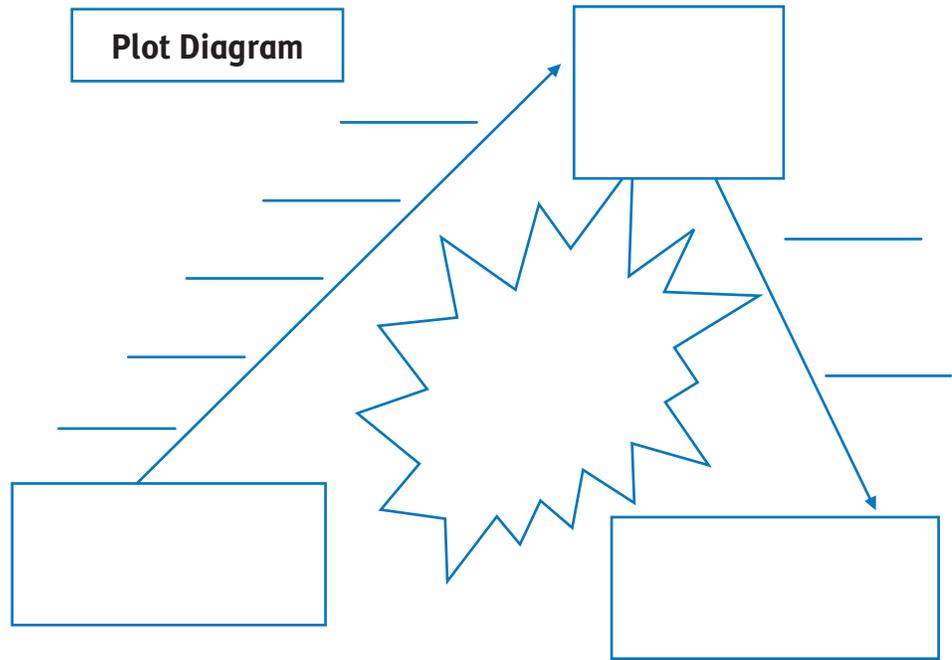


Previewing Embedded Assessment 2: Expanding Narrative Writing

My Notes

Check Your Understanding

Place the elements of plot structure on the plot diagram below.



Poor Choices: “Phaethon”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

The dialogue between the two characters is indicated by quotation marks; however, in this section, the speaker is not always named. Decide who is speaking within each set of quotation marks: the yellow-haired boy or the black-haired one. How do you know? Mark your text to show who is speaking.

GRAMMAR & USAGE

Pronoun and Antecedents

A pronoun takes the place of a noun or another pronoun, called its antecedent. Look at paragraph 7 on this page. The pronoun *he* is used twice. Who is *he*? The antecedent, Zeus, is not in this paragraph, but it is stated at the beginning of the text so readers know that *he* (and father) refers to Zeus.

When using pronouns in your writing, make sure you have clearly stated the nouns to which your pronouns refer.

Myth

Phaethon

by Bernard Evslin

1 Long ago, when the world was very new, two boys were racing along the edge of a cliff that hung over a deep blue sea. They were the same size; one boy had black hair, the other had yellow hair. The race was very close. Then the yellow-haired one spurred ahead and won the race. The loser was very angry.

2 “You think you’re pretty good,” he said. “But you’re not so much. My father is Zeus.”¹

3 My father is Apollo,” said the yellow-haired boy, whose name was Phaethon.²

4 “My father is the chief god, king of the mountain, lord of the sky.”

5 “My father is lord of the sun.”

6 “My father is called the thunderer. When he is angry, the sky grows black and the sun hides. His spear is a lightning bolt, and that’s what he kills people with. He hurls it a thousand miles and it never misses.”

Chunk 2

7 “Without my father there would be no day. It would always be night. Each morning he hitches up his horses and drives the golden chariot of the sun across the sky. And that is day time. Then he dives into the ocean stream and boards a golden ferryboat and sails back to his eastern palace. That time is called night.”



¹ Zeus [züs]: King of the gods in Greek mythology

² Phaethon [fä 'ə thon]

Poor Choices: “Phaethon”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does the argument between the friends set the plot in motion? What do Phaethon’s words and actions reveal about his character?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does Apollo feel about his son, Phaethon? What dialogue shows his attitude toward his son?

Chunk 3

23 And he went off. He was so stung by the words of his friend, and the boasting and lying he had been forced to do, that he traveled night and day, not stopping for food or rest, guiding himself by the morning star and the evening star, heading always east. Nor did he know the way. For, indeed, he had never once seen his father Apollo. He knew him only through his mother’s stories. But he did know that the palace must lie in the east, because that is where he saw the sun start each morning. He walked on and on until finally he lost his way completely, and weakened by hunger and exhaustion, fell swooning in a great meadow by the edge of a wood.

24 Now, while Phaethon was making his journey, Apollo sat in his great throne room on a huge throne made of gold and rubies. This was the quiet hour before dawn when night left its last coolness upon the Earth. And it was then, at this hour, that Apollo sat on his throne, wearing a purple cloak embroidered with the golden sign of the zodiac.⁵ On his head was a crown given him by the dawn goddess, made of silver and pearls. A bird flew in the window and perched on his shoulder and spoke to him. This bird had sky-blue feathers, golden beak, golden claws, and golden eyes. It was one of Apollo’s sun hawks. It was this bird’s job to fly here and there gathering gossip. Sometimes she was called the spy bird.

25 Now she said, “Apollo, I have seen your son!”

26 “Which son?”

27 “Phaethon. He’s coming to see you. But he has lost his way and lies exhausted at the edge of the wood. The wolves will surely eat him. Do you care?”

28 “I will have to see him before I know whether I care. You had better get back to him before the wolves do. Bring him here in comfort. Round up some of your companions and bring him here as befits the son of a god.”



⁵ **zodiac** [zō´dē ak]: An imaginary belt of the heavens, divided into 12 parts, called signs, and named after 12 constellations

Poor Choices: “Phaethon”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Predict what might happen if Phaethon drives the horses.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why does Apollo want Phaethon to change his request?

Chunk 5

44 “Well, you’re my son, all right. Proud, rash, accepting no affront,⁸ refusing no adventure. I know the breed. Speak up, then. What is it you wish? I will do anything in my power to help you.”

45 “Anything, Father?”

46 “Anything I can. I swear by the river Styx,⁹ an oath sacred to the gods.”

47 “I wish to drive the sun across the sky. All by myself. From dawn till night.”

48 Apollo’s roar of anger shattered every crystal goblet in the great castle.

49 “Impossible!” he cried. “No one drives those horses but me. They are tall as mountains. Their breath is fire. They are stronger than the tides, stronger than the wind. It is all that *I* can do to hold them in check. How can your puny grip restrain them? They will race away with the chariot, scorching the poor Earth to a cinder.”

50 “You promised, Father.”

51 “Yes, I promised, foolish lad. And that promise is the death warrant. A poor charred cinder floating in space — well, that is what the oracle predicted for the earth — but I did not know it would be so soon . . . so soon.”

Chunk 6

52 “It is almost dawn, Father. Should we not saddle the horses?”

53 “Will you not withdraw your request—allow me to preserve my honor without destroying the earth? Ask me anything else and I will grant it. Do not ask me this.”

54 “I have asked, sire, and you have promised. And the hour for dawn comes, and the horses are unharnessed. The sun will rise late today, confusing the wise.”

55 “They will be more than confused when this day is done,” said Apollo. “Come.”

56 Apollo took Phaethon to the stable of the sun, and there the boy saw the giant fire-white horses being harnessed to the golden chariot. Huge they were. Fire-white with golden manes and golden hooves and hot yellow eyes. When they neighed, the trumpet call of it rolled across the sky — and their breath was flame. They were being harnessed by a Titan, a cousin of the gods, tall as the tree, dressed in asbestos¹⁰ armor with a helmet of tinted crystal against the glare. The sun chariot was an open shell of gold. Each wheel was the flat round disk of the sun as it is seen in the sky. And Phaethon looked very tiny as he stood in the chariot. The reins were thick as bridge cables, much too large for him to hold, so Apollo tied them around his waist. Then Apollo stood at the head of the team gentling the horses speaking softly to them, calling them by name — Pyrocis,¹¹ Eous,¹² Aethon,¹³ Phlegon.¹⁴

57 “Good lads, good horses, go easy today, my swift ones. Go at a slow trot and do not leave the path. You have a new driver today.”

⁸ **affront** [ə frunt’]: Insult

⁹ **Styx** [stiks]: In Greek myths, a river that led to Hades or Hell

¹⁰ **asbestos** [as bes’ tās]: A mineral that does not burn or conduct heat

¹¹ **Pyrocis** [pī rō’ chis]

¹² **Eous** [e’ us]

¹³ **Aethon** [a’ thon]

¹⁴ **Phlegon** [fle’ gon]

58 The great horses dropped their heads to his shoulder and whinnied softly, for they loved him. Phaethon saw the flame of their breath play about his head, saw Apollo’s face shining out of the flame. But he was not harmed, for he was a god and could not be hurt by physical things.

Chunk 7

59 He came to Phaethon and said, “Listen to me, son. You are about to start a terrible journey. Now, by the obedience you owe me as a son, by the faith you owe a god, by my oath that cannot be broken, and your pride that will not bend, I put this rule upon you: Keep the middle way. Too high and the earth will freeze, too low and it will burn. Keep the middle way. Give the horses their heads; they know the path, the blue middle course of day. Drive them not too high nor too low, but above all, do not stop. Or you will fire the air about you where you stand, charring the earth and blistering the sky. Do you heed me?”

60 “I do, I do!” cried Phaethon. “Stand away, sire! The dawn grows old and day must begin! Go, horses, go!”

61 And Apollo stood watching as the horses of the sun went into a swinging trot, pulling behind them the golden chariot, climbing the first eastern steep of the sky.

62 At first things went well. The great steeds trotted easily along their path across the high blue meadow of the sky. And Phaethon thought to himself, “I can’t understand why my father was making such a fuss. This is easy. For me, anyway. Perhaps I’m a natural-born coachman though . . .”

63 He looked over the edge of the chariot. He saw tiny houses down below and specks of trees. And the dark blue puddle of the sea. The coach was trundling across the sky. The great sun wheels were turning, casting light, warming and brightening the earth, chasing all the shadows of night.

64 “Just imagine,” Phaethon thought, “how many people now are looking up at the sky, praising the sun, hoping the weather stays fair. How many people are watching me, me, me . . .?” Then he thought, “But I’m too small to see. They can’t even see the coach or the horses—only the great wheel. We are too far and the light is too bright. For all they know, it is Apollo making his usual run. How can they know it’s me, me, me? How will my mother know, and my sisters? They would be so proud. And Epaphus—above all, Epaphus—how will he know? I’ll come home tomorrow after this glorious journey and tell him what I did and he will laugh at me and tell me I’m lying, as he did before. And how shall I prove it to him? No, this must not be. I must show him that it is I driving the chariot of the sun—I alone. Apollo said not to come too close to earth, but how will he know? And I won’t stay too long—just dip down toward our own village and circle his roof three times—which is the signal we agreed upon. After he recognizes me, I’ll whip up the horses and resume the path of the day.

Chunk 8

65 He jerked on the reins, pulled the horses’ heads down. They whinnied angrily and tossed their heads. He jerked the reins again.

66 “Down,” he cried. “Down! Down!”

67 The horses plunged through the bright air, golden hooves twinkling, golden manes flying, dragging the great glittering chariot after them in a long flaming swoop. When they reached his village, he was horrified to see the roofs bursting into fire. The trees burned. People rushed about screaming. Their loose clothing caught fire, and they burned like torches as they ran.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What will happen if Phaethon chooses not to obey Apollo’s instructions? Predict whether or not Phaethon will follow the directions. Give a reason for your prediction.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Mark the portions of the text that reveal Phaethon’s character through his thoughts.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Why do you think Phaethon chooses to do exactly what Apollo warned him not to do?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

How does this section set up the climax of the story?

Poor Choices: “Phaethon”

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What are the consequences of Phaethon’s disobedience.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What features of nature are explained by Phaethon’s ride?

68 Was it his village? He could not tell because of the smoke. Had he destroyed his own home? Burned his mother and his sisters?

69 He threw himself backward in the chariot, pulling at the reins with all his might, shouting, “Up! Up!”

70 And the horses, made furious by the smoke, reared on their hind legs in the air. They leaped upward, galloping through the smoke, pulling the chariot up, up.

71 Swiftly the earth fell away beneath them. The village was just a smudge of smoke. Again he saw the pencil-stroke of mountains, the inkblot of seas. “Whoa!” he cried. “Turn now! Forward on your path!” But he could no longer handle them. They were galloping, not trotting. They had taken the bit in their teeth. They did not turn toward the path of the day across the meadow of the sky, but galloped up, up. And the people on earth saw the sun shooting away until it was no larger than a star.

72 Darkness came. And cold. The earth froze hard. Rivers froze, and oceans. Boats were caught fast in the ice in every sea. It snowed in the jungle. Marble buildings cracked. It was impossible for anyone to speak; breath froze on the speakers’ lips. And in village and city, in the field and in the wood, people died of the cold. And the bodies piled up where they fell, like firewood.

73 Still Phaethon could not hold his horses, and still they galloped upward dragging light and warmth away from the earth. Finally they went so high that the air was too thin to breathe. Phaethon saw the flame of their breath, which had been red and yellow, burn blue in the thin air. He himself was gasping for breath; he felt the marrow of his bones freezing.

74 Now the horses, wild with change, maddened by the feeble hand on the reins, swung around and dived toward earth again. Now all the ice melted, making great floods. Villages were swept away by a solid wall of water. Trees were uprooted and whole forests were torn away. The fields were covered by water. Lower swooped the horses, and lower yet. Now the water began to steam—great billowing clouds of steam as the water boiled. Dead fish floated on the surface. Naiads moaned in dry riverbeds.

75 Phaethon could not see; the steam was too thick. He had unbound the reins from his waist, or they would have cut him in two. He had no control over the horses at all. They galloped upward again—out of the steam—taking at last the middle road, but racing wildly, using all their tremendous speed. Circling the earth in a matter of minutes, smashing across the sky from horizon to horizon, making the day flash on and off like a child playing with a lamp. And the people who were left alive were bewildered by the light and darkness following each other so swiftly.

Poor Choices: “Phaethon”

After Reading

- Using the plot diagram from Activity 1.11, determine the major conflict of the story and where the climax and falling action of the story occur.
- Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about Phaethon and Apollo. Then write the textual evidence that supports your position. Go back to the text and highlight your textual evidence; look for vivid details as textual evidence.

Agree	Disagree	
		Phaethon is a thoughtless, headstrong boy. Textual Evidence:
		Phaethon is an adventurous, courageous boy. Textual Evidence:
		Phaethon is _____. (Insert your description) Textual Evidence:
		Apollo is a disinterested, ineffective parent. Textual Evidence:
		Apollo is deeply concerned for his son’s well-being. Textual Evidence:
		Apollo is _____. (Insert your description) Textual Evidence: