MovieLit

The *Classics* go to the *Movies!*

Curriculum Sample:

The following excerpts illustrate one of the literary analysis tools included in the "Dynamic Dozen Tool Kit," and several examples of how students are required to use that tool over the course of the curriculum. Some of the examples also include our essay-scoring suggestions to the parent/teacher. The Teacher's Handbook contains these scoring suggestions for every writing assignment the students are required to complete.

TOOL #4. CATCHING THE CONFLICT.

Without a conflict, it's difficult to imagine a story being interesting or worthwhile. The first question to be asked and answered in analyzing conflict in a story might be, "Who are the primary people or forces involved in this conflict?" Most stories will have one main character with a problem, a challenge, a conflict. As readers, we probably sympathize with this character and root for him or her to succeed. This character is called the **protagonist**. The character or force serving as the primary opponent or obstacle for the protagonist is called the **antagonist**.

Most conflicts in literature have traditionally been classified in one of the following five ways:

A. Man vs. man. The protagonist is struggling primarily against one other person.

B. Man vs. society. The protagonist is struggling primarily against his or her surrounding social conditions. Social setting (see **TOOL #2**) is always very important in these stories.

C. Man vs. himself. The protagonist is at the center of a psychological drama, struggling against some problem within his or her own mind, personality or character.

D. Man vs. nature. The protagonist is struggling against natural forces such as the ocean, a forest fire, a blizzard, the desert, etc. These are generally stories of physical survival.

E. Man vs. God. The protagonist is struggling against the will and power of God (or "the gods" in a polytheistic setting).

There can, of course, be variations on these classifications, or combinations of them, but these five provide you with the basic tools for analyzing conflict.

Assignment D (from the required *Hamlet* unit)

After reviewing **TOOL #4** in your Dynamic Dozen Tool Kit, identify the kind of conflict we see in Hamlet's story. Might there be more than one of the standard kinds of conflict represented? Who is the antagonist in the story, and what are his two major tactics against Hamlet?

Assignment D (from the required *A Man for All Seasons* unit)

After reviewing TOOL #4 in your Dynamic Dozen Tool Kit, identify the kind of conflict around which this story is based. You may identify conflicts of different kinds on different levels of the story, but choose the one category that best describes the story overall and explain the choice you have made. Describe the tools or strategies that More uses to pursue his side of the conflict, and the equivalent tools or strategies used against him. Who wins?

Pointers for Teachers: *This conflict is probably best described as Man vs. Society. A student could make a case for Man vs. Man, based on King Henry being the individual antagonist for Sir Thomas More, but the play intentionally avoids giving Henry a truly major role. It is not just that the king wants his way; it is that nearly the whole government wants the king to have his way, so the whole system is stacked against More. More's strategies are to stand up against the overwhelming majority, and more importantly, to avoid formally stating his opinion on the controversy so that he technically cannot be tried for treason. The king's first strategy, working mainly through Lord Cromwell, is to try to persuade More to come along with the crowd. The next strategy is to find some charge (several are tried) to destroy More's reputation. The final strategy is Rich's false testimony in court that dishonestly defeats More's strategy of silence.*

Assignment D **(from the optional *The Miracle Worker* unit)**

Describe the conflict in this play. (See TOOL #4 in your Dynamic Dozen Tool Kit.) Into which of the standard categories of conflict does the story fit, and how is the conflict different from what we find in most stories?

Pointers for Teachers: *One level of conflict in the story, Helen's own struggle against her sensory limitations and isolation, fits roughly into the "Man vs. himself" category (with the obvious modification for gender). The play emphasizes how desperately she wants to learn, although it is difficult for the average person to recognize that fact due to her apparently sub-human behavior. That behavior creates what looks like a "Man vs. man" struggle between Helen and Annie. More realistically, there is "Man vs. man" conflict between Annie and Captain Keller (and even Mrs. Keller to an extent) as they contend over their expectations for Helen. The conflicts do not fit the usual pattern found in most stories, because everyone concerned really has the same general goals, but disagree over the methods for reaching those goals and exactly how high to aim.*

MovieLit Optional Film 3, *The Glass Menagerie* <u>Final</u> Essay Test

Instructions: After you have completed all the preliminary work for the film, take the essay test below. Once you have seen this essay question, you should write the entire essay in one uninterrupted sitting without reviewing your notes or any of the instructional materials in your *MovieLit* Student's Handbook. Your essay should be approximately 500 words in length.

Make an argument that defends Tom for his decision to leave the family at the end of the story, and then make an argument that criticizes his decision. Indicate which argument you find the most convincing and explain why. Describe what kind of conflict you see in Tom's character (Man vs. _____). If you wish, compare and contrast Tom Wingfield's dedication to his family with that of Tom Joad in *Grapes of Wrath*.