

# Elements of a Narrative

*Literature, Reading, Reacting, Writing*. 4th Ed (2000) Eds. Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers. (40-41)

## 1. **Plot:**

- How do the events in the narrative relate to one another?
- How do they relate to the narrative as a whole?
- What conflicts occur in the narrative?
- How are these conflicts developed or resolved?
- Does the narrative include any noteworthy plot devices, such as flashbacks or foreshadowing.

## 2. **Characters:**

- What are their most striking traits?
- How do these individuals interact with one another?
- What motivates them?
- Are the characters fully developed, or are they stereotypes whose sole purpose is to express a single trait (good, evil, generosity) or to move the plot along?

## 3. **Setting:**

- At what time period and in what geographic location does the action of the narrative occur?
- How does the setting affect the characters of the narrative?
- How does it determine the relationships among the characters?
- How does the setting affect the plot?
- Does the setting create a mood for the narrative?
- In what way does the setting reinforce the central ideas that the narrative examines?

## 4. **Point of View:**

- What person or persons are telling the narrative?
- Is the narrative told in the first person (I or we) or in the third person (he, she, or they )?
- Does the narrator see from various perspectives, or is the narrative restricted to the perspective of one person--a major character, a minor character, or just an observer?
- How much does the narrator know about the events in the narrative?
- Does the narrator present an accurate or inaccurate picture of events?
- Does the narrator understand the full significance of the narrative he or she is telling?

## 5. **Style, Tone, and Language:**

- Does the writer make any unusual use of diction or syntax?
- Does the writer use imaginative figures of speech? Patterns of imagery?
- What styles or levels of speech are associated with particular characters?
- What words or phrases are repeated throughout the work?

- Is the narrative's style plain or elaborate?
- Does the narrator's tone reveal his or her attitude toward characters or events?
- Are there any discrepancies between the narrator's attitude and the attitude of the author?
- Is the tone of the narrative playful, humorous, ironic, satirical, serious, somber, solemn, bitter, condescending, formal, informal -- or does the tone suggest some other attitude?

6. **Symbolism and Allegory:**

- Does the author use any objects or ideas symbolically?
- What characters or objects in the narrative are part of an allegorical framework?
- How does an object establish its symbolic or allegorical significance in the narrative?
- Does the same object have different meanings at different places in the narrative?
- Are the symbols or allegorical figures conventional or unusual?
- At what points in the narrative do symbols or allegorical figures appear?

7. **Themes:**

- What is the central theme?
- How is the idea or concept expressed in the work?
- What elements of the narrative develop the central theme?
- How do character, plot, setting, point of view, and symbols reinforce the central theme?
- How does the title of the narrative contribute to readers' understanding of the central theme?
- What other themes are explored?