

**Conflict** in a story is a problem to be overcome. It can be **internal** (a character is attempting to overcome something inside of him or herself-- usually a physical or personality trait), or it can be **external** (a character is attempting to overcome something outside of him or herself-- society, nature, or another character). Conflict is not always resolved (**resolution**, or outcome) successfully, and there can (and usually is) more than one conflict in a work of fiction.

**DIRECTIONS:** Use the nursery rhyme below to answer whether the conflicts are internal or external. If they are both, include an explanation.



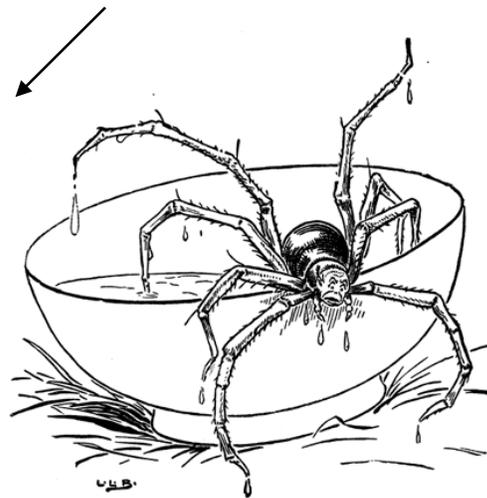
Little Miss Muffet



Sat on a tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey;



Along came a spider,  
Who sat down beside her



And frightened Miss Muffet away.

1. A spider wants to share the same space as Little Miss Muffet.
2. Little Miss Muffet is afraid of spiders.

3. Little Miss Muffet is hungry for curds and whey.
4. Little Miss Muffet can only afford to eat curds and whey because she is so poor.
5. The tuffet is rocky and uncomfortable.

A **theme** is an underlying message in a work of fiction, what the author argues is a feature of some big aspect of life. Think of a work of fiction as an argument of sorts, where the story/poem/etc. itself is the example that proves the argument is correct. It should be about big ideas (“Everything works out eventually”-- to give an obviously wrong answer for “Little Miss Muffet”), not about specific events in the story (“Always check your tuffet-- to give another obviously wrong answer for “Little Miss Muffet”).

**DIRECTIONS:** Read “The Queen of Hearts” and complete the following tasks.

*The following is a portion of an anonymous poem published in the British periodical The European Magazine, no. 434, in April 1782. Whether it was an original composition or an adaptation of a folk rhyme is the subject of some debate, though this portion of the poem has survived as a nursery rhyme, most famously used in Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.*

The Queen of Hearts  
She made some tarts,  
    All on a summer’s day;  
The Knave of Hearts  
He stole those tarts,  
    And took them clean away.  
The King of Hearts  
Called for the tarts,  
    And beat the knave full sore;  
The Knave of Hearts  
Brought back the tarts,  
    And vowed he’d steal no more.



6. What is one external conflict for the rhyme?
7. What is one internal conflict for the rhyme?
8. Choose one of your answers for 6 or 7 and explain what the resolution or non-resolution of that conflict seems to suggest about how the author feels about the issue. In other words, what is the message or argument it seems to be making. This can be a moral, or it can simply be a description of what the author is trying to communicate about the nature of life or living.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read Charles Perrault’s “Little Red Riding Hood” and complete the following activity.

9. Use the story to generate a list of conflicts in this format. The more you do, the better your grade.

**From Whose Point of View:** (mother, Little Red Riding Hood, grandmother, or wolf)

**Conflict:** (internal or external and label from whose point of view)

**With What or Whom:** (oneself, another character or characters, society, nature)

**Resolution:** (how the conflict is or is not resolved)

**Theme:** (a moral, message, or description of what this would suggest about the author’s feelings about this issue) → This is a theme, not necessarily *the* theme of the entire work.