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Every story has the same basic structure, but this foundation doesnt need to be limiting. Find out the basics of storytelling and use these tools to craft your own absorbing tales.In this article well look at: The beginningThe first plot-pointSome first plot-points in moviesSome first plot-points in novelsSome plot-points are not so obviousConflictThe middleThe second plot-pointThe endExceptions to the basic story structureThe beginning of a story (sometimes called the exposition or prologue) is an introduction that gives us the information we need to fully understand and enjoy a tale. The writer doesnt have to reveal everything in the beginning, just enough to get us started. In most cases the beginning will establish the location of the story and give us information about the principle characters, especially the protagonist. In the case of genre fiction the beginning also establishes the tone of the story. If your tale is a gruesome horror story, its an idea to introduce something gruesomely horrific early on, just so the reader knows what they have in store for them. At the same time avoid information dumps, some story elements are best left to emerge naturally as the plot progresses. Readers often dont mind being left in the dark at the start of a tale, just dont abandon them there.In relation to story openings, Kurt Vonnegut used to say start as close to the end as possible. Which could be shortened to cut out the waffle. Give your audience the information they need to understand whats happening (and why they should care) then get to the inciting incident that kicks off your tale (see below) as quickly as you can.The first plot-point almost always consists of an inciting incident that causes a problem something goes wrong that has to be put right. Its the putting right bit that makes up the main part of the story. Take the movie Star Wars. Near the start of the story Luke Skywalker comes across CP30 and R2D2 and learns of Darth Vaders capture of Princess Leia. In a recorded message the Princess asks the help of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke goes to find him. Obi-Wan tells Luke about The Force and the Jedi Knights and asks Luke to join the battle against Darth Vader. Luke refuses but gives Obi-Wan a lift to the spaceport. On the way they discover that Imperial Stormtroopers have killed Lukes Aunt and Uncle and destroyed their farm. Luke then decides to follow Obi-Wan and learn how to become a Jedi. Reading the above we can see that there are a number of contenders for the inciting incident in Star Wars, for example, Lukes discovery of CP3O and R2D2, the playing of Leias message, Obi-Wans revelation about Lukes father etc. However, the strongest contender is an incident that we dont actually witness at all the murder of Lukes family. Prior to discovering this massacre Luke was going to act as Obi-Wans Uber lift to the spaceport before returning home to resume his normal life, but after the massacre his world is turned inside out and he makes the decision to go to the stars and join the Rebellion. All the information we learned before Lukes change of heart is the beginning of the story, the prologue that tells us about: The main characters the prologue gives us information about their personalities, background and relationships Their situation the prologue shows us where they are and what theyre doing. Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Roy, a telephone engineer, is called out on a job and sees a flying saucer. Although the flying saucer doesnt present Roy with an immediate problem (it doesnt try to zap him or kidnap him) it does change his life. Before Roy saw the flying saucer his life was ordinary; after he sees it, everything is different. West Side Story. Maria, whose friends and family belong to a gang called the Sharks, goes to a dance organised by a local social worker. At the dance, Maria sets eyes on Tony (a member of a rival gang called the Jets). The pair immediately fall in love and, despite their many differences, they start to plan a future together. The Odessa File. Peter, a journalist, reads the diary of a concentration camp victim and decides to track down the SS Commandant who ran the camp. When Peter begins reading the diary hes a journalist looking for a story; by the time hes finished, hes a man with a mission. You can find a contender for the first plot-point in almost any story, whether its presented as a movie, play or novel. However, most novels arent as fast-paced as movies and television shows and the problems faced by their characters usually unfold at a gentler pace.Pride and Prejudice. Mister Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet meet at a dance and form unflattering opinions about each other. Mister Darcy and Elizabeth arent faced with any immediate problems to solve, but we have a shrewd idea theyre meant for each other. We keep reading because we want to see how things work out. The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe. A group of children discover that an old wardrobe is a doorway to another world. There is an immediate problem here because the children have to discover a way to get home. They also have another problem in that a witch has kidnapped one of their friends. We keep reading because we want to see how these problems are resolved and, like the children, we want to learn more about this strange world of talking animals. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. Captain Nemos submarine, the Nautilus, sinks a ship but rescues some of the survivors who are presented with the problem of escaping from his clutches. They also discover that Nemo wants to rule the oceans and have to figure out how to stop him. In the meantime we find out more about Captain Nemos incredible submarine and the mysteries of his underwater realm.Sometimes identifying the first plot-point can be difficult. Take Titanic a love-story involving Rose, a wealthy socialite, and the penniless artist Jack who first meet when he talks her out of committing suicide. This is a dramatic event, but nothing much changes as a result Rose is still going to marry her unpleasant fianc. The first plot-point occurs much later in the story when Jack declares his love for Rose and she decides to run away with him. When Rose makes this decision everything changes. If youre having trouble finding the first plot-point look at the behaviour of the main protagonist. Many stories start with the hero as a passive individual who just goes with the flow. However, at some point they usually decide theyre tired of being pushed around and take matters into their own hands. More often than not this moment is the first plot-point. For example, in the movie Patriot Games the hero, Jack Ryan, is targeted by terrorists after foiling an IRA kidnap plot. Jack and his family are hunted ruthlessly, culminating in a car crash that almost kills his wife and daughter. Up till now Jack has been on the run, but when he sees his daughter lying in hospital the expression on his face tells us hes not going to take it anymore. Hes going to start to fight back. This is the first plot-point, the moment when Jack takes control of his own destiny.It sometimes helps to think of a story in terms of conflict. Conflict is usually against one of three things: A person versus nature. A plane crashes into the desert. How will the pilot survive in the waterless waste? A person versus another person. Two brothers discover they are rivals for the love of the same girl. Who will win her? A person verses themselves. A young show-jumper has an accident that leaves her terrified of horses. How will she overcome her fears to become a champion? Almost any story you can think of is about a persons conflict with something, someone, or themselves. The start of that struggle is often the first plot-point of the storyThe middle of a story, usually the main part, is about problem solving. For example, in Raiders of the Lost Ark the first plot-point propels Indiana Jones on a journey to find the Ark of the Covenant and his life soon becomes a procession of difficulties: first he has to get to Nepal and recover an artefactthen he has to travel to Egypt and find the Arkthen he has to rescue his girlfriend from some Nazisthen he has to rescue the Ark from the Nazisthen he has to rescue his girlfriend, the Ark and himself from the Nazisetc. For more about problem solving and developing the middle of your story seeExpanding the basic story.The middle of the story ends with the second plot-point. The first plot-point presented our hero with a problem. The second plot-point sees the problem resolved. The climax of a story (the exciting finale) usually coincides with the second plot-point, but it doesnt have to. In The Wizard of Oz the climax occurs when Dorothys enemy, the Wicked Witch is finally destroyed. But it wouldnt be right to say that the Witchs death is the second plot-point. Dorothys objective was not to kill the Witch, it was to get home, and she achieves this later when the Wizard reveals the secret of the magic shoes.The second plot-point sees the problem-solved, and everything after this point is the end of the story an epilogue, a summing-up. In Raiders of the Lost Ark the second plot-point occurs when the Nazis open the Ark and are burnt to a crisp. In the end of the movie we find out that Indie and his friends have got home safely and see the Ark being put into storage. In the end of The Wizard of Oz Dorothy discovers herself lying in her bed surrounded by her friends and family. Everything is back to normal and the Land of Oz was all a dream (or was it?). In Close Encounters of the Third Kind the second plot-point occurs when Roy climbs to the top of Devils Tower and sees the alien ships (proving hes not insane and was led there for a purpose). In the end of the movie the aliens welcome Roy on-board their mother ship and fly him away for a new adventure (hopefully not one involving probes of any kind). Everything after the second plot-point is about tying up loose ends, offering explanations and (in most cases) showing a return to normality.The beginning-middle-end structure of the traditional story is a useful framework, but it can be simplistic and many stories dont conform to this pattern. Take the movie Batman (the 1989 version), here the second plot-point coincides with the death of the Joker, but the first plot-point is hard to pin down. The lives of the Joker and Batman seem entwined even before theyre aware of each others existence and its not easy to say where their story starts. In Pride and Prejudice the first plot-point is reasonably clear (see above) but wheres the second? Theres no great climax where Mister Darcy saves Elizabeth from a bull, or fights a duel on her behalf, its more that they gradually become aware of each others good points. Though you could say that the eventual happy ending is sparked by the actions of the haughty and frightful Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Goodfellas doesnt follow the traditional pattern, partly because its a biopic based on real events. The first plot-point is not an event, more of a transition, the scene where we first see the main protagonist Henry (Ray Loitta) as an adult mobster. There are a number of contenders for second plot-point, but one pivotal moment is when Henrys capo, Paulie, turns his back on him and forces Henry to turn to the FBI for protection. Whenever youre writing a story be aware of the classic beginning-middle-end structure, but dont feel bound by it. You can play around with it or even discard it if its getting in your way. However, most audiences will expect these traditional story elements so if youre planning on dropping some youd better have a good reason. For more on crafting a story seeExpanding the basic story.Bookworms NotebookKey TakeawaysMastering story writing requires following six essential steps: Develop Your Idea: Begin by cultivating your core concept through personal experiences or imaginative what-if scenarios. Distill this into a focused theme and a compelling one-sentence logline that captures your storys essence. Create an Outline: Build a flexible framework using proven structures like Freytags Pyramid or the Three-Act Structure. Map your major plot points, character arcs, and key scenes to maintain narrative cohesion. Build Characters and Setting: Craft multidimensional protagonists with clear motivations and flaws, while designing immersive settings that actively influence the storys events and atmosphere. Write the First Draft: Transform your outline into a complete manuscript by focusing on momentum rather than perfection. Use your plan as guidance while allowing room for creative discoveries. Revise Thoroughly: Systematically improve your draft by addressing plot logic, strengthening character development, and refining dialogue. Examine pacing and ensure each scene drives the story forward. Final Polish: Execute a precision edit by eliminating distractions, tightening prose, and verifying all elements serve your central theme. Perfect your opening, closing, and title for maximum impact.Have you ever dreamed of telling a fascinating tale but felt overwhelmed by where to begin? Writing a story can seem overwhelming, but breaking it down into clear steps makes the process manageable. Whether youre a beginner or looking to refine your technique, understanding how to construct a story effectively is key.The desire to create stories is a fundamental aspect of being human, a way we make sense of the world and connect with others. Perhaps a vivid dream sparked an idea, or a fleeting observation made you wonder about a characters journey. This guide will walk you through six essential stages of writing a great storydeveloping an idea, outlining, building characters and setting, drafting, revising, and making final touches.Step 1: Develop Your Story IdeaEvery story begins with an initial thought, a kernel of an idea that ignites the imagination. Finding this spark is the first and often most exciting part of the creative process. Where do these initial thoughts originate? They can come from various sources within and outside yourself.Before putting words on the page, take time to explore different ideas and find one that excites you. This means more than picking a genre. Ask yourself what sort of emotion you want to create, what type of structure suits the idea you have, and what kind of ending you find most fitting.Drawing from life:Real events, emotions, or people can spark unique fictional twists. Consider your personal experiences and memories; often, the most authentic stories spring from what you have seen, felt, or lived through. News articles and current events can also serve as fertile ground, inspiring fictionalized accounts or explorations of real-world issues.Freewriting:Set a timer for 10 minutes and write without stopping. Let your thoughts flow freely. Freewriting allows unfiltered thoughts to pour onto the page. Mind maps encourage lateral thinking. The point is not to land on a perfect premise but to find one that continues to intrigue you even after repeated consideration.What-if scenarios:Ask unusual questions like,What if a detective could hear lies as musical notes? Listing outcomes of a single what-if question can lead to unusual and unexpected directions.A theme anchors your story, giving it purpose beyond surface-level events. Unlike plot (what happens), theme exploreswhy it matters. Consider Harper LeesTo Kill a Mockingbird(1960): its exploration of racial injustice isnt just a backdrop of the story but entirely shapes every characters choices. To identify your theme:Start with questions:What message do I want to convey?What universal idea will my story examine? (e.g., sacrifice, identity, power)How will the protagonists struggles reflect this idea?How will the events in the story reinforce this idea?Show, dont preach: Themes emerge organically through actions and consequences. For example, in Ray Bradburys Fahrenheit 451(1953), the theme of censorship isnt stated outright; its revealed through the burning of books and the characters defiance.Avoid oversimplification: Complex themes resist easy answers. In Kazuo IshigurosNever Let Me Go(2005), the ethical dilemmas around humanity arent resolved neatly, leaving room for reflection.Test your themes strength:If removed, would the story collapse? (A strong theme is inseparable from the plot.)Can it be expressed in one word (e.g., redemption)andexpanded into a debate? Example:InThe Great Gatsby(1925), F. Scott Fitzgerald uses Jay Gatsbys pursuit of wealth to critique the illusion of the American Dreamnot by stating it, but through Gatsbys tragic character arc.A strong premise is concise. Once you have a general idea, try to condense it into a single, compelling sentence. This is often called the logline concept. A logline succinctly answers three fundamental questions about your story: What is the main character? What do they want? What is stopping them from achieving their desire?Avoid vague ideasspecificity makes a story compelling. For example, for J.K. Rowlings Harry Potter and the Sorcerers Stone (1997), a logline might be: An orphaned boy discovers he is a wizard and must defeat an evil sorcerer who murdered his parents. This concise statement provides clarity and direction for your entire writing project.Step 2: Create a Story OutlineMany new writers struggle to maintain focus halfway through their projects. This is often because they begin without a plan. A story outline serves as both compass and map. It does not need to be rigid or highly detailed, but it should provide a basic structure to guide the major developments of the piece. An outline keeps your story structured and prevents aimless writing.There are various outlining methods you can use. Simple bullet points and summaries for each chapter or major plot point can be effective. A more detailed approach involves a scene-by-scene breakdown, where you plan out the specific events, characters involved, and goals of each individual scene. While some writers prefer to write without a strict plan, an outline can prevent writers block and ensure that your story maintains coherence and a logical progression of events.There are several popular outline frameworks. The Three-Act Structure breaks the story into beginning, middle, and end, with a turning point at the end of each act. The Heros Journey expands on this by including steps like the call to adventure, crossing the threshold, and returning transformed. Some writers prefer the Snowflake Method, which starts with a single sentence and gradually expands into more detailed summaries, characters, and scenes.One of the most enduring models is Freytags Pyramid, which maps narrative tension across five key phases: The exposition establishes characters and their world before the inciting incident shatters that normalcy. Rising action then escalates the conflict through successive challenges until the climax delivers the decisive confrontation. The story then winds down through falling action into resolution, with the denouement providing final closure.An outline prevents aimless tangents and inconsistent pacing. It also helps with managing subplots and character arcs. Sketch the sequence of events, highlight key moments of change, and identify where tension builds and where it must be released. Keep your outline short enough to remain flexible but strong enough to carry the weight of your storys events.Characters drive the storyno plot succeeds without believable characters. Readers invest in people more than events, and they care about their struggles and growth; therefore, characters must feel real to carry a story convincingly. Begin by crafting a protagonist who wants something specific. This desire becomes the engine of the plot.The protagonist is the central figure, the one whose journey the story primarily follows. The antagonist is the force or individual who opposes the protagonist, creating conflict and driving the plot forward. This opposition does not always mean the antagonist is evil; they simply have goals that clash with the protagonists.Consider the character arc: How will they change throughout the story? Will they learn a profound lesson, overcome a personal failing, or transform their worldview? Another is the character backstory: What experiences shaped them before the story began? This does not need to be explicitly stated in the text, but having a clear understanding of their past will inform their present actions and reactions.Next, define their motivation and goals: What drives them? What do they desire, both consciously and subconsciously? A characters desires, whether for love, power, revenge, or self-discovery, are the engine of the story. What external goals do they pursue, and what internal changes do they seek?Well-written characters possess contradictions, flaws, and unique perspectives. They act according to what they believe, not what the author needs to happen next. Think beyond physical description and basic backstory. Consider the emotional or psychological lens through which they view the world. A characters decisions must grow from who they are, not simply from external circumstances.Dialogue plays a key role in developing characters. It must reveal personality, not just advance the plot. Avoid speech that sounds like expositioninstead, let characters speak in ways that reveal their motivations, histories, and emotional states. Each character should have a distinct voice.The setting is more than just a backdrop; it is a living, breathing component of your story that influences characters, plot, and overall atmosphere. It provides the context for your events to unfold, which has the power to immerse the audience in the world you have created.Consider the time period in which your story takes place. Is it the distant past, the bustling present, or a speculative future? Each era carries its own unique social norms, technological advancements, and challenges, all of which will impact your characters lives and the conflicts they face.The location is equally important. Whether it is a sprawling metropolis, a quiet rural village, a fantastical kingdom, or the confines of a single room, specific details about the physical environment bring it to life. Do not just name a place; describe it. What does it look like? What are its defining features? Think about the atmosphere and mood that the setting evokes. Is it ominous and foreboding, bright and hopeful, or somber and reflective? The environment can mirror or contrast with the emotional states of your characters, a technique that adds layers to your storytelling. A dark, stormy night can heighten suspense, while a sunny meadow can convey peace.Engage the audiences senses through sensory details. Describe what your characters see, hear, smell, taste, and touch within their environment. Instead of simply stating it was cold, describe the biting wind, the numb fingers, or the visible breath. This sensory richness makes the setting tangible and makes it possible for the audience to truly step into your world.With your idea, characters, setting, and outline in place, it is time to embark on the most direct step: writing your first draft. This stage is about getting the story downediting comes later. Do not worry about grammar, spelling, or finding the exact right word in this phase. Simply focus on getting the story from your mind onto the page. Remember that perfectionism kills creativitytrying to perfect every paragraph from the beginning almost always leads to a stalled project.Write consistently. Whether you produce 300 or 1,000 words a day, the habit of completion builds confidence and discipline. Many professional writers treat their first drafts as discovery. They learn what the story is by writing it. Setting a routine can be incredibly beneficial. Dedicate a specific time each day or week to writing, even if it is just for a short period. Consistency is key to building momentum and completing your draft.Overcoming writers block is a common challenge. If you find yourself stuck, try writing something else, taking a walk, or revisiting your outline. Skip difficult scenes and write the parts youre excited about first. Another trick is changing locationsa new environment can spark creativity. Sometimes, the best way forward is to write through the block, even if the words feel clumsy.Keep scenes tight. Open with action or conflict whenever possible. Avoid long explanations, but ground the reader quickly in who is present, what is happening, and what is at stake. Most importantly, allow your characters to lead the way. If your outline says one thing, but your characters pull in a new direction that makes sense, follow them. Flexibility during drafting often results in better stories.Revision transforms a rough draft into a finished work. It is not optional because no first draft is final. Once the manuscript is complete, step away from it for a few days or even a week. This helps you return to the material with fresh eyes. Begin by reviewing large-scale elements before focusing on sentences or word choice.Read your entire manuscript aloud; this helps you catch awkward phrasing, repetitive sentences, and unnatural dialogue that you might miss when reading silently. Check for consistency in your characters actions, the plots progression, and the details of your setting. Pay attention to pacing and flow, making sure the story moves at an appropriate speed, with moments of tension and release. Lastly, cut unnecessary scenesif a chapter doesnt advance the plot or character, remove it.Beta readers are helpful during this stage. They can point out where the story drags or where character motivations seem unclear. Select readers who will give honest, precise feedbacknot only those who want to spare your feelings. Be open to constructive criticism; it is a gift that helps you improve your craft. Remember that different readers will have different opinions, so seek patterns in the feedback rather than trying to please everyone.Lastly, proofreading serves as the final line of defense against errors. After multiple rounds of revision, carefully check for typos, grammatical mistakes, and punctuation errors. These small details can distract from your story and diminish its impact. Consider using grammar-checking tools, but always give your manuscript a final human review.Understand that this is the iterative process of writing. Writing a great story often involves multiple rounds of revision, sometimes even rewriting entire sections. It is a cyclical journey of writing, revising, and refining until your story shines. Embrace this process as an opportunity for growth and improvement.Now that the draft has been shaped and cleaned, consider what makes the difference between an adequate story and one that remains memorable. This final step focuses on sharpening the details that give the piece its force and clarity. Use this stage to transform a competent final draft into something stronger.Pay close attention to your storys voice. This refers to the tone, rhythm, and diction that define how the story is told, which should feel deliberate and consistent. Uneven language can flatten the effect of otherwise strong material. A consistent voice builds cohesion. Avoid sudden shifts in mood or language unless they serve a clear purpose.Look at pacing: adjust transitions between scenes so they flow logically. Every scene should earn its placeeach scene should push the story forward. Remove what doesnt serve the movement of the story. Remove any passages that serve only to fill space. Transitions between scenes should be smooth, with clear cause-and-effect relationships guiding the shift.Check the storys emotional and thematic coherence. If youve raised certain questions or ideas early on, make sure they find some form of resolution. It does not have to be a tidy or happy ending, but it should be intentional and complete.Finally, review the title. An effective title is specific and memorable. Avoid vague phrases. If your story centers on an event, a single character, or a turning point, consider drawing the title from that element.This is the stage when small refinements can have outsized effects. A sharper scene opening, a better line of dialogue, or a more vivid description can bring the entire story into sharper focus. These final adjustments are often what elevate a finished draft from solid to impressive.Whats the best way to start a story? Begin with movement. An action, decision, or moment of conflict helps establish direction immediately. Avoid starting with long exposition or description.Do I need an outline? While not strictly necessary, an outline helps prevent mid-story confusion. It provides a structure for your plot and helps manage pacing, arcs, and thematic clarity.How long should a short story be? Most short stories fall between 1,500 and 7,500 words. Flash fiction can be under 1,000 words, while some publications accept stories up to 10,000 words. Let the idea dictate the length, but avoid unnecessary padding.When should I start editing? Finish the draft first. Editing during early stages disrupts momentum. Once the full story is on the page, begin revisions with clear goals.Whats the best way to write a story as a beginner? Keep things simple. Focus on one or two characters, a clear conflict, and a single turning point. Avoid overly complex structures or themes until you gain more experience.Whats the secret to how to write a great story? There is no single formula, but stories that stick tend to combine precise structure, vivid characters, a strong voice, and a sense of purpose. Writing with intention and revising carefully makes a substantial difference.How to Start a Story by The NovelryTake risks and tell the truth: how to write a great short story by Donal Ryan, The GuardianThe Art of the Short Story by Ernest Hemingway, The Paris ReviewWriting as Art vs Writing as Storytelling on RedditHere are five steps for writing a story: Find inspiration, brainstorm ideas, outline the plot, write a first draft, and refine it through revision and editing.Every story typically includes five key componentssetting, plot, conflict, characters, and theme.While stories can take countless forms, most follow one of seven classic plot types, such as rags to riches or overcoming the monster.Anecdotes are similar to stories but may not include all five fundamental elements.Narrative is another word for story, emphasizing how it is structured and told.Storytelling is fundamental to human connectionits how we learn, bond, and unwind. Many dream of writing a story, but getting started can be challenging.This guide breaks down the process into five essential steps, explores key story elements, and introduces common plot structures. The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do Table of contentsWhat is a story?Elements of a storyDifferent types of stories5 steps for writing a storyExamples of storiesHow to write a story FAQsWhat is a story?A story is a connected sequence of events, whether real or fictional, shared through books, movies, or everyday conversations.Stories serve various purposesthey entertain through novels and films, inform through news, and teach valuable lessons through parables and fairy tales.When writing a story to engage and captivate readers, its definition becomes more nuanced. Lets explore the essential elements that make a story compelling.Elements of a storyThe beauty of storytelling lies in its limitless possibilitiesbut not everything makes for an engaging read. For centuries, writers have studied what makes a story compelling. Through this, five essential elements have emerged.1SettingSetting is the time and place in which a story takes place, such as modern-day New York City or a spaceship in the future. It provides the context for the events and describes the world of the story.In the Sherlock Holmes series, the setting is Victorian-era London. 2PlotThe plot of a story is what the story is about, specifically the events that take place. Each event in the story is called a plot point, and the plot points all connect to tell a story from the beginning to the end.The plot of Sherlock Holmes revolves around the famous detective investigating a crime, and the plot points include each clue he discovers on his way to solving it. 3ConflictConflict is the driving force of a story, creating drama and suspense that keep readers engaged. It introduces risks and consequences the characters must face. Usually, the conflict revolves around the main characters goal, but a story can have multiple conflicts. Secondary conflicts, often explored through subplots, may even unfold without the protagonist.The conflict of each Sherlock Holmes story is the crime and whether or not Sherlock can solve it. In some of these stories, a character is in mortal danger, which raises the stakes for Sherlock to solve it quickly. 4CharactersCharacters are the heart of a story, whether theyre people, animals, or even abstract concepts (like emotions in Inside Out). Most stories center on a main character, or protagonist, supported by friends, rivals, or other key figures. When the conflict involves a central adversary, that character is the antagonist.In Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock is the protagonist, while his friend and narrator, Watson, serves as a supporting character. The criminals Sherlock pursuesespecially his nemesis, Moriartyare the antagonists.5ThemeA theme is the underlying idea or message woven throughout a story, adding depth and meaning. It can be a moral lesson, a philosophical concept, or a metaphor for real life. Themes range from simple, like the power of love in a romance, to complex, such as an allegory reflecting historical events and their consequences.A recurring theme in Sherlock Holmes is the power of logic and reasoning, emphasized through Holmes meticulous detective work and its triumphs.Want to make your story shine? Grammarly proofreads your writing so you can catch typos and mistakes early. It also provides suggestions for word choice and tone.Different types of storiesEach story is unique in its combination of characters, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. However, most narratives fall into one of seven classic plot types, as identified by journalist and author Christopher Booker:Overcoming the monster: A hero must defeat a powerful enemy. (Star Wars)Rags to riches: A once-powerless protagonist gains and loses power but grows as a person. (Cinderella)The Quest: A hero, often with companions, embarks on a journey to achieve a goal. (The Lord of the Rings)Voyage and return: The protagonist travels to an unfamiliar world, learns important lessons, and returns home. (Alice in Wonderland)Rebirth: A character confronts their flaws and undergoes a transformation. (A Christmas Carol)Comedy: A lighthearted story with a happy ending, often driven by humor and misunderstandings. (Bridget Joness Diary)Tragedy: A serious story in which the protagonists flaw leads to their downfall. (Macbeth)These plot types serve as broad templates, and stories within each plot type can be vastly different. For example, Groundhog Day and Pride and Prejudice may seem unrelated, yet both follow a rebirth arc, where a flawed character overcomes obstacles to grow.Classifying stories this way helps to analyze, categorize, and better understand storytelling.How long should a story be?Although stories have no minimum or maximum length, they are often categorized by their lengths. These are the most commonly used designations:Novel: More than 40,000 wordsNovella: 17,50040,000 wordsShort story: 7,500 words or fewerYou might also be familiar with terms like novelette and flash fiction. These are subcategories that refer to stories of specific lengths within these larger categories. A novelette is longer than a short story but shorter than a novella, while flash fiction is a story that is typically fewer than 1,500 words.Is an anecdote the same as a story?An anecdote is a brief account of events that lacks the complete structure of a story. It might describe a moment at work or a fun experience at an amusement park but doesnt necessarily include all five key story elements.When I was young, my grandfather took me to the park to feed the ducks. Id ask him questions, and he always had an answer. Years later, I realized he knew nothing about duckshe had been making everything up!While this anecdote has characters and a setting, it lacks a structured plot, conflict, or themekey components that define a complete story.What is a narrative?A narrative is a structured account of connected events, real or fictional, that conveys a story through a particular perspective or style. Just as the word composition can refer to a specific piece of writing or the art of writing, the term narrative can refer to a story itself or how it is told.A storys narrative is the way its plot elements are presented. A narrative uses the point of view of the first or third person (and, in some cases, the second person).You probably know the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. The version youre familiar with is a narrative told in the third person. Now imagine reading the story told from Mama Bears perspectivethe narrative might include a passage like the following:I followed the small, dirty footprints from the front door to the kitchen, where I found somebody had ransacked the pantry and left crumbs all over. Mama, come quick! Somebodys in your bed! Papa Bear called from the bedroom. My heart pounding, I told Baby Bear to stay in the kitchen. I didnt know what to expect was this intruder dangerous?See how the storytellers perspective shapes the narrative?5 steps for writing a storyThe story writing process is similar but not identical to the writing process you use for other kinds of writing. However, with a story, you must ensure the five elements we listed above are present. Heres how to write a story in 5 steps:1Find inspirationThe first step in writing a story is coming up with an idea. If the story is an assignment, you might already have a theme, a conflict, and/or other elements to work with. If not, look for inspiration. You can find inspiration anywhereyour own experiences, news stories, historical events, even just letting your mind wander down a what if? rabbit hole.Every story begins with an idea. Some elementslike theme or conflictmay already be provided if youre writing for an assignment. Otherwise, inspiration can come from anywhere: personal experiences, news, history, or just letting your mind wander down a what if? rabbit hole.Stay curiouswatch, listen, observe, and take notes. The more you engage with the world, the more story ideas will naturally emerge.2BrainstormOnce you have an idea for a story, brainstorm. Jot down all your ideas, including a rough outline of how the plot will progress. Let yourself play with ideas for characters, settings, plot points, and how the characters will resolve the main conflict (or not!).With the basic points down, decide on the point of view youll use. This is where the idea of narrative comes into playwho is telling the story, and how does that characters experience and perspective direct the narrative?3Create an outlineNext, draft an outline for your story. A story outline is similar to outlines used for other kinds of writing, like academic papers. Your outline is a basic framework for your story that lists its key plot points and relevant details. For many writers, a storys outline helps map out the scenes that make up the story.4Write the first draftNow, just writelet the story flow without overthinking or editing. Focus on getting your ideas down, knowing that refinement comes later. The first draft isnt about perfection; its about bringing your story to life.5Revise and edit your storyAt this stage, outside feedback is invaluable. A writing group, friends, or family can offer fresh perspectives, catching plot holes, weak passages, or mischaracterizations you might overlook.Use their input to revise your story into a stronger second draft. While it may be close to finished, dont skip proofreadingpolishing grammar, spelling, and punctuation is essential. If possible, have readers review it again for final refinements.Examples of storiesThe Tortoise and the Hare, an allegory attributed to Greek storyteller Aesop, is one of many stories from the ancient world that have stood the test of time. Its theme is steady progress beats speed when one is pursuing a goal.Another famous story is The Thousand and One Nights. This is a collection of stories within a larger story, similar to The Canterbury Tales and The Decameron. The main plot of The Thousand and One Nights is the story of Scheherazade, a young woman who marries the king, delaying her execution by telling him a new story every night. Eager to hear the storys end, he delays the execution over and over, for a total of 1,001 evenings. This kind of story is called a frame story, as multiple shorter stories fit into a larger framework.Frankenstein (its official title is Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus) is a well-known story by Mary Shelley, published in 1818. The story, which has been republished and reimagined countless times since its initial release, explores themes of life and death and the conflict of humans vs. nature.How to write a story FAQsWhat are stories?Stories are accounts of events that include a setting, theme, plot, conflict, and at least one character.What are the five steps for writing a story?Writing a story follows five key steps:Find inspirationBrainstorm ideasOutline the plotWrite the first draftRevise and editHow does a story work?A story communicates a theme by telling the reader about a series of events, also known as a narrative. Within the narrative, a character faces at least one conflict, which often (but not always) changes the character.What are the different types of stories?There are many different kinds of stories. The seven basic plot types are:Overcoming the monsterRags to richesThe questVoyage and returnRebirthComedyTragedyWhat makes a story good?Everyone has their own preferences for what they like in a story, but certain traits are more popular than others. Good stories usually have relatable characters, a dramatic conflict, unexpected twists, and a satisfying conclusion.Your writing, at its best.Works on all your favorite websitesRelated Articles Account that presents connected eventsFor other uses, see Narrative (disambiguation).For other uses of "story" and "tale", see Story (disambiguation) and Tale (disambiguation).Books about narrative on a library shelfLiteratureOral literatureFolklorefablefairy talefolk playfolksongheroic epiclegendmythproverbOrationPerformanceaudiobookspoken wordSayingMajor written formsBookDramacloset dramaPoetrylyricnarrativeProseNonsenseverseErgodicElectronicLong prose fictionAnthologySerialNovel/romanceShort prose fictionNovellaNoveletteShort storyDrabbleSketchFlash fictionParableReligiousWisdomProse genresFictionChildren'sEncyclopedicGenreactionadventurecoming-of-agecrimeeroticfantasyhorrormilitaryparanormalromancescience fictionsupernaturalwesternHistoricalRealistSpeculativeNon-fictionAcademichistoryphilosophyAnecdoteEpistleEssayJournalismLetterLifeNaturePersuasiveTraveloguePoetry genresNarrativeChildrenEpicDramaticVerse novelNationalLyricBalladElegyEpigramGhazalHaikuHymnLimerickOdeQasidaSonnetVillanelleListsEpicGroups and movementsPoetsDramatic genresComedyLibrettoPlayhistoricalmoralSatireScriptTragedyTragicomedyHistoryAncientClassicalMedievalModernistPostmodernLists and outlinesOutlineGlossaryBooksWritersMovementsCyclesLiterary awardspoetryShort story collectionLost literary workLacunaTheory and criticismSociologyMagazinesCompositionLanguageNarrativeFeudEstate Literature portalvteA narrative, story, or tale is any account of a series of related events or experiences,[1][2] whether non-fictional (memoir, biography, news report, documentary, travelogue, etc.) or fictional (fairy tale, fable, legend, thriller, novel, etc.).[3][4][5] Narratives can be presented through a sequence of written or spoken words, through still or moving images, or through any combination of these. The word derives from the Latin verb narrare ("to tell"), which is derived from the adjective gnarus ("knowing or skilled").[6][7] Historically preceding the noun, the adjective "narrative" means "characterized by or relating to a story or storytelling".Narrative is expressed in all mediums of human creativity, art, and entertainment, including speech, literature, theatre, dance, music and song, comics, journalism, animation, video (including film and television), video games, radio, structured and unstructured recreation, and potentially even purely visual arts like painting, sculpture, drawing, and photography, as long as a sequence of events is presented. The social and cultural activity of humans sharing narratives is called storytelling, the vast majority of which has taken the form of oral storytelling.[8] Since the rise of literate societies however, many narratives have been additionally recorded, created, or otherwise passed down in written form. The formal and literary process of constructing a narrativenarrationis one of the four traditional rhetorical modes of discourse, along with argumentation, description, and exposition. This is a somewhat distinct usage from narration in the narrower sense of a commentary used to convey a story. Many additional narrative techniques are used to build and enhance any given story.A narrative is the telling of some actual or fictitious sequence of connected events to an audience, by a narrator in some cases (and in all cases of written narratives). A personal narrative is any narrative in prose in which the speaker or writer presents, usually informally and in a spontaneous moment, their own personal experiences, such as in casual face-to-face conversation or in text messaging. Narratives are to be distinguished from simple descriptions of qualities, states, or situations without any particular individuals involved. Narratives range all the way from the shortest accounts of events (for example, the simple sentence "the cat sat on the mat" or a brief news item) to the most extended works, in the form of long and complex series that contain multiple books, films, television episodes, etc. The topic of narrative can be organized into a number of thematic or formal categories. Nonfiction includes creative nonfiction, biography, journalism, historiography, and other storytelling forms grounded fully in facts and history. Fiction, however, departs from this complete basis in facts and history. For instance, fictionalization of historical events, such as myths, legends, works of historical fiction, and some anecdotes have a basis in past real-life events but add in imaginary or supernatural events or characters. Fiction in its other forms includes short stories, novels, most plays, and imaginary narratives in other textual forms, games, or live or recorded performances. In the study of literary (written) fiction, it is usual to distinguish first-person from third-person narratives. Narrative poems and songs, defined by their use of language following a rhythmic or other artistic structure, can be either fictional (like epics) or nonfictional (like transcript poems). Narrative poetry is distinct from lyric poetry, which focuses on the speaker's emotions and lacks a plot, setting, or other required narrative elements. Furthermore, nearly all dramatic enactments (plays, musicals, operas, ballets, etc.) are narratives.Certain basic elements are necessary and sufficient to define all works of narrative, including, most well-studied, all narrative works of fiction. Thus, scholars commonly also refer to the following essential elements of narrative as the elements of fiction.Main article: Character (arts)Characters are the individual persons inside a work of narrative; their choices and behaviors propel the plot forward. They typically are named humans whose actions and speech sometimes convey important motives. They may be entirely imaginary, they may be real-life individuals, or they may be roughly based on real-life individuals. The audience's first impressions are influential on how they perceive a fictional character, for example whether they empathize with a character or not, feeling for them as if they were real.[9] The audience's familiarity with a character results in their expectations about how characters will behave in later scenes. Characters who behave contrary to their previous patterns of behavior (their characterization) can be confusing or jarring to the audience. Narratives usually have main characters, protagonists, whom the story revolves around, who encounter a central conflict, or who gain knowledge or grow significantly across the story. Some stories may also have antagonists, characters who oppose, hinder, or fight against the protagonist. In many traditional narratives, the protagonist is specifically a hero: a sympathetic person who battles (often literally) for morally good causes. The hero may face a villain: an antagonist who fights against morally good causes or even actively perpetrates evil. Many other ways of classifying broad types of characters exist too, which are known as stock characters or character archetypes.Main article: Conflict (narrative)Broadly speaking, conflict is any tension that drives the thoughts and actions of characters. Narrowly speaking, the conflict of a story is the major problem a protagonist, or main character, encounters. Often, a protagonist additionally struggles with a sense of anxiety, insecurity, indecisiveness, or other emotional burden as result of this conflict, which can be regarded as a secondary or internal conflict. Longer works of narrative typically involve many conflicts or smaller-level conflicts that occur alongside the main one. Conflict can be classified into a variety of common types, with the major ones being: character versus character, character versus nature, character versus society, character versus unavoidable circumstances (often termed fate or destiny), and character versus self. If the conflict is brought to an end by the end of the story, this is known as a resolution.Main article: NarrationThe narrative mode is the set of choices and techniques the author or creator selects in framing their story: how the narrative is told. It includes the scope of information presented or withheld, the type or style of language used, the channel or medium through which the story is presented, the way and extent to which narrative exposition and other types of commentary are communicated, and the overall point of view or perspective. An example of narrative perspective is a first-person narrative, in which some character (often the main one) refers openly to the self, using pronouns like "I" and "me", in communicating the story to the audience. Contrarily, in a third-person narrative, such

as Claude Lvi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. It leads to a structural analysis of narrative and an increasingly influential body of modern work that raises important theoretical questions:What is text?What is its role (culture)?How is it manifested as art, cinema, theater, or literature?Why is narrative divided into different genres, such as poetry, short stories, and novels?Main article: Literary theoryIn literary theoretic approach, narrative is being narrowly defined as fiction-writing mode in which the narrator is communicating directly to the reader. Until the late 19th century, literary criticism as an academic exercise dealt solely with poetry (including epic poems like the Iliad and Paradise Lost, and poetic drama like Shakespeare). Most poems did not have a narrator distinct from the author.But novels, lending a number of voices to several characters in addition to narrator's, created a possibility of narrator's views differing significantly from the author's views. With the rise of the novel in the 18th century, the concept of the narrator (as opposed to "author") made the question of narrator a prominent one for literary theory. It has been proposed that perspective and interpretive knowledge are the essential characteristics, while focalization and structure are lateral characteristics of the narrator.[according to whom?]The role of literary theory in narrative has been disputed; with some interpretations like Todorov's narrative model that views all narratives in a cyclical manner, and that each narrative is characterized by a three part structure that allows the narrative to progress. The beginning stage being an establishment of equilibriuma state of non conflict, followed by a disruption to this state, caused by an external event, and lastly a restoration or a return to equilibriuma conclusion that brings the narrative back to a similar space before the events of the narrative unfolded.[20]The school of literary criticism known as Russian formalism has applied methods that are more often used to analyse narrative fiction, to non-fictional texts such as political speeches.[21]Other critiques of literary theory in narrative challenge the very role of literariness in narrative, as well as the role of narrative in literature. Meaning, narratives, and their associated aesthetics, emotions, and values have the ability to operate without the presence of literature, and vice versa. According to Didier Costa, the structural model used by Todorov and others is unfairly biased toward a Western interpretation of narrative, and that a more comprehensive and transformative model must be created in order to properly analyze narrative discourse in literature.[22] Framing also plays a pivotal role in narrative structure; an analysis of the historical and cultural contexts present during the development of a narrative is needed in order to more accurately represent the role of narratology in societies that relied heavily on oral narratives.Narrative is a highly aesthetic art. Thoughtfully composed stories have a number of aesthetic elements. Such elements include the idea of narrative structure, with identifiable beginnings, middles, and ends, or the process of exposition-development-climax-denouement, with coherent plot lines; a strong focus on temporality including retention of the past, attention to present action, and future anticipation; a substantial focus on character and characterization, "arguably the most important single component of the novel" (David Lodge The Art of Fiction 67); different voices interacting, "the sound of the human voice, or many voices, speaking in a variety of accents, rhythms, and registers" (Lodge The Art of Fiction 97; see also the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin for expansion of this idea); a narrator or narrator-like voice, which "addresses" and "interacts with" reading audiences (see Reader Response theory); communicates with a Wayne Booth-esque rhetorical thrust, a dialectic process of interpretation, which is at times beneath the surface, forming a plotted narrative, and at other times much more visible, "arguing" for and against various positions; relies substantially on the use of literary tropes (see Hayden White, Metahistory for expansion of this idea); is often intertextual with other literatures; and commonly demonstrates an effort toward Bildungsroman, a description of identity development with an effort to evince becoming in character and community.[jargon]See also: Narrative therapy and Narrative psychologyWithin philosophy of mind, the social sciences, and various clinical fields including medicine, narrative can refer to aspects of human psychology.[23] A personal narrative process is involved in a person's sense of personal or cultural identity, and in the creation and construction of memories; it is thought by some to be the fundamental nature of the self.[24][25] The breakdown of a coherent or positive narrative has been implicated in the development of psychosis and mental disorders, and its repair said to play an important role in journeys of recovery.[26][27] Narrative therapy is a form of psychotherapy.Illness narratives are a way for a person affected by an illness to make sense of his or her experiences.[28] They typically follow one of several set patterns: restitution, chaos, or quest narratives. In the restitution narrative, the person sees the illness as a temporary detour. The primary goal is to return permanently to normal life and normal health. These may also be called cure narratives. In the chaos narrative, the person sees the illness as a permanent state that will inexorably get worse, with no redeeming virtues. This is typical of diseases like Alzheimer's disease: the patient gets worse and worse, and there is no hope of returning to normal life. The third major type, the quest narrative, positions the illness experience as an opportunity to transform oneself into a better person through overcoming adversity and re-learning what is most important in life; the physical outcome of the illness is less important than the spiritual and psychological transformation. This is typical of the triumphant view of cancer survivorship in the breast cancer culture.[28] Survivors may be expected to articulate a wisdom narrative, in which they explain to others a new and better view of the meaning of life.[29]Personality traits, more specifically the Big Five personality traits, appear to be associated with the type of language or patterns of word use found in an individual's self-narrative.[30] In other words, language use in self-narratives accurately reflects human personality. The linguistic correlates of each Big Five trait are as follows:Extraversion - positively correlated with words referring to humans, social processes, and family;Agreeableness - positively correlated with family, inclusiveness, and certainty; negatively correlated with anger and body (that is, few negative comments about health or body);Conscientiousness - positively correlated with achievement and work; negatively related to body, death, anger, and exclusiveness;Neuroticism - positively correlated with sadness, negative emotion, body, anger, home, and anxiety; negatively correlated with work;Openness - positively correlated with perceptual processes, hearing, and exclusivenessHuman beings often claim to understand events when they manage to formulate a coherent story or narrative explaining how they believe the event was generated. Narratives thus lie at the foundations of our cognitive procedures and also provide an explanatory framework for the social sciences, particularly when it is difficult to assemble enough cases to permit statistical analysis. Narrative is often used in case study research in the social sciences. Here it has been found that the dense, contextual, and interpenetrating nature of social forces uncovered by detailed narratives is often more interesting and useful for both social theory and social policy than other forms of social inquiry. Research using narrative methods in the social sciences has been described as still being in its infancy[31] but this perspective has several advantages such as access to an existing, rich vocabulary of analytical terms: plot, genre, subtext, epic, hero/heroine, story arc (e.g., beginningmiddleend), and so on. Another benefit is it emphasizes that even apparently non-fictional documents (speeches, policies, legislation) are still fictions, in the sense they are authored and usually have an intended audience in mind.Sociologists Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein have contributed to the formation of a constructionist approach to narrative in sociology. From their book The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World (2000), to more recent texts such as Analyzing Narrative Reality (2009) and Varieties of Narrative Analysis (2012), they have developed an analytic framework for researching stories and storytelling that is centered on the interplay of institutional discourses (big stories) on the one hand, and everyday accounts (little stories) on the other. The goal is the sociological understanding of formal and lived texts of experience, featuring the production, practices, and communication of accounts.In order to avoid "hardened stories", or "narratives that become context-free, portable, and ready to be used anywhere and anytime for illustrative purposes" and are being used as conceptual metaphors as defined by linguist George Lakoff, an approach called narrative inquiry was proposed, resting on the epistemological assumption that human beings make sense of random or complex multicausal experience by the imposition of story structures.[32][33] Human propensity to simplify data through a predilection for narratives over complex data sets can lead to the narrative fallacy. It is easier for the human mind to remember and make decisions on the basis of stories with meaning, than to remember strings of data. This is one reason why narratives are so powerful and why many of the classics in the humanities and social sciences are written in the narrative format. But humans can read meaning into data and compose stories, even where this is unwarranted. Some scholars suggest that the narrative fallacy and other biases can be avoided by applying standard methodical checks for validity (statistics) and reliability (statistics) in terms of how data (narratives) are collected, analyzed, and presented.[34] More typically, scholars working with narrative prefer to use other evaluative criteria (such as believability or perhaps interpretive validity[35]) since they do not see statistical validity as meaningfully applicable to qualitative data: "the concepts of validity and reliability, as understood from the positivist perspective, are somehow inappropriate and inadequate when applied to interpretive research".[36] Several criteria for assessing the validity of narrative research was proposed, including the objective aspect, the emotional aspect, the social/moral aspect, and the clarity of the story.This section may be too technical for most readers to understand. Please help improve it to make it understandable to non-experts, without removing the technical details. (August 2023) (Learn how and when to remove this message)In mathematical sociology, the theory of comparative narratives was devised in order to describe and compare the structures (expressed as "and" in a directed graph where multiple causal links incident into a node are conjoined) of action-driven sequential events.[37][38][39]Narratives so conceived comprise the following ingredients:A finite set of state descriptions of the world S, the components of which are weakly ordered in time;A finite set of actors/agents (individual or collective), P;A finite set of actions A;A mapping of P onto A;The structure (directed graph) is generated by letting the nodes stand for the states and the directed edges represent how the states are changed by specified actions. The action skeleton can then be abstracted, comprising a further digraph where the actions are depicted as nodes and edges take the form "action a co-determined (in context of other actions) action b".Narratives can be both abstracted and generalised by imposing an algebra upon their structures and thence defining homomorphism between the algebras. The insertion of action-driven causal links in a narrative can be achieved using the method of Bayesian narratives.Developed by Peter Abell, the theory of Bayesian narratives conceives a narrative as a directed graph comprising multiple causal links (social interactions) of the general form: "action a causes action b in a specified context". In the absence of sufficient comparative cases to enable statistical treatment of the causal links, items of evidence in support and against a particular causal link are assembled and used to compute the Bayesian likelihood ratio of the link. Subjective causal statements of the form "I did b because of a" and subjective counterfactuals "if it had not been for a I would not have done b" are notable items of evidence.[39][40][41]Linearity is one of several narrative qualities that can be found in a musical composition.[42] As noted by American musicologist Edward Cone, narrative terms are also present in the analytical language about music.[43] The different components of a fugue subject, answer, exposition, discussion, and summary can be cited as an example.[44] However, there are several views on the concept of narrative in music and the role it plays.One theory is that of Theodore Adorno, who has suggested that "music recites itself, is its own context, narrates without narrative".[44] Another, is that of Carolyn Abbate, who has suggested that "certain gestures experienced in music constitute a narrating voice".[43] Still others have argued that narrative is a semiotic enterprise that can enrich musical analysis.[44]The French musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez contends that "the narrative, strictly speaking, is not in the music, but in the plot imagined and constructed by the listeners".[45] He argues that discussing music in terms of narrativity is simply metaphorical and that the "imagined plot" may be influenced by the work's title or other programmatic information provided by the composer.[45] However, Abbate has revealed numerous examples of musical devices that function as narrative voices, by limiting music's ability to narrate to rare "moments that can be identified by their bizarre and disruptive effect".[45] Various theorists share this view of narrative appearing in disruptive rather than normative moments in music.The final word is yet to be said regarding narratives in music, as there is still much to be determined.Unlike most forms of narratives that are inherently language based (whether that be narratives presented in literature or orally), film narratives face additional challenges in creating a cohesive narrative. Whereas the general assumption in literary theory is that a narrator must be present in order to develop a narrative, as Schmid proposes;[46] the act of an author writing his or her words in text is what communicates to the audience (in this case readers) the narrative of the text, and the author represents an act of narrative communication between the textual narrator and the narratee. This is in line with Fludernik's perspective on what's called cognitive narratologywhich states that a literary text has the ability to manifest itself into an imagined, representational illusion that the reader will create for themselves, and can vary greatly from reader to reader.[47] In other words, the scenarios of a literary text (referring to settings, frames, schemes, etc.) are going to be represented differently for each individual reader based on a multiplicity of factors, including the reader's own personal life experiences that allow them to comprehend the literary text in a distinct manner from anyone else.Film narrative does not have the luxury of having a textual narrator that guides its audience toward a formative narrative; nor does it have the ability to allow its audience to visually manifest the contents of its narrative in a unique fashion like literature does. Instead, film narratives utilize visual and auditory devices in substitution for a narrative subject; these devices include cinematography, editing, sound design (both diegetic and non-diegetic sound), as well as the arrangement and decisions on how and where the subjects are located onscreenknown as mise-en-scne. These cinematic devices, among others, contribute to the unique blend of visual and auditory storytelling that culminates to what Jose Landa refers to as a "visual narrative instance".[48] And unlike narratives found in other performance arts such as plays and musicals, film narratives are not bound to a specific place and time, and are not limited by scene transitions in plays, which are restricted by set design and allotted time.The nature or existence of a formative narrative in many of the world's myths, folktales, and legends has been a topic of debate for many modern scholars; but the most common consensus among academics is that throughout most cultures, traditional mythologies and folklore tales are constructed and retold with a specific narrative purpose that serves to offer a society an understandable explanation of natural phenomenaoftentimes absent of a verifiable author. These explanatory tales manifest themselves in various forms and serve different societal functions, including life lessons for individuals to learn from (for example, the Ancient Greek tale of Icarus refusing to listen to his elders and flying too close to the sun), explaining forces of nature or other natural phenomena (for example, the flood myth that spans cultures all over the world),[49] and providing an understanding of human nature, as exemplified by the myth of Cupid and Psyche.[50]Considering how mythologies have historically been transmitted and passed down through oral retellings, there is no qualitative or reliable method to precisely trace exactly where and when a tale originated; and since myths are rooted in a remote past, and are viewed as a factual account of happenings within the culture it originated from, the worldview present in many oral mythologies is from a cosmological perspectiveone that is told from a voice that has no physical embodiment, and is passed down and modified from generation to generation.[51] This cosmological worldview in myth is what provides all mythological narratives credence, and since they are easily communicated and modified through oral tradition among various cultures, they help solidify the cultural identity of a civilization and contribute to the notion of a collective human consciousness that continues to help shape one's own understanding of the world.[52]Myth is often used in an overarching sense to describe a multitude of folklore genres, but there is a significance in distinguishing the various forms of folklore in order to properly determine what narratives constitute as mythological, as anthropologist Sir James Frazer suggests. Frazer contends that there are three primary categories of mythology (now more broadly considered categories of folklore): Myths, legends, and folktales, and that by definition, each genre pulls its narrative from a different ontological source, and therefore has different implications within a civilization. Frazer states:"If these definitions be accepted, we may say that myth has its source in reason, legend in memory, and folk-tale in imagination; and that the three riper products of the human mind which correspond to these its crude creations are science, history, and romance."[53]Janet Bacon expanded upon Frazer's categorization in her 1921 publicationThe Voyage of The Argonauts.[54]Myth According to Janet Bacon's 1921 publication, "Myth has an explanatory intention. It explains some natural phenomenon whose causes are not obvious, or some ritual practice whose origin has been forgotten." Bacon views myths as narratives that serve a practical societal function of providing a satisfactory explanation for many of humanity's greatest questions. Those questions address topics such as astronomical events, historical circumstances, environmental phenomena, and a range of human experiences including love, anger, greed, and isolation.Legend According to Bacon, "Legend, on the other hand, is true tradition founded on the fortunes of real people or on adventures at real places. Agamemnon, Lycurgus, Coriolanus, King Arthur, Saladin, are real people whose fame and the legends which spread it have become world-wide." Legends are mythical figures whose accomplishments and accolades live beyond their own mortality and transcend to the realm of myth by way of verbal communication through the ages. Like myth, they are rooted in the past, but unlike the sacred ephemeral space in which myths occur, legends are often individuals of human flesh that lived here on earth long ago, and are believed as fact. In American folklore, the tale of Davy Crockett or debatably Paul Bunyan can be considered legendsthey were real people who lived in the world, but through the years of regional folktales have assumed a mythological quality.Folktale Bacon classifies folktale as such, "Folk-tale, however, calls for no belief, being wholly the product of the imagination. In far distant ages some inventive story-teller was pleased to pass an idle hour with stories told of many-a-feat." Bacon's definition assumes that folktales do not possess the same underlying factualness that myths and legends tend to have. While folktales still hold a considerable cultural value, they are simply not regarded as true within a civilization. Bacon says, like myths, folktales are imagined and created by someone at some point, but differ in that folktales' primary purpose is to entertain; and that like legends, folktales may possess some element of truth in their original conception, but lack any form of credibility found in legends.In the absence of a known author or original narrator, myth narratives are oftentimes referred to as prose narratives. Prose narratives tend to be relatively linear regarding the time period they occur in, and are traditionally marked by its natural flow of speech as opposed to the rhythmic structure found in various forms of literature such as poetry and haikus. The structure of prose narratives allows it to be easily understood by manyas the narrative generally starts at the beginning of the story, and ends when the protagonist has resolved the conflict. These kinds of narratives are generally accepted as true within society, and are told from a place of great reverence and sacredness. Myths are believed to occur in a remote pastone that is before the creation or establishment of the civilization they derive from, and are intended to provide an account for things such as humanity's origins, natural phenomenon, and human nature.[55] Thematically, myths seek to provide information about oneself, and many are viewed as among some of the oldest forms of prose narratives, which grants traditional myths their life-defining characteristics that continue to be communicated today.Another theory regarding the purpose and function of mythological narratives derives from 20th Century philologist Georges Dumzil and his formative theory of the "trifunctionalism" found in Indo-European mythologies.[56] Dumzil refers only to the myths found in Indo-European societies, but the primary assertion made by his theory is that Indo-European life was structured around the notion of three distinct and necessary societal functions, and as a result, the various gods and goddesses in Indo-European mythology assumed these functions as well. The three functions were organized by cultural significance, with the first function being the most grand and sacred. For Dumzil, these functions were so vital, they manifested themselves in every aspect of life and were at the center of everyday life.[56]These "functions", as Dumzil puts it, were an array of esoteric knowledge and wisdom that was reflected by the mythology. The first function was sovereigntyand was divided into two additional categories: magical and juridical. As each function in Dumzil's theory corresponded to a designated social class in the human realm; the first function was the highest, and was reserved for the status of kings and other royalty. In an interview with Alain Benoist, Dumzil described magical sovereignty as such,"[Magical Sovereignty] consists of the mysterious administration, the 'magic' of the universe, the general ordering of the cosmos. This is a 'disquieting' aspect, terrifying from certain perspectives. The other aspect is more reassuring, more oriented to the human world. It is the 'juridical' part of the sovereign function."[57]This implies that gods of the first function are responsible for the overall structure and order of the universe, and those gods who possess juridical sovereignty are more closely connected to the realm of humans and are responsible for the concept of justice and order. Dumzil uses the pantheon of Norse gods as examples of these functions in his 1981 essayhe finds that the Norse gods Odin and Tyr reflect the different brands of sovereignty. Odin is the author of the cosmos, and possessor of infinite esoteric knowledgegoing so far as to sacrifice his eye for the accumulation of more knowledge. While Tyrseen as the "just god"is more concerned with upholding justice, as illustrated by the epic myth of Tyr losing his hand in exchange for the monster Fenrir to cease his terrorization of the gods. Dumzil's theory suggests that through these myths, concepts of universal wisdom and justice were able to be communicated to the Nordic people in the form of a mythological narrative.[58]The second function as described by Dumzil is that of the proverbial hero or champion. These myths functioned to convey the themes of heroism, strength, and bravery and were most often represented in both the human world and the mythological world by valiant warriors. While the gods of the second function were still revered in society, they did not possess the same infinite knowledge found in the first category. A Norse god that would fall under the second function would be Thorgod of thunder. Thor possessed great strength, and was often first into battle, as ordered by his father Odin. This second function reflects Indo-European cultures' high regard for the warrior class, and explains the belief in an afterlife that rewards a valiant death on the battlefield; for the Norse mythology, this is represented by Valhalla.Lastly, Dumzil's third function is composed of gods that reflect the nature and values of the most common people in Indo-European life. These gods often presided over the realms of healing, prosperity, fertility, wealth, luxury, and youthany kind of function that was easily related to by the common peasant farmer in a society. Just as a farmer would live and sustain themselves off their land, the gods of the third function were responsible for the prosperity of their crops, and were also in charge of other forms of everyday life that would never be observed by the status of kings and warriors, such as mischievousness and promiscuity. An example found in Norse mythology could be seen through the god Freyra god who was closely connected to acts of debauchery and overindulging.Dumzil viewed his theory of trifunctionalism as distinct from other mythological theories because of the way the narratives of Indo-European mythology permeated into every aspect of life within these societies, to the point that the societal view of death shifted away from a primal perception that tells one to fear death, and instead death became seen as the penultimate act of heroismby solidifying a person's position in the hall of the gods when they pass from this realm to the next. Additionally, Dumzil proposed that his theory stood at the foundation of the modern understanding of the Christian Trinity, citing that the three key deities of Odin, Thor, and Freyr were often depicted together in a trioseen by many as an overarching representation of what would be known today as "divinity".[56]A narrative gives listeners an entertaining and collaborative avenue for acquiring knowledge. All human cultures use storytelling as a way to record their histories, myths, and values, with the oldest and majority form being oral storytelling. These stories can be seen as evolving entities among cultural communities that carry the shared experience and history of the culture within them. While storytelling is often a form of entertainment and recreation, it can also be instructional or educational. During people's childhoods, narratives are often used to guide them on: proper behavior, history, formation of a communal identity, and values from their culture's standpoint, which anthropologists explicitly study today, for instance, in the communities of indigenous people.[59] With regard to oral tradition, narratives consist of everyday speech where the performer has the licence to recontextualise the story to a particular audience, often to a younger generation, and are contrasted with epics which consist of formal speech and are usually learned word for word.[60] Stories are often used within indigenous cultures in order to share knowledge to the younger generation.[61] Due to indigenous narratives leaving room for open-ended interpretation, native stories often engage children in the storytelling process so that they can make their own meaning and explanations within the story. This promotes holistic thinking among native children, which works toward merging an individual and world identity. Such an identity upholds native epistemology and gives children a sense of belonging as their cultural identity develops through the sharing and passing on of stories.[62]For example, a number of indigenous stories are used to illustrate a value or lesson. In the Western Apache tribe, stories can be used to warn of the misfortune that befalls people when they do not follow acceptable behavior. One story speaks to the offense of a mother's meddling in her married son's life. In the story, the Western Apache tribe is under attack from a neighboring tribe, the Pimas. The Apache mother hears a scream. Thinking it is her son's wife screaming, she tries to intervene by yelling at him. This alerts the Pima tribe to her location, and she is promptly killed due to intervening in her son's life.[63]Indigenous American cultures use storytelling to teach children the values and lessons of life. Although storytelling provides entertainment, its primary purpose is to educate.[64] Alaskan Indigenous Natives state that narratives teach children where they fit in, what their society expects of them, how to create a peaceful living environment, and to be responsible, worthy members of their communities.[64] In the Mexican culture, many adult figures tell their children stories in order to teach children values such as individuality, obedience, honesty, trust, and compassion.[65] For example, one of the versions of La Llorona is used to teach children to make safe decisions at night and to maintain the morals of the community.[65]Narratives are considered by the Canadian Mtis community, to help children understand that the world around them is interconnected to their lives and communities.[66] For example, the Mtis community share the "Humorous Horse Story" to children, which portrays that horses stumble throughout life just like humans do.[66] Navajo stories also use dead animals as metaphors by showing that all things have purpose.[67] Lastly, elders from Alaskan Native communities claim that the use of animals as metaphors allow children to form their own perspectives while at the same time self-reflecting on their own lives.[66]American Indian elders also state that storytelling invites the listeners, especially children, to draw their own conclusions and perspectives while self-reflecting upon their lives.[64] Furthermore, they insist that narratives help children grasp and obtain a wide range of perspectives that help them interpret their lives in the context of the story. American Indian community members emphasize to children that the method of obtaining knowledge can be found in stories passed down through each generation. Moreover, community members also let the children interpret and build a different perspective of each story.[64]An emerging field of information warfare (see also Hybrid warfare) is the "battle of the narratives". The battle of the narratives is a full-blown battle in the cognitive dimension of the information environment, just as traditional warfare is fought in the physical domains (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace). One of the foundational struggles in warfare in the physical domains is to shape the environment such that the contest of arms will be fought on terms that are to one's advantage. Likewise, a key component of the battle of the narratives is to succeed in establishing the reasons for and potential outcomes of the conflict, on terms favorable to one's efforts.[68]In historiography, according to Lawrence Stone, narrative has traditionally been the main rhetorical device used by historians. In 1979, at a time when the new social history was demanding a social-science model of analysis, Stone detected a move back toward the narrative. Stone defined narrative as organized chronologically; focused on a single coherent story; descriptive rather than analytical; concerned with people not abstract circumstances; and dealing with the particular and specific rather than the collective and statistical. He reported that, "More and more of the 'new historians' are now trying to discover what was going on inside people's heads in the past, and what it was like to live in the past, questions which inevitably lead back to the use of narrative."[69]Some philosophers identify narratives with a type of explanation. Mark Bevir argues, for example, that narratives explain actions by appealing to the beliefs and desires of actors and by locating webs of beliefs in the context of historical traditions. Narrative is an alternative form of explanation to that associated with natural science.Historians committed to a social science approach, however, have criticized the narrowness of narrative and its preference for anecdote over analysis, and clever examples rather than statistical regularities.[70]Storytelling rights may be broadly defined as the ethics of sharing narratives (includingbut not limited tofirsthand, secondhand, and imagined stories). In Storytelling Rights: The uses of oral and written texts by urban adolescents, author Amy Shuman offers the following definition of storytelling rights: "the important and precarious relationship between narrative and event and, specifically, between the participants in an event and the reporters who claim the right to talk about what happened."[71]The ethics of retelling other people's stories may be explored through a number of questions: whose story is being told and how, what is the story's purpose or aim, what does the story promise (for instance, empathy, redemption, authenticity, clarification)and at whose benefit? Storytelling rights also implicates questions of consent, empathy, and accurate representation. While storytellingand retellingcan function as a powerful tool for agency and advocacy, it can also lead to misunderstanding and exploitation.Storytelling rights is notably important in the genre of personal experience narrative. Academic disciplines such as performance, folklore, literature, anthropology, cultural studies, and other social sciences may involve the study of storytelling rights, often hinging on ethics.Narrative environment is a contested term that has been used for techniques of architectural or exhibition design in which 'stories are told in space' and also for the virtual environments in which computer games are played and which are invented by the computer game authors.Narrative film usually uses images and sounds on film (or, more recently, on analogue or digital video media) to convey a story. Narrative film is usually thought of in terms of fiction but it may also assemble stories from filmed reality, as in some documentary film, but narrative film may also use animation.Narrative history is a genre of factual historical writing that uses chronology as its framework (as opposed to a thematic treatment of a historical subject).Narrative photography is photography used to tell stories or in conjunction with stories.Narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story.Metanarrative, sometimes also known as master- or grand narrative, is a higher-level cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience you've had in life. Similar to metanarrative are masterplots or "recurrent skeletal stories, belonging to cultures and individuals that play a powerful role in questions of identity, values, and the understanding of life."[72]Hypodiegetic narrativeMonogatariNarrative designerNarrative threadNarreme as the basic unit of narrative structureOrganizational storytelling^ Random House (1979)^ Spencer, Alexander (2018-06-25). "Narratives and the romantic genre in IR dominant and marginalized stories of Arab Rebellion in Libya". International Politics. 56 (1). Springer Science and Business Media LLC: 123140. doi:10.1057/s41311-018-0171-z. ISSN1384-5748. S2CID149826920. Narratives here are considered to be part of human mental activity and give meaning to experiences.^ Carey & Snodgrass (1999)^ Harmon (2012)^ Webster (1984)^ Traupman (1966)^ Webster (1969)^ Mello, Robin (2001-02-02). "The Power of Storytelling: How Oral Narrative Influences Children's Relationships in Classrooms". 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