



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Video: Megafisherman Plot



(episodic pattern of action and person-against-society conflict)

Episodic Pattern of Action

In an episodic pattern of action, single events or short episodes are linked together by common characters, settings, or themes. Unlike the chapters of a story written with a progressive pattern of action, events written with an episodic pattern of action can be read in any order. These episodes are often full of action, but because they are typically short, there is little time for the author to fully develop the character. Instead, the reader comes to know the character over time, as the author repeats or emphasizes a particular character trait in each episode. With each episode, the reader reconfirms his/her image of the character.

Often, in adventure stories or book series, episodic and progressive plots are combined. When this happens, each chapter is an episode, or self-contained story, that can be read independently. Yet when these episodes are considered as a whole, each independent story contributes to the overall plot.

Person-Against-Society Conflict

When societal issues prevent characters from reaching their goals or cause them to make moral choices, it is described as a person-against-society conflict. For example, these conflicts may address racial or gender discrimination, unethical business practices, or societal challenges facing persons with special needs. Often the conflict is revealed through narration, the actions of the characters, or their thoughts about the main character. Adults typically recognize societal conflict much more easily than children, who often understand the story at a simpler level.

References:

Lukens, R. J. (2007). *A critical handbook of children's literature, 8th ed.* Boston: Pearson.

Nikolajeva, M. (2002). *The rhetoric of character in children's literature.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.