

Elements in Narrative Texts

Scene

Each scene in a story supplies one main idea. This helps the reader understand how the narrative goes together in its own inner logic and how principles might be derived from the text. Because this is the case, it is important to mark when a narrative makes a change in time or place.

New scene=New paragraph=new idea

Each scene is made up of two or more characters. A group can be considered a character, and even God, Himself. For Biblical narratives, God is often present in the scene. One author, Sidney Greidanus, called this the “pervasive presence of God.” So, instead of marking off paragraph breaks, one would mark off scene breaks.

Examples of key words that help you know there is a new scene are, “Then”, “The next Day”, “After”, “The next morning” etc.

Plot

The plot is what gives movement to the story. Every story has a beginning, middle and end with a climax to the story. Most stories in the Bible begin with a peaceful surrounding, then build to present a problem until the climax of the story, which ends with a resolution to the problem. The end comes full circle to rest again.

Point of View

The point of view is the perspective from which the story is told by the original writer. The narrator is conveying his prerogative about the story and occasionally allows one of the characters in a scene to make a point in his overall case. It is the point of view that gives coherence to all the scenes in the story. “The point of view supplies the lens through which the reader relates all the acts of each scene.” (Kaiser)

Characterization

Movement in the narrative comes from what a character says, thinks and does. This may be revealed by himself/herself or by other characters in the story. For this reason it is important for the reader to observe a character's actions and dialogues. Sometimes characters are often set against each other so that the reader may observe by way of contrast. Some characters develop and change in a story while others do not. The ones that show a great amount of character growth are considered *dynamic* while a person that shows no change is considered *static*.

Since God is an ever-present character in every story, the reader must pay attention to His role in the story.

Setting

Where a story takes place can add significance to that scene. Especially in the Bible, places have historicity and meaning depending on what happened there beforehand.

Dialogue

Dialogue plays such a central part in a narrative that "one can often find in the speech of one of the leading persons in the narrative the point of view of the whole passage."

Scene-Relationship

How are scenes related to one another? When the reader answers this question, he/she will unlock the purpose to the narrative.

Key Wording

Often a narrative will use similar word patterns, which is helpful to observe. Key words may help to impress upon the reader thematic unity of the text or solidify the central motif. Prominence may be given to words because of their frequent usage or their strategic employment.

Resources: *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament* by Walt C. Kaiser Jr.