



## Language Arts: Linear Plot Analysis

### Students Will

- Read “The Story of the Opera” and “The Librettists”
- Read and discuss “What’s the Matter: How Conflict Works in Literature” and “Tell it to me Straight: Linear Plot Elements”
- Complete Activity Worksheets 1 & 2

### Copies for Each Student

- "The Story of the Opera"
- "The Librettists"
- "What’s the Matter?: How Conflict Works in Literature"
- "Tell it to me Straight: Linear Plot Elements"
- Activity Worksheets

### Copies for the Teacher

- "The Story of the Opera"
- "The Librettists"
- "What’s the Matter?: How Conflict Works in Literature"
- "Tell it to me Straight: Linear Plot Elements"
- Activity Worksheets
- **ANSWER KEYS**

### Getting Ready

Review the lesson. Gather pens, pencils, and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

### Introduction

Read “The Story of the Opera” and “The Librettists” as a class. Continue reading through the additional information sheets (“What’s the Matter?” and “Tell it to me Straight”), reviewing the concepts as you go.

### Review

As guided practice, you may want to use a book your students have read to complete an example linear plot diagram or review conflict types as a class before moving on to the Activity Worksheets.

## *Pépito*

### **Guided/Independent Practice**

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the Activity Worksheet. Provide instruction and model the activity as needed. Have students complete the Activity Worksheet with opportunity for questions.

**Evaluation:** Have students share their answers individually or by groups and explain why they gave their answers. The teacher may want to guide the discussion with the sample answers provided.

### **TEKS**

(6) Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. (A)

**Correlates:** Music

**Gardner's Intelligences:** Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

**Bloom's Taxonomy:** Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

### **Sources:**

*Pépito* Libretto (TDO Production by Mary Dibbern, 2017)

<https://www.texasgateway.org/resource/analyze-linear-plot-developments-literary-textsfiction?binder=92071>

**NOTE:** Though the original production is in French, the Dallas Opera's production of *Pépito* has been adapted and translated to English by Mary Dibbern.

# The Story of the Opera

Setting: Elizondo, a Basque village in Navarre, Spain

Manuelita, the owner of the Blue Bird Hotel, tends to her garden, thinking about Pépito, her betrothed since childhood. She laments his absence, as he is serving in the military in Cádiz. Although she has not received a letter from him in four months, or seen him in three years, she has been saving up her hotel profits in order to help Pépito come home sooner so that they can be married.

Meanwhile, Vertigo, a jack of all trades, fluba player, and owner of the Hotel Crocodile (the rival hotel in town), tries to persuade Manuelita to go on a date with him. Steadfast in her devotion to her fiancé, Manuelita rejects Vertigo's advances.

Later, Manuelita sees her old friend, Miguel, who is home from college in Madrid and searching for a wife. They recall their time together as children, and Miguel realizes that he and Manuelita were destined for each other. Miguel tells her that he and Pépito exchange letters and in their latest correspondence, Pépito had informed him that he is getting married. Upon hearing this, Manuelita rejoices because she is now sure that Pépito is still faithful to her.

Always one to stir up trouble, Vertigo secretly tries to convince Miguel that Manuelita will never love him because she is already engaged to Vertigo. But Miguel is not one to give up easily. When they sit down to eat Vertigo's famous gâteau Basque with a glass of apple cider, Miguel makes sure that Vertigo stuffs himself so full that he falls asleep at the table.

With Vertigo out of the way, Miguel expresses his feelings for Manuelita and tells her that if Pépito really cared, he would have never left her. This gives Manuelita pause. However, she maintains that she is completely devoted to her promise to Pépito and leaves Miguel alone to think about how he has hurt her feelings by speaking ill of Pépito.

Vertigo wakes up and realizes that his leg has fallen asleep. He jumps up from the chair in pain and Miguel says that he deserves it because Vertigo lied about being engaged to Manuelita. Vertigo admits that Manuelita "can't stand" him. Suddenly, he realizes that he is late for a church service in San Sebastián where he has promised to play a solo on his fluba! He runs away in a panic.

Manuelita comes out of her hotel. Miguel apologizes and says that he only wants her to be happy. He is so impressed by Manuelita's virtue and loyalty to Pépito that he volunteers to take the young soldier's place in the military so that Pépito may return to marry Manuelita.

When he returns from church, Vertigo, who is also the town's postman, announces that he has just found a letter that Pépito sent to Manuelita over a year ago. Miguel hurries to open it and reads with great joy that Pépito has married another woman!

Manuelita is shocked. How could Pépito betray her? After much deliberation, Manuelita realizes that her loyalty to Pépito was not out of love, but out of the obligation to keep the promise she made so many years ago. Seizing his chance, Vertigo quickly asks Manuelita to marry him, but Manuelita declares she will marry Miguel instead, as her feelings for him are true.

Though unhappy at his own misfortune, Vertigo cannot let a lucrative business opportunity pass him by. He agrees to bake the wedding cake and play his fluba for Miguel and Manuelita, who are ecstatic that they can finally be together.

## The Librettists

**Léon Battu** was a French dramatist born on February 8, 1828 in Paris. He was the son of Pantaléon Battu (1799–1870), a violinist and assistant conductor at the Opéra de Paris. His sister, Marie Battu (1838-1888) created the role of Inès in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*. Battu wrote many vaudevilles and libretti. In the opera world, he collaborated with many other librettists on several opéra-comique and opérettes. These librettists included Ludovic Halévy, Michel Carré, Jules Barbier, Jules Moinaux and Lockroy. Composers who utilized Battu's talents include Jacques Offenbach (*Pépito*, *Le mariage aux lanternes*), Adolphe Adam (*Les Pantins de Violette*), Victor Massé (*La Reine Topaze*), Georges Bizet and Charles Lecocq (*Le Docteur Miracle*). He also translated he translated Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* with Halévy for its centennial production at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens in 1856. His final work, *Le Cousin de Marivau*, an opera comique in two acts written with Halévy and music by Victor Massé premiered in Baden August 15, 1857. Even though he was deathly ill, Battu wished to see his final work on stage. Sick and exhausted, he dragged himself to the theater and was able to attend the first performance. Shortly thereafter, he returned to Paris, where he died a few months later On November 22, 1857. He was 29 years old. His funeral service was attended by more than 500 people, including many of the foremost literary and musical minds of Paris.

**Jules Moinaux**, born **Joseph-Désiré Moineaux** or **Moineau** (October 24, 1815 – December 4, 1895) was a 19th-century French writer, playwright, and librettist. The son of Joseph-Jacques Moineau, a cabinetmaker in Tours, Moinaux learned the cabinet-making trade from his father and was expected to go into the family business. Soon, however, he realized that he preferred to live by his pen and became a journalist and a writer-reporter at the Palais de Justice in Paris.

By the late 1840s, Moinaux began writing, very often in collaboration, comic pieces that found success. Collaborating with dramatist Léon Battu, he wrote *Pépito*, an opéra comique for Jacques Offenbach in 1853. In 1855, again for Offenbach, he wrote the libretto for the thirty-minute comic opera, *Les Deux Aveugles*.

In 1866, his comedy *Les Deux Sourds* premiered at the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris. During the Franco-Prussian War, while volunteering for national guard, his opéra bouffe, *Le Canard à trois becs*, premiered with great success at the Folies-Dramatiques.

His judicial chronicles of the Criminal Court, written for publications such as *La Gazette des tribunaux*, *Le Charivari*, etc., were collected in 1881 under the title *Les Tribunaux comiques*. Moinaux's son Georges Courteline, a dramatist and novelist, sometimes drew inspiration from these publications for some of his own written works.

Moinaux satire of the police community, *Le Bureau du Commissaire*, was published in 1886 with a preface by Alexandre Dumas  *fils*, the son of famed playwright Alexandre Dumas  *père* (French for “father”) and author of classic work *The Three Musketeers*.

*Le Monde ou l'on rit*, his last work, was published in 1895. This collection of sketches featured among others *Le Sourd qui n'avoue pas*, *On demande un malade gai*, *Le Rapia de Champigny*, and *L'Homme aux goûts champêtres*. Moinaux died on December 4, 1895 in Saint- Mandé (current Val-de-Marne).

## What's the Matter? How Conflict Works in Literature

Conflict is the key to every good story. It's what keeps us interested, leaves us wondering what's going to happen to the characters so we'll finish the story to see how everything works out. Will the superhero defeat the villain at last? Will the dog find his way back home? Will everything be ok again? When you ask these kinds of questions during a story, it's a signal you're in the middle of a conflict.

There are two main types of conflict: external and internal. External conflict exists when there is a problem between the character and an outside source, such as another character, society as a whole, or nature. These are usually labeled as character vs. character, character vs. society, or character vs. nature. Here's a few examples:

- Marcus is annoyed. He did forget to take out the trash again, but his mom didn't have to yell at him in front of his girlfriend. She just doesn't get it. (character vs. character)
- Denise had been looking forward to her family vacation to the beach all year. Now they're finally here and it has rained for three days straight. They haven't even been able to get in the water because the storms have been so bad. She is so disappointed. (character vs. nature)
- Jack knew what was expected of him, he'd heard it his whole life. Go to school, come home and work on the farm. But he knew he could do so much more. (character vs. society)

Internal conflict is the opposite. It describes a conflict within a character, usually centered around values or feelings about an event.

- Rachel did not enjoy Sonia's idea of fun. A sleepover with horror movies and she'd never sleep again. But if she didn't go, or told her she was afraid of those movies, Rachel might not let her be a part of the group anymore. She didn't know what to do. (character vs. self)

Take stock: What is the major conflict in *Pépito*? Which type of conflict is it?

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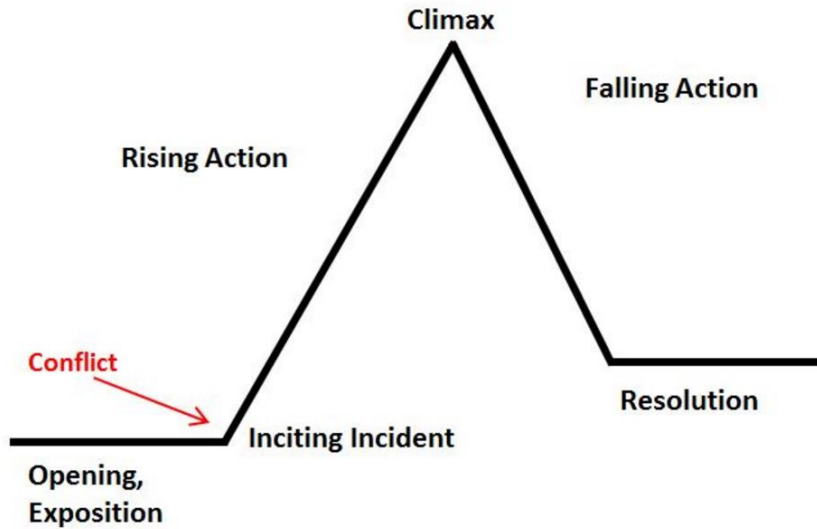
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## Tell it to me Straight: Linear Plot Elements

A Linear Plot is one way to organize the plot of a story. The story moves continuously forward from point A to point B, and contains some specific elements:

### Basic Plot Diagram



**Opening/Exposition:** introduces the characters and sets the tone of the story

**Inciting Incident:** what happens to kick off the action of the story – the main conflict is introduced and reveals the protagonist (good guy) and the antagonist (bad guy)

**Rising Action:** everything that happens in the story that adds conflict and builds suspense

**Climax:** the turning point of the story – the rising action builds to this most intense moment in the conflict

**Falling Action:** what happens after the climax to let us know how the resolution could be achieved

**Resolution:** how the conflict is resolved and all the loose ends of the story are tied up

- Conflict is always what keeps the story moving forward and keeps the reader interested. Events and actions build to increase the conflict until it is resolved and the story ends.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity Worksheet 1: Pépito is in Trouble

Below are several conflicts found in *Pépito*. Identify each conflict as internal or external and character vs. character, society, nature, or self.

1. Manuelita is sad because she misses her fiancé, Pépito, and hasn't received a letter from him in several months.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Vertigo wants to marry Manuelita and combine their two hotels. Manuelita is not interested in him at all.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Manuelita has not been able to save enough money to get Pépito out of the army because Vertigo's hotel takes all her potential customers.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Miguel is forced to leave his studies to come home and find a wife.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Manuelita is drawn to Miguel because of their childhood connection, but she is engaged to Pépito.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Miguel is shocked after Vertigo says he plans to marry Manuelita.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Miguel is frustrated because he argued with Manuelita and made her angry.

\_\_\_\_\_ | character vs. \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWER KEY 1

### Activity Worksheet 1: Pépito is in Trouble

Below are several conflicts found in *Pépito*. Identify each conflict as internal or external and character vs. character, society, nature, or self.

1. Manuelita is sad because she misses her fiancé, Pépito, and hasn't received a letter from him in several months. (external, character vs. character,)
2. Vertigo wants to marry Manuelita and combine their two hotels. Manuelita is not interested in him at all. (external, character vs. character)
3. Manuelita has not been able to save enough money to get Pépito out of the army because Vertigo's hotel takes all her potential customers. (external, character vs. character)
4. Miguel is forced to leave his studies to come home and find a wife. (external, character vs. society)
5. Manuelita is drawn to Miguel because of their childhood connection, but she is engaged to Pépito. (internal, character vs. self,)
6. Miguel is shocked after Vertigo says he plans to marry Manuelita. (external, character vs. character,)
7. Miguel is frustrated because he argued with Manuelita and made her angry. (internal, character vs. self)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity Worksheet 2: Linear Plot Summary

Identify each of the character quotes below as it fits into the Linear Plot Summary: Exposition, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, or Resolution. (Some of the plot elements may contain more than one quote.)

When you have labeled each quote, summarize the event in 1-2 sentences and create a Linear Plot Diagram on the page provided.

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MANUELITA

He walked around this lovely garden, He ate the fruit picked from the trees,  
He took a long nap in the hammock, He rested there cooled by the breeze.  
My trees are lonely, they miss you, We're waiting for a rendez-vous.  
When he returns he'll understand, How much he's missed our land.

\_\_\_\_\_

---

MIGUEL

Excuse me, señora, could you tell me....

MANUELITA

Señor Miguel?

MIGUEL

Manuelita! Oh...I hardly recognized you!

MANUELITA

Where have you been all this time?

MIGUEL

I've been studying in Madrid...and you... I can't believe my eyes...you are more beautiful than ever!

\_\_\_\_\_

---

VERTIGO

Wake up and stop dreaming about Pépito. He has forgotten all about you and I can prove it.  
(triumphantly) He hasn't written you one letter in months.

\_\_\_\_\_

VERTIGO

Here I am! The best barber in town...well...the ONLY barber in town! I shave everyone, but when it comes to shaving myself...I just don't have time. BUT...today is my big day. I am going to play a solo in church

---

MIGUEL

I'm telling the truth...I love you. I want you to marry me....now, immediately!

MANUELITA

But, I love you like a brother...I cannot marry you. It's impossible!

---

MIGUEL, *alone*

Last night when I arrived in town I didn't want to stay.  
I didn't want to hang around, Couldn't wait to get away.  
Alas, I cannot tell you why I never looked for love.  
But now she's come into my life I cannot run away  
I want us to get married, Right now without delay.  
Alas, I cannot tell you why, I really am in love.

---

MIGUEL

All I can tell you.... is that I don't have to leave. Even if I go there to replace Pépito, he won't come here to marry you.

MANUELITA

Pépito, oh no, is he dead? Is he dead?

MIGUEL

No not dead. He's a....married man....

---

MIGUEL

Would marrying Pépito really make you happy?

MANUELITA (*hesitating*)

Maybe.....well....yes, I think so...

MIGUEL

Alright.... I will go to Cadix AND I take his place AND he can come back here AND then...(sadly) you can marry Pépito.

---

---

VERTIGO

To celebrate, I'll bake a wedding gift, a true gateau Basque  
the best I can make...vanilla cream or sweet fruit jam?

---

VERTIGO

He wants to ask you to get married.

MANUELITA

I know I cannot turn him down.

VERTIGO (*falling at Manuelita's feet*)

Will you allow him now  
to ask this hand in marriage?

MANUELITA (*giving her hand to Miguel*)

With all my heart, this hand is yours!

---

MANUELITA

What did you say? Forget Pépito?

MIGUEL (*with passion*)

He went away, he has left you all alone.

He doesn't care and now you are on your own.

MANUELITA

No, you are wrong, my Pépito still loves me  
and I don't care if you say you disagree.

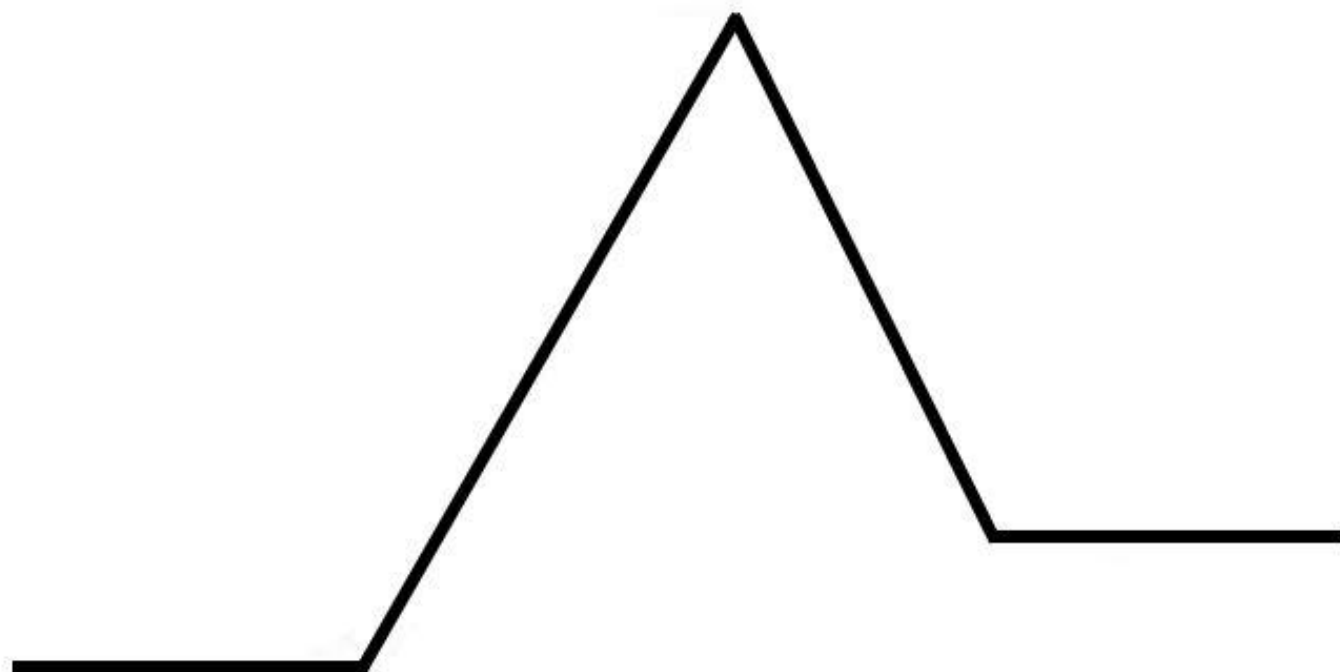
MIGUEL (*kissing her hand*)

Pépito left you, he does not care.

Please love me now, this is not fair.

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## Linear Plot Diagram



## ANSWER KEY 2

### Activity Worksheet 2: Linear Plot Summary

Identify each of the character quotes below as it fits into the Linear Plot Summary: Exposition, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, or Resolution. (Some of the plot elements may contain more than one quote.)

When you have labeled each quote, summarize the event in 1-2 sentences in the correct place on the Linear Plot Diagram.

---

MANUELITA

He walked around this lovely garden, He ate the fruit picked from the trees,  
He took a long nap in the hammock, He rested there cooled by the breeze.  
My trees are lonely, they miss you, We're waiting for a rendez-vous.  
When he returns he'll understand, How much he's missed our land.

**Exposition**

---

MIGUEL

Excuse me, señora, could you tell me....

MANUELITA

Señor Miguel?

MIGUEL

Manuelita! Oh...I hardly recognized you!

MANUELITA

Where have you been all this time?

MIGUEL

I've been studying in Madrid...and you... I can't believe my eyes...you are more beautiful than ever!

**Rising Action**

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VERTIGO

Wake up and stop dreaming about Pépito. He has forgotten all about you and I can prove it.  
(triumphantly) He hasn't written you one letter in months.

**Inciting Incident**

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VERTIGO

Here I am! The best barber in town...well...the ONLY barber in town! I shave everyone, but when it comes to shaving myself....I just don't have time. BUT....today is my big day. I am going to play a solo in church

**Exposition**

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I'm telling the truth....I love you. I want you to marry me....now, immediately!

MANUELITA

But, I love you like a brother...I cannot marry you. It's impossible!

**Rising Action**

---

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Alas, I cannot tell you why I never looked for love.  
But now she's come into my life I cannot run away  
I want us to get married, Right now without delay.  
Alas, I cannot tell you why, I really am in love.

**Rising Action**

---

MIGUEL

All I can tell you.... is that I don't have to leave. Even if I go there to replace Pépito, he won't come here to marry you.

MANUELITA

Pépito, oh no, is he dead? Is he dead?

MIGUEL

No not dead. He's a....married man....

**Climax**

---

MIGUEL

Would marrying Pépito really make you happy?

MANUELITA (*hesitating*)

Maybe.....well....yes, I think so...

MIGUEL

Alright.... I will go to Cadix AND I take his place AND he can come back here AND then...(sadly) you can marry Pépito.

**Rising Action**

---

VERTIGO

To celebrate, I'll bake a wedding gift, a true gateau Basque  
the best I can make...vanilla cream or sweet fruit jam?

**Resolution**

---

VERTIGO

He wants to ask you to get married.

MANUELITA

I know I cannot turn him down.

VERTIGO (*falling at Manuelita's feet*)

Will you allow him now  
to ask this hand in marriage?

MANUELITA (*giving her hand to Miguel*)

With all my heart, this hand is yours!

**Falling Action**

---

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What did you say? Forget Pépito?

MIGUEL (*with passion*)

He went away, he has left you all alone.

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MIGUEL (*kissing her hand*)

Pépito left you, he does not care.

Please love me now, this is not fair.

**Rising Action**