

Module 4: Drama in American Literature


Topic 3 Content: Conflict

Introduction

Conflict

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A major component of any play or drama is the conflict. Conflict in dramas can be internal or external. Most often, you will encounter a major conflict within a play and many lesser conflicts between or among characters. Click on each section of the pyramid diagram to learn more about conflict and the different types of conflict.



The diagram is a pyramid with a red top section and two blue bottom sections. The red section is labeled 'Conflict'. The two blue sections are labeled 'Internal Conflict' and 'External Conflict'.

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The **conflict** is the problem or problems that the character must overcome throughout the play. The conflict must be introduced in the opening scenes of the play because it is what drives the characters and the action.

Remember *Romeo and Juliet*? The conflict is introduced in the Prologue, and the opening scene of the play begins with a skirmish between the servants of the Capulets and those of the Montagues.

As you have read, the conflict for Miller's *The Crucible* is introduced in the opening introduction to Act One when Miller references "the coming madness" and "the witch hunt."



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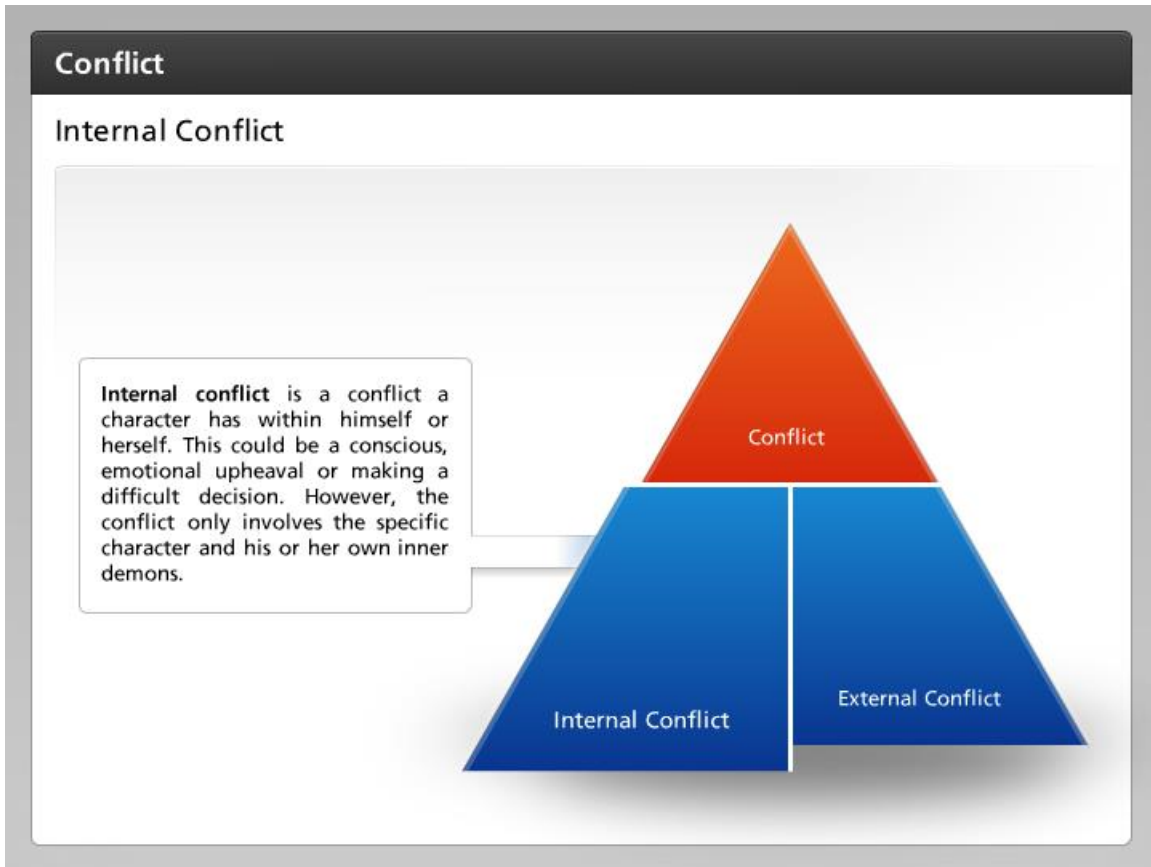
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Internal Conflict



Internal conflict is a conflict a character has within himself or herself. This could be a conscious, emotional upheaval or making a difficult decision. However, the conflict only involves the specific character and his or her own inner demons.

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External Conflict

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External conflict can take a few forms but ultimately leaves the characters battling each other or some outside force. You can find different manifestations of external conflict in literature. For example, you might find:

- two characters in opposition to each other
- one character in opposition to many characters
- several characters battling several other characters
- characters battling external, unseen forces



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