



## Creating Conflict

Ok, so you know who your characters are. Excellent. Now it is time to figure out what your characters are going to do this November. **Most stories are ultimately about the same thing—the journey a protagonist goes on to get what he or she wants.** Whether the goal is to become the next "American Idol" or to discover the cure for cancer, his or her journey is never easy, and your character will encounter many setbacks along the way. Though they're no fun for your protagonist, these obstacles are what make your story exciting to read.

Imagine a story about someone named Jim who wants a sandwich more than anything in the world. How boring would the story be if all Jim had to do was walk from his bedroom to the kitchen and eat a sandwich? That story is so uneventful it can be told in one sentence. But what if Jim is seriously afraid of the dark, the power is out in his house, and he has to walk down a dark hallway to get to the kitchen? And, once there, he has to fight his cruel older sister, Helga, for the last two pieces of bread?

That story has both external conflict and internal conflict.

### External Conflict

**The external conflict is the one between a protagonist and antagonist.** In the above story, the protagonist (Jim) has a goal (to eat a sandwich), but a motivated antagonist (Helga) has his or her own agendas (to also eat a sandwich). The struggle between Jim and Helga over the last two pieces of bread is the external conflict in this story.

### Internal Conflict

**The internal conflicts are the fears and insecurities that a protagonist has to overcome in order to get what he or she wants.** In the story above, Jim has to overcome his fear of the dark in order to get the sandwich he wants so badly.



If you have completed your character questionnaires, you already know a good amount about the major players in your novel. Now it's time to answer some deeper questions about your characters' hopes and fears in order to create the conflicts that will make your novel interesting.

Take out and review your character questionnaires, then fill in the blanks below.

**Your Protagonist**

More than anything in the world, my protagonist wants:

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But he/she is afraid of:

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And his/her greatest weakness is (is it something like Kryptonite or more like Hostess snack cakes?):

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Not to mention that no-good antagonist . . .

**Your Antagonist**

More than anything in the world, my antagonist wants (this can be as simple as defeating the protagonist or something more ambitious like world domination):

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My antagonist's "beef" with the protagonist is:

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My antagonist is afraid of (kittens?):

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His/her greatest weakness is:

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Congratulations! You now have the basic ingredients for a juicy story: **external conflict and internal conflict**. Know that your internal and external conflicts will overlap throughout your novel. Once your characters find out about each others' fears and weaknesses, you better believe they will use them against each other mercilessly as they fight to make their own dreams come true.