realized that asteroids are more likely a result of the formation of the solar system.

Since there are so many asteroids floating through space, it would make sense that some of them might collide with Earth at some point.

What is the main idea of the passage?

What are three details in the passage that support the main idea?



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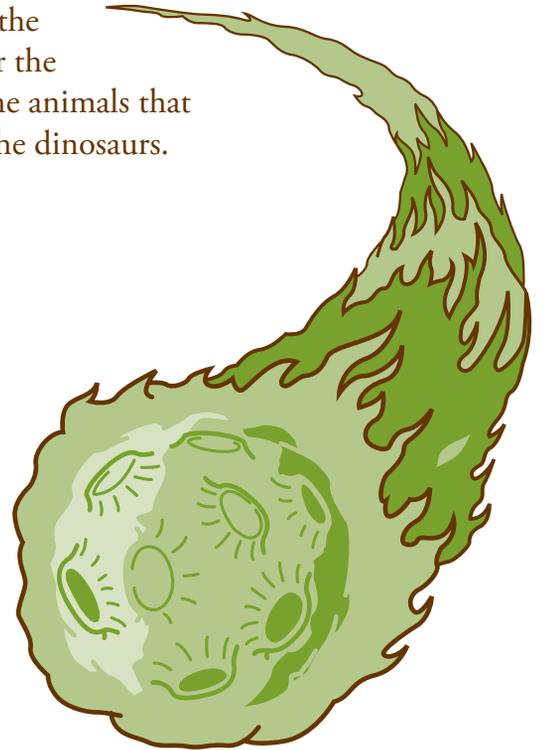
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This is a rare event, but it does happen. In fact, there are about 150 craters on Earth that were formed by asteroid hits. In 1972, a small piece of an asteroid entered Earth's atmosphere over the state of Idaho. Even though the asteroid piece was considered small, it was still the size of a house. It came within just 36 miles of hitting Earth, but it never collided. Many asteroid pieces that enter Earth's atmosphere burn up before they can reach the ground. Our atmosphere creates a natural barrier against many space objects such as asteroids.

Many scientists think that asteroids are part of why dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years ago. A large asteroid hit Earth and created a large crater in what is now Mexico. The asteroid filled the air with dust and clouds, which blocked sunlight all over the world. Plants died because they got no light, and then the animals that ate them died. This climate change may be what killed the dinosaurs.



How do the details in the passage support the main idea?



Duplicating any part of this book is prohibited by law.

Apply It

Read the passage. Look for the main idea and supporting details. Answer the questions that follow.

The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

When the Houston Astrodome was built, it was referred to as “the eighth wonder of the world.” This was a reference to the fabled “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World,” seven pieces of architecture identified by the ancient Greeks as the most monumental in existence. Obviously, the list created by the ancient Greeks only contained those structures which they were aware of, and only those that had been built up to that time. The ancient Greeks would probably consider a modern skyscraper a wondrous architectural achievement.

The first item on the list is the Colossus of Rhodes. This giant statue stood at the entrance of a harbor on the Greek island of Rhodes. Rhodes was an important economic center in the ancient world. The statue was the image of the island’s patron god, Helios, and is believed to have taken twelve years to build. It stood for nearly sixty years before it was toppled by an earthquake, which sent pieces hurling into the harbor, where they remained for centuries.

The next is the Great Pyramid of Giza, also known as the Great Pyramid of Khufu, a large monument to an ancient Egyptian ruler. Like other pyramids built for pharaohs, the Great Pyramid was believed to contain Khufu’s body and treasure. But when an archaeologist finally found his way inside, neither the pharaoh’s mummy nor his gold was found. Of the seven wonders, the Great Pyramid of Giza is the only one that still stands today.

Third on the list are the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Babylon was one of the largest and best known cities of the ancient world. Its legendary “hanging gardens” did not actually hang, but rather were built atop buildings within the city to look like a mountainside filled with greenery. The city of Babylon was destroyed centuries ago, and today its ruins remain largely buried beneath the ground in present-day Iraq.

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, like the Great Pyramid, was a giant tomb built for a king. In this case, it was for Mausolus of the tiny Greek kingdom of Halicarnassus. Upon his death, his wife decided to build the grandest tomb in the world. Today, his name lives on in the word *mausoleum*, which means “a large above-ground tomb.”

The Lighthouse of Alexandria is next on the list of ancient wonders. The lighthouse was built on the Greek island of Pharos, just off the coast of Alexandria, and was used to help guide ships to safety. It was the first lighthouse in the world, and except for the Great Pyramid, was the tallest building in the world at the time. It is believed to have been destroyed in an earthquake.

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Grade 6

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Writing and Language

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Write an Opinion

Learn About It

An **opinion** is a personal point of view with which others may disagree. Unlike a fact, an opinion cannot be proven true. An opinion essay, or argument, begins with a claim. A **claim** states the author's point of view. It is the main idea that the author wants to persuade readers about. The claim should be supported with **reasons** and **evidence**. When you write an opinion essay, organize your reasons into supporting paragraphs. End with a conclusion that sums up your claim and supporting ideas.

Read the passage. Look for the claim, reasons, and evidence.

Instead of buying a new scoreboard for the football field, our school should spend money on the girls' gymnastics team. The old scoreboard works just fine. However, the gymnastics team is badly in need of a new balance beam. The other day, one of the girls got a splinter in her hand while doing a cartwheel on the beam. In addition, the girls need new uniforms. At least half of the uniforms are faded or have snags.

Claim	The school should spend money on the girls' gymnastics team instead of buying a new scoreboard for the football field.
Reason #1	The gymnastics team needs a new balance beam.
Evidence	A girl on the team got a splinter from the beam.
Reason #2	The gymnastics team needs new uniforms.
Evidence	Some of the uniforms are faded or have snags.

Try It

Read the passage. Circle the author's claim. Underline the reasons and evidence that support the claim. Use the questions to help you.

Join a Sports Team!

I come from a family that loves sports. My father coaches Little League baseball. My mother bowls nearly every weekend. My brother is on his high-school track team, and I am the best hitter on my middle-school volleyball team. All of us have benefited from our involvement in sports. One of the most common ways for kids to participate in sports is to join a team. Joining a sports team should be a school requirement.

Identify the claim in the introduction.

One of the main reasons that schools should require students to join a team is that playing sports has health benefits. Everyone knows that exercise helps people stay fit. For example, swimming helps your heart work better. It also helps build muscle strength. Kids on swim teams get an excellent workout and stay in great shape. In addition, school athletes often maintain a healthy diet. My brother, for instance, eats a lot of fruit and vegetables. He avoids fatty foods that will slow him down.

What are the transitional words or phrases in the second paragraph?

Another reason to make students join a school team is that being on a team teaches kids discipline. They learn to follow the rules of the sport. They have to follow rules of conduct. They also have to balance schoolwork and team practice. Joining the volleyball team actually made me a better student. I had to manage my time carefully so that I would not fall behind in my studies. I set aside time for my homework, watched less TV, and attended every team practice.

What example does the author use to develop the topic sentence of the fourth paragraph?

Kids who participate in school teams sometimes earn college scholarships. My brother's friend played football in high school. His family did not have money to send him to college. However, a college recruited him to play on its team. The college is paying for him to go to school. Joining a team turned out to be one of the best decisions he ever made. Now he attends a great college, and his parents do not have to take out loans that would take them years to pay back. Not every school athlete gets a college scholarship, but joining a school team at least makes it possible.

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Furthermore, playing on a school team gives truly gifted athletes a chance to shine. School is where they often develop the talents that get them to the Olympics or professional sports teams. Derek Jeter of the New York Yankees, the Chicago Bears' Walter Payton, and track-and-field star Jackie Joyner-Kersey all played sports in school. Would they have achieved greatness in their sports if they had not played on school teams? Maybe, but probably not.

Schools should also require students to join a team because kids on teams enjoy a healthier social life. They often make more friends and can be some of the most popular kids in school. Having an active social life helps young people develop into well-rounded adults.

Some people may not like the idea of forcing students to join a school team. However, the benefits cannot be denied. Playing on a team helps kids stay healthy, learn discipline, earn scholarships, and make friends. It can also help nurture the sports stars of tomorrow.

Why does the author mention famous athletes in the fifth paragraph?



How well does the author support her claim?

Apply It

Read the writing prompt. Plan your response in the graphic organizer.



Some people believe that students should have more of a say in their education. Should students in middle school and high school help decide which classes are taught in school? Why or why not? Support your opinion with reasons and evidence. Be sure to develop each reason in a separate supporting paragraph.

Claim	
Reason #1	
Evidence	
Reason #2	
Evidence	
Reason #3	
Evidence	
Concluding Statement	