

P L O T

A. Explain the *causal relationship* of the sequence of events. (Trace the plot.)

1. What event marks the beginning of the plot?
2. What event marks the end of the plot?
3. List the events of the middle, showing how each causes the next.
4. Do the events lead logically to the end, or is there a *Deus ex machina*?
5. What has the writer done with time? Is the plot in chronological order? All of it? Some of it? Which parts? Why?

B. Explain whether the plot is *episodic* or *organic*.

6. Are there events not directly related to the movement of the main plot?

C. What is the meaning of the plot?

7. If there is a break in the causal relationship of events, which event seems to have no cause? List as many possible causes as you can. Do any of them seem more logical, more intelligent than others?
8. If there is no break in the causal relationship, what does the sum of the events mean?

D. Identify the “sparking incident,” the even that sets the plot in motion.

9. Is it an evident event or a more subtle happening?

E. Identify the *climax*.

10. Find the story’s turning point, the point of no return. It is often signaled by a decision which cannot be reversed. At what point can things no longer go back to the way they were or would naturally have been?

F. Identify any *irony* and any *reversal of intention*.

11. Do any characters attempt to do one thing and actually accomplish the opposite?

G. Identify any *recognition*.

12. Do any characters, as a result of any of the events, change from ignorant to knowledgeable? Do any discover something they did not already know?

H. Identify the *catastrophe*.

13. Is there a death, mutilation, or psychological undoing of any character?
14. Do things get better during the story? (*comedy*)
15. Do they get worse? (*tragedy*)
16. Do they stay good? (*romance*)
17. Do they stay bad? (*satire*)
18. Keep a pencil diagram of the plot movement. Some say there are only two “über-plots”: the hero’s journey and the stranger in the town. Does either prevail in this novel?