

# Problem or Challenge

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Most fictional narratives have a **problem** or **challenge** that leads to some action. The problem or challenge makes the reader want to know how the story turns out.

This is especially true when you're flipping through the television channels. Flip... flip...flip...Nothing really interesting....On the next channel you see a rabbit being chased by a rattlesnake. You stay on that channel just to see what finally happens. Does the rattlesnake have rabbit burgers for lunch? Does the bunny escape?

Next, you flip to another channel and see a competition between kids racing to the top of a hill to win a big reward. Who will win? Will it be a close race?

**A problem is a negative situation.** Something goes wrong. Something terrible happens. The main character finds himself in a bad situation he doesn't want to be in.

A grizzly bear wanders into the campsite where you and your friends are sleeping....



Nancy accidentally mixes in soap flakes instead of the powdered sugar for the cake she is baking for the 4-H contest....

The boat Esmeralda and Wendy are paddling through the swamp hits a stump and springs a leak. An alligator is approaching....

**A challenge is a positive situation.** A competition. A contest. An adventure. The main character must prove something or wants to accomplish something.

Dale is trying to sell lemonade to earn enough money to buy the little dog in the pet store window before someone else buys him....



Nguyen has entered the Jr. Olympics and wants to win a gold medal in the boys' archery contest....

Tyrell got a new metal detector for his birthday and he wants to look for buried treasure in the field behind his house....

# Problems and Challenges Create Tension

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking up a problem or challenge for her main character is one of the toughest things an author has to do. **The problem or challenge causes tension or conflict.** Without an interesting or exciting problem or challenge, there isn't much of a story.

**Authors have to think creatively.** This takes practice. The more you do it, the easier it becomes when you want to write a story other people will want to read. Make sure your problem or challenge is something other kids will think is interesting or exciting. For instance, if you were writing about two best friends, they could....

...try camping out in the back yard for the first time.

...accidentally set the shed on fire while trying to light some fireworks.



...break a neighbor's window while playing baseball.

...enter the skateboard competition at the park.

...take horseback riding lessons together.

...sneak into the basement of the town museum to see some secret dinosaur bones.

...find a bag of stolen jewelry buried under an old tree.



...have to take care of a baby elephant for the weekend.

The only limit is your own imagination. When you're writing a story, anything can happen! Kids like to read stories about other kids who:

have a magical or fantastic experience  
 have to solve a problem without an adult's help  
 have a special relationship with an animal  
 get to do something kids don't usually get to do  
 try creative ways to make money  
 go somewhere interesting or special  
 want to win a contest

have to do something scary  
 get into trouble  
 face danger  
 solve a mystery  
 rescue a friend or animal  
 do something silly or stupid  
 want someone to like them