

Corso di narrazione e mastering

(III) Costruire personaggi interessanti

Roberto Grassi

DISCLAIMER

Quanto segue è frutto di riflessioni, esperienze e conoscenze personali.

Non prendetelo come testo sacro, ovviamente, e non aspettatevi verità. Lo scopo principale di questi incontri è sollevare dubbi e fornire strade per le risposte.

Il materiale è liberamente diffondibile.

Se ci sono domande fatele pure durante la nostra chiacchierata oppure scrivetemi.

AGENDA

Costruire personaggi interessanti

- ➔ Elementi di una storia
 - Le relazioni tra gli elementi
 - Caratterizzazione diretta ed indiretta
 - Gli elementi della caratterizzazione
 - Le relationships – map
 - «Usare» i personaggi
 - La «Premise» narrativista

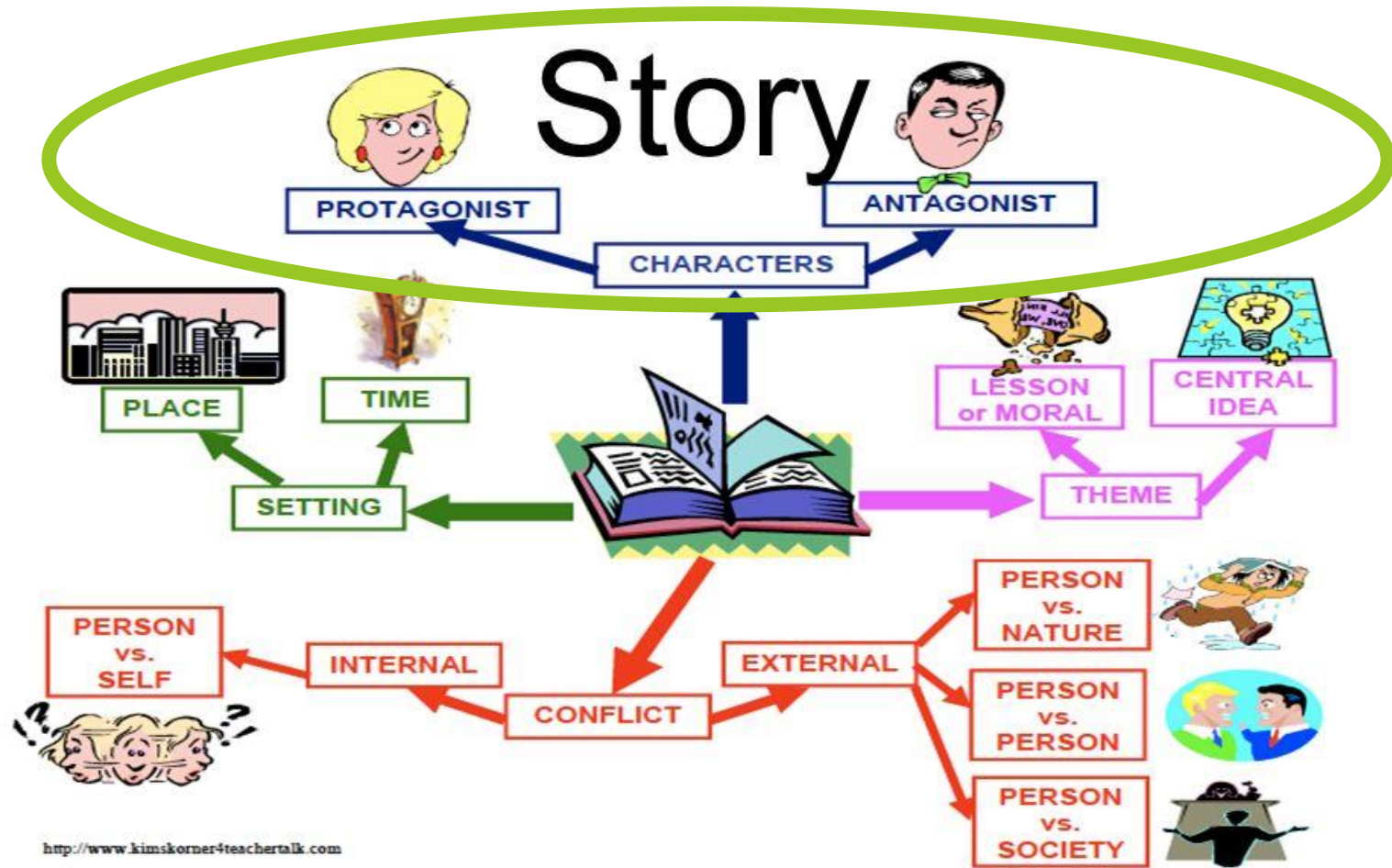
These are the basic elements of a story that you learn about in elementary school:

1. **Setting:** Where and when is the story set? Setting represents both the physical location but also the time (i.e. past, present, future) and the social and cultural conditions in which the characters exist.
2. **Character:** A person or animal or really anything personified. There can be one main character or many, and often there are secondary characters, but not always.
3. **Plot:** The events that happen in a story are called the plot. In a plot you typically find an introduction, rising action, a climax, the falling action, and a resolution. Plot is often represented as an arc. *To learn about plot in detail, read the article: "What is a Plot."*
4. **Conflict:** Every story must have a conflict, i.e. a challenge or problem around which the plot is based. Without conflict, the story will have no purpose or trajectory.
5. **Theme:** Idea, belief, moral, lesson or insight. It's the central argument that the author is trying to make the reader understand. The theme is the "why" of the story.

In high school, you start learning the advanced elements of a story:

6. **Point-of-view:** "Who" is telling the story? First person ("I") or third person ("he/she/it"). Limited (one character's perspective), multiple (many characters' perspectives) or omniscient (all knowing narrator). Second person ("you") is not often used for writing stories.
7. **Tone:** The overall emotional "tone" or meaning of the story. Is it happy, funny, sad, depressed? Tone can be portrayed in multiple ways, through word and grammar choices, choice of theme, imagery and description, symbolism, and the sounds of the words in combination (i.e. rhyme, rhythm, musicality).
8. **Style:** This is *how* things are said. Word choices, sentence structure, dialogue, metaphor, simile, hyperbole. Style contributes significantly to tone.

Elements of a

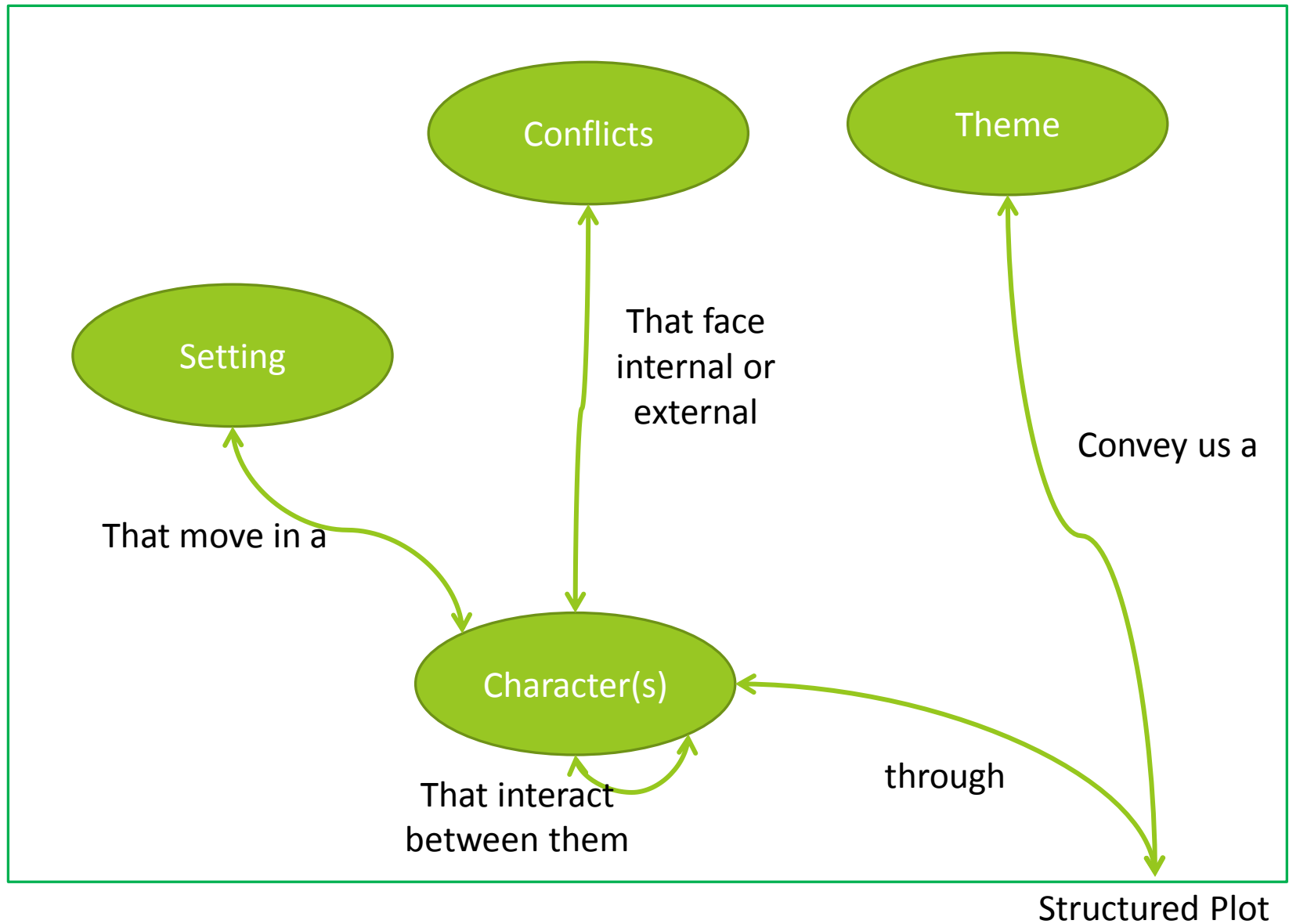


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Le relazioni tra gli elementi

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Direct Characterization

Direct characterization is when the author TELLS the audience what the personality of the character is.

Example: "The patient boy and quiet girl were both at the game."

The author is telling us that the boy is patient and the girl is kind.

Indirect Characterization

Speech- What does the character say?
How does the character speak?

Example: “Hey, we can have lots of fun
at camp this summer! I love being
outside!”

This shows us the character is upbeat
and happy.

Indirect Characterization

Thoughts- What is revealed through the character's thoughts and feelings?

Example: I wish it would stop raining. I am tired of sitting inside!

This shows us the character is not happy about the situation.

Indirect Characterization

Effect on Others- What is revealed through the character's effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character?

Example: The boy glared at his sister as she ate his dessert.

This shows us that the character is upset about his sister's behavior and inability to think of others.

Decorative elements: Three dots in the top left, a blue 'Clip slide' button in the top right, a yellow line with circles on the right side, and three dots in the bottom right corner.

Indirect Characterization

Actions- What does the character do?
How does the character behave?

Example: The girl rode the lawn mower through the house and into the garage.

This shows us the girl is not concerned with rules or safety.

The slide features a dark red background with a yellow vertical bar on the left. A blue button with a white icon and the text 'Clip slide' is in the top right. A yellow line with circles and a solid dot runs along the right and bottom edges. Three yellow dots are in the top left, and three are in the bottom right.

Indirect Characterization

Looks- What does the character look like? How does the character dress?

Example: The little girl left the game with slumped shoulders and a frown on her face.

This shows us the little girl is not enjoying herself and is upset.

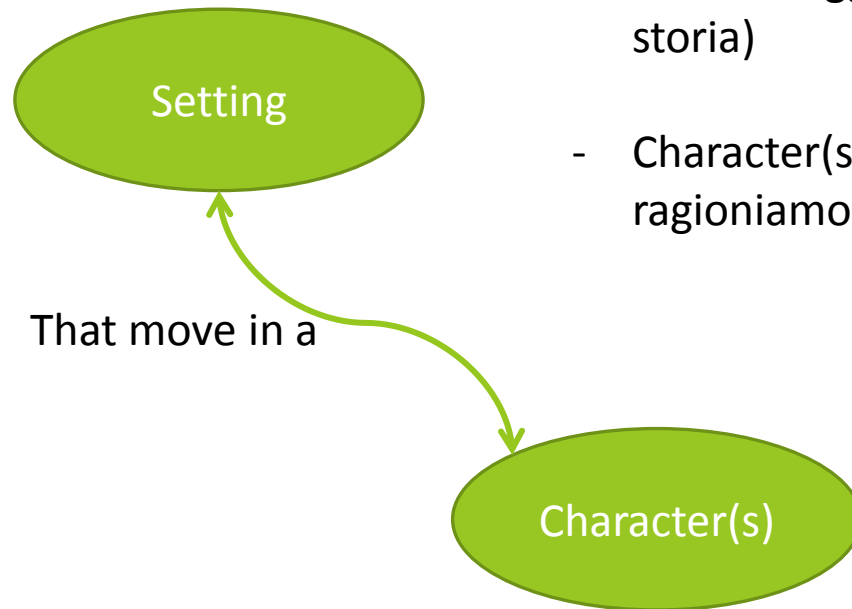
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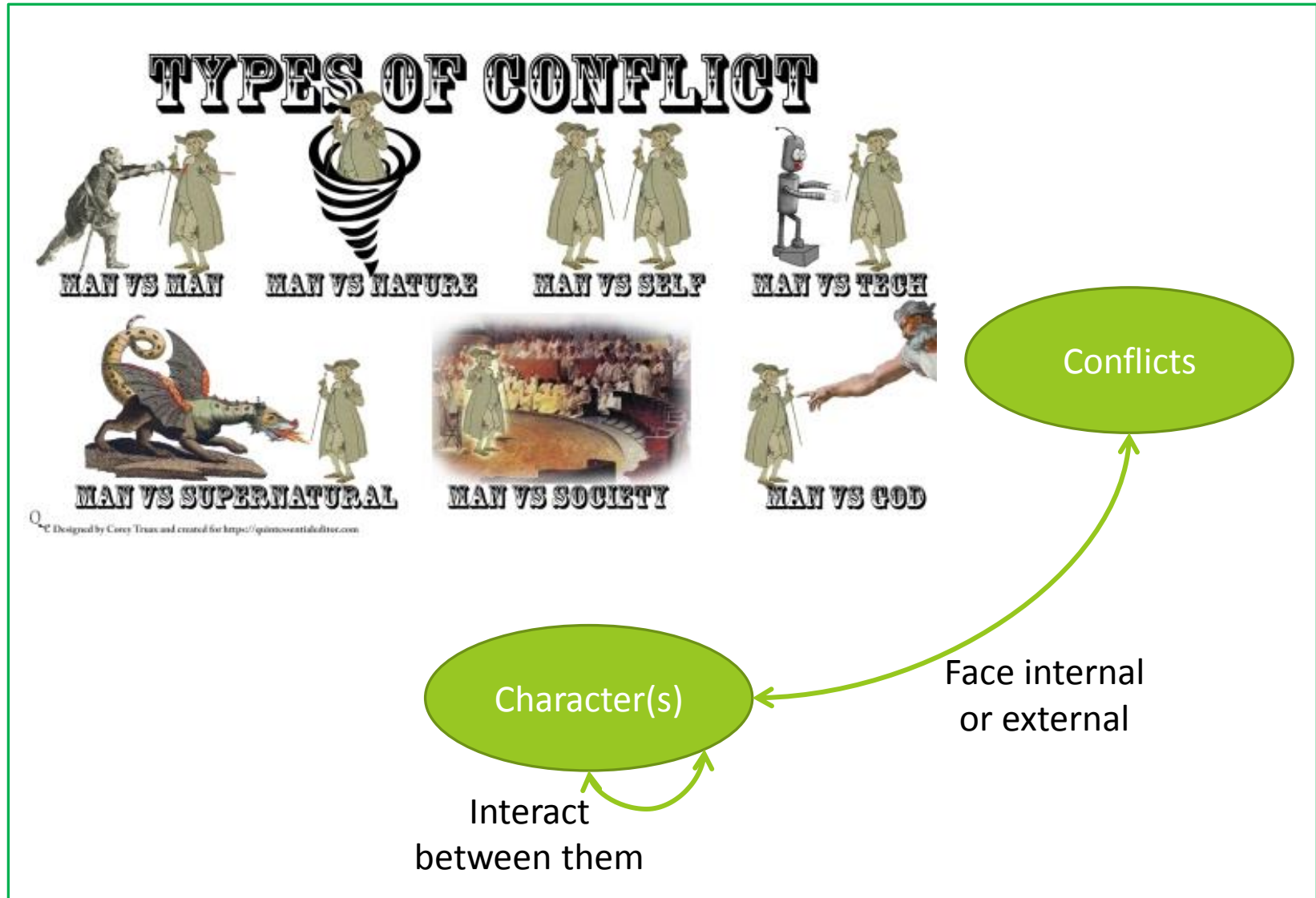
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Relazioni tra personaggio e setting:

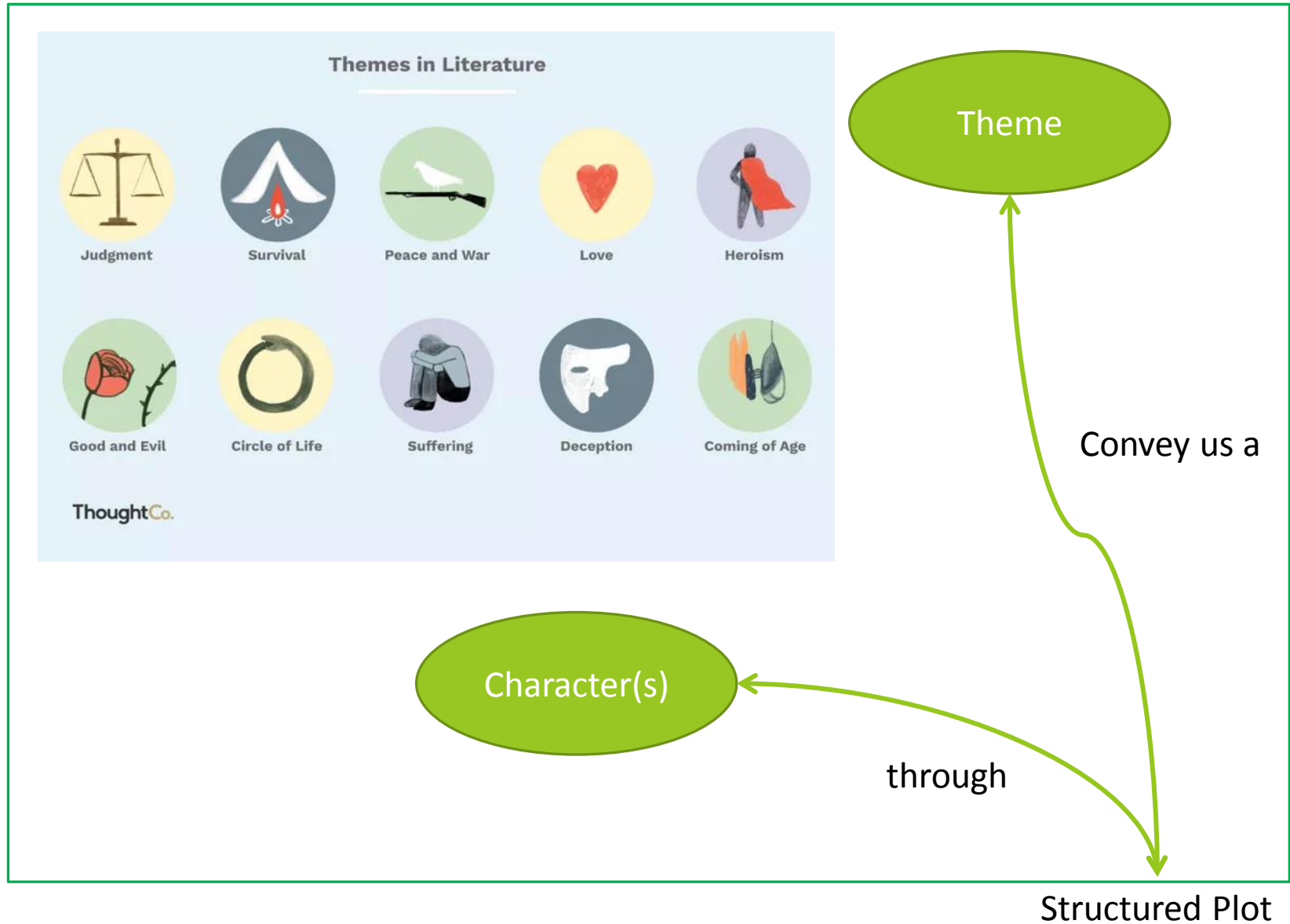
- Conoscenza del mondo in cui vive e degli aspetti generali dello stesso (che non saranno oggetto di focalizzazione nella storia)
- Character(s) + Setting = Situation (se ragioniamo con le «scene»)



Structured Plot



Gli elementi della caratterizzazione



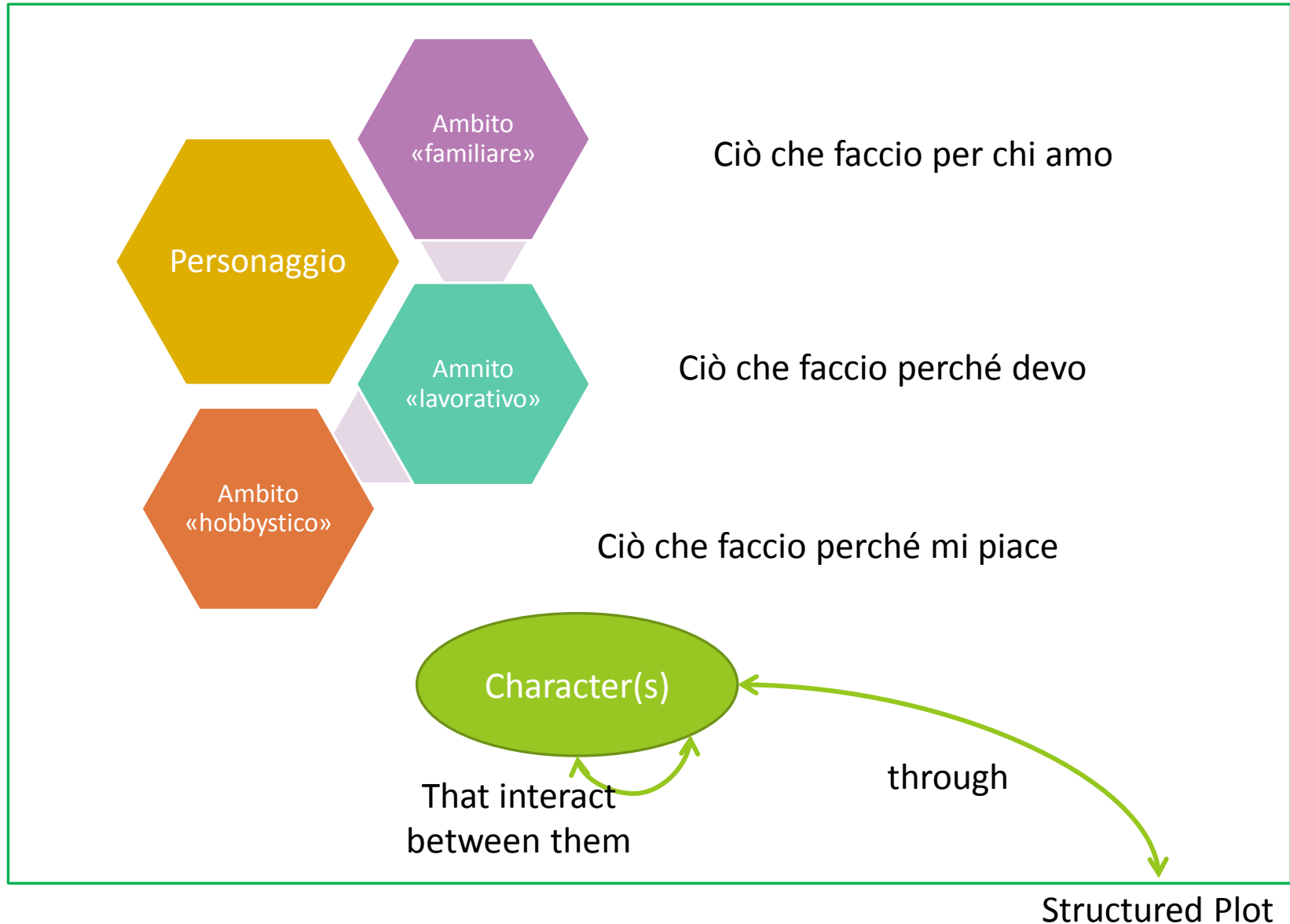
Gli elementi della caratterizzazione

- 1. Judgment:** Possibly one of the most common themes is judgment. In these books, a character is judged for being different or doing wrong, whether the infraction is real or just perceived as wrongdoing by others. Among classic novels, you can see this in "The Scarlet Letter," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," and "To Kill a Mockingbird." As these tales prove, judgment does not always equal justice.
- 2. Survival:** There is something captivating about a good survival story, one in which the main characters must overcome countless odds just to live another day. Almost any book by Jack London falls into this category because his characters often battle nature. "Lord of the Flies" is another in which life and death are important parts of the story. Michael Crichton's "Congo" and "Jurassic Park" certainly follow this theme.

- 3. Peace and war:** The contradiction between peace and war is a popular topic for authors. Quite often, the characters are gripped in the turmoil of conflict while hoping for days of peace to come or reminiscing about the good life before the war. Books such as "Gone With the Wind" show the before, during, and after of war, while others focus on the time of war itself. Just a few examples include "All Quiet on the Western Front," "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" by Ernest Hemingway.
- 4. Love:** The universal truth of love is a very common theme in literature, and you will find countless examples of it. They go beyond those sultry romance novels, too. Sometimes, it is even intertwined with other themes. Think of books like Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" or Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights." For a modern example, just look at Stephenie Meyer's "Twilight" series.

5. **Heroism:** Whether it is false heroism or true heroic acts, you will often find conflicting values in books with this theme. We see it quite often in classical literature from the Greeks, with Homer's "The Odyssey" serving as a perfect example. You can also find it in more recent stories such as "The Three Musketeers" and "The Hobbit."
6. **Good and evil:** The coexistence of good and evil is another popular theme. It is often found alongside many of these other themes such as war, judgment, and even love. Books such as the "Harry Potter" and "Lord of the Rings" series use this as the central theme. Another classic example is "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."
7. **Circle of life:** The notion that life begins with birth and ends with death is nothing new to authors—many incorporate this into the themes of their books. Some may explore immortality such as in "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Others, such as Leo Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," shock a character into realizing that death is inevitable. In a story like F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," the circle of life theme is turned completely upside down.

8. **Suffering:** There is physical suffering and internal suffering, and both are popular themes, often intertwined with others. A book such as Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" is filled with suffering as well as guilt. One like Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" looks more at the physical suffering of impoverished children, though there is plenty of both.
9. **Deception:** This theme can also take on many faces. Deception can be physical or social and it's all about keeping secrets from others. For instance, we see many lies in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," and many of William Shakespeare's plays are centered on deception at some level. Any mystery novel has some sort of deception as well.
10. **Coming of age:** Growing up is not easy, which is why so many books rely on a "coming of age" theme. This is one in which children or young adults mature through various events and learn valuable life lessons in the process. Books such as "The Outsiders" and "The Catcher in the Rye" use this theme very well.

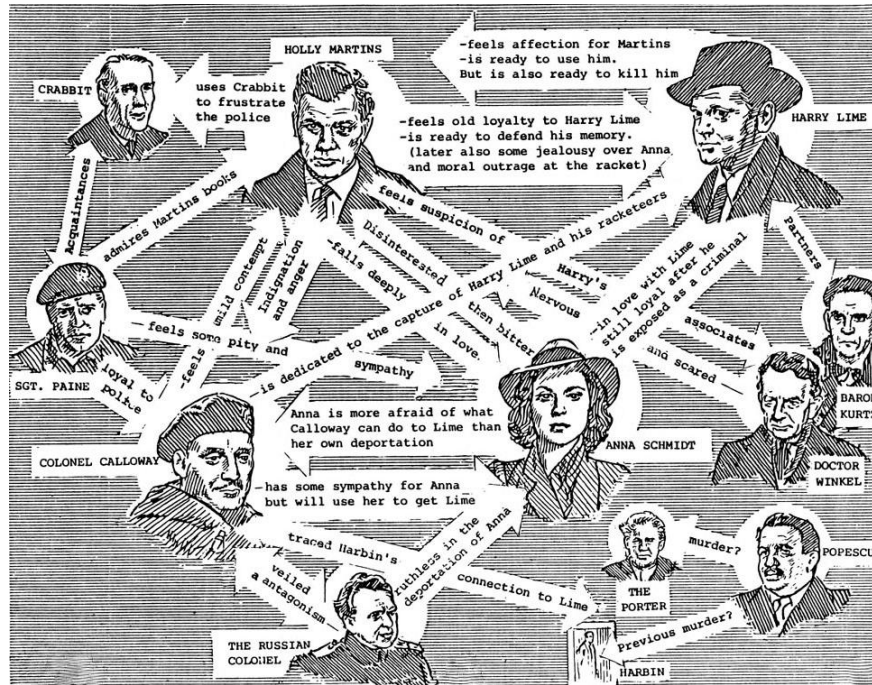


Gli elementi della caratterizzazione

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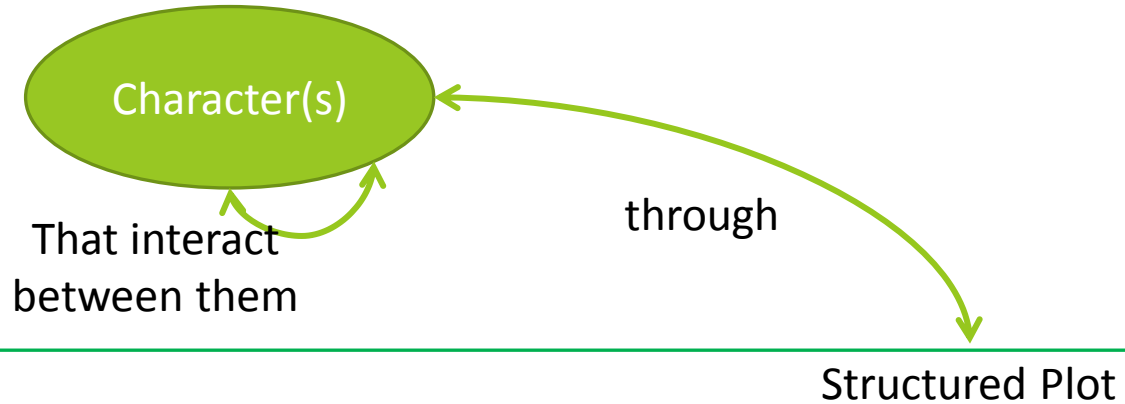
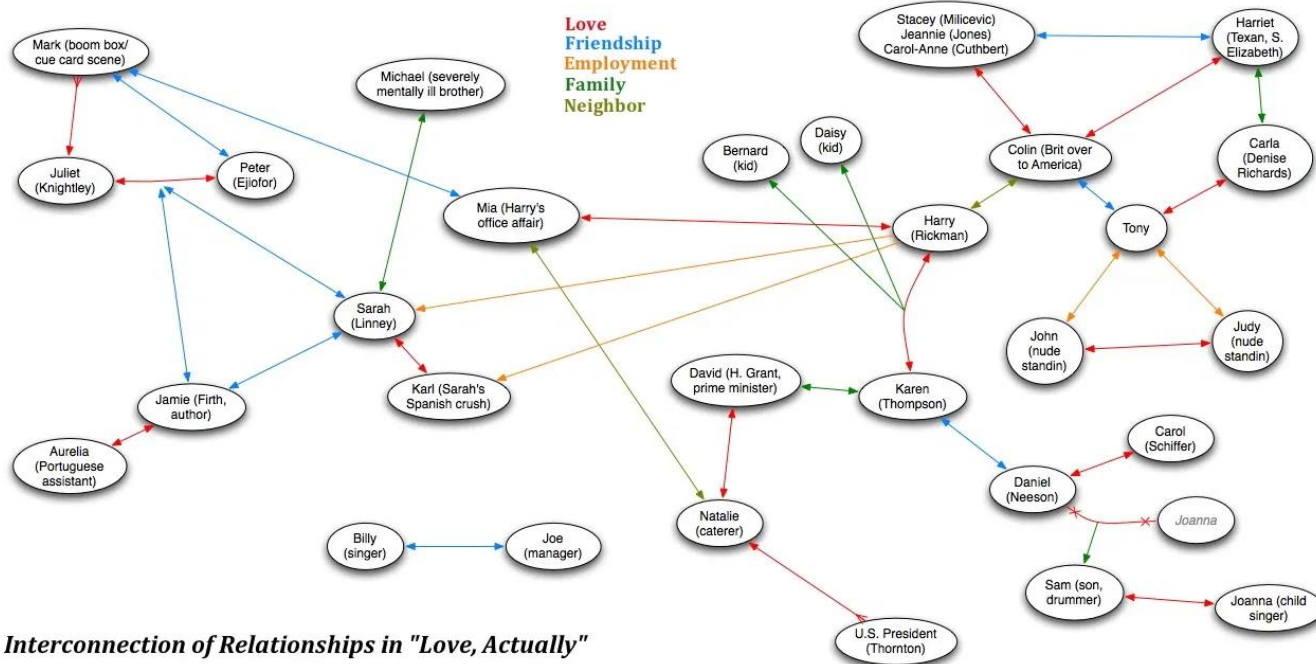
Character(s)

That interact between them

through

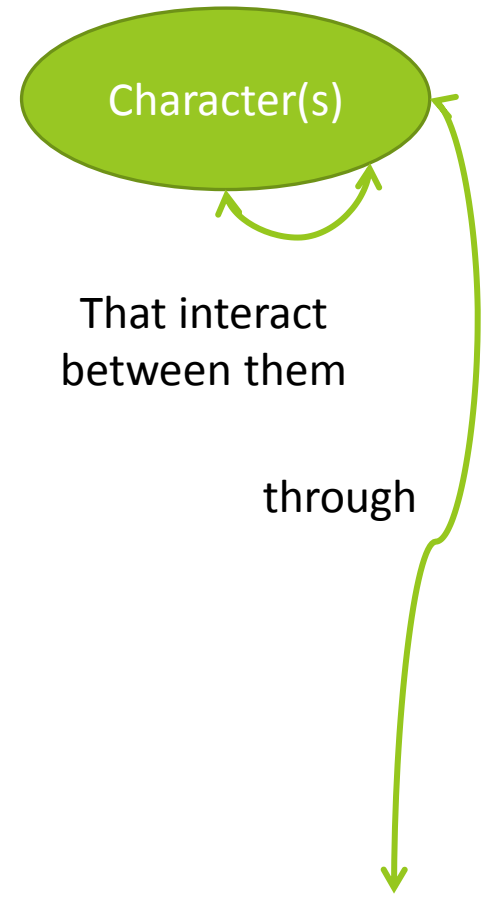
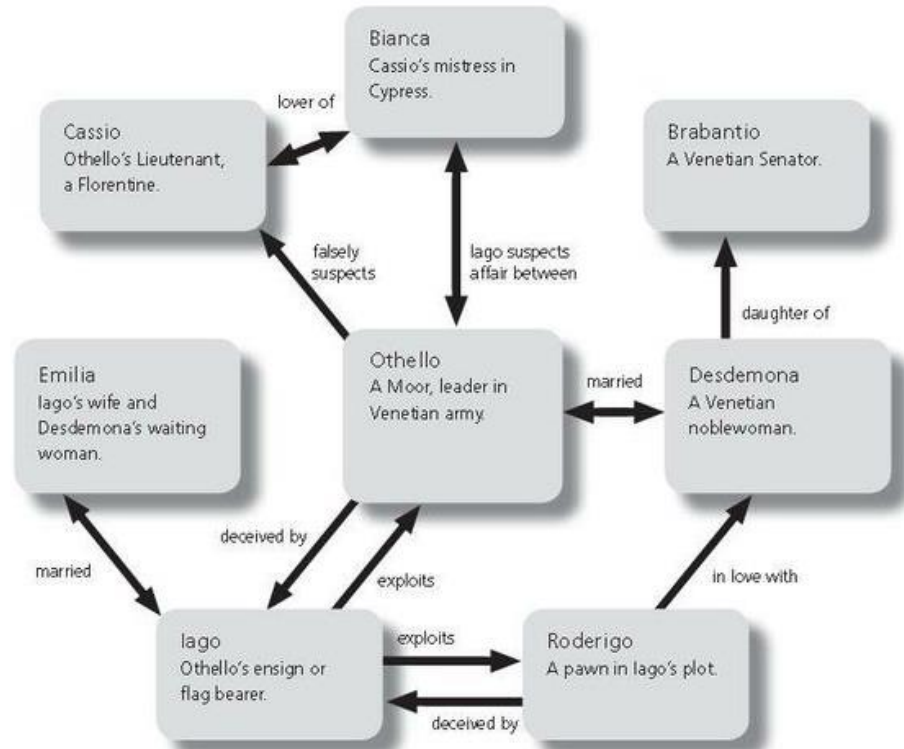
Structured Plot

Le relationships – map



Le relationships – map

Character map



Structured Plot

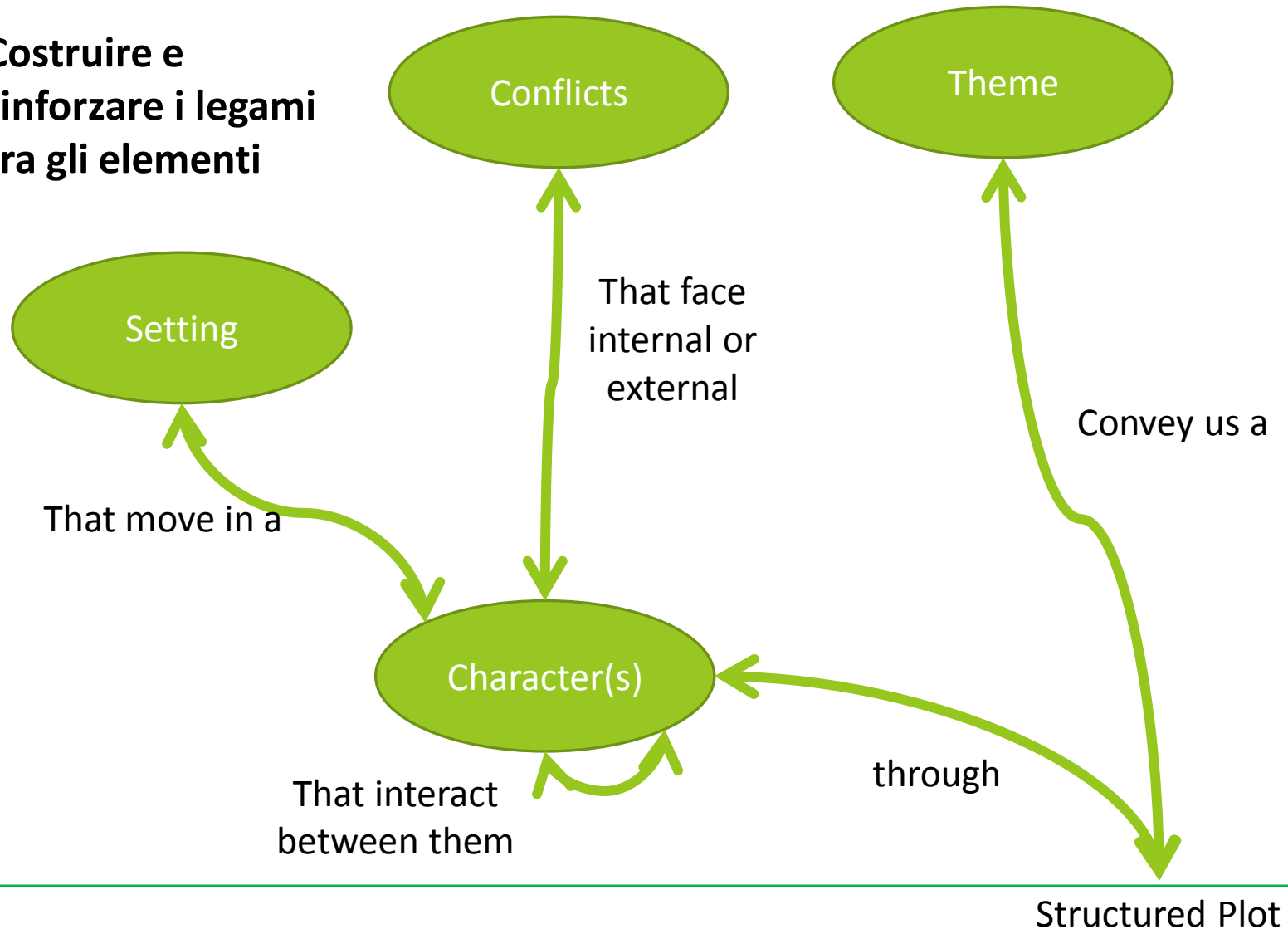
Le relationships – map

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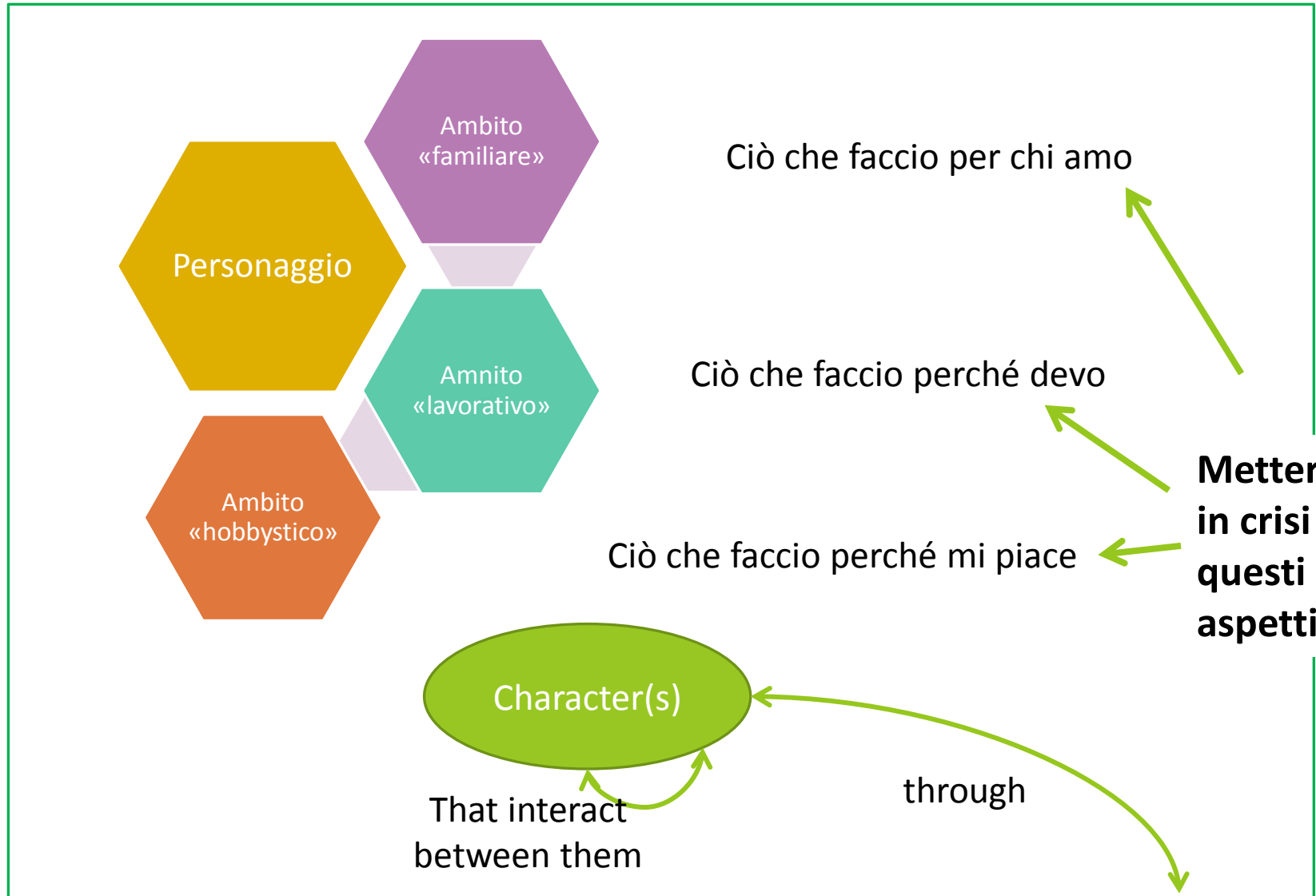
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Costruire e rinforzare i legami tra gli elementi



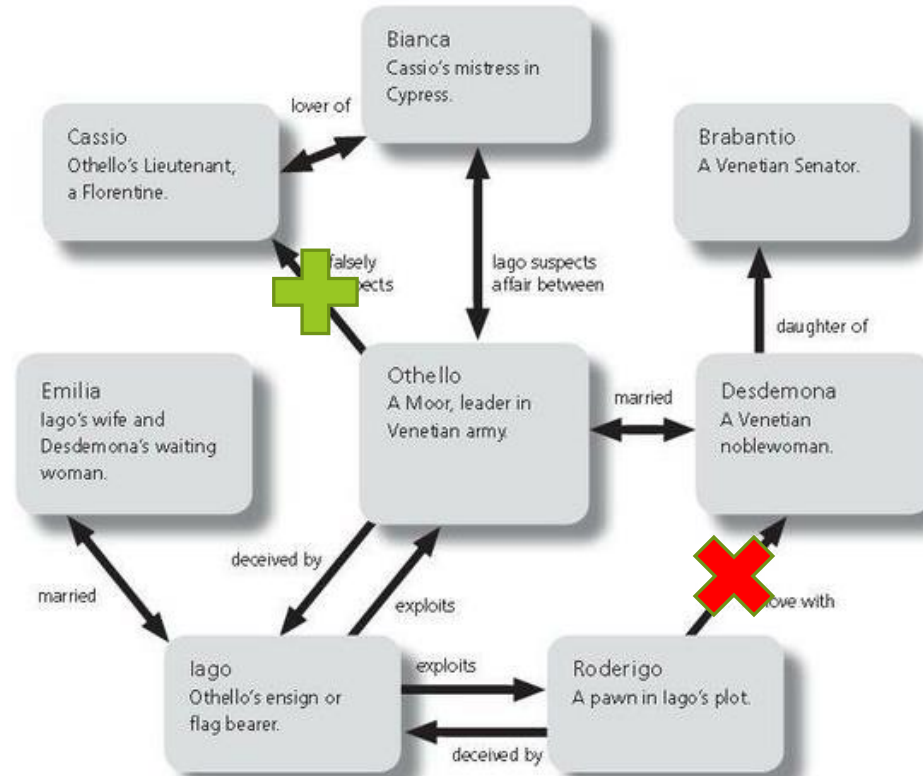
«Usare» i Personaggi



«Usare» i Personaggi

Character map

Costruire,
modificare e
distruggere
legami



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La «Premise» narrativista

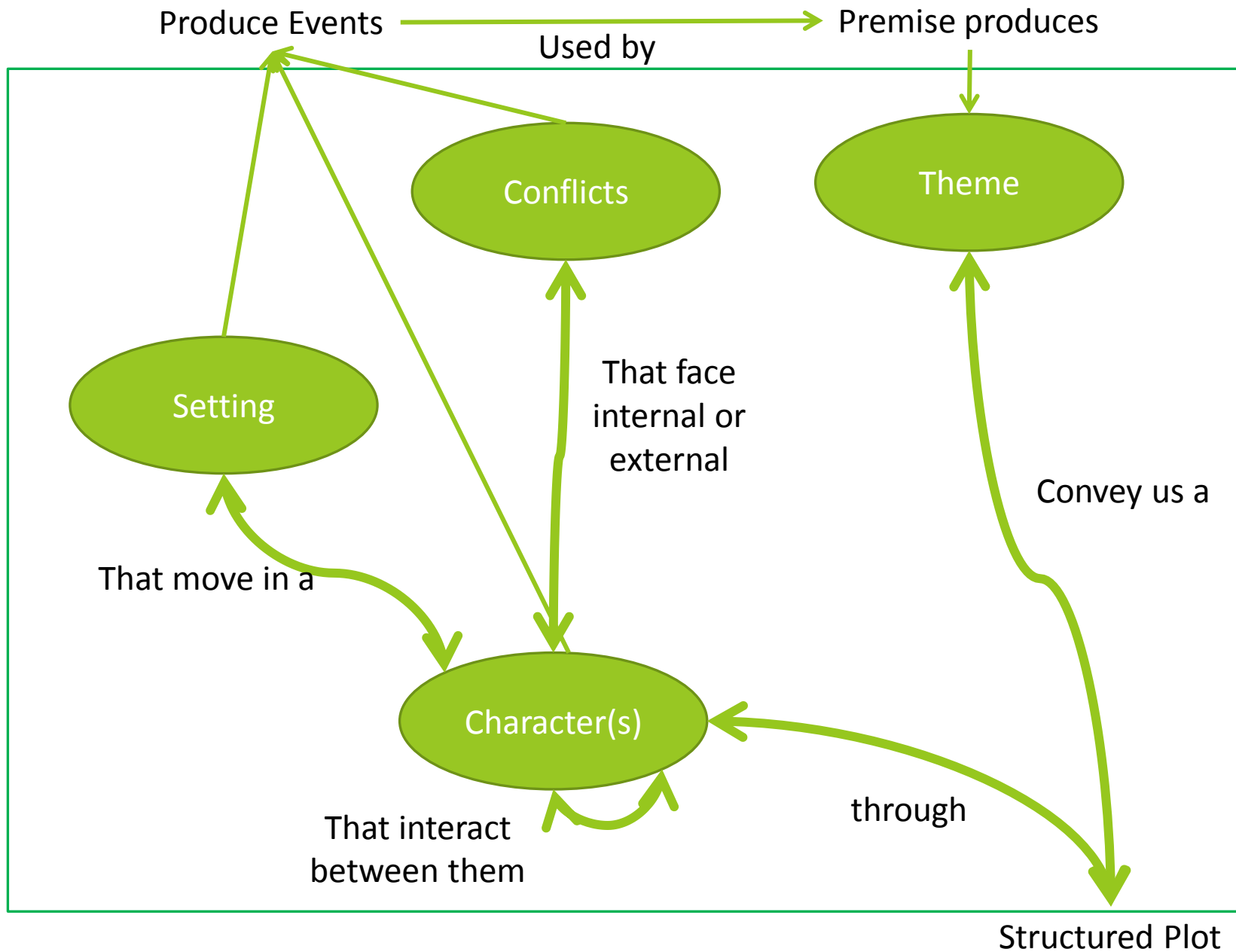
Narrativist Premises

-
... focus on producing Theme via events during play. Theme is defined as a value-judgment or point that may be inferred from the in-game events.

My thoughts on Narrativist Premise are derived from the book *The Art of Dramatic Writing* by Lajos Egri, specifically his emphasis on the questions that arise from human conundrums and passions of all sorts.

- Is the life of a friend worth the safety of a community?
- Does love and marriage override one's loyalty to a political cause?

And many, many more - the full range of literature, myth, and stories of all sorts.



La «Premise» narrativa