Different Kinds of Conflict in Literature

**Person versus Self**
When a story has a “person vs. self” conflict, the main character battles him or herself. He or she may lack confidence or ability, they may have to make a difficult choice, or they may have to address a personal problem. The key here is that the battle occurs within them, though it may involve and affect other characters too.

**Example**: Alexa caught her friend Jamie stealing from a classmate. Now Alexa must choose between keeping her friendship with Jamie and doing the right thing.

**Person versus Person**
In this type of conflict, the central character clashes with another individual. With that said, please note that the opposing character doesn’t always have to be a person, for it/they could be, for example, animals.

**Example**: Jimmy and Eric compete for the same position on the baseball team.

**Person versus Society**
With this type of conflict, the main character challenges a law, tradition, or social norm.

**Example**: Daquan makes an art project protesting school violence, and his art teacher loves the project and tries to feature it in the town art show, but the county commission rejects the piece. Now, Daquan and his art teacher are going to fight for the freedom of expression.
**Person versus Nature**

When a story has a person vs. nature conflict, **the main character fights to endure or overcome forces of nature**. He or she may struggle to survive harsh elements, navigate through a disaster, or meet his or her basic needs. Stories with this type of conflict often occur in the wilderness, but they can take place in urban settings too.

**Example:** Alex and Beth are out at sea on a small fishing boat when a large storm hits. After their boat flips over and sinks during the storm, the two girls struggle to stay afloat. Just when they think that things can’t get any worse, they see a shark fin circling them.

**Person versus Supernatural (Fantasy/Science Fiction)**

In stories with this type of conflict, **the main character resists forces that are not of this world**. He or she may battle monsters or strange creatures, challenge beings with magical powers, or encounter hostile aliens. The key to this conflict is that the opposing forces are not of this world and threaten the main character.

**Example:** Svi and Sven accept a dare to sleepover in the old abandoned house on the hill. They act brave at first, but when they start seeing ghosts, they run. Trapped in the haunted house, the two boys struggle to escape with their lives.

**Person versus Technology**

In a story with this type of conflict, **the main character resists technological forces**. He or she may battle robots or hostile computers, or they may simply struggle to accept or use the technology of a changing world.

**Example:** Emily is a saleswoman who never adapted to the new ways of doing business. Now, she has a new boss who forces her to send text messages and emails, but Emily struggles to use these technologies and fears that it will affect her job.