

Conflict

There are two types of conflicts – Internal and External.

Internal – conflicts that deal with the personalities of your protagonists; how they think; how they react; how they confront different things. Do they see the glass as half empty or half full? Check back with your characterisation exercise and see if you can't figure out how they might react in different scenarios.

External – conflicts that come from outside factors. Do your protagonists live on opposite sides of the country but have met on-line? Is there danger around? Have they changed jobs? Have they been diagnosed with cancer.

The *external* conflict should bring about a multitude of *internal* conflicts. All books, movies, TV shows have both external and internal conflicts. Have a look at your favourite shows/movies/books and write down what these might be. The more you can reverse-engineer conflicts like this, the more the concepts of internal and external conflicts will solidify in your mind and will naturally come out when you're doing your characterisation, world building and story structure.

Remember to give your characters 5 likes and 5 dislikes – and during your story, make them do all 5 of things on the 'dislike' list. Put your characters in a hole and throw stones at them. What are their *goals*? What do they want to achieve? What are their *motivations* for achieving these things? Both the *goals* and *motivations* will help strength your conflicts.

Eg:

Goal Your character wants to travel.

Motivation Why do they want to travel? To see the world? To explore new places? To meet new people? To get away from a bad situation? To start again?

Conflict What will happen with they arrive? Will they find somewhere to live/job? Will their passport get stolen along the way? Will they run out of money? What if they have an accident, do they end up in hospital? What about the language barrier? Can they accept different cultures? What bad things might happen? What good things might happen? Will their past catch up with them?

The questions keep on coming and in honing in on *why* your character wants to travel (motivation), you can direct both the external and internal conflicts in order to wring out of them every drop of emotion.

Check the genre you're writing for. What sort of external and internal conflicts come just from genre? Adventure? Romance? Western? Historical? Horror? Sci-Fi?

Remember to look at your structure – Aristotle's Incline – to ensure that your conflicts keep raising the tension between your protagonists. Sit down and do more plotting if you need to in order to avoid having a sagging middle. Conflicts are there to keep the tension tight, to keep the story moving and to help your characters to discover the *real* person inside.