

Power Lessons - Year 5

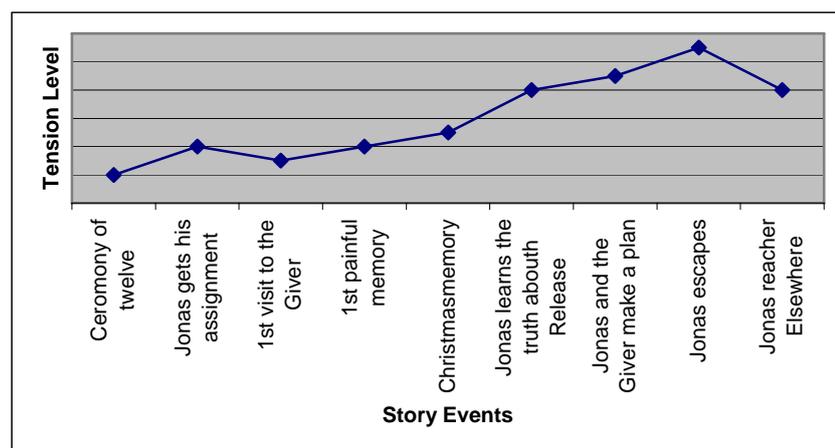
Plot Climax

Objective: To help students recognize the climax of a story.

Materials: Any novel you have recently read to the students, such as *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (5.7).

Optional Materials: An overhead projector and transparencies.

- Lesson:**
1. Help students recall the plot of the book you have chosen. Remind them that the *plot* is what happens in the story and that plots are often organised around a problem and a solution. Ask, "What is the central problem in this story?" (Can Jonas continue to live in his perfect community once he has learned the truth about it?)
 2. On the board or overhead transparency, draw a graph like the one shown below. Label the vertical axis "Tension Level" and devise a measurement scale. Label the horizontal axis "Story Events" and have students list the major events that take place in the story.



3. Point to the first event listed on the graph and ask, "Where on the tension scale would you place this event?" Help students come to a consensus and place a dot on the graph at the appropriate level. Follow the same procedure for the other events listed. If students decide that the action starts at a very high level, you may have to add additional levels to the chart. After you have plotted dots for each of the events, draw a line connecting the dots on the graph.
4. Have students look at the shape that the line makes on the graph. Tell students, "In many stories, the plot follows a certain shape. Usually a problem or *conflict* is presented at the beginning of the story. Then, as the character tries to solve the problem, the action of the story rises, sometimes through fits and starts, to a *climax*, the most exciting part of the story." Point out the line that shows the conflict and rising action as you follow the events listed on the horizontal axis. Point to the dot at the highest mark on the graph and ask, "Which event was the climax of this story?" (Jonas escapes.)

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5. Discuss the story's ending. Tell students that the ending of a story usually relieves the tension by tying up loose ends. Tell students, "In a *closed* ending, the author answers most of the reader's questions about what will happen. In an *open* ending, the author lets the reader draw his or her own conclusions about what will happen." Ask students which type of ending the sample book has.
6. Ask students to identify the climax in books they have recently read.

Status of the Class

Follow up: As you take the Status of the Class, ask:

- Have you reached the climax in the book you are currently reading? How do you know?
- What was the last fiction book you read? What was the main conflict or problem in the book? What happened at the climax of the book?
- Did the last book you read have an open or closed ending? Why do you think so?

Added Practice: Encourage students to create plot graphs for their independent reading books. Have students who have read the same book compare their graphs. Ask, "Why might two graphs for the same book be different?"

Ask students, "Which do you like better, closed endings or open endings?" Have pairs of students debate opposing opinions.

Suggest that small groups of students present a "Headline News" radio program in which they give synopses of the climactic events from books they have recently read.