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## Conflicts in Literature [8th grade]

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*Education Department*

*Understanding by Design Curriculum Units*

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*Trinity University*

*Year 2006*

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Conflicts in Literature

Erin Phillips  
Trinity University,

# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

**Unit Title: Conflict**

**Grade Level: 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

**Subject/Topic Area(s): Reading**

**Designed By: Erin D. Phillips**

**Time Frame: 3-4 weeks**

**School District (One Designer): North East Independent School District**

**School: Jackson Middle School**

**School Address and Phone:**

**4538 Vance Jackson  
San Antonio, TX 78230  
(210) 442-0550**

### **Brief Summary of Unit (Including curricular context and unit goals):**

In this unit, students will gain a greater understanding of conflict and its implications on life. The reading of short stories, biographies, and newspaper articles will guide the students in exploring the understandings that conflict brings about change, conflict is a catalyst of fiction, and that conflicts in literature can be applicable to our own lives.

Performance task #1 invites students to delve into a newspaper article identifying the essential component of every story, (Does every story have a conflict?) conflict. The purpose is to locate the conflict and arrive at the conclusion that conflict is the determining factor of the opinions cast on its effect.

Students will then learn that conflict does not always have to be bad and that it can be a venue in which we can learn. This will specifically be highlighted in the performance task #2, where students create a peer mediation role play. The purpose of this assessment is to think of a real world conflict, one that is personal to their lives, and to develop a plan of action that solves the conflict in a beneficial way. Thus, allowing them to see that conflicts, which at first appear to be negative, can be turned around for the betterment of those involved.

## Unit: Conflict

Grade: 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading

### Stage 1: Desired Results

#### Understandings

*Students will understand that...*

- Conflict brings about change – positive or negative.
- Conflict is the catalyst of fiction.
- Literature often helps us identify conflicts - man vs. man, man vs. himself, man vs. nature
- The conflicts that characters face can be applied to contemporary situations.

#### Essential Questions

- Does every story have a conflict?
- Is conflict always bad?
- Can we learn from conflict?

#### Knowledge & Skill

*(NEISD scope & sequence; TEKS; Core; etc.)*

8.10 (E,H) Comprehend selections using varied strategies (cause and effect)  
8.12 (F) analyze characters, including their **traits, motivations, conflicts**, points of view, relationships, and changes they undergo.  
8.12 (G) recognize and analyze story plot, setting, and problem resolution.  
8.12 (H) describe how the author's perspective or point of view affects the text  
8.14 Reading/culture. The student reads to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures. The student is expected to:  
*(A) Compare text events with his/her own and other readers' experiences*

## Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Performance Task #1:

### Looking on the Bright Side

- Working in pairs, you will read the provided newspaper/magazine article. While reading, you will identify the conflict as well as what category your conflict falls under. (ie. Man vs. man, man vs. nature, etc...) The article that you do receive however; will only include those involved, the situation at hand, and the conflict. The actual resolution (which is the determining factor of whether the conflict is viewed as being negative or positive) will be omitted.

-Your task: With this article, it is you and your partner's job to predict an outcome (resolution) that sheds a positive light on the existing conflict. You will apply your understanding of conflict by answering the following questions:

- Create a new title that reflects the positivity of the conflict.
- What is the conflict? (brief description)
- What category does this conflict fall under? Why?
- What was your predicted resolution?

The next **two** questions should be answered based on your predicted resolution:

- Why was this conflict positive?
- Who benefited from this conflict? Why?

Your answers will be displayed as an announcement to the public, allowing them to see a new and positive perspective of the conflict in which you read about in your article. The article that you read will also be attached to your public announcement.

Performance Task #2:

### Lights, Camera, Mediate!

-Here is your chance to take an in-depth reflection on your own lives.

-Your task: You and your group members (you will be in groups of three) select a real and personal conflict in which you have experienced. With this chosen conflict, you will create a peer mediation plan of action. This plan will include:

- What is the conflict you are addressing?
- Why is this conflict important to your group?
- A brainstorm of at least three solutions to your conflict (ideally making the conflict positive)
- The solution you have chosen to use
- A detailed procedure of how your chosen solution will be executed. This should be the numbered steps that you would take. You should also include the written dialogue that each person in your group will say during the role play. (Look at the provided example)

-Once your plan has been formed and revised, you and your group will role-play your created action plan. Your classmates will be your audience. As each group presents their role-play the audience will rate them using a rubric evaluating the credibility of the action plan.

-After each group has presented their action plan, you will then write a personal reflection answering "What did you learn from the conflict?"

Other evidence:

*(quizzes, tests, academic prompts, etc.*

*note – these are usually included where appropriate in Stage 3 as well)*

- Exit slips to monitor student's questions and misunderstandings.
- Type of Conflict chart
- Quiz on plot diagram and types of conflict
- Cause and Effect worksheet
- Admit ticket to monitor student's questions and misunderstandings.
- Point of view worksheet
- Journal responses to various prompts supporting their understanding.

## Stage 3: Learning Activities

*(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)*

### Day one:

-Students will watch a cartoon clip (such as Sponge Bob or any other popular cartoon) in which the only part they get to watch is the introduction of the plot diagram. Right before the conflict begins, turn off the clip and ask the students their reaction to the clip. Ask question such as:

- Did you enjoy the clip? Why or why not?
- What did you understand about the clip?
- Do you feel like something was left out?
- What was wrong with what you got to watch?

After this discussion, turn the clip on again and allow the students to watch the conflict. After a few minutes turn off the clip and ask the kids the same questions. As a class, fill out a Venn diagram comparing the two separate viewings of the cartoon making sure that the differences are highlighted. By this point, students should be able to pinpoint that it was the omission of the conflict that made the viewings different.

-Then challenge the students to write a short story without a conflict. When students are finished, have a couple share their stories. Discuss with the class about what conflict brings to a story. For further reinforcement refer back to the cartoon clip; showing that conflict creates the interest for a reader. (Be sure to pick up their stories in order to use them at a later point in the unit)

### Day two:

-Begin the day by reading a sample story written by one of the students the day before. Review what important component is missing and why conflict is crucial in a story.

-Explain to the students that just like stories have conflicts to make them interesting, our lives have conflicts that keep them interesting. Have students then write a journal entry answering the prompt "describe a conflict that is currently happening in your life."

-When students are finished with their journal entries, introduce the "Conflict Drop-Box". The "Conflict Drop-Box" will be an opportunity for students to freely write on a slip of paper a conflict that they may have during the unit. They may do this anonymously or not. Explain to the students that the box is like an outlet in which they can throw their conflict away and no longer worry about it. Also tell them that the conflicts they put in there will be used later on during their project (role play). Make sure they know that names will not be used.

-After the "Conflict Drop-Box" has been introduced, have students participate in a chalk talk. Students will quietly walk around the room (no talking allowed) as they answer the three essential questions. This will allow them to consider the theme in which they will explore in the upcoming weeks. NOTE: Half the students will be participating in the chalk talk while the other

half is writing down a conflict for the drop-box and visa versa.

**Day three:**

-Quickly review the students on the elements of the plot diagram. Draw the plot diagram on the board and label each element with the students help. Have students provide examples for each element from a book they may currently be reading.

- To make sure students understand the plot diagram, read the students the children's book *The Three Little Pigs*. This is a familiar story in which students can apply their knowledge of the plot diagram. After reading the story, give students a strip of paper containing a particular event of the story. There should be one strip representing each element of the plot diagram. The students with the strips should come up to the front of the classroom and with the teachers help as well as the other students; the selected students will put themselves in to a live plot diagram. Once students are arranged into the plot diagram, each student in the diagram must provide their reasoning for putting themselves where they did. As a class, come to a consensus of why the conflict in *The Three Little Pigs* was important to the story. In other words, why does this story have a conflict?

-As independent practice, break the students up into groups of four. Provide each group a book from the Bernstein Bear collection. Students will read the book and then on provided note cards write an event (per card) in the book that represents the different elements of the plot diagram. They will then construct their own plot diagram and be able to present their reasoning. Groups will also be asked to answer why does your story have a conflict? (Class will end on group presentations of plot diagrams)

**Day Four:**

- As a class we will read the short story, "Only a Dollar's Worth" (Scholastic Read XL). Ask various comprehension questions that will ensure the students understanding. After reading, students will draw a plot diagram and label the elements on dry erase boards; they will then put the events of the story on their plot diagram. To check for understandings discuss the plot diagrams they drew and clarify any misunderstandings they might have had. If time, repeat by reading, "A Matter of Honor".

- Before students leave, have students on an exit slip answer why was the conflict important to the story?

**Day Five:**

- Students will receive a Type of Conflict chart containing man vs. man, man vs. self, and man vs. nature. Begin with man vs. man, providing them the definition as well as a personal example of this conflict (students should write this on their chart). Then read the students the story *The Ugly Duckling*. Ask students to jot down the conflicts they hear that occur between character to character (man vs. man). Briefly go over this as a class and put the mentioned conflicts on the class Type of Conflict chart.

- Then define man vs. nature conflict and provide a personal example. Ask students as well for various encounters they have had with nature. Then read a brief section of the story *The Lorax*. Again, the students should jot down the conflicts they hear that occur between characters vs. nature (man vs. nature). Briefly go over this as a class and put the mentioned conflicts on the class Type of Conflict chart.

-Then define man vs. self conflict and provide a personal example Then read the story *Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine*. Again, the students should jot down the conflicts they hear that occur between characters vs. self. (man vs. self). Briefly go over this as a class and put the mentioned conflicts on the class Type of Conflict chart. Note: For each story/type of conflict ask the students the following questions:

- What is the major conflict in the story?

- (For the first 2 types) How does another character cause conflict? How does nature cause conflict?
- How does the character react to the conflict?

#### **Day Six:**

-Students will use the Conflict chart that they made the day before. In pairs, students will be given several examples of conflicts; they will then categorize these conflicts according to the three different types. Then as a class discuss the reasoning for why the conflicts were placed where they were.

-For independent practice, put a short list of conflicts on the overhead and have students work individually as they place the conflicts under the correct type of conflict.

-Then hand back the boring stories that the students wrote and have them write in a conflict that makes the story more interesting. The students will have the freedom to choose which type of conflict they want to write. After writing their conflict, students will label their type of conflict and why they chose it.

#### **Day 7:**

-Students will begin by taking a quiz assessing their knowledge of the plot diagram and the types of conflict. On the quiz, students will also answer, Does every story have a conflict? Why?

-After the quiz, begin a brainstorm asking the students the question: When have you learned the best? (prompt them by asking when did you feel good about learning something, when did you feel the most prepared etc..)

-Based on the students brainstorm, ask them why they feel they were able to learn. Explain to them that the reason why is the cause and their ability to learn was the effect. Cause and effect is like a chain reaction. Provide them the visual of a seesaw. Why did the seesaw go up (effect)? Because someone sat on the other end. Same for learning. Why did you learn so well (effect)? Maybe you studied, you could relate to the situation, etc...

- Exit slip → students will define cause and effect in their own words.

#### **Day 8:**

- Briefly review cause and effect. Explain to the students that the cause of cause and effect is often or can be the conflict of the story. For example in *Number the Stars*, the conflict of the Nazi's killing the Jews was the cause of the Jews relocating from Denmark to Sweden (effect).

-Give students a worksheet asking for the conflict, type of conflict, at least three examples of cause and effect, and how the conflict relates to at least one cause and effects in the story.

-This worksheet will apply to the short story *Passage to Freedom* (Scholastic Read XL).As a class begin reading the story. Encourage students to point out causes and effects as you read. The ultimate goal is to point out that the conflict is often the instigate cause for the result of something happening (why).

-Students will complete and turn in the worksheet.

#### **Day 9:**

- Present the class with the central figure of woman rights, Susan B. Anthony by reading a brief biography. Brainstorm as a class what conflicts she and other women of her time faced. Then brainstorm what these conflicts caused. Take a vote; thumbs up if positive, thumbs down if negative; whether or not the effect was positive. Hopefully the consensus will be that it was positive. Then brainstorm, based on what they know of Susan B. Anthony, what characteristics/qualities she had that motivated her to overcome such conflicts. This will point out to the students that not all conflicts should be considered bad; that some conflicts render positive results thus should be considered beneficial.

-For further understanding, break the students up into groups of four. Give half of the groups a biography on Martin Luther King and the other half of the groups information on the Alamo

(specifically Davy Crocket and/or Jim Bowie). Have each group complete the exact brainstorm that was previously done on Susan B. Anthony (i.e. what conflicts, what qualities). Students will present their brainstorms the following day.

**Day 10:**

-Groups will present their brainstorms on either Martin Luther King or the Davy Crocket.

Explain to the students that it is certain qualities that allow a character (person) to overcome conflicts that at first seemed negative.

-Four Corners→ given the effects of Martin Luther King, students will decide whether the main conflict he faced was completely beneficial, somewhat beneficial, completely negative, and somewhat negative. Students will stand in the corner that represents their opinion.

- After discussing the reasoning for why the students stood in certain corners, ask the students why they think there were so many different opinions on whether or not the conflict Martin Luther King faced was positive or negative. Guide the students in concluding that it is one's point of view that will affect a person opinion of a conflict because we have all had different life experiences.

-With the new understanding that conflict is not always bad, ask students to think of a positive conflict that they have occurred in their lives and then drop it in the "Conflict Drop-Box" on their way out.

**Day 11:**

- Students will complete the admit ticket→ What is point of view? Why is point of view important when considering conflict?

- Show students a brief clip of *Freak the Mighty* (the scene showing Freak and his mom's point of view on his illness). Have students complete the point of view worksheet. They will be asked to describe Freaks point of view and his mother's point of view concerning the conflict he is facing, a life threatening illness. They will also be asked to create a list of qualities that motivate both characters to arrive at such point of views.

**Day 12-13:**

-In pairs students will begin working on performance task #1. (due the Day 14)

**Day 14:**

-Students will turn in their performance task #1.

- Based on the article they used in performance task #1, students will write a journal entry responding to: What about your life experiences allowed you to see the point of view of those involved in the conflict? What about your life experiences made it difficult to see the point of view of those involved in the conflict?

-Introduce performance task #2 and show students peer mediation video (found on the internet) so that they know what is expected of them as an end result.

**Day 15:**

-Students will begin work on performance task #2.

**Day 16:**

-Students will continue their work on performance task #2.

**Day 17:**

-Begin presentations of role play.

**Day 18:**

-Complete presentations of role play.

-Students will individually answer, what did you learn from the conflict (of your role play)?

-Students will evaluate the unit to describe their favorite and least favorite parts of the unit, explain the most important things learned, and provide their own answers to the essential questions.

## Looking on the Bright Side

Category	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches	Unacceptable
<b>Title</b>  <i>(10 pts.)</i>	The title can be read clearly and easily portrays the idea of a conflict that can be considered positive (good). The title is creative and definitely is original (new). The title also conveys an accurate description of the article's content.	The title can be read clearly and easily portrays the idea of a conflict that can be considered positive (good). The title tends to be similar to the old title. The title relates to the content of the article.	The title can be read clearly; however there is some question as to whether the story contains a positive or negative conflict. The title begins to relate to the content of the article, but the wording is somewhat confusing.	The title does not leave the reader with any expectations nor does it create a set feeling except confusion. The title provided has no relation to what the article actually says or it has not been changed at all.
<b>Identification/ Categorization of Conflict</b>  <i>(15 pts.)</i>	The conflict is identified and categorized correctly. Strong supportive reasoning is provided for why the conflict falls under the selected category.	The conflict is identified and categorized correctly. However; the reasoning provided, lacks details to strongly support the category chosen.	A conflict is identified, but is categorized incorrectly. There was very little reasoning to explain why the conflict was categorized the way it was.	No conflict is identified and there is no attempt to categorize it.
<b>Resolution</b>  <i>(30 pts.)</i>	The resolution is a realistic prediction based on the provided facts/clues in the article. It is evident that an exceptional amount of thought has been put into the predicted resolution. It also presents the view that the conflict was beneficial/good.	The resolution is a somewhat believable prediction based on the provided facts/clues in the article. More thought could have been used; however the resolution does allow the view that the conflict was beneficial/good.	The predicted resolution is far fetched and makes no sense based on the provided information in the article. There is no positive light on the conflict.	No resolution is provided and the viewer of the article is left wondering what happened. The viewer has to make the prediction themselves.
<b>Explanation of Conflict</b>  <i>(30 pts.)</i>	Both questions are answered with a great deal of thought as to why the conflict was beneficial and who benefited from it. Answers include several supporting details and/or examples.	Both questions are answered as to why the conflict was beneficial and who benefited from it. Answers provide only 1 supporting detail and/or example.	Both questions are partially answered. Answers provide no supporting details and/or examples.	Did not attempt to answer either of the questions provided.
<b>Appearance/Attraction</b>  <i>(15 pts.)</i>	The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The poster is acceptably attractive though it may be a bit messy.	The poster is distractingly messy or very poorly designed. It is not attractive.

Ms. Phillips

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Lights, Camera, Mediate!

Category	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches	Unacceptable
<b>Conflict</b> <i>(20 pts.)</i>	The conflict chosen is thought through with great detail. The chosen conflict is one that is personally important to the whole group and is realistic for their targeted age group (middle school).	The conflict chosen is realistic for the targeted age group, but not personal to all group members.	The conflict attempts to be realistic for the targeted age group, but is also not personal to all group members.	No conflict has been established or the conflict chosen is not at all realistic and is completely unbelievable.
<b>Solution</b> <i>(20 pts.)</i>	The posed solution to the conflict at hand is believable (applicable to the real world). It is a solution that required a great deal of thought and the connection between the conflict and solution is evident.	The solution to the conflict is believable and could occur in everyday life. However; some details to solidify the connection are missing.	A solution is established, but the connection between the solution and conflict is unnatural. The steps to the solution are unbelievable.	No set solution is provided. The solution is still in revision and lacked any connection to the conflict.
<b>Presentation/Execution</b> <i>(40 pts.)</i>	Everyone in the group knew their parts and what they were expected to say. There was a step by step procedure in solving the conflict. The role play conversation has a nice natural flow, similar to normal day conversation.	Everyone in the group knew their parts and what they were expected to say. The step by step procedure had some flow, but would have benefited had more detail been added. The role play conversation was steady.	The majority of the group appeared to be confused about their role and did not know exactly what to say. The step by step procedure had no flow and consisted of gaps. The role play conversation was chopping and hard to follow.	Complete chaos; no one in the group knew their parts. Obviously no prior planning took place.
<b>Use of Class Time/Cooperation</b> <i>(10 pts.)</i>	Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. All statements, body language, and responses were respectful and were in appropriate language.	Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others. Statements and responses were respectful and used appropriate language, but once or twice there was inappropriate body language or remarks.	Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others. Most statements and responses were respectful and in appropriate language, but there was occasional disrespect.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others. Statements, responses and/or body language were consistently not respectful.
<b>Voice/Theatrics</b> <i>(10 pts.)</i>	The groups' passion for the conflict was evident. The group's voice was loud and clear and created a high level of interest for the audience.	The groups' passion for the conflict was evident. The group's voice was loud and clear, but occasionally lost the audience's interest.	The group attempted to show passion about their conflict. The role play was difficult to hear and it lacked interest for the audience.	The group appeared to care less about their role play. They were unable to be heard and was unable to grasp the audience's attention.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Group # \_\_\_\_\_

# Peer-Evaluation

*Rate your peers as they present their peer mediation action plan. The following are the categories in which you will rate them on. Circle one of the numbers for each according to their performance. 5 is the best and 1 is the worst.*

Conflict	5	4	3	2	1
Solution	5	4	3	2	1
Presentation/ Execution	5	4	3	2	1
Voice/Theatrics	5	4	3	2	1

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Group # \_\_\_\_\_

# Peer-Evaluation

*Rate your peers as they present their peer mediation action plan. The following are the categories in which you will rate them on. Circle one of the numbers for each according to their performance. 5 is the best and 1 is the worst.*

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Presentation/ Execution	5	4	3	2	1
Voice/Theatrics	5	4	3	2	1