



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Video: Thievin' Theo Plot

(cliffhanger pattern of action and person-against-self conflict)



Cliffhanger Pattern of Action

Suspense is the emotional pull that keeps readers wanting more, right up to the final pages. One form of suspense is the cliffhanger pattern of action. While readers may come to the end of a story and not ever know the outcome, as in the case of *Thievin' Theo*, authors often use the cliffhanger as the exciting chapter ending that makes it hard to lay a book aside. Each chapter contributes to the overall plot of the book, yet leaves the reader eager to read "just one more!"

Person-Against-Self Conflict

The person-against-self conflict is probably the most sophisticated conflict found in children's literature because it describes a character's inner struggle. Internal conflict is sometimes called "idea-against-idea" conflict, but this term doesn't help us remember that it is the character who is the one of two minds.

In most books, several conflicts are combined in the same story. Initially, a reader may find that the main character is in conflict with another character (person-against-person conflict). When delving deeper into the story, however, the reader may find the same main character struggling with an inner conflict as well, often requiring a decision to be made, or some sort of action to take place. Person-against-self conflict is often the cause or result of conflicts between characters.

References:

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