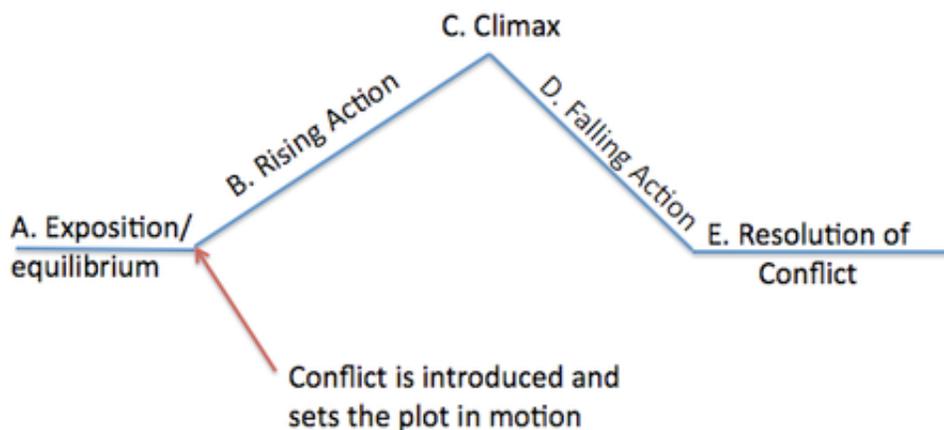# Plot and Conflict

At the center of a plot is **conflict**: the main struggle between opposing forces. Conflict is introduced in the rising action of a plot line, the climax revolves around the conflict, and the falling action is the eventual resolution of the conflict. It creates the tension, interest, and suspense that keep audiences interested in the story. It compels characters to have dramatic encounters when those opposing forces must interact.

The conflict sets the plot in motion, and for that reason, many critics believe that plot cannot exist without conflict.
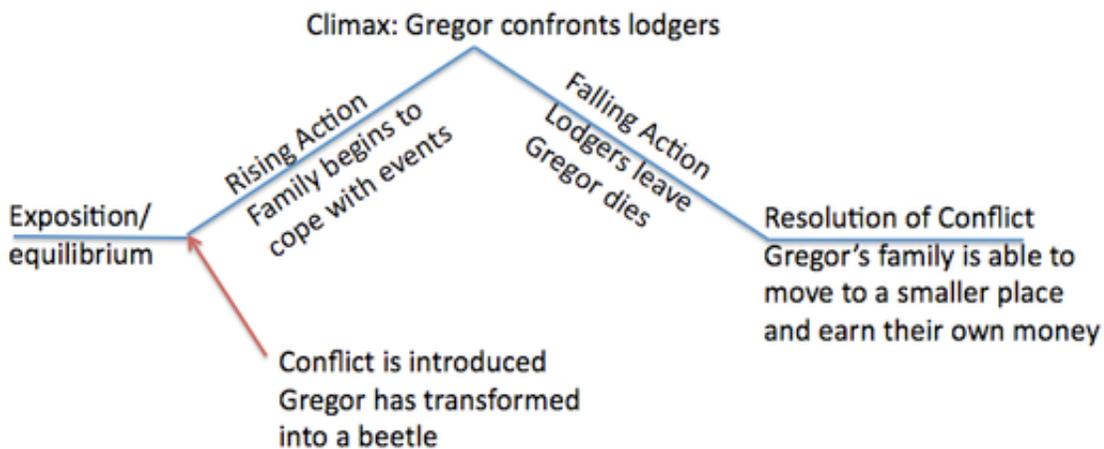

Let's look at an example: Mary Shelley's 1831 classic*Frankenstein.*

- **main conflict**: Dr. Victor Frankenstein creates the monster (or creature) and then loses control over it.
- **Plot outline**:

1. **Exposition:** Robert Walton's letters home to his sister and Victor's account of his childhood and studies at school.
2. **Rising Action/Conflict is Introduced:** Victor creates the monster (or creature) and then it disappears.
      1. **The creature's actions complicate the conflict as the story approaches the climax**
3. **Climax:** Victor marries Elizabeth, and the two embark on their honeymoon. Victor isolates himself from Elizabeth to keep her safe because he believes that he is going to be

the creature's next victim. However, the creature finds and kills Elizabeth. He disappears, leaving a trail of clues behind him for Victor.

4. **Falling Action:** Victor chases the creature North where he meets Robert Walton.

5. **Resolution:** Victor dies from exhaustion, sickness, and mental anguish. The creature appears to pay his last respects, and then wanders off into the barren landscape of the North to die alone.

- The main conflict (Victor's lack of control over his creation) determines the course of events; each part of the plot somehow connects back to that main conflict. If Victor had never lost control of his creation, the plot would not have advanced to the climax and resolution.

Climax: Gregor confronts lodgers

Rising Action
Family begins to
cope with events

Falling Action
Lodgers leave
Gregor dies

Exposition/
equilibrium

Resolution of Conflict
Gregor's family is able to
move to a smaller place
and earn their own money

Conflict is introduced
Gregor has transformed
into a beetle

Plot and Conflict