

# Understanding *The Contender* Structure – Conflict

The Contender captures Alfred Brooks at a crucial time in his life. He has dropped out of school and is barely getting by working in a grocery store. His future looks quite bleak because of his own failures and because of the temptations and dangers around him. The novel deals with many layers of conflict in Alfred's life – conflict with others in the ring and in the streets, conflict with himself and his failures, and conflict with society at large.

Your job is to figure out how the conflict in The Contender works. First identify what the main conflict is – Human vs. Human, Human vs. Nature, or Human vs. Self. Be sure to explain your choice, citing examples from the story. Then determine what other forms of conflict exist in the novel, and explain each of them. Finally, determine how this conflict is developed in terms of Freytag's Pyramid by placing quotes and page numbers on the model below.

Central Conflict - \_\_\_\_\_

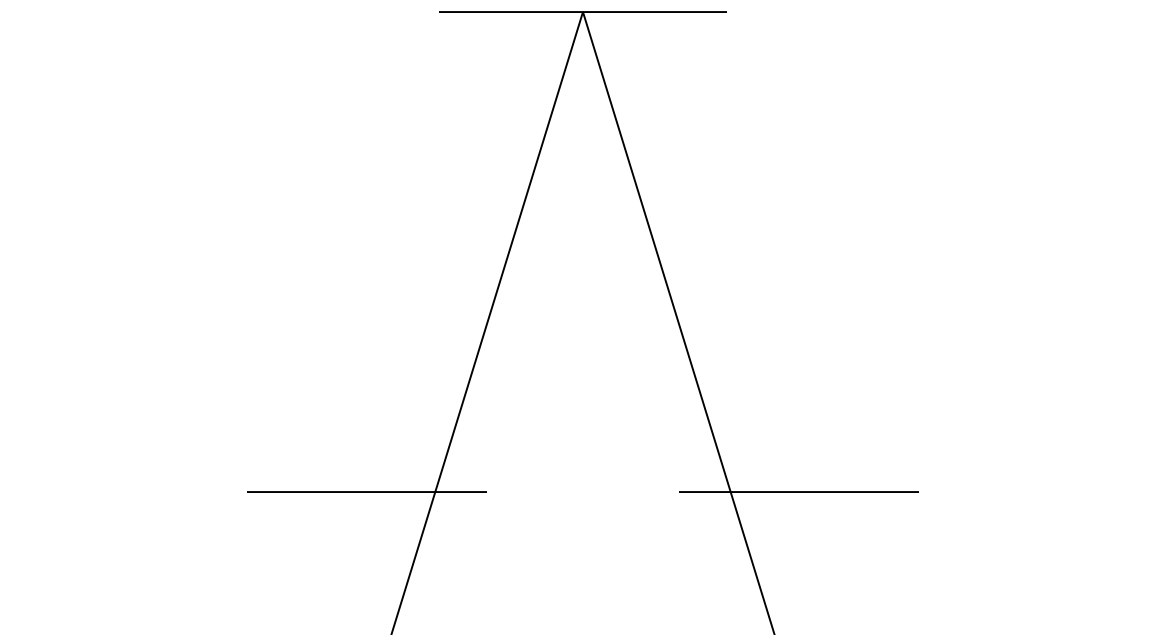
Explain Your Choice \_\_\_\_\_

Minor Conflict - \_\_\_\_\_

Explain Your Choice \_\_\_\_\_

Minor Conflict - \_\_\_\_\_

Explain Your Choice \_\_\_\_\_



# *Understanding The Contender Character – Dynamic Character*

Characters in a work of fiction are called dynamic if they undergo some kind of fundamental change. This means that the character's beliefs, attitudes, desires, or personality changes as a result of the conflict in the story. Even physical changes often represent more emotional, mental, or spiritual changes. A simple haircut would probably be meaningless, but a drastic change in weight, a scar or disfigurement, or maybe a change in attire can be very symbolic. The opposite of a dynamic character is a static character, one who does not change. The static character's lack of change can be good or bad. If the character refuses to change, sticking to some sense of morality or justice, then the lack of change is considered brave and right. On the other hand, if a character stubbornly refuses to change a belief that is wrong or flawed, or refuses to quit some harmful behavior, then the lack of change is often considered bad. However, even though there is nothing inherently better about dynamic characters, readers seem to prefer them, probably because they are more interesting to read about and more like real people who change as they learn and grow.

Find five quotes that show some basic change in Alfred's personality. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how Alfred is changing in the quote.

<b>Quotes</b>	<b>Thoughts</b>
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)



# *Understanding The Contender Structure – Point of View*

The point of view of a story is the perspective from which the story is told. Point of view consists of two parts: person, which is usually first or third, and perspective, which is usually limited, objective, or omniscient. The point of view makes a great difference in how a story is revealed to the reader for two reasons. First, the type and amount of information revealed to the reader depends on the point of view. In first person, the reader can only be told what one character knows, but in third person, the reader can be told what many characters know. In limited perspective, the reader is limited to what one character sees and hears and thinks, but in omniscient perspective, the narrator can tell the reader anything that goes on anywhere, even in the minds of all the characters. The other reason point of view has such an effect on storytelling is because especially when a story is written in first person, as The Contender is, the reader sees the world of the story exactly the way that the main character does. In this case, the reader looks at the world through Alfred's eyes, learns what he learns, and feels what he feels.

Find five quotes that demonstrate the point of view. Look for quotes that show things only Alfred would know, like his thoughts and feelings. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how the quote proves that the novel is first person.

Quotes	Thoughts
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)



# *Understanding The Contender*

## *Theme – Pride*

One of the defining changes in Alfred's character is the sense of self-worth and pride that boxing gives him. By becoming successful at boxing, even just a little bit, he begins to think of himself as capable of far more than he had ever thought possible. This sense of pride begins to set him apart from his old friends. He is able to stand up to the gang members in his neighborhood because he knows his worth. He is able to help his family and friends because he now thinks of himself as powerful instead of powerless. This is the kind of pride that gives us ambition and drives us to accomplish great things with our lives. Once Alfred gains this pride, he is able to leave behind all of his past failures and negativity and become a stronger person.

Find five quotes that show Alfred's new pride. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how his opinion of himself is changing.

Quotes	Thoughts
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

