

(Matheson is known for writing some *Twilight Zone* episodes and sci-fi novels including *I Am Legend*)

### Characterization in “Duel”

1. How does Matheson get the reader to relate on some level with Mann?  
Page 1 – references to trailer parks and pet cemeteries. Thinking about wife and kids.  
Mann so nervous in Chuck’s Café that he pours beer on himself  
Thinking about average day appointments
2. Bernhardt says that there’s 5 things we must know about our protagonist. Check the following boxes through which we learn about Mann.

a. Background	<b>X</b>	d. Occupation	<b>X</b>
b. Personality	<b>X</b>	e. His secret	<b>?</b>
c. Appearance	<b>X</b>		
3. What is the main thing that Mann wants?  
He **WANTS** to get to his hotel room and have a drink. He **NEEDS** to survive his encounter with Keller.
4. Bernhardt says there are only 4 ways in which you may bring your character to life. Check which ones the author uses.

a. Action	<b>X</b>	c. Speech	<b>X</b>
b. Appearance	<b>X</b>	d. Thought	<b>X</b>
5. What is extraordinary about Mann (or, what is his superpower?)?  
His optimism. His patience. His problem-solving abilities.
6. What’s one way in which Mann and the truck driver are exact opposites?  
Page 2--Trucker’s rig is a piece of crap, opposite of Mann’s dress clothes and car. Truck stinks.  
Page 3—large veins in trucker’s hand. Mann is an Everyman.  
Throughout—Mann fights fair. Keller doesn’t.

### Plotting in “Duel”

1. What’s one way in which the author takes Mann out of his comfort zone?  
Page 7—he’s speeding and he doesn’t like that  
He will have to cancel his appointments for the day  
In Chuck’s Café, he has to figure out who is the truck driver
2. AI says, “An inciting incident is the pivotal event in a story that disrupts the main character's life, introduces the central conflict, and sets the plot in motion. It's the catalyst that pushes the protagonist from their normal, stable state into the action of the story.”  
Where is the inciting incident in this story?  
Pages 4-6—Mann tries to pass the trucker, is stopped by the trucker, then finally passes him (whew!)

3. How does the author make Mann's already slim chances slimmer?  
Road construction, car falling apart, idiot light flashing, steam pouring from the engine (he has to turn on his windshield wipers), can't make it to the top of the hill, motor stalls, oil, smoke ... (end of Act 2). For you *Save the Cat!* fans, this is the "Bad Guys Closing In" part of the story.
4. Where's a moment in the story where the author integrates backstory into the action?  
Page 6—Mann tells us about his wife Ruth and their relationship  
Page 21—He should have replaced the %\$#@\*& car hoses! (been there, said that)
5. Bernhardt says "Let the conflict get increasingly worse, right up to the turning point that links act 2 to act 3. This turning point is often called 'The Crisis' or 'The Dark Moment.' (*Save The Cat!* calls it 'All is Lost.')
- Don't relieve the tension until the climax is over."
- Where is this story's turning point?  
Page 22--"Mann felt himself crushed in a vise of panic. He stared ahead with haunted eyes. Then he saw it, several hundred yards ahead: an escape route for trucks with burned-out brakes. There was no alternative now. Either he took the turnout or his car would be rammed from behind." Yet another crucible.
6. When does Mann experience an inner conflict?  
Page 7—Mann is shocked that he's doing 60 mph  
Pages 8-9 Mann's body freaking out in the bathroom of Chuck's Café  
Page 10—Mann stewing about the trucker in Chuck's Café  
Page 14-16—Mann experiencing a crucible. Mirrors the inciting incident  
Page 16—Mann changing. Now he wants to go 80  
Page 21—"Please, God, help me!" screamed his mind."  
Note that most of the conflict in this story happens in his mind
7. When does Mann experience a personal conflict?  
Page 6—wife would do the opposite of how he's driving  
Page 9—which one of these men in Chuck's Café is the truck driver?  
Page 16-17—Mann's "relationship" with Keller
8. When does Mann experience an external conflict?  
Page 8—trucker is about to run him over  
Page 20—Mann's car pooping out on him  
The decision to take the runaway truck ramp is all three conflicts
9. Which one of the following plots does the author use in "Duel"? Check the box and then, below, tell why you think so.
- |                      |                          |                 |                                     |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Education plot       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Testing plot    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Coming-of-Age plot   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Redemption plot | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Disillusionment plot | <input type="checkbox"/> | Corruption plot | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

In 1971, the same year this story was published, a young filmmaker named Steven Spielberg worked with Richard Matheson to create the television movie screenplay for Spielberg's first feature film. Check out the Wikipedia backstory of [Spielberg's \*Duel\*](#). The movie is not on Netflix, but Amazon Video still has it.

Jerry Brown, whoever he is, put a .pdf of some of Richard Matheson's stories on the web. Free book! Check out [Duel](#). The book does not include Matheson's famous story, "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet." Click [here](#) for that. Why is the story so famous? Because of the [Twilight Zone episode](#) based on it. Starring a young William Shatner (remember Star Trek II The Wrath of Khan?). If you've read this far, you must watch the [Saturday Night Live parody](#) of the Twilight Zone episode.