**Mindful Content: Central Conflict Generator**

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| **Central Conflict** | **Definition** | **Examples** |
| Internal conflict versus external conflict | A protagonist must do things they wouldn’t normally dream of doing to overcome the obstacle at hand. | Casablanca, The Godfather, Hamlet, The Da Vinci Code,  |
| Character versus society | When the harsh rule of a society or community conflicts with the freedoms of the central character, conflict must follow. | The Scarlett Letter, Brave New World, A Clockwork Orange, 1984, Malcolm X, Roots, The Hunger Games, |
| Character versus character | When two opposing personalities clash, sparks fly, and audience and reader interest intensify. | The Fugitive, First Blood, The Godfather, Superhero novels and films, Bond thrillers,  |
| Character versus nature | Nature or a force of nature can be the ultimate foe for a character. Can they survive prolonged exposure?  | Dune, The Martian Chronicles, The Martian, Robinson Crusoe, |
| Character versus technology | A protagonist facing a technological foe can make for many opportunities for conflict. | The Terminator, Blade Runner, 2001: a Space Odyssey, Star Wars, |
| Character versus destiny | Often a hero tries to escape their fate or is reluctant to accept it, yet must. | Oedipus, Lord of the Rings, The Godfather, Ulysses, Harry Potter,  |
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**Can you think of any more examples?**

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| **Central Conflict** | **Example** | **How to intensify the conflict?** |
| Internal conflict versus external conflict | A man is afraid of water but needs to rescue a drowning woman | A shark fin appears in the water and starts to circle. |
| Character versus society | Our hero challenges the system in a dystopian future, where all lives are ended at 35. | He is excommunicated from society, and all his family have to survive with no technology. His family hate him. |
| Character versus character | A hero takes on a group of invaders and defeats them. | Looking out to sea, the hero discovers that the defeated invaders were only the advance party. |
| Character versus nature | A superyacht shipwrecks on a reef, and the crew struggle to make land. | The crew soon find out that man-eating plants inhabit the land. |
| Character versus technology | A protagonist develops a set of virtual reality specs to automate his house. | The virtual specs become lodged on his face and start to control the inventor’s mind.  |
| Character versus destiny | An introverted man hasn’t left his house in fifteen years and will not speak to anyone.  | His house catches fire in a forest fire, and he has to move. He is mistaken for a cult leader. |
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**Can you think of any more ways to intensify the conflict?**

**Raise the Stakes**

When creating your central conflict, the *Masterclass* staff writers state that ‘The trick isn’t to shy away from it [conflict] — it’s to welcome it with open arms so you can get down to solving your way out again (08, 2021):

* Go big — makes the stakes high,
* Deny the antagonist’s needs — make it hard for them to get what they want,
* Shift from bad to worse,
* Raise the stakes,
* Make your solutions complex but logical,

Can you think up some scenarios for your story and then find ways to make the situation go from bad to worse? Can you raise the stakes? Intensify the pressure? Deny your hero or heroine an easy ride?

To help you organise your thoughts, a downloadable and editable ‘central conflict generator template’ is available on my website: visit [www.mc-mindful-content.com](http://www.mc-mindful-content.com) and download the Word doc ‘Template: Story Archetypes’ (Why not subscribe why you’re on the site? ☺).

If you are interested in the steps used to generate initial story ideas, create character profiles, choose a setting, or find a genre generator — and you haven’t already done so — check out my previous blogs. Blog 19: ‘Generating Story Ideas’, Blog 20: ‘Creating Novel Characters with Individuality and Depth – Profiling’, blog 22: ‘Creating memorable settings’, blog 23: ‘Genre generator’, and blog 24: ‘Story archetypes and themes’.