

## A Bad Beginning by Lemony Snickett

In order to do literary analysis of books we read, it is necessary to understand the terms used and to apply them. In this lesson, we will define some literary terms and apply them to A Bad Beginning.

**Setting:** The place and time of the story. This includes the historical period, geographical location, descriptions of outdoor and indoor locales, and the social status of the main characters.

1. Describe the setting of A Bad Beginning.

**Protagonist:** The main character(s).

2. Who is/are the protagonist(s) in A Bad Beginning?

**Antagonist:** The person with whom the protagonist has the most conflict. He or she is the enemy of the protagonist and wants to keep them from their goal.

3. Who is the antagonist in the story?

**Foil:** A character whose sole purpose is to develop the protagonist and help them achieve their goal.

4. Is there a foil in A Bad Beginning, and if so, who is the foil?

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**Conflict:** The struggle with someone or something which keeps the protagonist from reaching their goal. When a character struggles within themselves over a decision or action they have an ‘internal conflict.’ Conflict between the protagonist and antagonist in a story is an external conflict. There can be internal and external conflicts in a single story.

5. What kind of conflict took place in A Bad Beginning? With whom was there conflict?

**Plot:** The plot of a story includes the events of the story in the order presented. A typical plot consists of five main parts: exposition or the description of the beginning of the story, rising action, crisis or climax, falling action or denouement, and resolution. The crisis or climax is the moment or event in the plot in which the conflict is the most directly addressed: the main character wins or loses, the secret is revealed. After the climax, the falling action takes place. The resolution is simply the ending of the story.

6. Identify each of the five main parts of the plot of A Bad Beginning (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution).

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**Narration (Voice):** The narration of a story is the way the author chooses to tell the story. It is the perspective or voice they employ. First-person narration is written from the protagonist's point of view, referring to him or her as "I." Second-person narration addresses the main character as "you." Omniscient narration is written in the third-person and writes from an all-knowing perspective and addresses the main character as "he" or "she."

7. How was A Bad Beginning narrated, in whose voice was it written?

**Tone:** The mood of the story is the tone. Tom Sawyer and Peter Pan are good examples of a humorous tone. Romeo and Juliet may be described as a somber tone.

8. What was the tone of A Bad Beginning?

**Theme:** The theme is the main purpose of the piece of literature and can usually be stated in one sentence. It is implied throughout the story. It should not be confused with a moral. Some common themes include: coming of age, love conquers all, overcoming odds, humanity versus nature, good versus evil, etc.

9. What was the theme of A Bad Beginning?

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**Analysis:** This is your criticism of the book. How well you thought the author developed the plot or the characters, etc. You are the critic.

10. Critique A Bad Beginning by Lemony Snickett.

**Activity/Game: Academy Awards Game**

In this game we are going to be film critics. We will be using our literary analysis terms to critique the following films and award them best ones with Oscars.

## How to Play

In groups of 4-5 people, read through the list of films below. Evaluate and choose an award for each of the following categories:

- Best Protagonist (main character - best actor or actress)
- Best Antagonist (best bad guy)
- Best Foil (best supporting actor)
- Best Climax (best conflict)
- Best Resolution (best ending)
- Best Film (overall)

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Make your selection and enter your choice for each award in the envelope provided. Each team will read the results of their evaluation in front of the class/group/book club. Beginning with “The envelope please...” and “The award for Best Protagonist goes to...”

Films to be evaluated:

- The Sound of Music
- Star Wars
- Mary Poppins
- The Wizard of Oz
- Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
- Beauty and the Beast
- Tarzan
- Snow White
- Cinderella
- Swiss Family Robinson
- The Parent Trap
- Finding Nemo