

# Module 9: Nonfiction

## Topic 1 Content: Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction

### Introduction

**Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction**

Plot

Setting

Dialogue

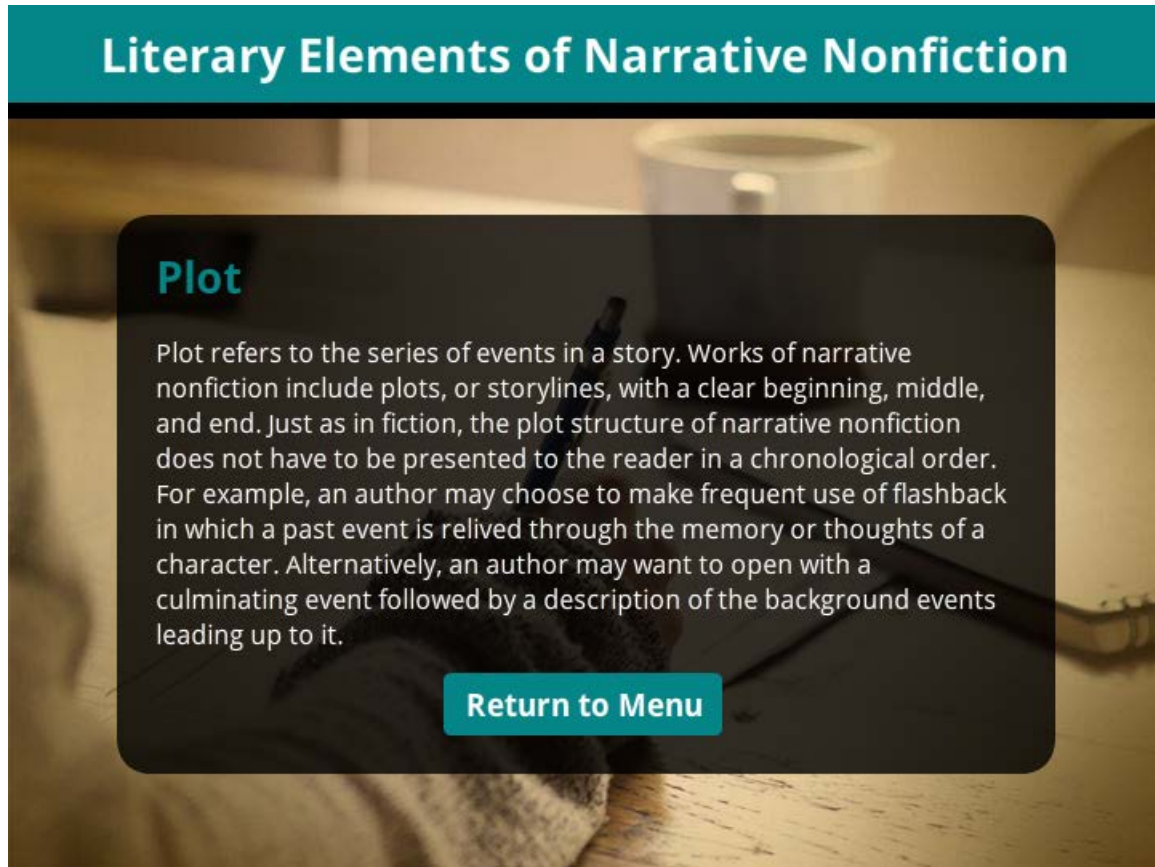
Characterization

Although narrative nonfiction is based on true events, it shares many characteristics with literary fiction. These aspects are what make narrative nonfiction stand apart from other types of nonfiction, such as interviews or research papers. In this interactivity, you will explore various types of literary elements that are commonly found in works of narrative nonfiction, including plot, setting, dialogue, and characterization. Click each of the tabs to learn more.

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**Plot**



**Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction**

**Plot**

Plot refers to the series of events in a story. Works of narrative nonfiction include plots, or storylines, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Just as in fiction, the plot structure of narrative nonfiction does not have to be presented to the reader in a chronological order. For example, an author may choose to make frequent use of flashback in which a past event is relived through the memory or thoughts of a character. Alternatively, an author may want to open with a culminating event followed by a description of the background events leading up to it.

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**Setting**



**Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction**

**Setting**

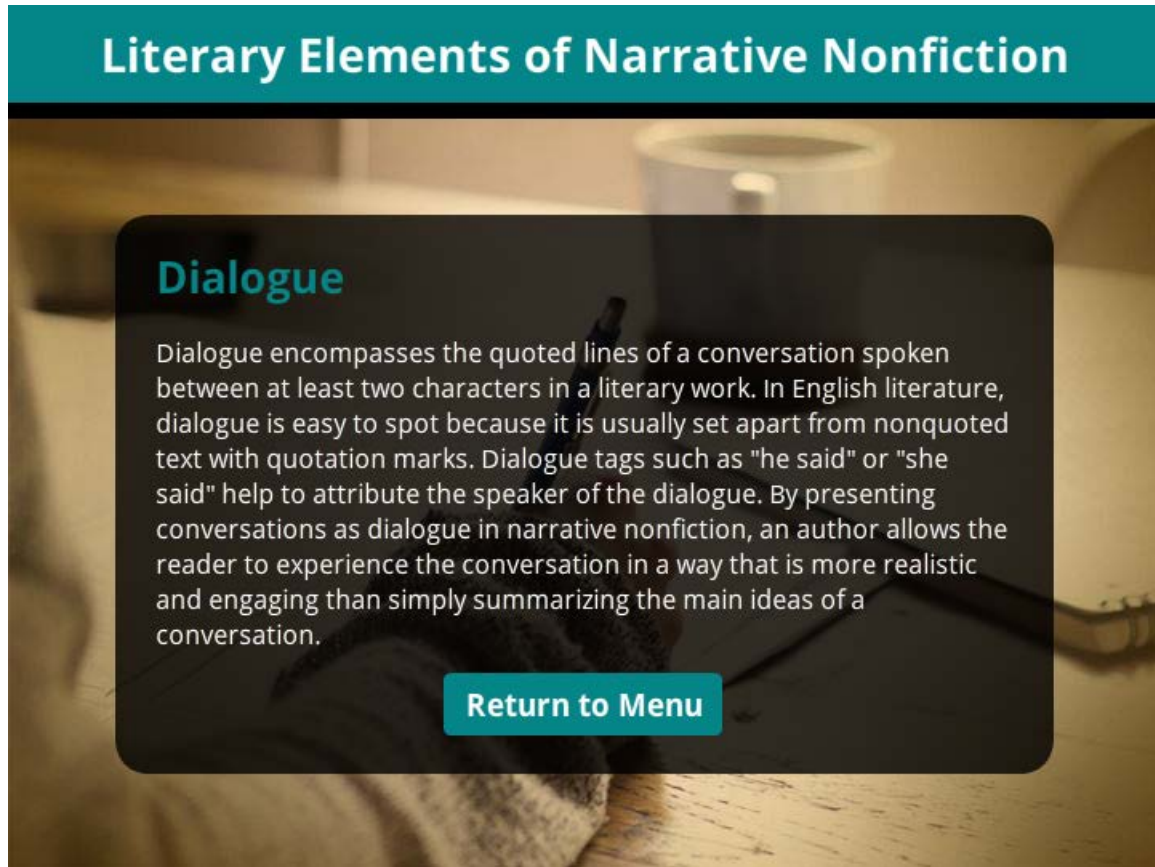
The setting of a story includes the time and location in which a story takes place. Vivid descriptions of what the setting looks like can help to set the tone and mood of the scene. For example, pointing out the dark and rainy weather can emphasize the grief and sadness felt during a funeral. Describing the vibrant colors, enticing aromas, and lively sounds of a bustling market can convey feelings of anticipation and excitement. Likewise, focusing on the tattered, faded curtains and dilapidated furniture of an impoverished home sets up a mood of hardship and gloom.

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**Dialogue**



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**Dialogue**

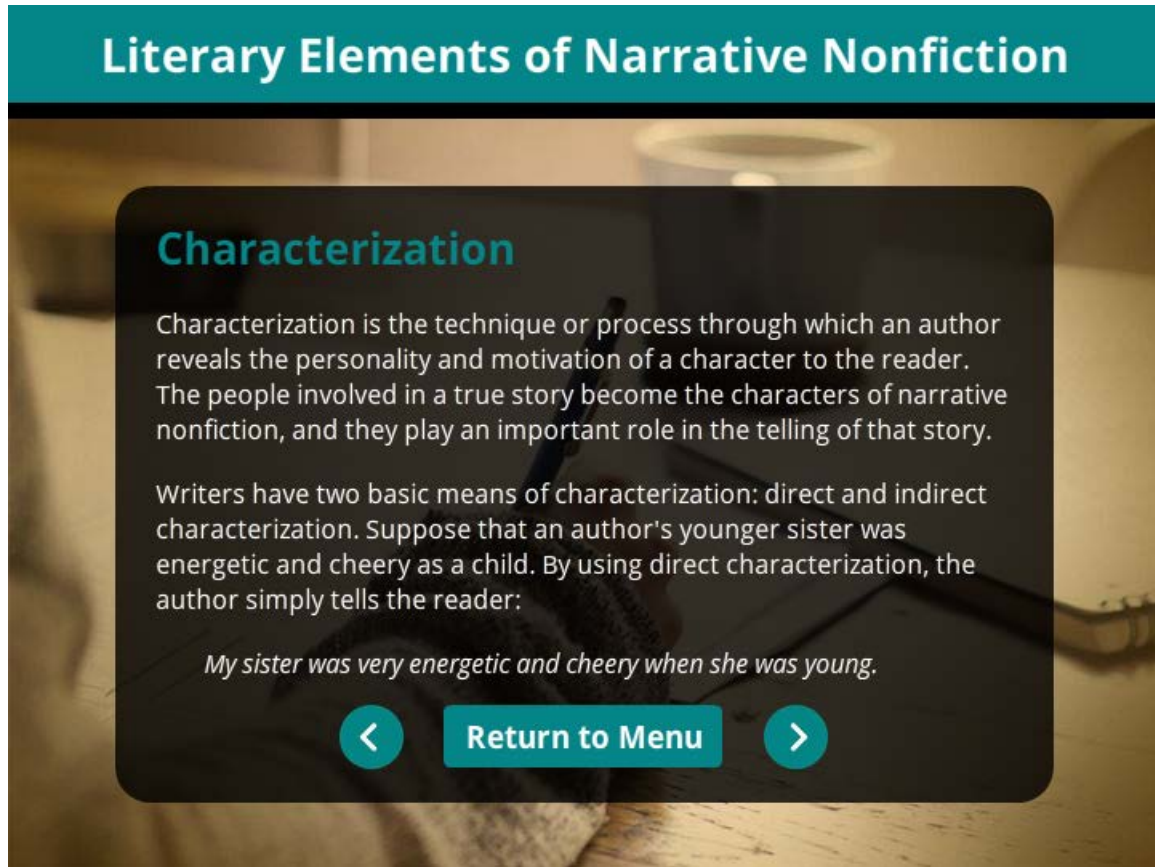
Dialogue encompasses the quoted lines of a conversation spoken between at least two characters in a literary work. In English literature, dialogue is easy to spot because it is usually set apart from nonquoted text with quotation marks. Dialogue tags such as "he said" or "she said" help to attribute the speaker of the dialogue. By presenting conversations as dialogue in narrative nonfiction, an author allows the reader to experience the conversation in a way that is more realistic and engaging than simply summarizing the main ideas of a conversation.

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**Characterization (Part 1)**



**Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction**

### Characterization

Characterization is the technique or process through which an author reveals the personality and motivation of a character to the reader. The people involved in a true story become the characters of narrative nonfiction, and they play an important role in the telling of that story.

Writers have two basic means of characterization: direct and indirect characterization. Suppose that an author's younger sister was energetic and cheery as a child. By using direct characterization, the author simply tells the reader:

*My sister was very energetic and cheery when she was young.*

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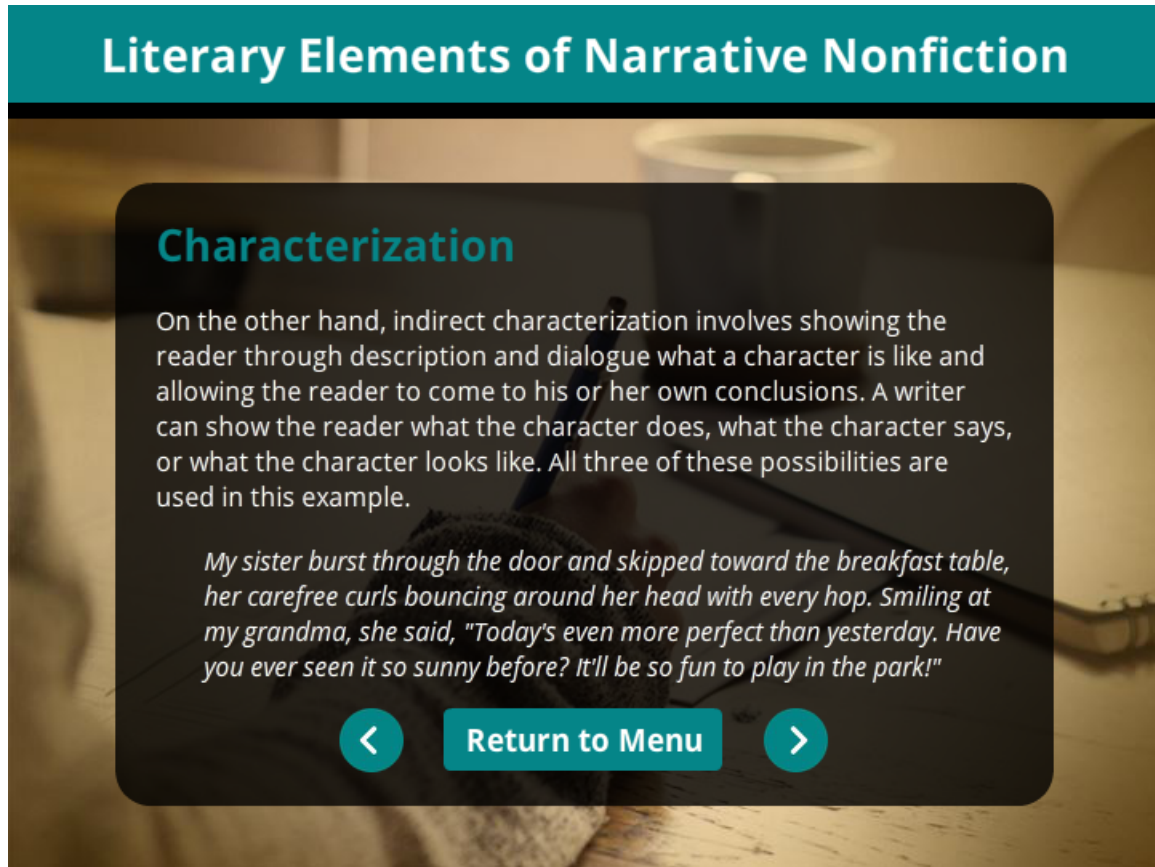
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**Characterization (Part 2)**



## Literary Elements of Narrative Nonfiction

### Characterization

On the other hand, indirect characterization involves showing the reader through description and dialogue what a character is like and allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusions. A writer can show the reader what the character does, what the character says, or what the character looks like. All three of these possibilities are used in this example.

*My sister burst through the door and skipped toward the breakfast table, her carefree curls bouncing around her head with every hop. Smiling at my grandma, she said, "Today's even more perfect than yesterday. Have you ever seen it so sunny before? It'll be so fun to play in the park!"*

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