

# How to Read and Study the Bible

Narrative  
Poetry  
Making Observations

## Reading the Bible

- The Bible was not meant to be reduced to a moral lesson or a topical study.
- The Bible is a piece of literature with a very specific message.
- Only when the authors' message (not ours) is understood can one apply it to their lives.

## Major Themes

- Sovereignty and supremacy of Yahweh
- Fall and sin of Humanity
- Love and Grace of Yahweh
- The chosen seed/Plan

**Metanarrative**

- The redemption of creation and humanity
- The kingdom of Yahweh
- The kingdom of Satan
- Foreshadowing and arrival of Jesus Christ

# Understanding Narrative

## Reading Narrative

| Response Focused  | Event Focused  | Text Focused  |
|---|--|---|
| What the reader thinks the text is saying                             | What is the historical event recorded in the text            | What the text says about the historical event                   |
| It does not matter what you think, it only matters what God is saying | Do not know what happened with the original historical event | This is what the author has revealed about the historical event |

However, the history and culture of the event is necessary to understand the text.

## Reading Narrative

- The author writes with the original audience in mind using common language and experiences.
- **Thema** are the terms and experiences that the author assumes the audience knows.
- **Rhema** are the things that the audience does not understand and so he must elaborate on them.
- We are not the original audience so it is up to us to learn the Thema.

## Reading Narrative

- Know how to read literature
- Know the worldview of the ancient Near East
- Know the geography of the ancient Near East

## What Is Narrative?

- Narrative is a selective record of a series of events that uses shared conventions to convey the author's communicative intention in an engaging manner.
- The Bible's intention is a theological one.
- Author is not interested as much in the historical as he is in Yahweh's interaction with the people.

## Basic Elements of Narrative

- Setting
- Plot
- Characterization
- Dialogue

## Setting

- **Setting**—When, where, and cultural background of the story takes place.
- Understanding the setting can affect one's interpretation of the story.
- A **scene** is a specific location where the action takes place.
- One can identify what is important to the author by what is left out and what is included.

## Setting: Examples

- The fall of Adam and Eve is in the garden of Eden.
- The book of Ruth is the time of the Judges and a famine in the land.
- Elijah's confrontation with the soldiers takes place on a hill (2 Kig. 1:19).
- Samson's confrontation with the lion is in the vineyards of Timnah (Judg. 14:5).

## Plot

- **Plot**—A sequence of events that involve a conflict centered on the major character of the story.
- Can be opposition, a test, or a challenge.
- Can be external or internal.
- The conflict of the plot is the main idea.

### Plot Structure

1. Introduction
2. Crisis Introduced
3. Climax of Crisis
4. Resolution Introduced
5. Crisis Resolved
6. Conclusion

### Plot Structure: Examples

Life of Joseph

1. Joseph's family
2. Joseph's dreams
3. Joseph forgotten in prison
4. Joseph before Pharaoh
5. Joseph rescues his family
6. Family is blessed

### Plot Structure: Examples

Lion, Witch, & Wardrobe

1. Playing in house
2. Meeting Mr. Tumnus
3. Aslan Killed
4. Resurrection
5. Witch Killed
6. Children become rulers

### Types of Plot

- **Tragedy**—One who has the potential to succeed but fails and falls (1 Kig.; Saul).
- **Negative**—Presents a character in a negative light as an example to avoid (Judg. 10-12; Jephthah).
- **Punitive**—Highlights Yahweh's justice by punishing an evildoer (Judg. 9; Abimelech).

### Types of Plot

- **Comedy**—One who faces challenges and overcomes them through faith (Ruth).
- **Positive**—Presents a character in a positive light as an example to follow (Gen. 37-50; Joseph).
- **Reward**—Illustrate Yahweh's justice by rewarding faithfulness (2 kig. 4:8-17; Shunamite Woman).

### Characterization

- **Characterization**—How the participants in the story are presented and developed.
- Used to emphasize relationship to Yahweh.
- One must pay attention to how the narrator evaluates the character.

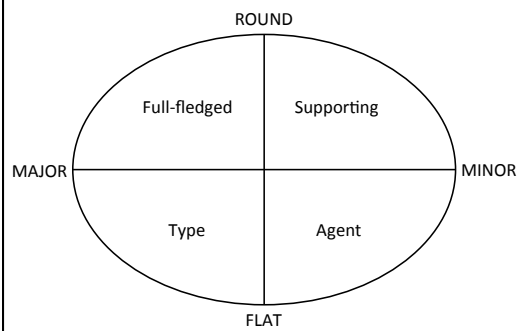
### Characterization

- How does the narrator present the character?
- How, if at all, does the character develop in the course of the story?
- In what way(s) is the character an example to follow or to avoid?
- What does the character’s experience teach about who God is and the way He relates to people?
- The author does not always tell the reader what they should think about a particular person or action. He expects the reader to engage with the ideas presented on their own.

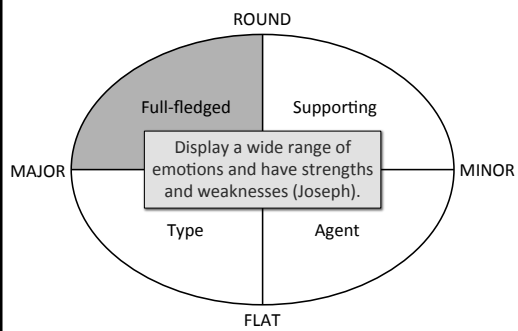
### Characterization

- **Major**—Central to the plot development and resolution (Abraham).
- **Minor**—Developed character yet not necessary for every scene (Sarah).
- **Round**—Display more than two character traits and are dynamic in personality (David).
- **Flat**—Display one or two character traits and are static in personality (Lot).

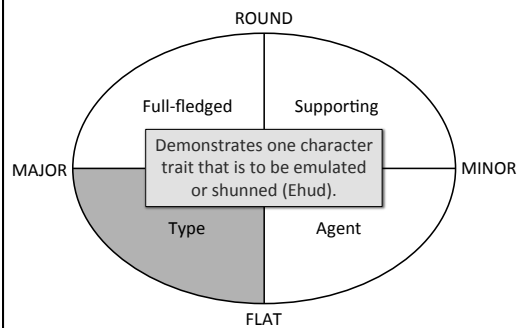
### Classification of Characters



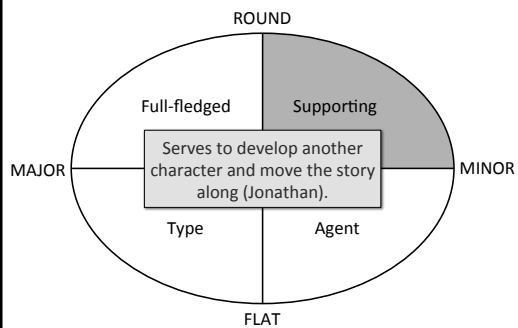
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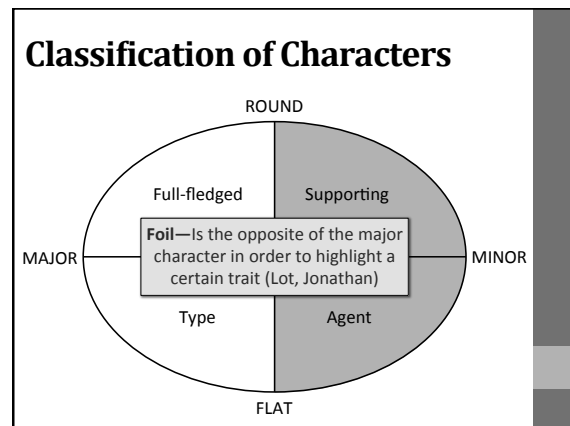
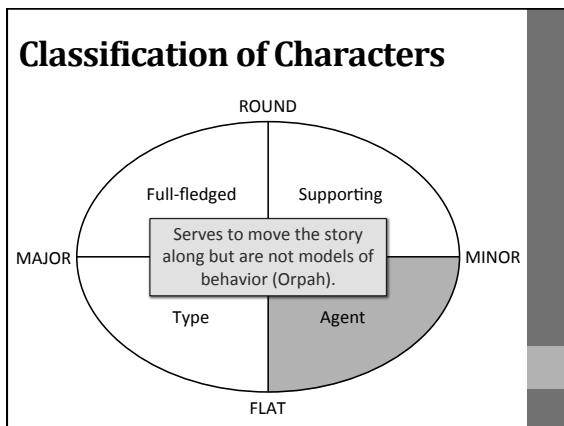


### Classification of Characters



### Classification of Characters





## Dialogue

- **Dialogue**—How speech is used to portray the characters and events in the story.
- **Indirect** dialogue is when the author conveys the content of the speech.
- **Direct** dialogue is when the author uses the exact words of the character.
- Dialogue reveals the type of person the characters in the story are.
- Comparing and contrasting their words with their actions can reveal what is important.

## Dialogue: Examples

- David states his motives for killing Goliath, both good and bad (1 Sam. 17).
- David and Abigail (1 Sam. 25).
- Moses resistance to Yahweh (Ex. 3-5).
- Samson's mother lack of understanding (Judg. 13).

## Dialogue: Priority of Voices

- Yahweh reflexive (Gen. 18:17-19)
- Yahweh's words (Gen. 1:3)
- Narrator or parenthetical (Jn. 2:9)
- Main character (Gen. 45:1-13; 50:19-21)
- The people (Num. 13:1)

## Literary Devices

- **Repetition**—Phrases repeated to emphasize, make a point, or connect two scenes (Gen. 5; "then he died").
- **Patterns**—A passage is built on a repeating phrase or event. Deviation from the pattern is important (Samson and Delilah).
- **Comparison and Contrast**—Things that are alike and unlike (Saul & David; Samson & Samuel).
- **Proportion**—The amount of time spent on a topic. Emphasizes importance (Creation compared to patriarchs in Genesis).

## Literary Devices

- **Irony**—A statement or action that is the opposite of what was implied or intended (Ruth 1:20).
- **Metaphor**—A term or phrase used to represent something else for the sake of comparison (Jn. 6:49-51). When a phrase is emotive not descriptive (Gen. 3:9, 11).
- **Foreshadow**—To show or indicate something beforehand (1 Sam. 21:7; 22:9, 18).
- **Typology**—When a character points to Christ (Isaac). An object symbolizes Christ through its repetitive use (Temple).

## Asking Questions

- Who
  - What
  - Where
  - When
  - Why
  - How
- 
- Ask the text questions that only it can answer.
  - Ask questions that you do not know the answers.
  - Ask about the way the author presented the text.