

Plot profile

What is it?

A plot profile or plot line is a combination of a timeline and an excitement rating chart.

What is its purpose?

It helps students to gain a deeper understanding of the whole structure of the text they are reading or viewing, and to explore their own responses to it.

How do I do it?

- It's best to demonstrate first with a text which is relatively well known to the students. First the students work out the main plot events.
- Provide students with a simple graph to use. They graph the text plot using the horizontal axis to show time and the sequence of events, and the vertical axis to give an excitement rating. Each event is positioned on the graph according to when it takes place and how exciting or significant it is.
- When lines are drawn between the events, it is easy for students to see how the structure of the story works. More sophisticated texts can result in much more complex plot profiles. The process of developing a profile helps students to gain a clear overview of the text and its complexities.
- Students can work in groups to develop plot profiles, or can develop individual profiles which they then compare with others. Either approach enables students to share and justify their own interpretations.

How can I adapt it?

- Other types of changes throughout a text can be plotted along the vertical axis. Examples include: the closeness of two characters in a relationship; the happiness or despair of a main character; the degree of confidence a character shows.
- In complex texts incidents related to particular sub-plots can be linked with different colours. When students do this for a text such as a TV soapie or a nineteenth century novel, they gain an appreciation of the ways in which the narrative as a whole is shaped.
- Students can compare plot profiles of similar texts in a particular genre to see what kinds of frameworks are typically used.
- Students can use plot profiles on their own texts to help them check how their plot holds up and how it fits with the framework typical of a particular genre.

Adapted from <http://www.discover.tased.edu.au/english/plot.htm>