

“The 11:59” by Patricia C. McKissack
Model Selection: Fiction

Fiction is prose that tells a story about characters or events from the author’s imagination. The **characters** in a work of fiction are the people or animals who take part in the story’s action. Characters have **traits**, or characteristics, that can affect the story’s events. In “The 11:59,” for example, Lester is a spellbinding storyteller. Through his stories, the reader learns about events that will happen to Lester later on. A story’s series of events is its **plot**. A plot usually begins with a problem, or **conflict**, and ends with a conclusion, or **resolution**. The plot of “The 11:59” hinges on the conflict between Lester’s story about a mysterious train and the reality of his physical condition.

DIRECTIONS: *Read this passage from “The 11:59,” and answer the questions that follow.*

Suddenly [Lester] felt a sharp pain in his chest. At exactly the same moment he heard the mournful sound of a train whistle, which the wind seemed to carry from some faraway place. Ignoring his pain, Lester looked at the old station. He knew nothing was scheduled to come in or out till early morning. Nervously he lit a match to check the time. 11:59!

“No,” he said into the darkness. “I’m not ready. I’ve got plenty of living yet.”

Fear quickened his stop. Reaching his small apartment, he hurried up the steps. His heart pounded in his ear, and his left arm tingled. He had an idea, and there wasn’t a moment to waste. But his own words haunted him. *Ain’t no way to escape the final ride on the 11:59.*

“But I’m gon’ try!” Lester spent the rest of the night plotting his escape from fate.

1. What is Lester’s **conflict**? _____

2. What **character traits** is Lester shown to have in this passage? List two. _____

3. How do these **character traits** set the rest of the story in motion? _____

4. Tell what **resolution** ends Lester’s conflict—and the story itself. _____
