

A Storyteller's Steps in Bible Story Analysis

1. **A careful and alert reading of the text.** Not just once, but many times, asking lots of questions: the **Six "W's"**: *Who? What? Where? When? Why?* and *How?* And ponder all the **Six "C's"**: *Character, Circumstances, Conflict, Crisis, Climax* and *Conclusion*. Be sure and always read at least the preceding and following chapters.
2. **Visualize the story** as you read it calling upon all the senses, and not just what has been included, but what is also implied, or suggested. Settings are usually significant. Are there details or aspects left out, but yet implied by the whole.
3. **Visualize it from the viewpoints of each of the characters.** Look for clues concerning the characters - their state of mind, feelings, motivations, why they have been included in the account. Since the Bible is sparse in giving descriptions, pay attention when it does; and note the significance of names. Look for the subtle expressions of the viewpoint of the narrator as well.
4. **Be alert to the details.** Preserved oral traditions are often compacted texts, so the "bare bones" that remain are important to the story. The use of particular words or phrases or descriptions may be very important for catching subtle meanings, and in "fleshing out" the story.
5. **Be alert for repetitions of words, phrases, or actions.** Be alert for changes in pacing, shifts in settings, or in the mode of narration, use of dialog, addition of detail, etc. These offer important clues.
6. **Map out scenes and diagram the plot.** Break the story sequence into a series of scenes. What was the problem creating tension? The turning point? Where is the Conflict, the Climax, and the Resolution. Is the conclusion satisfactory?
7. **Pay particular attention to the dialogue.** In Biblical narrative, usually direct speech is used to manifest character traits, motives, feelings, thoughts and intentions. Contrasted dialogue - juxtaposing the brief statements of one with the verbosity of the other is often significant. As are the initial words spoken.
8. **Get the "Big Picture"** Are there rhetorical devices in the arrangement of the episodes of the book? In the flow of the larger book, look for repetition, parallels, comparison and contrast of characters or events; irony; clustered accounts; symmetry, framing, or use of chiasm; topical or chronological arrangements.
9. **Then consider "Why?" of the story.** Ponder why it was included in the overall narrative by the writers? How does it relate to the themes of the book? How do its characters fit into the bigger picture? What role does it serve in the flow of its larger contexts? Why has God passed it on to us?

A narrative is a literary form characterized by sequential time action, and involving plot, setting, dialogue and characters.

Old Testament Narrative Structures:

Some examples on larger levels

Narratives are characterized by dramatic style (plot), character development, action and dialogue, repetitions, frequent symmetry and even an occasional use of irony. Narrative structure often applies to larger arrangements than just the stories themselves.

Contrasts / Comparisons / Paralleled Accounts

Joshua 1 – 7: Rahab (The Caananite Harlot 2:1-21; 6:17,23,25) and **Achan** (7:10-26)
(These characters bracket the fall of Jericho and the defeat at Ai)

1 Samuel : Hannah's Son, Samuel (3:1-20) and **Eli's sons** (4:4-11)

Saul (9:1-2) and **David** (16-17) –As we are introduced to them. though much of 1 Samuel is an ongoing comparison and contrast of the man after man's heart and the one after God's.

Two brothers: Judah (Gen 38: 1-30) **Joseph** (Gen 39:1-23) Simultaneous accounts contrasting them in their relationships with foreign women.

Unified Dramatic Accounts with Rising and Falling Events – Turning Points

2 Chronicles 14 – 16 Asa Rises (14-15) and Falls (15-16) Notice the Battle narratives and Prophetic encounters The turning point was a change of trust (16:2)

2 Samuel : 1- 9 David's victorious rise to power
10-12 David's Sin with Bathsheba (Turning Point)
13-20 Consequences in the house of David

Esther

Clusters:

1 Kings 3:16-4:34 Four episodes about Solomon's early reign after prayer for wisdom
Numbers 33:1-49 A summary of travels in plains of Moab in four episodes
2 Kings 4f – A series of miracle stories about Elisha

Fravings (Inclusion)

1 Kings 3:1-9:25 (Pharaoh's daughter (3:1-3; 9:24-25) frames Solomon's Wisdom
9:26-10:29 (International trade (9:26-28; 10:14-29) frames Queen of Sheba

Chiasm

2 Samuel 21-24 is appended material not in Chronological order, arranged in **chiasm**:
→ Intervention **21:1-14** Battle Accomplishments **21:15-22** Royal Words **22:1-51**
Intervention **24:1-5** Battle Accomplishments **23:8-39** Royal Words **23:1-7** ←

Daniel 1-7 is a Chiastic arrangement with Four empires (2 and 7) Persecution (3 & 6) and Divine judgement (4 & 5) at the heart