

What Situation Is An Example Of External Conflict?

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External conflict is a fundamental element in storytelling that drives the narrative forward and creates tension. It involves a character engaging in a struggle against an outside force that impedes their goals or desires. Unlike internal conflict, which occurs within a character's mind, external conflict manifests through interactions with other characters, society, nature, or external circumstances. Understanding what situations exemplify external conflict helps in analyzing stories, characters, and themes across various media. This article explores the concept of external conflict in depth, illustrating with concrete examples and examining different types of external conflicts to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Defining External Conflict

What Is External Conflict?

External conflict occurs when a character faces opposition from an outside force. This force can be another individual, a group, society, nature, or even a supernatural entity. The core aspect of external conflict is the opposition that hinders the character from achieving their goals, often creating suspense and engaging the audience. External conflicts are essential in storytelling because they introduce obstacles that characters must navigate, thereby revealing their character, resilience, and growth.

Why Is External Conflict Important?

External conflict serves several vital functions in narratives:

- **Creates Tension and Drama:** It introduces obstacles that characters must overcome, keeping the audience invested.
- **Reveals Character Traits:** How a character responds to external conflicts showcases their personality, values, and strengths.
- **Advances the Plot:** External conflicts propel the story forward, leading to climaxes and resolutions.
- **Highlights Themes:** The nature of external conflicts often reflects broader

themes such as justice, freedom, survival, or morality.

Types of External Conflict

External conflict can take various forms depending on the nature of the opposing force. Recognizing these types helps in identifying and analyzing specific situations that qualify as external conflicts.

1. Character vs. Character

This is perhaps the most common form of external conflict, where one character opposes another.

- Example: A detective pursuing a criminal, or a protagonist fighting against an antagonist.
- Scenario: Two rival companies engaging in a fierce business rivalry, trying to outdo each other in the marketplace.
- Significance: It often involves direct confrontation, competition, or moral opposition.

2. Character vs. Society

Here, the character faces opposition from societal norms, laws, or cultural expectations.

- Example: A young woman fighting against gender discrimination in her community.
- Scenario: An activist protesting unjust laws in her country.
- Significance: This conflict highlights social issues and challenges systemic injustice.

3. Character vs. Nature

In this type, the external force is the natural environment, such as weather, animals, or natural disasters.

- Example: A group of hikers lost in a storm fighting to survive.
- Scenario: A sailor battling a hurricane at sea.
- Significance: It emphasizes human vulnerability and resilience against the natural world.

4. Character vs. Supernatural

This involves conflicts with supernatural entities like ghosts, gods, or mythical creatures.

- Example: A hero battling a vengeful spirit or a protagonist confronting divine beings.
- Scenario: A person trying to banish a haunted house's malevolent spirit.
- Significance: It explores themes of good versus evil beyond the natural realm.

Examples of External Conflict in Literature and Media

To better understand external conflict, examining real-world examples from literature, films, and history can be illuminating.

Example 1: "The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien

- Type of Conflict: Character vs. Society and Character vs. Evil (Supernatural)
- Description: The hobbits and their allies oppose the dark forces of Sauron who threaten Middle-earth. The external conflicts include battles, political struggles, and the fight against evil supernatural entities.
- Analysis: The overarching external conflict drives the narrative, with characters facing armies, treacherous landscapes, and malevolent magic.

Example 2: "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee

- Type of Conflict: Character vs. Society
- Description: Atticus Finch defends Tom Robinson, an African American falsely accused of assault. The town's entrenched racial prejudices oppose his pursuit of justice.
- Analysis: This external conflict highlights societal injustice and moral courage, shaping the novel's themes.

Example 3: "The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway

- Type of Conflict: Character vs. Nature
- Description: An old fisherman battles a giant marlin in the sea, embodying

the struggle between human perseverance and natural forces.

- Analysis: The external conflict emphasizes resilience, dignity, and the indomitable human spirit.

Example 4: "Harry Potter" Series by J.K. Rowling

- Type of Conflict: Character vs. Supernatural and Character vs. Character
- Description: Harry faces opposition from Lord Voldemort and his followers, as well as supernatural monsters.
- Analysis: The external conflicts are crucial to the hero's journey, testing Harry's courage and morality.

Real-World Situations That Exemplify External Conflict

External conflict is not just confined to stories; it also manifests in real-world situations, often with significant consequences.

Example 1: Civil Rights Movements

- Scenario: Activists fighting against racial segregation and discrimination.
- Opposing Force: Societal laws, cultural norms, or authorities resistant to change.
- Impact: These external conflicts have led to legislative changes and societal shifts.

Example 2: Environmental Disasters

- Scenario: Communities battling hurricanes, wildfires, or floods.
- Opposing Force: Natural forces that threaten lives and property.
- Impact: External conflicts in these situations often require coordinated emergency responses and resilience.

Example 3: Business Competition

- Scenario: Companies competing for market dominance.
- Opposing Force: Rival firms, market fluctuations, or regulatory challenges.
- Impact: These external conflicts can lead to innovation, mergers, or legal battles.

How to Identify External Conflict in a Story or Situation

Understanding external conflict involves analyzing the interactions and obstacles faced by characters or individuals.

Steps to Identify External Conflict:

1. Determine who or what the protagonist is opposing.
2. Identify the nature of the opposition—another character, society, nature, or supernatural forces.
3. Assess whether the obstacle is external (outside the character) or internal (within the character).
4. Look for direct confrontations, battles, or struggles that impede the goal.
5. Consider the consequences of the conflict on the character and the story's progression.

Conclusion

External conflict is a vital storytelling element that encapsulates the struggles characters face against outside forces. Whether it involves confrontations with other individuals, societal structures, natural disasters, or supernatural entities, external conflicts create tension, develop characters, and propel narratives. Recognizing these conflicts in literature, media, or real life helps deepen our understanding of human resilience, societal issues, and the complex nature of struggle. From epic battles in fantasy worlds to social justice movements and natural disasters, external conflicts are omnipresent in our stories and experiences, illustrating the perpetual human encounter with external obstacles and the indomitable spirit to overcome them.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an example of external conflict in a story?

A character struggling against a natural disaster, such as a flood or hurricane, exemplifies external conflict.

How does an external conflict differ from an internal conflict?

External conflict involves outside forces like other characters or nature, whereas internal conflict occurs within a character's mind or emotions.

Can a disagreement between two characters be considered an external conflict?

Yes, a disagreement or fight between characters is a classic example of external conflict.

Is a legal battle an example of external conflict?

Absolutely, a legal battle between individuals or organizations exemplifies external conflict.

How does external conflict drive the plot in stories?

External conflict creates obstacles that characters must overcome, propelling the story forward and adding tension.

Can environmental issues in a story be an example of external conflict?

Yes, conflicts like battling pollution or climate change are external conflicts involving external forces.

Is competition between teams in a sports story an example of external conflict?

Yes, competition between teams or individuals in sports is a common example of external conflict.

What role does external conflict play in character development?

External conflict challenges characters and often leads to growth as they confront and resolve these outside obstacles.

Can societal pressures be considered external conflict?

Yes, social expectations, discrimination, or cultural norms can serve as external conflicts that characters must navigate.

Additional Resources

What Situation Is An Example Of External Conflict?

Understanding external conflict is essential for analyzing stories, character development, and storytelling dynamics in literature, film, and real-life scenarios. External conflict refers to the struggle that occurs between a character and outside forces, such as other characters, society, nature, or fate. Recognizing what situation exemplifies external conflict allows writers and readers to better grasp the narrative tension and the obstacles characters must overcome. In this guide, we'll explore the nature of external conflict, provide clear examples, and offer a detailed breakdown of typical situations that illustrate this concept.

What Is External Conflict?

Before diving into specific situations, it's important to clarify what external conflict entails. In storytelling, conflicts are generally categorized into two types:

- Internal Conflict: Struggles that occur within a character, such as moral dilemmas, emotional struggles, or identity crises.
- External Conflict: Struggles between a character and outside forces, which can include other characters, society, nature, or fate.

External conflicts are often the driving force behind plot development because they create obstacles that characters must confront and resolve.

Types of External Conflict

External conflict can manifest in various forms, each representing different outside forces. Common types include:

1. Character vs. Character

A direct confrontation or opposition between two or more characters.

2. Character vs. Society

When a character challenges societal norms, laws, or cultural expectations.

3. Character vs. Nature

A struggle between a character and natural forces like storms, animals, or environmental challenges.

4. Character vs. Fate or Destiny

Conflicts involving forces beyond human control, such as fate, destiny, or divine intervention.

Recognizing an Example of External Conflict

To identify an external conflict, look for situations where a character faces an obstacle or opposition originating outside themselves. These scenarios are characterized by tangible forces or entities that stand in the way of the character's goals or desires.

Examples of External Conflict in Different Situations

Let's examine some concrete situations that exemplify external conflict, illustrating how they fit into the categories above.

Character vs. Character

Example:

A detective trying to catch a criminal who is constantly one step ahead. The detective's goal is to solve the case, but the criminal's cunning and evasiveness create external obstacles.

Analysis:

This is a classic example of character vs. character conflict. The opposing goals and actions of the detective and the criminal produce tension, as each tries to outwit the other.

Key features:

- Direct opposition between individuals.
- Clear goals that conflict.
- Tension driven by external actions.

Character vs. Society

Example:

A young activist fighting against an unjust legal system to bring awareness to social inequality.

Analysis:

This situation exemplifies character vs. society conflict. The character challenges societal norms or laws, facing resistance from institutions or cultural expectations.

Key features:

- A character challenging societal rules or values.
- Potential for systemic opposition, such as laws or social stigma.
- A broader scope than individual disputes, involving community or cultural dynamics.

Character vs. Nature

Example:

A hiker caught in a severe storm while stranded on a mountain, trying to find shelter and survive.

Analysis:

This is a classic character vs. nature conflict. The external forces—weather, terrain, wildlife—pose life-threatening obstacles that the character must navigate.

Key features:

- External natural forces threatening the character's safety.
- No human adversary involved directly.
- Often involves survival instincts and resourcefulness.

Character vs. Fate or Destiny

Example:

A prophecy predicts a hero's downfall, and the hero struggles against the inevitable outcome.

Analysis:

This situation illustrates character vs. fate conflict, where external forces beyond human control influence the story. The character's internal efforts are pitted against destiny.

Key features:

- External, often mystical or divine, forces.
- A sense of inevitability or predetermination.
- The character's actions may slow or alter the outcome but not necessarily prevent it.

Identifying External Conflict in Literature and Media

In stories, external conflicts are often central to the plot. Here are ways to identify them:

- Look for opposition: Is the protagonist facing obstacles from outside forces?
- Check for external struggles: Are there natural disasters, societal opposition, or rival characters involved?
- Observe the stakes: Do external factors threaten the character's goals or

survival?

- Note the character's response: How do characters respond to outside pressures? Their actions often reveal external conflicts.

Why External Conflict Matters

External conflicts are vital because they:

- Create tension and suspense: External obstacles keep the story engaging.
- Drive character development: How characters respond to external conflicts reveals their traits and growth.
- Shape the plot: External conflicts often lead to pivotal moments and resolutions.
- Reflect real-world struggles: Many real-life challenges involve external forces, making stories more relatable.

Summary: What Situation Is An Example Of External Conflict?

In summary, an example of external conflict involves a situation where a character faces opposition or obstacles originating outside of themselves. These situations can take many forms, such as:

- A hero battling a villain (Character vs. Character)
- An individual protesting against unjust laws (Character vs. Society)
- A person stranded during a hurricane (Character vs. Nature)
- Someone fighting against their predetermined destiny (Character vs. Fate)

Understanding these scenarios helps writers craft compelling narratives and readers appreciate the depth of storytelling. Recognizing external conflict enhances our comprehension of character motivations and plot dynamics, making stories more impactful and meaningful.

Final Thoughts

External conflicts are fundamental elements of storytelling that reflect the universal human experience of facing challenges beyond our control. Whether it's a physical obstacle like a storm or an adversarial opponent like a rival, external conflict propels stories forward and tests characters in meaningful ways. By analyzing situations and recognizing external conflict, writers can create more engaging stories, and readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of narrative structures.

Remember: The key to identifying an external conflict is to look for outside

forces—other characters, societal structures, natural elements, or fate—that challenge the protagonist’s goals. When you see a character battling something external, you’re witnessing an example of external conflict in action.

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