**ANALYSIS OF PROSE TEXTS – NARRATIVES**

* **the basic criteria are**

- **STORY** (**What happens**?)

- **PLOT** (What are the **causal elements** of story?)

- **CHARACTER** (**Who acts**?)

- **SETTING AND TIME** (**Where** and **when** do events take place)

- **NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE** (**Who sees** what?)

- **STYLE** (**formal aspects** of the narrative)

All are also important when analysing film and drama, i.e. wherever NARRATIVE is a constitutive feature).

**NARRATIVE?**[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Q: WHAT’s the distinction between STORY & NARRATIVE?**

* **Stories** – **accounts of WHAT happened** to people and how the experience felt to those people
* **Narrative** – a basic human **strategy to come to terms** with **time/process/change**

**Q: What is NARRATIVE PROSE?**[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Prose lit. that tells a **story**
* ***but*** NARRATIVE and STORY are ***not* exact *synonyms***

**NARRATIVE answers the three following questions:**

* **WHAT** is being **told**
* **HOW** is it being **told**
* **WHY** it is being **told**

**Key terms or CATEGORIES in NARRATIVE prose**

**STORY & DISCOURSE**

* STORY – *WHAT* is told (what happens)
* DISCOURSE – *HOW* is it told (a term amply used in structuralist theory)
* NARRATIVE encompasses STORY; *not the other way round*

For the purpose of analysis, it useful to further subdivide these terms and to talk about elements of the story**:**

**1. STORY**

—**actions**

––**events**––--––

—**happenings**

––––1. **story**––

—**characters**

––**existents**––––

—**space/settings**

**NARRATIVE** –––––––––

––––2. **discourse**

* **EVENTS things that happen**
* **EXISTENTS characters** that make things happen or have them happen to them
* **ACTIONS** EVENTS **acted** out **actively** (character kills someone)
* **HAPPENINGS** EVENTS **just happen** (heart-attack)

**2. DISCOURSE**

––––1. **story**

**NARRATIVE**–––

–––**2. discourse** —plot

—narrative voices (who SPEAKS)

—focalisation (who SEES)

—narrative modes

—representation of consciousness

—time

—language (style)

1. Based on David Herman, ‘Introduction’, in *Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–10; and Marie-Laure Ryan ‘Toward a Definition of Narrative’, in *Cambridge Companion*, 11–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Based on Lethbridge and Mildorf, Stefanie Lethbridge and Jarmila Mildorf, *Basics of English Studies*,‘Chapter 2, Prose’, 42–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)