



TOOLBOX OF RESOURCES

SEQUENCE 4: Defining allies, antagonists and narrative dynamics

Target: Educators, Youth Workers, Trainers

Estimated duration: 60 minutes

Context: Formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts

Materials: tables, chairs, with blackboard/virtual board, computers etc.

Activities can be carried out individually, collaboratively, or in facilitated settings, depending on the educational context and learners' needs.

1. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the sequence is to guide participants in creating all those characters who, through their presence and interaction with the protagonist, enrich the story of the Adventure Book, making the story more complex and realistic.

- It will be necessary to identify a hierarchical scale based on the role and importance that each character will have in the story. As with the protagonist, it will also be necessary to identify the character traits, values, and motivations of these characters so that they are credible but also understandable to all readers, including young people with Specific Learning Disorders (SLD).
- Each character brings with them situations, actions, and thoughts that will contribute significantly to enriching the story. **The story arises from the interrelationship between the protagonist and the antagonist: the conflictual and dramatic relationship.** This relationship, whether positive or negative, constitutes the soul of the story. The writer's skill lies in understanding that, as in real life, the characters in a book also grow, evolve, and change over the course of the story: someone who is an obstacle at the beginning, for example, may become a supporter, or a negative character may change for the better thanks to their experiences.



- We often believe that “antagonist” always refers to a real character, but sometimes it could be society, the environment in which the protagonist lives, which influences and hinders them, or the protagonist's lack of awareness of their own abilities and talents. If the hero or heroine are people who doubt their own abilities, they may be the ones who stand in the way of their own progress and personal, emotional, and human growth. Showing this evolution in the story will also bring awareness to readers.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SEQUENCE

The characters who accompany the protagonist do not all have the same weight: in writing the story, there will be characters who may “exit the story” after the first chapter, others who will accompany them throughout the journey, and still others who will appear at the appropriate moment. Supporting characters or antagonists can play two roles, one in opposition and the other in support of the hero. The former will create conflicts and obstacles and act as antitheses to the protagonist; the latter will interact to support and assist the actions of the hero/heroine. It will be the writer's task to develop the tensions and relationships between the hero/heroine and the other characters in order to add value and make the plot appealing.

To create the negative antagonist, in our specific case, we can think of characters who are “opposite” to our hero, i.e., someone who does not believe in climate change, or who acts in an unfair and even immoral way, preferring, for example, their own economic advantage at the expense of the environment and the common good. Again, we must think of credible characters, emphasizing their evil and dark side if necessary. The conflict that will arise from the opposition between this character and the protagonist will give depth and value to the story.

It could also be interesting to have the antagonist or one of them have a change of heart - it also adds depth to the story and blends well with the subject of hope.

At the same time, we must also develop positive characters who can support our hero/heroine or simply be useful to the development of the story.



2.1. The concept of antagonist

The concept of antagonist is often used to define “the villain” of the story, but the antagonist can also be a character who criticizes or opposes certain behaviour of the protagonist. For example, it could be a parent, teacher, or friend who, for the protagonist's own good, constructively criticizes certain actions and offers suggestions to encourage them to grow and change. In fact, the antagonist's task is precisely to pose obstacles and issues that aim to shake up, evolve, and make the protagonist more self-aware, both emotionally and internally.

They may be people of different ages, but even in this case, it is best to avoid gender and ethnic stereotypes, trying to create a balance with both the protagonist and the entire story. Before developing the story, it will be useful to imagine “portraits” with which to describe the strengths and weaknesses, values and peculiarities of the character, as well as their physical appearance. These few “notes” will be useful for creating actions, dialogues and narrative situations.

To make it easier (especially with mixed groups or students with learning disabilities), it can be useful to distinguish between characters:

- **main** characters, who directly influence the protagonist's choices;
- **secondary** characters, who enrich the context;
- **functional** characters, who serve to advance the plot.

2.2. The fundamental elements of the character

As with the construction of the protagonist, students develop a hierarchical scale to understand the value and importance of these characters in the story and also answer simple questions about them that will allow them to create the various characters. It is important that the main antagonists, whether negative or positive, are developed to the fullest and have “their own story.”

The questions to be answered are:

- Who are they?
- What do they want? What are their goals and dreams?



- What is their relationship with the protagonist?
- What is their position on climate change? Do they believe in it? Or do they act contrary to it?
- What can they lose or gain from their choices?

3. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 - Brainstorming: Who are our antagonists and how many are there?

Duration: 10 - 15 min

The educator first introduces the main character, as a starting point for thinking about and developing the supporting characters. Once again, it is necessary to avoid stereotypes and gather all the ideas from the group about the various antagonists proposed. It is also necessary to keep in mind the chosen theme (another important antagonist) in order to develop the supporting characters. These characters must be described and outlined, each with their own position and role in relation to climate change.

It could be interesting to include or draw inspiration from characters who really exist or have existed. Scientists, politicians, activists, etc., who carry out relevant and particularly significant actions in real life. In the story, they could play “short” but useful roles to support or refute the theses put forward in the story.

Brainstorming concerns:

- Age and background (where do they live? What social class do they belong to?)
- How the environment and education have influenced the character
- Strengths and limitations
- Approach to climate change: awareness, indifference, or denial?
- Motivations that drive the character to act: are they a climate change activist or an environmental champion?
- Are they real or fictional characters?

A structured worksheet can be used to support this brainstorming activity (see [Sequence 5](#))



Activity 2 - The antagonists' profile

Duration: 20–25 min

Learners complete a structured antagonist profile sheet ([Annex 1](#)), for each antagonist, based on the role and importance assigned to the character in the story. The profile includes:

- Name
- Age
- Where they live and their background.
- What they love to do and what they hate. What they believe in.
- Is the character “static” or does they evolve over the course of the story?
- How do they act: are they a friend or enemy of the protagonist?
- What are the consequences of their actions?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?

At this stage, the various characters take shape. Drawings, images, and short texts can also be useful here to visualize them better. The crucial point is to establish each character's relationship: are they for or against the protagonist? However, it is also important to take into account other aspects concerning their “character,” expectations, and actions they will perform throughout the story. The more accurate and detailed the description of the antagonist, the more realistic they will be and the more compelling the story will be, thanks to their clashes and relationships with the protagonist.

When writing the story, it is important that the central theme of climate change is set against a backdrop of ‘other stories’ concerning the romantic and human relationships, dreams, and problems of all the characters, revealing their inner lives. This will not only make the story more credible, but will also allow the reader to identify better with the issues addressed. We can introduce stories and characters who have problems with work, love, sexual identity, bullying, anxiety... which will form the backdrop to the main story. Weaving them together and structuring them in such a way as to make the main story more solid and profound. The presence of convincing antagonists will allow us to create compelling dialogues and situations that will help reinforce the message. For example, if the climate issue is developed in a direct dialogue, in which the two main characters



confront each other and show their different positions, it will be easier to understand and identify with the “right” position.

Let's take a moment to discuss the idea of including “real” characters to reinforce certain concepts in the story. For example, we could include (the oft-mentioned) Greta Thunberg and perhaps have her engage in dialogue with the protagonist, to show that our hero also shares certain ideals and principles. When we include real characters, especially if they are still alive, we must always keep in mind the basic rules of respect, even if we do not share the opinions of the character in question.

Activity 3 - Draw or build your antagonists

Duration: 15–20 min

The various antagonists will be presented according to their importance. For an important antagonist, in addition to the file and description, a visual portrait can be created using:

- freehand drawing, or
- simple digital graphic tools (see [Digital Toolbox](#))

For minor characters, who play almost “extra” roles and do not influence the plot but may be useful for the development of the story or to clarify and show certain aspects of the protagonist, a brief description may suffice. For others, on the contrary, the more information is included, the more the story will benefit.

It is clear that those with creative and writing skills can introduce these elements during the writing process without necessarily creating specific character sheets, but this activity is useful for beginners and for providing reference points.

Activity 4 - Presentation of the character

Duration: 10 min

At the end of Activities 1,2 and 3 each individual or group presents their antagonists and receives feedback.



4. DIGITAL TOOLBOX - Tools for the Sequence

As with the protagonist, we can also use digital tools to help us structure and create the visual appearance of the other characters. Creating “portraits” of the antagonists through drawing will make it easier to visualize and understand them. This illustration work will also contribute to the creation of the book, as, as already mentioned in [Sequence 3](#), it will be necessary to accompany the text with a series of supporting images that can provide visual aid to SLDs.

We list some tools from our [Digital Toolbox](#) briefly below, inviting you to view [Tutorial 5](#) for detailed guidance on using digital tools.

Category: Illustration & Image Tools

- [Canva](#)
- [Pixlr](#)
- [Vectr](#)
- [GIMP – GNU Image Manipulation Program](#)

Also [Sequence 11](#) is very useful for editing and adapting images for narrative use.<<

5. HOW TO APPLY THESE ACTIVITIES IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTEXTS

Formal education contexts (e.g. school)

- Descriptive writing and character analysis activities
- Oral presentation as a communication exercise

Non-formal and informal contexts (youth work, community settings)

- Collaborative creation of various characters
- Artistic and creative activities
- Simple role-playing to “interpret” the character

6. ADAPTATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SLD

- Pre-structured character sheet templates



- Option to use images instead of text
- Use of icons representing emotions and character traits
- Audio support for reading and comprehension
- Longer time allowed to define character traits
- “Guided choice” with predefined lists (e.g. brave, curious, worried, etc.)

7. RELATED TUTORIALS

- [Tutorial 3 - Crafting Compelling Climate Narratives](#)
- [Tutorial 4 - Interactive Storytelling Techniques \(Role-Playing & Decision-Making\)](#)
- [Tutorial 5 - Using Digital & Multimedia Tools for Storytelling](#)



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ANNEX1

THE ANTAGONIST'S PROFILE

Instructions: complete the antagonist profile sheet based on the role and importance assigned to the character in the story.

Name	
Age	
Where they live and their background?	
What they love to do and what they hate? What they believe in?	
Is the character "static" or does they evolve over the course of the story?	



How do they act: are they a friend or enemy of the protagonist?	
What are the consequences of their actions?	
What are their strengths and weaknesses?	