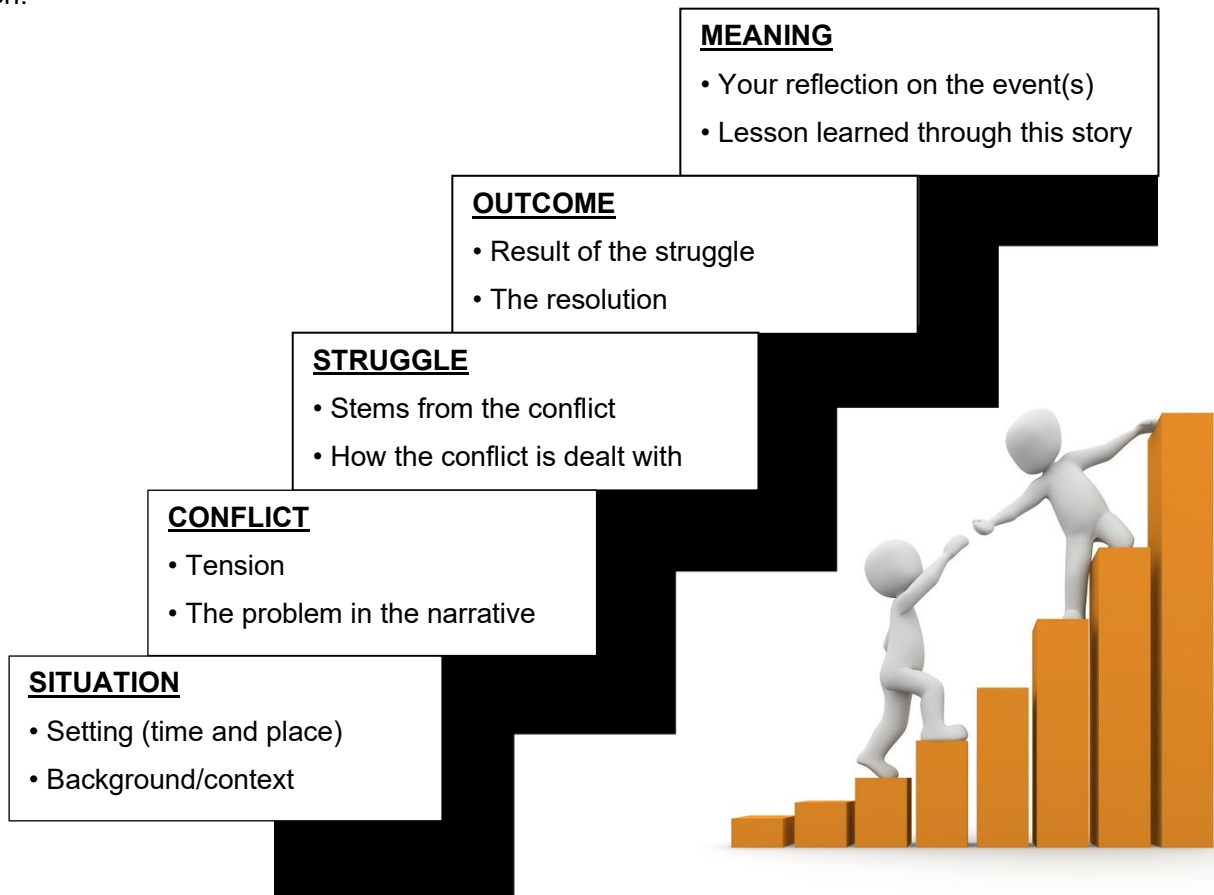


Narrative Structure

A Narrative essay will tell a story, often chronologically. You start at the beginning and tell a story as events unfolded. When doing so, remember that it is your job, as the author, to keep the reader in mind and help them to follow along so that they reach the conclusion of the essay understanding what has transpired. Action will often build. In the illustration below, the narrative structure starts at the bottom and works its way up, through a conflict, to a resolution.



When writing a narrative, keep the following points in mind:

Tense and Action: Generally, narratives can be written in the past tense, since the event has already taken place. However, sometimes, depending on your instructor's specifications, present tense can be used. Remember, a narrative chronicles an event, almost like scenes in a film. Keep in mind the action.

Point of View: Narration often lends itself to first person point of view (I, me, mine, our). Third person point of view (he, she, they, etc.) is often acceptable as well. Be sure to consult your assignment guide or your instructor for specific requirements. Second person (you) would be avoided.

Descriptive Detail: Use rich images, sensory description (the five senses), and specific language, including strong, active verbs, to help your reader understand the experience.

Dialogue: You might incorporate spoken language to develop your characters. Again, check with your instructor to be sure that using dialogue is acceptable for your assignment. Consult a writing or grammar handbook for the rules on properly formatting dialogue (quotation marks, spacing).

Narrative Structure Graphic Organizer

Use the template below to outline some ideas about the story you want to tell your reader. Keep in mind that the conclusion for this type of essay will usually include some sort explanation of what you or your characters learned. It will demonstrate to the reader why this story should be important to them.

Situation:

Conflict:

Struggle:

Outcome:

Meaning:

To make smooth transitions between parts of your narrative, be sure to consult the ASC's Transitions handout. The section titled "To Show a Time or Place Arrangement of Your Ideas" would be most helpful for this type of essay.