

# The Narrative Paragraph

Name:

Date:

Another different type of writing is called "narrative writing". It is different from descriptive writing. **Narration** tells a story. It has these elements:

**A Plot with a Conflict/Climax**

**A Narrator**

**A Setting**

**Characters**

These elements will be examined below in more detail.

## Plot and Conflict:

Narratives relate a series of events that happened (in the **past**, as a memory), are happening (in the **present**), or will happen (in the **future**). As with descriptive writing, you should always use vivid language, but instead of focussing on a special moment in time as you would when writing a descriptive paragraph, a narrative has **movement and direction**. There is usually a conflict of some kind. Some common types of conflict include:

- **conflict between one person and another person or between groups**
- **conflict between a person and nature**
- **conflict between an individual and the society in which she or he lives**

As a narrative writer, you can **choose** the events that you want to tell to your **audience**, and you also have the power to decide what **order** in which to tell these events. **Selection and order** are two powerful writer's tools.

Narratives also have special types or **organization and structure**.

1. You can decide to tell your story in **chronological order**. This means that you tell the story "in time" according to the order the events happened one after the other. Some people call this a "**linear narrative**" because it seems to travel in a straight line.

2. A story can also be told using a "**flashback**" technique. In this type of structure, events are interrupted by a memory of something that happened in the past or by an event that will happen in the future. Sometimes the story or paragraph starts right in the middle of an exciting event (a technique called "**in medias res**", which is Latin) then backtracks to explain how the story got to that point. These "non-linear narratives" are difficult to build but are very interesting to read. The movie "Twelve Monkeys" is constructed this way.

3. A third way that a narrative can be constructed is by learning about a series of events or a major happening from the **points of view** of several characters. The story "Voices in the Park" is written this way. By looking at the **perspectives** of different people about a common event, readers in the audience can learn about how mysterious a simple thing can be when it is viewed by several different people at the same time.

## **Narrators:**

There will always be a "voice" telling the story to a reader in a narrative. Sometimes this voice has a very clear personality or even a name. At other times it is more difficult to detect who the "person" that is telling the story really is. There are types of narrators that include:

△ **First Person:** The narrator says "I" when telling the story, as in "I want you to know that everything I tell you is true." Anywhere But Here is written in this voice. In stories like this the narrator is a part of the events you are reading about. This type of perspective only gives us inside thoughts and views from one character. If the character is asleep during an important event, the reader only finds out about when she wakes up and someone tells her about it.

△ **Third Person Omniscient:** Omniscient means "all seeing". The narrator is not part of the story but describes the events that happen to all the characters, as well as their thoughts. The narrator talks about the characters as "he" and "she" instead of "I". The Westing Game is a story like this, even though some details are kept hidden for the sake of the mystery.

△ **Third Person Limited Omniscient:** A Limited Omniscient narrator can see all, but chooses to focus on a few things or people. In this type of perspective, the narrator is also not part of the story and can describe many events. However the story is mostly about one character's experience. The Curses Of Third Uncle is like this. The Narrator uses the "he" and "she" pronouns, but mostly focusses on Lilian's experiences.

## **Setting:**

Narratives are set in specific time and place. These setting details are usually identified at the beginning of the story in the exposition. Sometimes the setting is kept vague or poorly defined for a reason. Sometimes it is very specific with dates and real city names. The setting, along with characters, are a writer's best opportunity to use rich descriptive language in her/his writing.

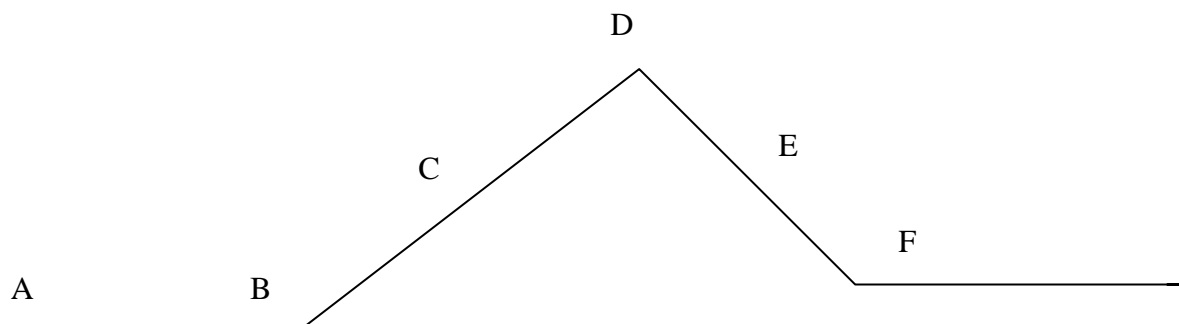
## **Characters:**

Characters are an important part of the story. A good plot can be spoiled by characters that are dull and unrealistic. A story usually features a main character or protagonist that the story follows. Sometimes there is a character that goes against the protagonist. This character is called an antagonist and often is the "bad guy", but not always. In The Curses of Third Uncle, Lilian is the protagonist and Third Uncle is a villainous antagonist.

Characters are most interesting when they are three dimensional and have many sides of their personalities shown. These characters have strengths and weaknesses. They seem alive and real. They are duller when they are one dimensional stereotypes like "the hero", "the villain", "the best friend", "the know-it-all" or "the nerd". Movies specialize in these types of characters. You should try to create at least one well-rounded character in your stories, no matter how short the story.

(Assignments: Mask Narrative / Scar Story / Journeys / My World In Motion)

## The Plot Graph - A Diagram Model



Narratives also have special names for each part, some of which are familiar. The letters match the ones on the graph diagram above.

Introduction	(A):	also called the <u>exposition</u> , this part of the story introduces the setting, characters and opening situation.
Inciting Action	(B):	also called the <u>crisis</u> , this single, sudden or special event starts the story going because something changes.
Rising Action	(C):	the interest level increases usually due to problems, setbacks or complications which are also called <u>crises</u> (plural of crisis)
Climax	(D):	the point of highest interest. Everything else that happens is affected by the moment or event in the climax. In Hollywood movies the climax usually comes in the last five minutes of the film.
Falling Action	(E):	events unravel or unfold because of something that happened in the climax. Think of dominoes that are sent tumbling in a row.
Denouement	(F):	the final resolution of the plot in which some or all of the loose ends of the plot are tied up.

Define the following terms using a dictionary. Write the word and the responses in your Writing notebook.

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|----------------------|----------------|
| a) author            | b) audience    |
| c) character         | d) protagonist |
| e) antagonist        | f) setting     |
| g) plot              | h) crisis      |
| i) " in medias res " | j) flashback   |

# Narrative Story Planning Form

*A narrative needs characters, a developed setting and a clear problem to be interesting to an audience. Decide what type of story you are writing (mystery, fantasy, humourous narrative, adventure).*

**At the beginning of my story:**

A working title:	
WHERE/WHEN (the setting)	WHO (the main characters)

The problem or conflict:

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**In the middle of my story:**

1 <sup>st</sup> major event	2 <sup>nd</sup> major event	3 <sup>rd</sup> major event	4 <sup>th</sup> major event

**At the end of my story :**

The solution:

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