**Types of Conflict**

**Man vs. Self**

"Man vs. Self" is the only true version of internal conflict you will find in literature. In this mode, the conflict takes place within the mind of the main character, and often involves the character making a decision between right and wrong, or other mixed emotions. However, this struggle could also exist in the form of a character battling mental illness.

**Man vs. Man**

"Man vs. Man" is probably the most common form of external conflict, and is also known as interpersonal conflict. This mode lies at the heart of all dramatic arts and places the struggle directly between the protagonist and the antagonist -- otherwise known as the good guy and the bad guy. In a man vs. man conflict, the protagonist wants something, and the antagonist obstructs the protagonist from getting what he wants.

**Man vs. Society**

This mode of external conflict occurs when the protagonist is placed at odds with a government or cultural tradition. This type of conflict applies to societal norms as well. For example, if a child gets in trouble with his parents for sneaking out of the house at night, he is in conflict with the societal tradition that children are expected to obey their parents.

**Man vs. Nature**

"Man vs. Nature" pits the main character against the forces of nature -- in the form of a natural disaster or a similarly dangerous situation -- and is often associated with literary naturalism, which hinges on the idea that nature is indifferent to humanity. Stephen Crane's short story, "The Open Boat," is a prime example, and demonstrates that the sea can cause shipwrecks easily and without regard for humanity.

**Man vs. Machine**

"Man vs. Machine" can mean that a person is in direct combat with robots, in the context of science fiction, or it could mean simply that technology stands in the way of the protagonist getting what she wa nts. In the science-fiction version, the same attributes of a man vs. man conflict apply. However, if a person struggles to keep a job that a new machine can do better, the physical struggle is against the machine, but the emotional struggle is against the society that breeds technology.

**Man vs. Fate/Supernatural**

"Man vs. Fate" exists in any story in which the protagonist is struggling against a god or gods. It is sometimes considered part of "Man vs. Self" when focused on an internal, moral struggle, but should be considered separate in the context of epics -- such as the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," in which the gods are present antagonists. "Man vs. the Supernatural" falls into a similar standard: If the protagonist is the only one witnessing supernatural acts, it could be considered "Man vs. Self." However, if it's certain that these supernatural powers are real, then the mode of conflict stands on its own.