

Prompts That Support Understanding Protagonists and Antagonists

You can analyze the protagonist and problems faced:

- What do you learn about the protagonist's family? Friends? Self-image?
- What is the main problem the protagonist wrestles with? Does he or she resolve this problem? How?
- What motivates the protagonist to deal with his or her problems?
- What character traits does the protagonist have that enable him or her to cope with problems?
- How do external antagonists change the protagonist from the beginning to the end? Show what the protagonist's personality and feelings are like at the beginning and then at the end.
- What does the protagonist learn about himself or herself by solving problems and confronting the antagonist?

You can analyze the antagonist's character if it's a person:

- What do you know about the antagonist's history? What key experiences helped shape his or her personality?
- What motivates the antagonist? What goal or desire is he or she trying to achieve?
- How would you describe the antagonist? Use details and dialogue from the text to support your description.
- What does the antagonist value? How does this affect his or her decisions?
- What internal feelings does the antagonist have? Why do you think he or she has these feelings? How do they affect the antagonist's actions?
- How does the antagonist affect the protagonist?

You can analyze how the antagonist affects the plot:

- What is the main conflict in the plot? How is the antagonist involved?
- What are the key events in the plot? How is the antagonist involved?
- How is the conflict resolved? What is the antagonist's role in the resolution?
- What actions or reactions of the antagonist affect the events of the story?

You can analyze how the antagonist interacts with the protagonist and other characters:

- What is the relationship between the antagonist and the protagonist? How does this relationship affect the plot?
- How do the antagonist and the protagonist interact with each other? What do the interactions reveal about the character and motivations of each?
- Does the antagonist have friends or allies? What are these relationships like? How do they help you better understand the antagonist?

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- Does the antagonist interact with other characters? What do these interactions reveal about the character of the antagonist?
- What is the source of the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist? Compare and contrast how the antagonist and the protagonist view the conflict.

You can analyze how the antagonist affects the setting:

- Identify the key settings in the story. Which settings does the antagonist shape? Why do you think those particular settings are used?
- How does a particular setting influence the protagonist? Is there a setting where he or she feels more powerful and in control? Where he or she feels vulnerable? Explain why and how this power and control affect other story elements.
- How do the settings relate to the antagonist and the mood or tone of the story?

You can analyze how internal and external forces serve as antagonists:

- What internal conflicts get in the way of the protagonist achieving his or her goals? Does an intense fear or other feeling hamper the protagonist? Show how this internal conflict affects the protagonist's decisions, motivation, and ability to act.
- Does the protagonist have an illness or physical challenge to manage? How does it affect his or her plans and goals?
- What role do natural forces, such as a geographic feature, the weather, or a natural disaster, play in the plot? How do they affect the protagonist?
- What external events, such as war, holidays, or even a school assembly or competition, play a role in the plot? How do they affect the protagonist?

You can analyze how antagonists deepen your understanding:

- How do antagonists help you understand the plot?
- Show how understanding the antagonists enables you to determine and support themes.
- What do you notice about the antagonists?
- How do antagonists enable you to understand the personality of the protagonist? Provide evidence.
- How are antagonists connected to settings in the story? What do these connections help you understand about theme, plot, conflicts, and the protagonist?