



# When Lightning Strikes

## A Novel Study

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TEACHING NOTES ONLY

SECTION I: ONGOING ACTIVITIES

SECTION II: CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

# Section I

## ONGOING ACTIVITIES

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- *Life in Russia* photo (p. 40) is from *Hutterite Roots*,  
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- Moral virtues concepts are based on *Building Moral Intelligence*,  
by Michelle Borba, Jossey-Bass, 2001

## CHARACTERIZATION

Characters are who the story is about. We learn about them in two ways.

1. Dialogue (what they say)
2. Action (what they do)

As the novel progresses, you will meet the characters in the box below. As you read each group of chapters, you will get to know the characters better. Notice the Character Traits table below. Many of these words will apply to the characters in the novel.

**Moral Virtues:** Notice that some words in the character traits chart below are bold-faced. These are words that describe the seven moral virtues. A writer named Michelle Borba says that morality has to do with caring about others, and understanding the difference between right and wrong. She says there are seven important character traits that decent, well-adjusted human beings show. These are called the seven moral virtues. You will read more about them in the **Moral Virtues** activity in the section on chapters 1-5.

Hannah Stahl	Sannah Basel	Paul Wipf
Vanya the Great	<b>CHARACTER BOX</b>	The Jewish Man
Catherine Wipf	Johann Kleinsasser	Zechariah Wipf

### CHARACTER TRAITS

bitter	daring	harsh	mean	serious
boastful	dependable	helpful	meek	stern
bossy	deranged	honest	nasty	strict
brusque	determined	hot-headed	patient	strong
calm	dishonest	hurting	polite	strong-willed
careless	dissipated	impulsive	quiet	stubborn
caring	duty-minded	independent	rebellious	thoughtful
charming	<b>empathetic</b>	intelligent	reckless	<b>tolerant</b>
clever	erratic	intolerant	relaxed	tortured
conflicted	<b>fair</b>	irritable	<b>respectful</b>	understanding
<b>conscientious</b>	forgiving	<b>kind</b>	rude	unfair
contented	friendly	level-headed	sad	unforgiving
courageous	gentle	loving	<b>self-</b>	unkind
cowed	guilt-ridden	loyal	<b>controlled</b>	wise
cruel	hardened	manipulative	sensitive	witty

## **CHAPTERS 1 - 5**

### **MORAL VIRTUES**

As mentioned earlier, Michelle Borba says there are seven moral virtues. These are the important character traits that decent, well-adjusted human beings show. They are listed and defined below.

- **Empathy:** This being able to understand (and care) how other people are feeling.
- **Conscience:** This is the small voice inside that helps you know (and do) what is right.
- **Self-control:** This is being able to think before you act, which helps you to act wisely.
- **Respect:** This helps you believe that every person is valuable, and worthy of good treatment.
- **Kindness:** This is the ability to show concern for the feelings of others.
- **Fairness:** This is choosing to be open-minded, and refusing to show favouritism.
- **Tolerance:** This is the ability to appreciate people whose beliefs, customs, abilities or looks may be different than your own.

## CHAPTERS 6 – 8

### IMAGERY

Imagery is language that appeals to the senses so a reader can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch what the author describes. The words create mental pictures that help the reader understand the mood or feeling of the story.

Authors often use *figurative language* to create imagery. Figurative language will be covered in the next chapter set. For now, read the examples of imagery in the chart below to get an idea of how it works.

SENSE	EXAMPLE
Sight	P. 12. My <i>Mueter</i> , my own dear mother. A curl of rolled hair curved out from under her kerchief. Her hair was the clean pale yellow of autumn grass in the sun....
Sound	P. 24. Her voice was high and piercing, like sharp sticks jabbing at my weary mind.
Smell	P. 28. In my own home, the morning smell of bacon and eggs or oatmeal had always wafted from the stove.
Taste	P. 40. By the time he had finished, I tasted blood on my tongue from biting back my cries.
Touch	P. 12. Nor would I ever again feel Fater's – my father's – guiding hand on my shoulder, or feel his strong, work-hardened hands lift me into the air as they had done so often in the past.

## CHAPTERS 9 - 13

### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

In the last chapter group, you learned about imagery. Now let's look at figurative language. Figurative language creates clear and vivid images by describing things in ways that are not exactly (or literally) true. It often compares one thing to another to give a clearer picture of what something is like. It helps create pictures in the mind and lets the reader see things in a new, imaginative way.

Study the figurative language chart below to learn the names of seven kinds of figurative language.

FIGURE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Simile	A simile is a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. A simile always uses the words <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> to make the comparison.	P. 11. <i>On the left, <b>like</b> a field of sad-eyed flowers, were the women....</i> P. 13. <i>All eyes were downcast, <b>as</b> serious and brooding <b>as</b> the cold place in the bottom of my heart.</i>
Metaphor	A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things that have something in common. The comparison does not use <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> . Instead, it says that one thing <i>is</i> something else.	p. 24. " <i>Jesus <b>is</b> your miller.</i> " (Andreas does not mean that Jesus is actually a miller. He is making a comparison for Paul.)
Synecdoche	Synecdoche is a comparison, when a part of something is used to represent the whole thing.	P. 11. <i>The right half of the church was a sea of <b>black coats and beards</b>.</i> (Coats & beards, of course, represent the men.) P. 33. <i><b>Red-hair</b> was right.</i> (Paul means red-haired Hons Gross.)
Personification	Personification is when the author speaks of an idea, object, or animal as if it were a person.	P. 51. <i>Doubt <b>pinched</b> my heart.</i> (Doubt cannot actually pinch something.)
Irony	Irony is saying one thing, but meaning something else.	P. 58. <i>"I hope you liked the house tour," I joked. "<b>Wasn't it fun?</b>"</i> (When reading the story, you can tell that he really means it was a failure, & <i>not</i> fun.)
Hyperbole	Hyperbole is an exaggeration, usually to make a point.	P. 56. <i>We both ran <b>faster than a jackrabbit</b>.</i> (They didn't run <i>that</i> fast.)
Litotes	Litotes is a deliberate understatement of something the reader knows could really be said in a stronger way.	P. 40. <i>Graybeard <b>knew how</b> to use the strap.</i> (That's putting it mildly!)

## CHAPTERS 14 - 17

### POINT OF VIEW

Point of view refers to which character the author uses to tell the story.

**First Person Point of View:** This is when the author writes as if s/he is a character in the story. First person can be recognized because the narrator uses the word "I". For example, *"That was when it hit **me**, like a punch in the gut. **I** would miss Hannah when **I** left. But why was she so interested in **me**?"*

**Second Person Point of View:** This is when the narrator speaks directly to the reader, using the word *you*. For example, *"That was when it hit **you**, like a punch in the gut. **You** would miss Hannah when **you** left. But why was she so interested in **you**?"* This point of view is hardly ever used in fiction.

**Third Person Point of View:** This is when the narrator is not actually in the story, but tells it as if looking over the whole thing from the outside. *"That was when it hit **Paul**, like a punch in the gut. **He** would miss Hannah when **he** left. But why was she so interested in **him**?"*

**Retelling:** The feel of a story a story may change if it is told from a different character's point of view. For instance, in the scene in Chapter 15, when *Graybeard* uses a switch on Paul, we see Paul's anger, and feel the cruelty and unfairness of the whipping. As far as Paul is concerned the German teacher does not care how much Paul is already hurting inside, or that his aunt is so unloving. If Andreas were to tell the story it might be different. Andreas might recognize how unfair it was of Sannah to take Paul's treasure box, and how harsh the whipping is. Yet, he would also understand that Sannah has pain too, and that the German teacher thinks he is doing what is best to help Paul learn to follow the colony rules. He might see both sides. He might feel sorry for Paul, but not know what to do about helping him feel better. You can see that it is important which character tells the story.

## CHAPTERS 18 - 22

### THEME & CHARACTER

**Theme** is an **insight or idea about life** that the author examines in the story. One of the themes in *When Lightning Strikes* is about how different ways of dealing with life's troubles can affect what a person's life will be like.

Every person alive will have trouble at one time or another. Some troubles are more serious than others, but what makes the greatest difference in life is not always what the trouble is, but how we handle it. In the novel, Paul, Sannah, the old Jewish man, Vanya, and Hannah have all experienced trouble. In fact, you will see in the next section that Hannah's troubles are more serious than Paul realizes. Each of the characters has handled his or her troubles differently.

**Dealing With Trouble, Part 1:** Look at the chart below. It shows some different ways that people may respond to trouble.

NAME	Has had pain	Is filled with anger	Is angry with self	Hurts others	Has given up hope	Uses alcohol	Has gone crazy	Is a Loner	Lets others help	Accepts pain & tries to move on	Has found peace	Trusts God
Paul												
Hannah												
Sannah												
Jewish Man												
Vanya												

**Dealing With Trouble, Part 2:** A well-adjusted person lives a satisfying life, and is at peace with both him/herself and others. Some characters in the novel are well-adjusted, and some are not.

**Dealing With Trouble, Part 3:** Sometimes Paul worries that he could end up being like Sannah (p. 70), the Jewish man (p. 57), or Vanya the Great (p. 102). Each of them has responded to trouble in a negative way that Paul recognizes in himself.

**Dealing With Trouble, Part 4:** Though the reader gets a few hints about Vanya the Great's past life, not much is said about it. We do know, however, that he had no parents (p.100), and that something about Paul reminds him of himself. We also know that he has become an alcoholic and a thief. He is lonesome, and without much hope for the future. One of the themes in the novel is about how Paul can avoid ending up like this.



## CHAPTERS 23 - 27

### PLOT AND CONFLICT

Plot is the events that happen in a story. Plot is more about *what* happens than *why*.

One way to study plot is to look at conflict because, without conflict, there cannot be much story. Conflict puts the **protagonist** against an **antagonist**.

**Protagonist:** This is the main character. This is the character the story follows as he/she tries to accomplish a goal. The protagonist is usually, but not always, a good person.

**Antagonist:** This is the force that goes against the protagonist. An antagonist can be a person, society, or even something in the protagonist him/herself (like alcoholism or uncontrolled anger).

Three ways to name **Conflict**:

- **Person vs. Person** (sometimes called *man against man*)
  - This is when another person is against the protagonist.
- **Person vs. the Environment** (sometimes called man vs. environment)
  - This is when nature (like storms), or society, or even fate is against the protagonist.
- **Person vs. Him/Herself** (sometimes called man vs. himself)
  - This is when a character is fighting something within him/herself, such as jealousy, alcoholism or anger. It could even be about someone who struggles to make decisions, and never gets anything done.

Four types of **Conflict**:

- **Physical** (as in a fight)
- **Mental** (to do with thinking, as in a game of chess, or trying to solve a mysterious crime)
- **Emotional** (Wrestling with feelings)
- **Moral** (As in trying to decide what is right or wrong, and whether to do right or wrong)

## CHAPTERS 28 – 31

### FLASHBACK

Many books tell a story by starting at the very beginning and following through to the end in chronological order (the order that everything actually happens). *When Lightning Strikes* is a little different. Some events that have already happened are not told until part way through the novel. This is called the **flashback** technique.

Flashbacks are useful because they allow an author to bring out important information at just the right time to make the story interesting and to help readers understand important points more clearly.

*When Lightning Strikes* has three main flashbacks. They are Paul's story, Hannah's story, and the old Jewish man's story. The Jewish man's story is not mentioned ahead of time, but Paul's and Hannah's are. The author adds interest to the novel by hinting at what has happened to Paul and Hannah before the *flashbacks* are told. All three flashbacks help the reader understand the characters better.

These flashbacks help to explain why each character is the way he/she is. They help show where Paul's feelings of guilt come from, where the Jewish Man's anger and craziness come from, and where Hannah's wisdom originates.

## CHAPTERS 32 – 34

### THEME

As mentioned in the section on Chapters 18 – 22, **theme** is an **insight or idea about life** that the author examines in the story. Stories in which the themes are important are called **interpretive fiction**.

As an example, let's say an author writes a story about someone who loves to make money more than anything else. The trouble is he likes it so much that he will bully and cheat anyone to get it. He gets rich, but leaves a trail of misery behind him. The theme of such a story might be that everyone has the choice of making the world a better or worse place by how they treat others.

Not all stories have a **theme**. Some are written strictly for entertainment, and do not examine the concerns of real life. For example, some horror stories might be written just to give the reader a scare. An adventure story might be full of adventure and nothing more. Some mysteries are written only for the entertainment of seeing how a crook gets caught. Stories with no theme are called **escape fiction**. All interpretive fiction has a theme; only some escape fiction has a theme.

*When Lightning Strikes* has several different themes running through it, such as:

- the importance of treating other people with respect.
- whether or not God loves his people.
- the importance of friendship.
- how bad things can either destroy us or make us stronger, depending on our reaction to them
- the kind of person that makes a hero

## CHARACTER TYPES

Authors do not create all characters to be the same. Some characters are complex, and some are not; some characters change during a story, and some do not. Read about the character types below.

### Kinds of character: *Flat or Round*

**1. Flat:** Flat characters are characters the author does not develop very much. They always act in the same predictable way. For example they may be good or evil, or a jokester or a grump, and everything they do will reflect that characteristic. Real people usually have a little of each in them. Good people sometimes do bad things, and evil people sometimes do good things, but flat characters usually behave in only one way. Flat characters can also be people like a butler, a nurse, a blabbermouth, a bragger, or any kind of person not developed beyond a single characteristic. You can usually sum up what these characters are like in one sentence.

**2. Round:** Round characters are more realistic and well developed. They are complicated, and do not always act predictably. For instance, like real people, they can have a good side and a bad side, or a serious side and a funny side. They act like individuals, and can be full of surprises, doing things that you wouldn't expect. Because they are complex, it can be difficult to describe what these characters are like.

### Kinds of character: *Static or Dynamic*

**3. Static:** Static characters can be **either flat or round**, but what makes them static is that they do not change in the story. The way they are at the beginning is how they are at the end. They have not learned lessons or had experiences that change the way they act and think.

**4. Dynamic:** Dynamic characters are characters that change during the story. By the end, they are different than they were at the beginning. They may have learned something that changes the way they think or behave. The change can be good or bad. For instance a character that is prejudiced against a certain race of people might learn to value them as fellow human beings. Or maybe a person who has lots of fun and loves life could be turned into a sadder, quieter person because of some bad things that happen.

## Section II

# CULMINATING ACTIVITIES AND APPENDIX

This section provides activities that can be used either in addition to, or instead of, the ongoing activities in Section I.

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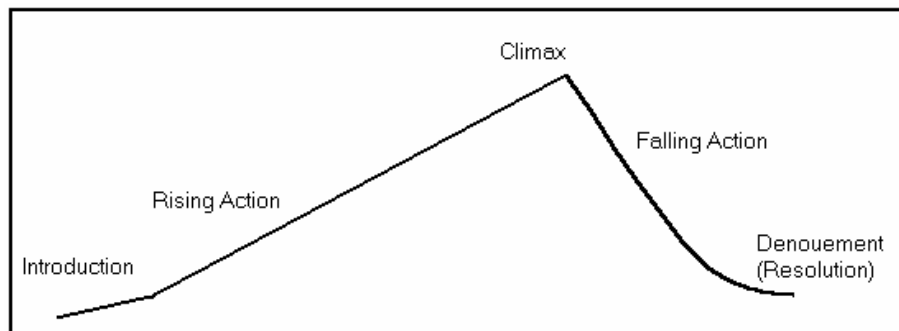
## PLOT DIAGRAMS

Stories usually follow a pattern that can be shown in a diagram. The parts of the plot diagram are:

- **Exposition:** This is the introduction to the story. The reader finds out who the characters are, and what is going on.
- **Rising Action:** This is where the problems develop. To move the story forward, the action gets more interesting and the problems get bigger.
- **Climax:** This is the point of the story where the emotional feelings are highest, or where the conflict peaks.
- **Falling Action:** When the action slows down, and events lead to the outcome of the conflict. Often this is not needed if the story ends right after the climax.
- **Denouement** (or Outcome): This is the closing off of the story, when everything is explained. All the loose ends are wrapped up and the reader finds out whether the protagonist wins or loses the conflict. It is a French word, meaning *unknotting*.

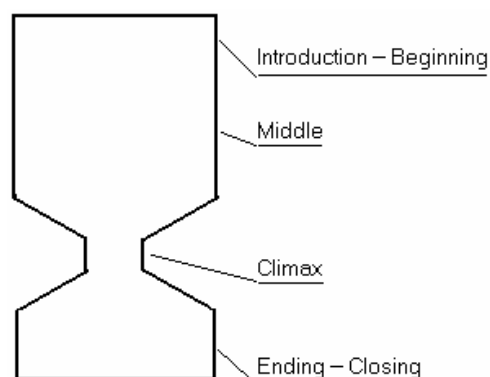
### PLOT DIAGRAM 1: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

The plot diagram is like a mountain climbing situation. The exposition is the climber getting ready. The rising action is the climber going up the slope. At the climax, the character reaches the peak. Then the climber falls off a cliff. This is the falling action. The denouement is when the climber hits the bottom, and it is all over.



### PLOT DIAGRAM 2: THE BOTTLENECK SHAPE

This is a simpler diagram. Every story must have three parts: a **beginning**, **middle** and **end**. It also has a climax, the point of greatest interest, when the problems come to a head. This is usually just before the ending.



## SETTING

Two types of setting are *geographical* and *chronological*.

1. **Geographical Setting:** This is *where* the story takes place. Depending on how specific the author makes it, it can be identified by country, urban or rural area, a particular building, a room in a house, or anything else that describes where the story happens.

2. **Chronological Setting:** This is *when* the story takes place. Depending on how specific the author makes it, it can be identified by time periods such as century, decade, year, month, day, or even a few hours within a day. Sometimes the setting is no more specific than, say, modern or ancient times.

**Setting is important because** it affects how the characters will act. For instance, a story about a person surviving a storm on a mountain cannot be the same story one set in the middle of a city. Because setting affects how people act, stories that take place on a Hutterite colony, or in a university, or in a drug den, or on a western ranch, or on a ship at sea, will have to be different from one another. Also, a story that takes place in modern times will have to be different, in some ways, than one that takes place long ago.

## FACT OR FICTION?

*When Lightning Strikes* is an historical novel. Historical fiction is a blend of real people and events *researched* by the author, and fictional people and events *invented* by the author. Sometimes it is difficult to know which parts are true, and which are made up. The afterword in *When Lightning Strikes* contains a section called *Fact or Fiction* that tells which are which.



## ART CONNECTION 1

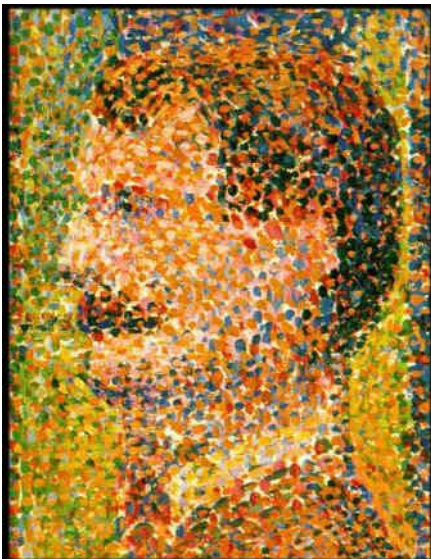
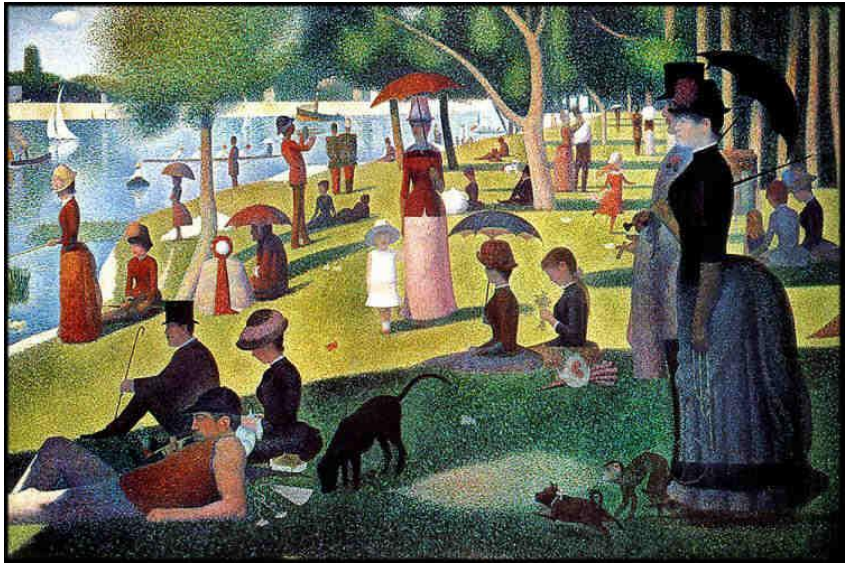


### TRAIN-SCENE: POINTILLISM & PRIMARY COLOURS

### BACKGROUND NOTES: POINTILLISM

During the period in which *When Lightning Strikes* is set, a young artist in Paris was learning his craft. George Seurat (1859–1891) became the founder of the artistic movement known as *pointillism*. At the time, researchers were gaining new knowledge about colour and perception. One of the researchers, a man named Eugène Chevreul, invented the colour wheel (and margarine, too, by the way).

Seurat paid attention to the new research on colour. He did his paintings by placing different coloured dots next to one another on a canvas. Every dot was carefully and perfectly planned to achieve the exact effect of colour and emotion that Seurat wanted. The picture above is Seurat's most famous painting. It is called *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. Hanging in the *Art Institute of Chicago*, it is three meters long by two meters high. It took Seurat two years (1884 – 1886) to create.



The picture at left, showing points of colour, is a detail from Seurat's painting *La Parade* (1889). The art samples shown here are in the *public domain*, and have been taken from *Wikipedia*. If you want more information about Seurat and Pointillism, go to [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), and use the search feature.