



# The Brainfuse Writing Lab Essential Narrative Guide

## A Quick Reference for Narrative Elements

### General Tips for Successful Narrative Writing:

1. Choose the right topic for the narrative's length.
2. Make sure the narrative unfolds logically and naturally.
3. Use transition words and phrases to help sequence events.
4. Be sure that your voice, mood, and tone align with your story's purpose.
5. Use clear, precise language and varied sentence beginnings, lengths, and patterns to make the writing flow smoothly.

The elements of narrative writing include:

- Theme
- Plot
- Characterization
- Setting

Oftentimes, *sound devices* and *imagery* are stylistic choices used in narrative writing.

### THEME

**Theme** is the unifying idea or message in a piece of writing. The theme is not the topic of the story. Instead, it is how the writer approaches the topic. Oftentimes, the theme is the conflict or obstacle the narrator and characters are trying to overcome throughout the story. Evidence of theme is found in all elements of a story, including characters, setting, and plot. A story can have more than one theme.

There are countless themes found in literature, but some of the most common themes are:

-Love and Friendship  
-Courage

-Loss  
-Coming of Age

-Importance of Family  
-Good versus Evil



## PLOT

**Plot** is the main story and sequence of events in a literary or dramatic work (such as a play, novel, or short story). A plot establishes connections and relationships between characters and suggests motives behind certain actions.

**Plot structure** is the way experiences within a story are organized, ensuring that all elements of the plot work together to create a complete and coherent beginning, middle and end. The four main plot structure types are:

**Dramatic or Progressive Plot Structure:** Presents the story chronologically from beginning to end; straight and forward timeline.

*Examples: The Lion King, Twelve Angry Men, George Orwell's Animal Farm*

**Episodic Plot Structure:** Ties together a series of events with a common theme or character(s). May not necessarily be in chronological form.

*Examples: Goosebumps series, TV series "Friends," Lord of the Rings trilogy*

**Parallel Plot Structure:** Connects two or more plots with a common character and theme.

*Examples: Wuthering Heights, Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet*

**Flashback Plot Structure:** Starts at a pivotal moment in the story, then flashes back in time to show how that pivotal moment came to be. Flashbacks can occur multiple times throughout and at different points in a story.

*Example: Beloved, Mary Shelly's Frankenstein, Forrest Gump*



## CHARACTERIZATION

**Characterization** is the representation of the traits, motives, and psychology by which a character becomes fully realized. In a work of literature, a character is introduced to the reader by way of an initial description. Characterization becomes more robust through internal and external dialogue, as readers get insight into a character's thought process and how they approach the conflict of the story. A helpful hint for remembering the five methods of characterization is the mnemonic **PAIRS**:

**P**hysical description

**A**ction/attitude/behavior

**I**nnner thoughts

**R**eactions

**S**peech

*Example:*

Rosie's nurturing nature was shown through her concern for the little bird:

*"Oh no!" Rosie thought to herself. "I must help this poor little thing!" She gently held the injured animal in her arms as if it were made of thin glass.*

## SETTING

**Setting** is the place and time in which the events of a story occur, and the conditions of the surrounding environment. Helpful questions for creating the setting include:

1. What might you experience if you were there?
2. What would you see?
3. What would you hear?
4. What would you feel?
5. What would you smell or taste?

*Example:*

In Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Camelot is introduced with:

*"It was a soft, reposeful summer landscape, as lovely as a dream, and as lonesome as Sunday. The air was full of the smell of flowers, and the buzzing of insects, and the twittering of birds, and there were no people, no wagons, there was no stir of life, nothing going on."*



## SOUND DEVICES

**Sound Devices** are stylistic techniques of literature and poetry that convey meaning through sound. There are numerous sound devices, but a few common examples include:

**Alliteration** uses the same letter in a sequence of words in a sentence. Edgar Allen Poe uses alliteration in *Tell-Tale Heart* to build suspense and create an eerie tone.

*Example: **Hearken!** and observe **how healthily, how** calmly, I can tell you the **whole** story. Meanwhile, the **hellish** tattoo of the **heart** increased. It is the beating of **his hideous heart!***

**Onomatopoeia** recreates the phonetic sounds of certain actions.

*Example: The squawking of crows loudly filled the air. **Caaaw! Caaw!***

**Consonance** is the repetition of similar sounding consonants in a sequence of words.

*Example: The **sailors sailed** across the **sea**.*

**Repetition** is when a selection of words or phrases are repeated throughout a text.

*Example: **She did not like the** hat, **she did not like the** dress and **she** certainly **did not like the** necklace.*

**Rhyme** is the repeated pattern of similar sounding words and syllables, usually placed at the ends of poems.

*Example: The **cat sat** in the **hat**.*

## IMAGERY

**Imagery** is the description which gives sensory details about characters, places, or experiences. Imagery appeals to our senses of smell, sight, taste, touch, or hearing.

*Example: In L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Oz is introduced with:*

*"There were many people--men, women, and children--walking about, and these were all dressed in green clothes and had greenish skins. They looked at Dorothy and her strangely assorted company with wondering eyes, and the children all ran away and hid behind their mothers when they saw the Lion; but no one spoke to them. Many shops stood in the street, and Dorothy saw that everything in them was green. Green candy and green popcorn were offered for sale, as well as green shoes, green hats, and green clothes of all sorts."*