

# Conflict

Read the following essay on conflict, and then answer then complete the Conflict Assessment that follows.

Conflict is a necessary element of fictional literature. It is defined as the problem in any piece of literature and is often classified according to the nature of the protagonist or antagonist, as follows:

## Human vs. Self

Human vs. Self is the theme in literature that places a character against his or her own will, confusion, or fears. Human vs. Self can also be where a character tries to find out who he or she is or comes to a realization or a change in character. Although the struggle is internal, the character can be influenced by external forces. The struggle of the human being to come to a decision is the basis of Character vs. Self. An example of this type of conflict is the movie, *A Beautiful Mind*, where characters struggle with their inner selves by deciding what's right or wrong.

## Human vs. Human

Human vs. Human is when, in a novel, there is a conflict of two forms of like beings. An example is the hero's conflicts with the central villain of a work, which may play a large role in the plot and contribute to the development of both characters. An example of this type of conflict is the conflict between Judah and Messala in *Ben-Hur*.

## Human vs. Society

Human vs. Society is a theme in fiction in which a main character's, or group of main characters', main source of conflict is social traditions or concepts. In this sense, the two parties are: a) the protagonist(s); b) the society of which the protagonist(s) are included. Society itself is often looked at as a single character, just as an opposing party would be looked at in a Man vs. Man conflict. An example in literature would be *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, or Holden Caulfield's struggle in *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger.

## Human vs. Nature

Human vs. Nature is the theme in literature that places a character against forces of nature. Many disaster films focus on this theme, which is predominant within many survival stories. It is also strong in stories about struggling for survival in remote locales, such as the novel *Hatchet* or Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire".

