

# What is a Narrative Essay?

- ▶ A narrative is a story
- ▶ A narrative essay is a story that has a specific point
  - A narrative essay strives to teach a lesson or
  - A narrative essay strives to make a specific point
  - A narrative essay is **not** a diary entry – the story is linked to the purpose of the essay

Source: Catherine Wishart Literacy Coach  
Adjunct Instructor Burlington County College

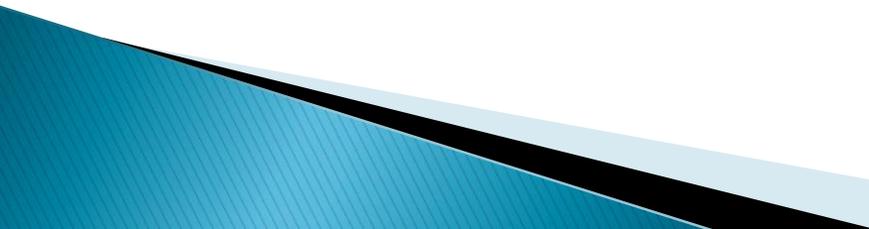
# What Does the Narrative Essay Need?

- ▶ Since this is a story, the narrative essay needs everything a story needs (these are known as the story elements):
  - Has a plot
  - Has characters
  - Has a problem
  - Has a climax
  - Often uses dialogue

# LITERATURE TERMS

- ▶ PLOT– The sequence of events in a story
  - ▶ CHARACTER – A person, animal, object, natural or supernatural force that plays a role in a story
  - ▶ SETTING– The time and place of a story
- 

- ▶ **INTERNAL CONFLICTS** – The struggle happens in the character’s mind.
  - ▶ **EXTERNAL CONFLICTS**– The struggle happens between the character and an “outside” force.
- 

- ▶ CONFLICT– (1) A struggle between opposing forces. (2) Causes the action that moves the plot
  - ▶ There are five basic conflicts in narrative literature
  - ▶ Man vs. Man –External
  - ▶ Man vs. Society – External
  - ▶ Man vs. Nature –External
  - ▶ Man vs. Supernatural –Internal or External
  - ▶ Man vs. Himself –Internal
- 

# CHARACTERIZATION

- ▶ The act of creating and developing a character
- ▶ The method by which an author “reveals” a character

There are two basic methods of characterization

**DIRECT**– The narrator tells us about the character

**INDIRECT**– We learn about character through action and dialogue.

# Planning the Narrative Essay

- ▶ Write a thesis statement, just as with any other essay
  - ▶ Brainstorm for a personal story or observation that illustrates or proves the thesis statement
  - ▶ Outline or web the important parts of the story to be told
  - ▶ Write an introductory paragraph that includes the thesis statement, and then write the story
  - ▶ Because this is a story, use as many paragraphs as necessary to tell the story
  - ▶ Write the conclusion that reflects on the thesis statement
- 

# Start With a Thesis Statement

- ▶ The thesis will depend upon the story to be proven.
- ▶ The thesis can be something general in the case of a narrative essay. For example, you may write, “Oftentimes people do not follow simple directions. However, these campers learned just how important following directions can be.”

# What Would You Expect From This Thesis?

- ▶ As the reader, you will expect to learn why following directions is important.
  - ▶ As the reader, you will expect to read a story about camping.
  - ▶ As the reader, you will expect there to be a twist in the action.
- 

# Outline the Parts of the Story and Write Out the Story

## **An Informal Outline of the Story:**

- ▶ Two campers go camping and ignore rules
  - ▶ They leave out food
  - ▶ An animal finds the food
  - ▶ One of the campers tries to scare off the animal
  - ▶ Campers learn to follow the rules
- 

# Let's Read the Essay – The Introduction

It was a wonderful week to camp in the great outdoors, even if some of their friends thought it was a strange way to honeymoon. Trudy and Jeff were looking forward to their week at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. Little did they know what a learning experience this trip would be. Oftentimes people do not follow simple directions. However, these campers learned just how important following directions can be.

# Setting the Scene of the Story

After a scenic drive through the glorious mountains, Trudy and Jeff arrived at the camping area. A ranger at the booth handed them a map and asked, “Have you ever camped with us before?”

“A better question would be if we ever camped before,” Jerry answered wryly.

“You’ll be fine. Just remember, this isn’t a hotel. We do have bears and other animals in the area, so lock your food up in the car,” said the ranger as he handed them a lists of Do’s and Don’ts.

# Developing the Plot

Exhausted from their first attempt at setting up a campsite, Trudy and Jeff crawled inside the tent that evening. They crashed right to sleep. The ranger's list was left laying on the tent floor.

# Continuing the Action – Vivid Word Choices

Just before sunrise, Jerry was awakened by the sounds of metal ripping. He quietly slipped out of the tent. A fully grown black bear was sitting on their picnic table busily prying the lid off the cooler they neglected to store in the car the night before. Finding the pound of bacon he prized, the bear leaned back on his hind haunches and began to devour the bacon. Jerry started screaming at the bear, “Get out of here! What do you think you’re doing?”

# Reaching the Climax

By this point, most of the other campers had exited their own tents and watched the scene unfold. The bear was not amused by Jerry's threatening, especially with the remainder of the bacon at stake. The black bear stood on top of the picnic table to his full height. While the bear actually stood only four feet tall, the extra height of the table caused him to loom over Jerry's head. The bear suddenly fell forward, striking the table with his full weight and snarled. The table moaned in response.

# The Climax Continues

Much more quickly than anyone anticipated, the bear reached out his huge, menacing paw towards Jerry. Fear leapt into Jerry's eyes as he turned and ran back into his tent. Zip! closed the zipper.

Now, one can only imagine how much time passed before Jerry and Trudy realized the futility of his preventive actions. How was a flimsy flap of canvas going to stop a full-sized, angry bear?

# Finding the Solution

Fortunately, the bear was much more interested in the left-over bacon than in Jerry and Trudy. The bear cautiously turned around, climbed back on top of the table, and continued to eat his early breakfast. He carefully examined the remaining contents of the cooler. Finding nothing else as delectable as the bacon, the bear jumped off the picnic table, grunted, licked his paws and mouth, and then lumbered off into the deeper woods that surrounded the campground.

# The Concluding Paragraph

The audience that had gathered applauded spontaneously, then slowly returned to their own campsites, shaking their heads in disbelief. Meanwhile, inside the thin canvas tent, Trudy and Jeff had lit their lantern and were carefully studying the items listed on the Do's and Don'ts list. The rest of their trip was blissfully peaceful as they made sure to follow all the rules at the campsite.