

Motive

Motive is what a character:

*wants

*doesn't want

*needs

Motive

The driving force behind the plot structure of all stories is the motive(s) of the character(s). Motive(s) determines the events, plot, and subplots. Motive at the simplest level is what each character needs, wants or doesn't want. It is followed by corresponding actions of the character which show how he tries to get what he wants/doesn't want or needs. A story problem is created when the character faces a "but" while trying to fulfill his motive. "Buts" are: disasters, tricks, acts of god (weather, magic, miracle), and use of force (physical or political). When the "but" is resolved, the reader learns if: the character(s) get what he wants/doesn't want/needs and if he likes/dislikes it or wants something different. Stories are a series of these simple motives linked together. The motive(s) dictates the story problem.

When a child's story does not make sense it is either because he did not clearly lay out what the character wants at the beginning of the story, or because the action of the character did not match the motive. The end of a story should show if the character did /didn't get what he wanted and if he did/didn't like it. When conferencing with a child whose story does not make sense, the number one question to ask is "What does your character want?" Until the child can answer this pivotal question, he should not continue writing. It is excellent practice to get in the habit of having your students always record the main character's motive after the setting on story maps/outlines.

Practice modelling motives for various characters with your students. This is especially beneficial when preparing for story writing exams. Mercer Mayer's book Just for You is a great way to introduce your lessons on this concept. **Literature: Just for You by Mercer Mayer**

Sample Motives:

- *try/learn to _____
- *find _____
- *get help from _____
- *journey to _____
- *explore _____
- *escape _____
- *beat/defeat _____
- *dream about _____
- *see the _____
- *wish to _____
- *acquire _____
- *visit _____
- *save _____
- *become _____
- *swap _____
- *change _____
- *free _____

Teacher Models Writing a Motive:

Pretend that you were going to write a story about each of the characters below. Write a single sentence to describe what each of them might want. Making sure that your character wants something interesting or unusual is an important part of creating an exciting story.

The motive of the character is what he wants or doesn't want. In a story motive is complicated with a "but". The "but" will be a:

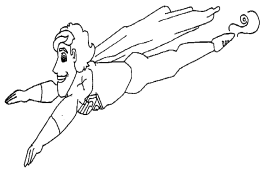
- *disaster
- *act of god (weather, magic, miracle)
- *trick
- *use of force (physical or political)



1. I wanted to soar on my new flying carpet, so I climbed on. But, the carpet had a mind of its own and kept tipping me off.



2. I wanted to deliver presents to the world on Christmas Eve, so I tried to open my door. But a snowstorm at the North Pole froze my door shut.



3. I wanted to rescue a girl from a burning apartment building, so I hurried into a phone booth to change. But my cape got stuck in the door of the phone booth.



4. I wanted to put out the runner at first base, so I threw the ball. But it hit the ground and bounced into a gopher hole.

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- *see the _____
- *wish to _____
- *acquire _____
- *visit _____
- *save _____
- *become _____
- *swap _____
- *change _____
- *free _____

Motive: I want/don't want...

Pretend that you were going to write a story about each of the characters below. Write a single sentence to describe what each of them might want. Making sure that your character wants something interesting or unusual is an important part of creating an exciting story.

The motive of the character is what he wants or doesn't want. Authors show the motive in three ways.

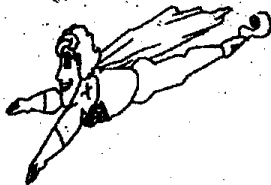
1. Omniscient Narrator
2. Main Character's speech or thoughts
3. Another Character's speech or thoughts



1. I wanted to fly over the moon but I ran out of air.



2. I wanted to deliver your presents but I bumped the chimney sweep which fell on my head.



3. I wanted to try on my new magic cape, but it kept throwing me to the floor.



4. I tried to make the winning run, but the catcher tagged me out.