



# Lessons for Upper Elementary School

## Lesson 5: Observing Conflict

Adapted from the *Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators – Middle School Edition*, United States Institute of Peace, <https://www.usip.org/public-education/peacebuilding-toolkit-educators>

**Grade:** 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grades

### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the value of analyzing conflicts.
2. To identify elements to look for when observing conflict.

### **Common Core State Standards:**

- Literature Standards – Key Ideas and Details: Grades 3-5 Standard 1

### **Materials:**

Blackboard or whiteboard, chalk or markers, pencils, role-plays, *Story Mountain* worksheet (double-sided), *Exit Pass* worksheet

**Time:** 50 minutes

### **Procedures**

#### **I. Essential Questions:**

1. What can you observe about conflicts that will help you understand them better?
2. What do you need to know in order to resolve conflicts in your own life?

#### **II. Motivation/Introduction (5 minutes)**

1. Prior to the lesson, select four students to act out Role-Play One and Role-Play Two. They should have time to read over the scenes and to discuss with each other what they will do. Encourage them to try to make it as realistic as possible, but remind them that there should be no name calling, physical contact, bad words, use of force, etc.
2. Ask the class what they remember about what conflict means. Remind them that conflict is a natural part of our life. It can be negative or bad when it becomes violent, but it can also be positive or good when it is nonviolent and leads to positive change.
3. Lead a Think-Pair-Share. Have students think for 30 seconds about a nonviolent conflict they have seen but in which they did not personally participate. This can be a conflict in a book, movie, or within their own life. Then have them turn to a partner and describe this conflict. What was the

- reason for the conflict? How did each person involved react? Was it resolved, and if so, how was it resolved? These questions can be written on the board to help guide them.
4. Ask for a few volunteers to share. Then, tell students that today they are going to learn how to tell the story of a conflict as a way to understand conflict better.

### III. Teacher Directed (5 minutes)

1. Divide the class into five groups.
2. Distribute the *Story Mountain* worksheet (double-sided) to everyone and review the questions. Assign each group one question to answer on the worksheet.  
Conflict Questions (and their plot relation):
  - Introduction: Who is involved in the conflict, and what is the relationship between those in the conflict?
  - Rising Action: What was the problem for each character?
  - Climax: Describe what happened (the facts) during the conflict.
  - Falling Action: How have the characters chosen to deal with the conflict?
  - Resolution: What could be done to resolve the conflict now?
3. Tell students that they are going to observe a role-play closely and answer their group's question when it is over.

### IV. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

Teacher note: You should have two Story Mountains (see below) drawn on the board.
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1. Have the first pair of students present Role-Play One.
2. After the role-play, direct students to answer their one question independently by writing the answer on piece of paper. Have them share answers with the people in their group. Have each group select a representative to share with the whole class.
3. Tell the class that conflicts are very similar to the plot of a fiction story. You are going to use a Story Mountain to help organize the information in this conflict.
4. In the order of the questions on the worksheet, ask each representative to share their answer. Write it on the Story Mountain on the board, and direct students to write it on their own Story Mountain, which is on the other side of the worksheet.
5. Discuss any misunderstandings about the questions, and ask if students need clarification.

### V. Independent Practice (15 Minutes)

1. Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to practice observing various elements of the conflict on their own. Instead of answering just one of the questions, they will answer all of them.
2. Make sure that students have a new, blank copy of the *Story Mountain* worksheet.
3. Share that they are to watch Role-Play Two and will answer the questions with a partner at the end of the presentation.
4. Have the second pair of students present Role-Play Two.
5. Students should get with a partner to answer the questions. Circulate around the room to address misunderstandings or remind students of parts of the role-play that they may have forgotten.
6. Ask students to share their answers. As they share, have them place their answers on the second *Story Mountain* while you record them on the board.

## **VI. Discussion (5 minutes)**

1. Lead a discuss with the following questions:
  - Why is understanding the parts of a conflict important when you are trying to resolve it?
  - What could have been done differently in the role-plays to create a more positive solution? You could ask for volunteers to act it out.
  - What do you think you need to learn in order to resolve conflicts in your own lives? Draw out different skills (active listening, mediation, communication), attitudes (kindness, nonviolence, friendship), knowledge, and behaviors.

## **VII. Exit Pass (5 minutes)**

Have students complete the Exit Pass worksheet, in which they will describe or sketch a conflict that they were part of and how they could have handled it differently.

### **Role-Play 1:**

Student A (playing a young person): Your mother/father is upset that you have not cleaned your room, which they have asked you to do for several days. Instead of cleaning your room, you have watched a lot of television. Your parents think you are watching too much television, and not focusing on your responsibilities in the house. They want to limit your TV watching to two hours on the weekend. You think this is unfair and want a second chance to prove that you can fulfill your responsibilities and still watch television during the week.

Student B (playing the mother/father): Your son/daughter refuses to complete the chores that you have assigned. He/she instead watches too much television. You have asked your son/daughter to clean their room several times, but instead of obeying, he/she continues to disobey. You want to change the allowed television time to two hours on the weekend until he/she can prove that they can do their chores and still watch television.

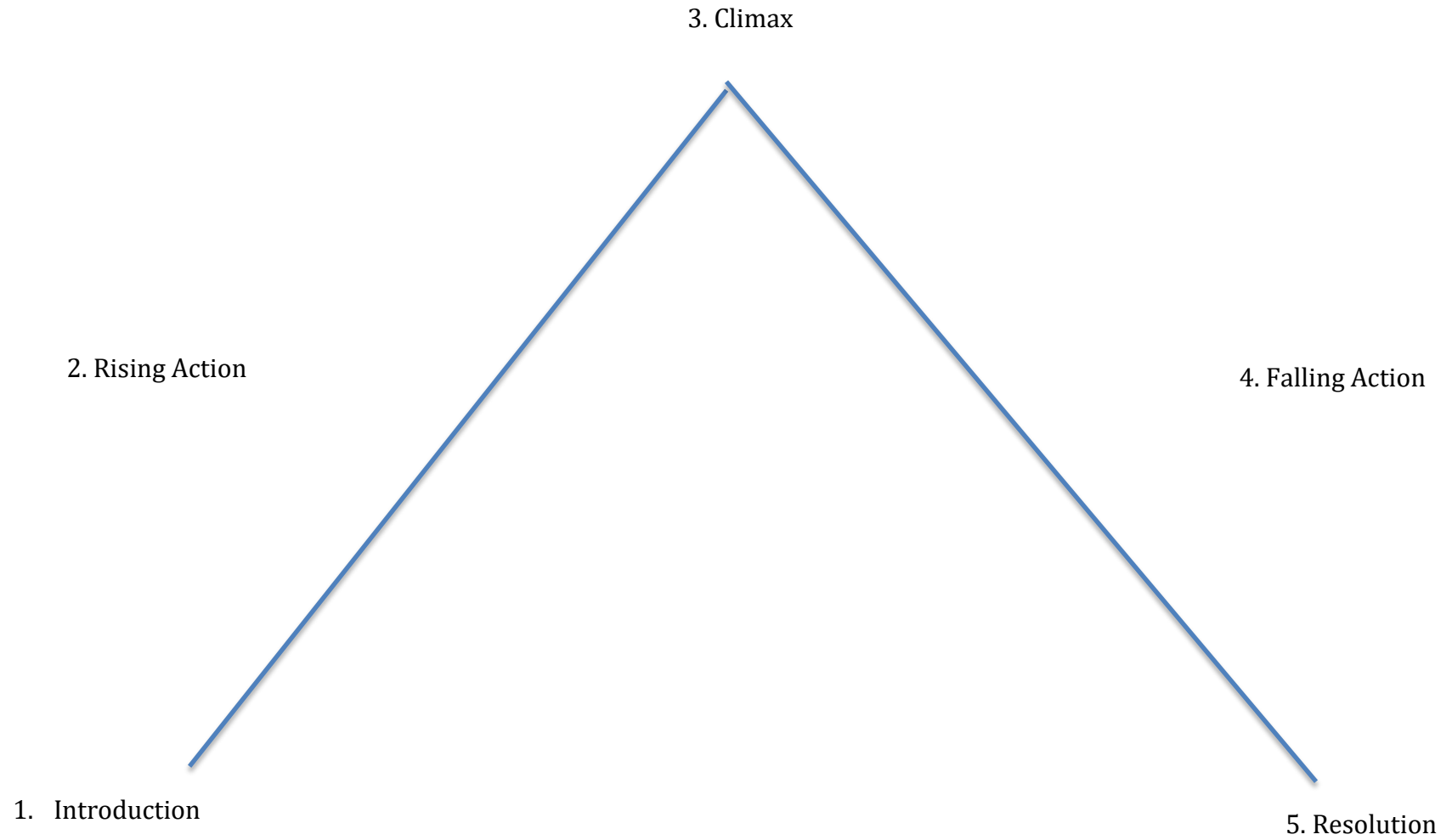
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### **Role-Play 2:**

Student A (playing a young person): You are sure your sister/brother has borrowed your favorite T-shirt again. You can't find it anywhere in the house.

Student B (playing a young person): You borrowed your sister's/brother's T-shirt. She/he wasn't home, so you couldn't ask for permission. When you get home from school, your sister/brother is there and very angry.

# Story Mountain



# Conflict Questions

1. Who is involved in the conflict, and what is the relationship between those in the conflict?

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2. What was the problem for each character?

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3. Describe what happened (the facts) during the conflict.

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4. How have the characters chosen to deal with the conflict?

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5. What could be done to resolve the conflict now?

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# Exit Pass

Describe or sketch a conflict that you were part of and how you could have handled it differently.



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