



Connect SD Hoover High Documentary Film Class Conflict and Films

What is conflict and why is it important to film?

Conflict is a difficulty that a character deals with, and can be shown as small as a character being torn between their own wants, or as big as a person taking on the world. Conflict is important to film because it makes the story move. Without conflict, most people would not bother to watch the film because nothing interesting happens. Also, the way in which the characters deal with conflict makes it easier for the watcher to understand and relate to the characters on the screen.

For example, a film about a man struggling with a conflict between his attraction to one woman while dating another woman is easier to relate to and understand if you've ever been in a similar situation. On the other hand, if you watched a film in which the character has a perfect life, you're less likely to be interested because there is no conflict.

Types of Conflict

There are two main types of conflict: internal and external. Internal conflict means that the character has to make difficult decisions between his/her own desires, beliefs, or morals. External conflict is about one or more character(s) who are facing problems with other people, a community, a government, or a society. Within the category of external conflict, there are four conflicts—person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. nature, and person vs. fate. Please note that just because a character has one type of conflict that s/he can't have another type of conflict at the same time. Below are some explanations of different types of conflicts and examples of these conflicts in film.

Internal Conflict

- **Person vs. self**—a character with an internal conflict may be having a hard time between what they want and what they need to do
Example: *The Dark Knight*—one of Batman's conflicts is choosing between his love for Rachel or helping Harvey take down crime

External Conflict

- **Person vs. person**—a character with an external conflict could be having problems with another person or a group of people.
Example: *Precious*—Precious's biggest conflict is with her parent's abusive treatment of herself
- **Person vs. society**—a character with this conflict could be dealing with a problem with a culture or a government
Example: *The Bourne Ultimatum*—Jason Bourne combats Blackbriar and the CIA, who wants to capture and kill him
- **Person vs. nature**—a character is fighting a force of nature, such as a storm
Example: *127 Hours*—a character is trying to survive after being trapped while rock climbing
- **Person vs. fate**—a character is struggling with his/her destiny
Example: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part I*—Harry is trying to accept that he has to fight Voldemort to the death