

# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

<http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk>

Cobley, Paul ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8222-159X> (2016) Narrative. In: Oxford Bibliographies in Communication. Moy, Patricia, ed. Oxford Bibliographies Online . Oxford University Press. . [Book Section] (doi:10.1093/OBO/9780199756841-0088)

Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

This version is available at: <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/20006/>

## Copyright:

Middlesex University Research Repository makes the University's research available electronically.

Copyright and moral rights to this work are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners unless otherwise stated. The work is supplied on the understanding that any use for commercial gain is strictly forbidden. A copy may be downloaded for personal, non-commercial, research or study without prior permission and without charge.

Works, including theses and research projects, may not be reproduced in any format or medium, or extensive quotations taken from them, or their content changed in any way, without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). They may not be sold or exploited commercially in any format or medium without the prior written permission of the copyright holder(s).

Full bibliographic details must be given when referring to, or quoting from full items including the author's name, the title of the work, publication details where relevant (place, publisher, date), pagination, and for theses or dissertations the awarding institution, the degree type awarded, and the date of the award.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Middlesex University via the following email address:

[eprints@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@mdx.ac.uk)

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated.

See also repository copyright: re-use policy: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/policies.html#copy>

Article details

**Article title:** Narrative  
**Article ID:** 9780199756841-0088  
**Article author(s):** Paul Cobley  
**Publishing Group:** Reference-US

**Revision (XML provided)**

**Title revised?** Y/N

**Previous title:**

**Table of contents:**

Introduction

General Overviews

Journals

Origins of Narrative

Narrative and Identity

Early Narrative

The Novel

Audiovisual Narrative

Narrative in the Digital Age

“Naturally Occurring” Narrative

Narratology

Narrative in Social Science

Narrative and Cognition

Time and Narrative

Style and XML details

**Citation style:** Scientific

**Special characters/fonts/elements:**

Module details

**Module:** Communication

**Module code:** COM

**Module ISBN:**  
9780199756841

Format neutral

**Note: All content will be format neutral compliant, unless otherwise indicated here**

**Exceptions:**

- Oxford Bibliographies articles do not currently have keywords. Introductions serve as abstracts.

**NARRATIVE**

## INTRODUCTION

As a concept, narrative has now seriously come of age. Whereas in the past people may have talked about “stories,” they now refer to “narratives,” betraying the awareness of how story events are very much organized phenomena, and the fact that the way in which narratives are used is a matter of considerable significance. This awareness comes at a time when human societies are saturated with narratives. It is possible to consume dozens, perhaps hundreds, of narratives in different media each day. It is also possible to trade narratives interpersonally on a scale unprecedented in human history. It is hardly surprising, then, that “narrative” has become a key category in how humans understand themselves: it is possible that humans live by way of narratives, and that humans quite frequently think in narratives. It is certainly the case that humans produce narratives and have done so for tens of thousands of years, since the oral cultures of our early forager ancestors. There is a growing consensus regarding why humans evolved this form of signification, although there are also differences of opinion about some of the specifics. One key issue concerns whether the way the human child develops is particularly fitted to narrative modes of thought and expression. If so, a question arises regarding how deep-rooted in psychology this disposition might be, and what environmental conditions are required for it to function or flourish. One key and related topic concerns identity. Narrative has been instrumental in recording the identity of communities and offering groups of people stories by which they might live. Yet there is debate regarding the extent to which narrative governs individual identities. Furthermore, identity and narrative will be inflected in different ways according to the media in which they are embodied. Many of these media are extremely complex; they frame narratives in ways that are far more challenging than if narrative simply reflected reality. Thus there has been much analysis—beyond self-conscious narrative theory—of drama, the novel, and cinematic and televisual narrative, as well as oral narrative. Research into the reconfiguration of narrative forms on digital platforms and in a range of technologies continues. In recent decades there has also been an accelerated interest in how narrative suffuses everyday and occupational life, a development that has emerged almost concurrently with a more concentrated investigation of the relation of narrative and cognitive processes, particularly the human relations to time. The entries in this bibliography include “landmark” studies, surveys, debates, and currents in the study of narrative.

## GENERAL OVERVIEWS

An overview that covered all topics and all approaches in the field of narrative would be especially difficult to imagine. Many choose to focus on theoretical issues in narrative; some offer a historical account; some focus on one narrative medium rather than others; some present a specific “approach” to narrative; some offer an overview of approaches; and others prefer to discuss narrative without the baggage of contemporary or historical scholarship. Some overviews even contain a mixture of the aforementioned approaches. Certainly, it is possible to identify work that emerged before the advent of *\*Narratology\** and work that was published after and influenced by narratology. [Scholes and Kellogg 1966](#) is a useful instance of the former. The majority of overviews incorporate some discussion of narratology and/or Anglo-American discussions of the rhetoric of narrative, including [Rimmon-Kenan 1983](#). There has also developed a considerable body of work that acknowledges narratology but identifies itself as part of postclassical narratology with specific interests in cognitive theory and discourse analysis. [Herman 2009](#) is an example of this, along with the essays in [Herman 2007](#). Yet these are not the ultimate boundaries of overviews on narrative. There are works that remain resolutely outside such identifications, such as the cognate semiotic perspectives of [Cobley 2014](#) and [Taha 2015](#), the communicative approach of [Altman 2008](#), and the eclecticism of [Herman, et al. 2005](#).

Altman, Rick. 2008. *A theory of narrative*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780231144292]

Maverick work by a distinguished film theorist that circumvents the major and contemporary theories of narrative to produce an overview based on analyzing what characters are “followed” in pictorial and print fictions. Also considers nonfiction, and some philosophy and Biblical texts. Makes interesting and far-reaching conclusions.

Cobley, Paul. 2014. *Narrative*. 2d ed. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415834438]

Historical overview of narrative that focuses on how narratives have been embodied in different media, and what that has entailed for narrative’s social function of memorializing identity. Final chapter consists of a review of current research and theory in the field of narrative.

Herman, David. 2009. *Basic elements of narrative*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. [ISBN: 9781405141536]

Introduction to narrative from the point of view of narrative's "worldmaking" capacity. A necessarily partial approach to what the "basic elements" of narrative are, but contains some excellent, illuminating readings of canonical and popular texts across media.

Herman, David, ed. 2007. *The Cambridge companion to narrative*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780521856966]

Extremely useful guide to narrative from a theoretical, rather than historical, perspective. Contains a discussion of the attempt to define narrative (Ryan), plus orientating essays on key topics such as character (Margolin) and dialogue (Thomas), as well as essays on narrative and media, and issues such as language (Toolan) and ideology (Herman and Vervaeck).

Herman, David, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. 2005. *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory*. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415282598]

Certainly hitting the spot in 2005, this bulky volume is well-organized, well-indexed, and very much to the point. With its roster of contributors, it remains a crucial reference book. Contributions offer further readings and references, while the readers' guide at the front makes the hard task of connecting issues and theories much easier.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. 1983. *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*. London: Methuen. [ISBN: 9780416742206]

An exceptionally skillful, concise synthesis of \*Narratology\* and then extant Anglo-American work on fiction. Mainly arranged according to sections on "Story," "Text" and "Narration," the volume clarifies some basic ideas on narrative that were challenging in 1983 and remain so, to some extent, today.

Scholes, Robert, and Robert Kellogg. 1966. *The nature of narrative*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

An overview of narrative that is historically very interesting because of its focus on narrative *per se* before the project of \*Narratology\* that developed in Anglophone criticism soon after this book was published. Initially takes a historical approach, then, later, focuses on thematic issues in favor of discussing narrative outside of literature.

Taha, Ibrahim. 2015. *Heroizability: An anthroposemiotic theory of literary characters*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton. [ISBN: 9781501510816]

Semiotic survey that shows how the role of the hero is central to the constitution of narrative. Offers a very persuasive argument regarding the relation of narrative to the question of what it is to be human. It is useful to compare Taha's focus on the hero with Woloch 2003 (cited under \*Novel\*).

## JOURNALS

Research in narrative can be found across a huge number of journals in the humanities and social sciences. There are even regular studies of narrative in journals devoted to economics, organizations, and business, as well as a small number in the sciences. That there is such a large amount of research into narrative in the humanities is to be expected when one considers that “narrative” falls within the boundaries of disciplines with great longevity, such as the study of literature. Nevertheless, along with the emergence of a recognizable interdisciplinary field of narrative studies, a number of specific journals devoted to narrative have become established. Of these, the journals most consistently hosting the key debates in recent years have been ***Narrative*** and ***Narrative Inquiry***. While not devoted to narrative theory alone, but also to stylistics and poetics, the journal ***Style*** has been home to articles and special issues on topics close to current narrative theory, including literary Darwinism. There are now numerous journals on narrative approaches or theories within particular disciplines. Narrative medicine and therapy are well covered, for example, there is a journal of narrative politics, and there is a growing number of journals on narrative and visual culture, such as ***Image and Narrative***. As expected, many journals on literature or audiovisual communications—such as ***Modern Fiction Studies*** and ***SubStance***, or ***Screen*** and the ***Journal of Popular Film and Television*** respectively—regularly focus on narrative. The core journals in terms of studying narrative *per se* are listed below.

***Diegesis: Interdisciplinary E-Journal for Narrative Research***[<https://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/diegesis>]\*. 2012–. [class:periodical]

Open access journal founded in 2012 by the Center for Narrative Research ( Zentrum für Erzählforschung) of the University of Wuppertal. Features articles in German and English, reviews, and special issues twice-yearly on topics such as narrative in computer games, journalism, etc. (German title: *Interdisziplinäres E-Journal für Erzählforschung*).

***Journal of Narrative Theory***[<https://www.emich.edu/english/jnt/>]\*. 1971–. [class:periodical]

Established in 1971 as the journal as the *Journal of Narrative Technique*, this journal focuses on narratives produced through media. In doing so, it is truly eclectic, showcasing various theories of narrative with reference to the most canonical or niche works as well as the familiar, popular narrative.

***Narrative***[<https://ohiostatepress.org/index.htm?journals/Narrative/narrmain.htm>]\*.

[class:periodical]

One of the leading journals in the field. Originally growing out of the relationship with the *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *Narrative* was launched in 1993 as the official journal of the International Society for the Study of Narrative. Published three times per year, it features a range of articles principally on narrative in the arts but not exclusively. Also has themed issues on narrative theory, Such as a recent issue on “Social Minds.” Information on individual issues available from Project Muse[<https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/narrative/>].

*Narrative Culture*[<http://www.wsupress.wayne.edu/journals/detail/narrative-culture>]. 2014–.

Journal first published in 2014. Two issues per year, with articles on the breadth of narrative in popular culture broadly conceived.

*Narrative Inquiry*[<http://www.clarku.edu/faculty/mbamberg/narrativeINQ/>]. 1990–. [class:periodical]

Previously entitled *The Journal of Narrative and Life History* (1990–1997), *Narrative Inquiry* has been the home of leading work on narrative in the social sciences. It publishes work especially with relation to the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology, social work, and medicine, but also publishes theoretical contributions.

*Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations & Interventions*[[http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/cirn/narrative\\_works.aspx](http://w3.stu.ca/stu/sites/cirn/narrative_works.aspx)]. 2011–. [class:periodical]

Launched in 2011, this open access twice-yearly journal publishes articles with a commitment to bridging research into theory and practice. It features narrative approaches to subjectivity in particular, ranging across topics such as health care and diplomacy.

*StoryTelling: A Critical Journal of Popular Narrative*[<http://english.eku.edu/storytelling-critical-journal-popular-narrative>]. 2005–. [class:periodical]

Based at the University of Eastern Kentucky, this journal has run since 2005. It features articles analyzing narrative in popular texts from Swift to *Charlie's Angels*.

*Storytelling, Self, Society*[<https://commerce.wayne.edu/wsupjournals/storytelling-self-society.html?cat=89>]. 2004–. [class:periodical]

Published three times per year since 2004. Initially committed to oral storytelling especially, the journal also features articles on such topics as theatrical storytelling and theory in ethnography. Various articles analyze narratives of care as they are embedded in everyday life.

*\*Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative*

*Studies*[<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Storyworlds,674134.aspx>]\*. 2009–.

[class:periodical]

Originally commencing with one issue per year in 2009, this wide-ranging journal moved to two issues per year in 2014. It has been able to attract very strong scholarship on narrative across media and is particularly distinguished in narrative theory. Features articles by creative writing and other practitioners as well as academics, and has been a fitting home for articles on narrative in digital media.

*\*Style*[[http://www.psupress.org/journals/jnls\\_Style.html](http://www.psupress.org/journals/jnls_Style.html)]\*. 1967–. [class:periodical]

A broader remit in poetics and discourse characterizes the content of this journal. However, there has been sufficient focus on narrative theories in its pages in recent years to merit a [listing here](#).

## ORIGINS OF NARRATIVE

Despite what might seem its obvious importance, the issue of the origins of narrative—where it came from, how it arose—had been left untouched for the vast duration of narrative’s history. Scholes and Kellogg 1966 (cited under \*General Overviews\*) provides a valiant early foray into the topic, but much of the most penetrating work has been carried out since the turn of the 21st century. In this more recent work, two general means of addressing the question can be discerned: phylogenetic and ontogenetic approaches. In phylogenetic approaches to the origins of narrative, stories are seen to have evolved with the human species’ needs. Boyd 2009 provides an extended discussion of why traditional aesthetic values of narrative serve the project of survival. Coe, et al. 2006 also argue that storytelling is associated with evolutionary fitness, suggesting that it also binds people in collaboration. Scalise Sugiyama 1996 finds evidence in forager communities of narrative’s role in promoting fitness within the community’s environment. Ontogenetic approaches, on the other hand, see narrative inhering in the development of each member of the species. Dautenhahn 2002 invokes the social brain hypothesis to demonstrate the development of narrative in humans’ preverbal phase. Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015 traces the origins of narrative all the way back to the movements of the human fetus in the womb, later developing in neonate interaction with a caregiver.

Boyd, Brian. 2009. *On the origin of stories: Evolution, cognition and fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674057111]

Large-scale “literary Darwinist” disquisition on the ways in which stories arose because they both served survival purposes and afforded transcendence.

Coe, Kathryn, Nancy Aiken, and Craig T. Palmer. 2006. \*Once upon a time: Ancestors and the evolutionary significance of stories[[http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kathryn\\_Coe/publication/233078634\\_Once\\_Upon\\_a\\_Time\\_Ancestors\\_and\\_the\\_Evolutionary\\_Significance\\_of\\_Stories/links/02e7e51c739e172dc0000000.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kathryn_Coe/publication/233078634_Once_Upon_a_Time_Ancestors_and_the_Evolutionary_Significance_of_Stories/links/02e7e51c739e172dc0000000.pdf)]\*. *Anthropological Forum* 16.1: 21–40.

Provides a useful overview of “evolutionary theory of narrative” and the idea that the origins of stories and storytelling are related to evolutionary fitness. In contrast to other theorists that have espoused this position in relation to the origins of narrative, such as [Brian Boyd](#) and Joseph Carroll, the authors argue that narrative serves the purpose of collaboration. In this way, there is some consonance with the work of [Scalise Sugiyama](#), but with significant differences that the article outlines.

Dautenhahn, Kerstin. 2002. \*The origins of narrative: In search of the transactional format of narratives in humans and other social animals[<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.62.5625&rep=rep1&type=pdf>]\*. *International Journal of Cognition and Technology* 1.1: 97–123.

Extremely wide-ranging article that considers narrative in relation to the “social brain” hypothesis, the possibility of narrative in nonhuman animals, the concept of “*Homo narratus*,” and the future of technology in relation to narrative. However, all of these are founded on a theory of the origins of narrative as based in the preverbal phase of human development (which aligns the article, to an extent, with [Delafield-Butt and Trevarthen 2015](#)) and related to the nonverbal communication of other animals.

Delafield-Butt, Jonathan, and Colwyn Trevarthen. 2015. \*The ontogenesis of narrative: From purposeful movements to shared meaning-making[<http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01157/abstract>]\*. *Frontiers in Psychology* 6:1157.

Overview article by key researchers on their own work and that of colleagues in the study of antenatal and neonatal communication. They investigate narrative as a process of human cooperation and communication in the earliest stages of development, including that of the fetus. As such, narrative is shown to grow through nonverbal communication in the gestures and motor movements that begin in the womb and are then nurtured in the shared tasks and practices of carer-infant interaction.

Fireman, Gary D., Ted E. McVay, and Owen Flanagan, eds. 2003. *Narrative and consciousness: Literature, psychology and the brain*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780195140057]

Stimulating collection of essays, mainly focusing on the role of narrative in the establishment of a “self,” but also containing essays that point to the developmental origins of narrative. Part 1, with essays by Nelson and Hardcastle, is indispensable for its investigation of the role of narrative in the development of conscious awareness.

Gratier, Maya, and Colwyn Trevarthen. 2008. Musical narratives and motives for culture in mother-infant vocal interaction. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 15:122–158.

Article based on studies of neonates, focusing on mother-child interactions and finding a narrative bearing to them. As the narrator in traditional oral narrative moves with the story and tells a story not just with words but with subtle inflections, well-coordinated gestures expressive of emotion, and engaging with an audience who become co-tellers of the story, Gratier and Trevarthen find such activity already prefigured in parent-child interaction at an early stage of development.

Nelson, Katherine, ed. 2006. *Narratives from the crib*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674601185]

Classic collection of essays, first issued in 1989, with each essay focusing on the early communication, especially narrative, carried out by one infant named Emily. The contributions by Bruner and Locariello, Feldman, Stern, and Nelson herself are particularly germane to the question of the conditions under which narrative arises.

Scalise Sugiyama, Michelle. 1996. On the origins of narrative: Storyteller bias as a fitness-enhancing activity. *Human Nature* 7.4: 403–425.

Based on the study of forager communities, this article argues that narratives were developed to provide information about the environment. It suggests that storytellers and listeners will not have identical interests, so that storytellers will promote one set of fitness interests to the detriment of another set.

## **NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY**

Identity has always been implicated in narrative. For the first users of narrative, the implication would have been unquestioned; for analysts of narrative, it became clear that the very reason that narrative had evolved was as a means for recording the identity that brought a give community together and effected that community’s boundaries (Cobley 2014, cited under \*General Overviews\*). Oral storytellers and griots in societies across the globe self-

consciously narrated the stories that were central to their communities' definitions of themselves. Undoubtedly, the narratives of the classical and medieval worlds said much about the societies from which they emanated. Moreover, these narratives morphed into the stories of heroes in the modern world that made contributions to the forging of both nations and national languages. These interrelations of narrative and identity have been well known for some time and have been briefly referenced in historical works on nationhood, community, and identity. However, a more thoroughgoing appreciation of the penetration of narrative into processes of identity formation arrived with the advent of [\\*Narratology\\*](#). As narrative *per se* became an object of study after the 1960s, the reach of narrative became more apparent. Researchers started to consider how it might be the case that narrative suffused everyday life, as well as how the dilemmas and rewards of quotidian existence might well be organized in narrative form. By the 1990s, attendant also on a focused interest on the idea of identity as the driving force in the lives of individuals and groups, it had become commonplace to assume that the greater part of human activity was apprehended in terms of narrative. Emphasis on the role of narrative in philosophy and social science (see [\\*Narrative in Social Science\\*](#)) in particular promoted that assumption, as is evident in [Taylor 1989](#), [Gergen 1998](#) and [Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001](#). The consequences of such an emphasis were thrown into relief by the intervention of the philosopher Galen Strawson (see [Strawson 2004](#)), and by the debate that followed (exemplified by [Eakin 2006](#)). Yet the relation of “identity” and “narrative” had never been couched only in functionalist terms. One of the key drivers of the debate in the last decades of the 20th century was postcolonialism and, specifically, the contention that the formation of an identity through narrative necessarily *excludes* other identities ([Snead 1990](#), [Ritivoi 2005](#), [Fludernik 2007](#)).

Brockmeier, Jens, and Donal Carbaugh, eds. 2001. *Narrative and identity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [ISBN: 9789027226419]

Robust collection featuring rich, to-the-point essays by Brockmeier, Bruner, Freeman, and Harré. Very strong on the theoretical interface between philosophy and social science in relation to questions of narrative and identity.

Eakin, Paul John. 2006. Narrative identity and narrative imperialism: A response to Galen Strawson and James Phelan. *Narrative* 14.2: 181–187.

A response to issues raised by the arguments of [Strawson 2004](#) and James Phelan's suggestion that proponents of narrative theory might be “imperialistic” in seeing its workings in all aspects of human life. Useful in that it gives a flavor of what is at stake in

debates over narrative and identity; ultimately, the essay concludes that narrative is simply inescapable.

Fludernik, Monika. 2007. Identity/alterity. In *The Cambridge companion to narrative*. Edited by David Herman, 260–273. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780521856966]

Excellent short overview of the issues raised in the relation of narrative and identity. Rather than discussing the liberal-humanist contention that narrative is the route to a valued, fulfilled life, Fludernik focuses on the potential divisiveness in narrative's setting up of alterity. The article, like Snead 1990, therefore identifies the importance of the theory of postcolonialism.

Gergen, Kenneth J. 1998. Erzählung, moralische Identität und historisches Bewusstsein. In *Erzählung, Identität und historisches Bewußtsein: Die psychologische Konstruktion von Zeit und Geschichte*. Edited by Jürgen Straub. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. [ISBN: 9783518290026]

Influential social constructionist account of identity. The paper argues that “narratives are vital both to the creation and sustenance of value, and to the achievement of individual identity.” Arguably, it is Gergen's formulations that have been more responsible even than the work of Charles Taylor or Alasdair MacIntyre in forging the association of narrative and identity in popular consciousness. English-language version available

\*online[[http://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/kenneth-gergen/Narrative\\_Moral\\_Identity\\_and\\_Historical\\_Consciousness.pdf](http://www.swarthmore.edu/sites/default/files/assets/documents/kenneth-gergen/Narrative_Moral_Identity_and_Historical_Consciousness.pdf)]\*.

Ritivoi, Andreea Deciu. 2005. Identity and narrative. In *The Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory*. Edited by David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, 231–235. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415282598]

Extremely useful, short, orientating encyclopedia entry. Ritivoi not only gives summaries of the liberal/moral and postcolonial takes on narrative, but he also gives further pointers to the study of the relation of narrative and identity in everyday communication.

Snead, James. 1990. European pedigrees/African contagions: Nationality, narrative, and communality in Tutuola, Achebe and Reed. In *Nation and Narration*. Edited by Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415014823], pp. 231-49

Persuasive and influential essay arguing that Europeans' assessment of African narratives in universalizing terms, by reference to such concepts as “human nature,” is an act of confinement, domination, and, ultimately, imperialism. Snead also finds the same

universalizing tendency in European approaches to *European* narratives that attempt to describe identities found therein as “universal.”

Strawson, Galen. 2004. Against narrativity. *Ratio* 17:428–452.

Provocative essay calling into question some of the more presumptive formulations about narrative and identity that have been promulgated by theorists, philosophers, and lay commentators alike. It takes issue with the idea that human beings typically see or live or experience their lives as a narrative—the “psychological Narrativity thesis”—along with the “ethical Narrativity thesis,” the idea that experiencing or conceiving one’s life as a narrative is a good thing.

Taylor, Charles. 1989. The self in moral space. In *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674824256]

Chapter in a classic book of modern humanist philosophy, arguing that the lives of individuals are governed by a narrative. Ultimately, Taylor sees the human narrative as a quest for the “good.” He is one of the thinkers criticized in [Strawson 2004](#) for his role in ensuring the popularity of this idea in the 21st century.

## EARLY NARRATIVE

As with the origins of narrative, the question of what narratives circulated among our forebears has been recognized as more and more important in recent decades. The study of classical literature in the West had been a key component of elite education in the late 18th and 19th centuries, so Roman and Greek texts are well represented still. The journal **\*\*[Ancient Narrative](#)\*\*** is devoted to exegeses of such narratives. [Cueva and Byrne 2014](#) focuses on early novels, as does [Doody 1998](#). [Auerbach 1968](#) tracks the continuities of Judeo-Christian narrative from the Greeks to present-day Europe. [Campbell 1975](#), exemplifying a post-19th-century anthropological approach, “globalizes” the field beyond its European purview, while also formalizing it in a fashion that was to underpin **\*[Narratology](#)\***. [Lévi-Strauss 1977](#) continues this interrogation of myth and archetypes, but in a different vein, stressing the narratological repetition of tropes and structures in early narrative. A still different kind of anthropology—of forager communities—underpins theory of early “bogeyman” stories, as detailed in [Scalise Sugiyama and Sugiyama 2012](#).

**\*[Ancient Narrative](#)**[<http://www.ancientnarrative.com/>]\*. 2002–.

European journal focusing on ancient narrative, mainly from the Western tradition. The term “narrative” is principally used to enable contributions to focus on different kinds of

stories in poetry, drama, histories, and scriptures. However, there is breadth in the journal's remit, and the wealth of information on early narrative allows also for narrative analysis.

Auerbach, Erich. 1968. *Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western literature*.

Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

Enduring set of close readings of texts from the Judeo-Christian tradition from its earliest period up to the 1930s. First published in 1946, the legend has it that Auerbach composed the volume while in Istanbul, in exile from Germany during the Second World War and without a "specialized library." This might explain the innovative way in which each chapter—on *The Odyssey* and Genesis, on the *Satyricon*, on the *Decameron*, and so on—focuses on a specific passage from a narrative to demonstrate the workings of that narrative in general.

Cueva, Edmund S., and Shannon N. Byrne, eds. 2014. *A companion to the ancient novel*.

Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. [ISBN: 9781118350416]

Very usable guide to some ancient narratives. Much of the focus is on genres, some of which are associated with a proper name such as Petronius or Apuleius. Yet while there is a great deal that is informative about the texts in the respective genres—such as their authors, their times, and the cultural context—there is also copious analysis of narrative features: plot, parody, characterization, and so forth.

Campbell, Joseph. 1959–1968. *The masks of God*. 4 vols. New York: Viking.

Comprising bulky volumes on *Primitive Mythology*, *Oriental Mythology*, *Occidental Mythology*, and *Creative Mythology*, it is not an indulgence to recommend this work in addition to [Campbell 1975](#). Largely leaving behind the psychoanalytic thesis on the hero, and even while dated and open to criticism, these volumes remain a landmark in attempts to gain a global grasp on early narrative.

Campbell, Joseph. 1975. *The hero with a thousand faces*. London: Abacus. [ISBN:

9780349104805]

Originally published in 1949, this volume has been extremely influential, not just in narrative theory but also in the study of myth and spirituality. Relying on insights from psychoanalysis, it nevertheless provides a concise account of the manifold roles of the hero in myths across the globe.

Doody, Margaret Anne. 1998. *The true story of the novel*. London: Fontana. [ISBN:

9780006863793]

Rich and detailed account of the influence of the "ancient novel." Partly inspired by Arthur [Heiserman's](#) *The Novel before the Novel* (1977), this volume traces the tropes and structure

of novels that appeared at the time of Alexander the Great. As such, it is also a key work on the explication of the origin of the **\*\*Novel\*\***, as well as early narrative in general.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1977. *Structural anthropology 1*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Collection of major essays by the anthropologist, first translated into English in 1963. The essays in Parts 3 and 4 are the most germane to the study of early narrative, for they focus on the nature of myths. “The structural study of myth,” in particular, also makes a major contribution to the founding of **\*Narratology\***.

Scalise Sugiyama, Michelle, and Lawrence S. Sugiyama. 2012. “Once the child is lost he dies”: Monster stories vis-à-vis the problem of errant children. In *Creating consilience: Integrating the sciences and the humanities*. Edited by Edward Slingerland and Mark Collard, 351–371. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780199794393]

An illuminating and stimulating essay on the origin of monster stories. The authors offer their account of what narrative might have been like in the Pleistocene period, emphasizing the informative function. They show how monster stories originated to warn children about straying from the camp of early communities.

## THE NOVEL

In the past couple of centuries, the narrative form known as the novel has received an immense amount of critical attention in the West. One reason for this, perhaps, was that the novel was read by *literate* citizens. The novel is essentially a *written* form of narrative and is usually consumed individually, although public readings such as those given by Dickens and “audiobooks” in the 21st century provide minor exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, the structures and procedures of the novel have largely determined the form of **\* Audiovisual Narrative\*** in other media. It is possible that the literate age of which the novel is the foremost form of narrative is giving way to **\*Narrative in the Digital Age\***. Nevertheless, there has been extensive research into the kind of narrative that is characterized by the novel, much of it concerned with issues other than narrative *per se*. Among such research are nevertheless important contributions, such as Williams 1970 and Watt 1963. Bakhtin 1981, Brink 1998, Forster 1962, and Woloch 2003, on the other hand, are very much focused on narrative. Roberts 1993 indicates how narrative is ultimately ineluctable.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. Discourse in the novel. In *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press. [ISBN: 9780292715349], pp. 259-442.

Long, but ultimately very rewarding, disquisition on the kind of narrative communication that is embodied in the novel. For Bakhtin, the social world is “heteroglot,” made up of

many different voices that are constituted by, and reflect, interests and situations in relation to the voices of others. The novel is the quintessentially heteroglossic narrative, reworking the many voices of the social world so that it is never a foregone conclusion that the narratorial voice can control all the characters.

Brink, Andre P. 1998. *The novel: Language and narrative from Cervantes to Calvino*. London: Macmillan. [ISBN: 9780333684092]

Series of close readings, carried out by the celebrated South African novelist, of mainly modern and postmodern novels. This volume approaches narrative in terms of the foregrounding of “language” (principally, figures of speech) in the novel in order to define the genre.

Forster, E. M. 1962. *Aspects of the novel*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Engaging volume, originally from 1927, that betrays its origins as a series of lectures by the novelist. Effervescent and eloquent, in some ways this is a work of proto-narratology, including chapters on story, people, plot, pattern, and rhythm.

Logan, Peter Melville, Olakunle George, Susan Hegeman, and Efraín Kristal eds. 2014. *Encyclopedia of the novel*. Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell. [ISBN: 9781118723890]

Thorough, well-organized volume with some high-caliber contributors. The section on “Theory” is useful and there is also a robust entry on “Narrative” in the section on “Form,” apart from the other riches on offer.

Roberts, Andrew Michael, ed. 1993. *The novel: from its origins to the present day*. London: Bloomsbury. [ISBN: 9780747514633]

Useful set of orientating essays, but most germane here are the two openers by Roberts on “The Novel as a Genre” and “Theories of the Novel.” In the latter, he demonstrates how theorists of the novel form have ultimately pointed to the theorization of narrative as the master category.

Watt, Ian. 1963. *The rise of the novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Classic analysis of the way in which the mushrooming of the middle class in the 18th century entailed an upsurge in literacy. This, in turn, led directly to the widespread readership for the novel form of narrative. The novel’s promotion of prolonged individual contemplation, Watt argues, made it a powerful individualist product of literate culture and constitutes one of the main transformations of narrative in history.

Williams, Raymond. 1970. *The English novel: From Dickens to Lawrence*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Powerful work showing that the narrative form of the novel is a confident assertion that the knowable relationships it depicts are part of a wholly known social structure. Put another way, it argues that the novel possesses a special ability to depict the increasingly varied social world and the people within it, which gives rise to this narrative form.

Woloch, Alex. 2003. *The one vs. the many: Minor characters and the space of the protagonist in the novel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780691113142]

A stimulating and influential study of minor characters in the novel. It suggests that the novel has been instrumental in setting up the 19th-century “European character system” and that the novel is marked, in particular, by its attempt to balance different “character spaces” in the midst of character profusion. Bears comparison with Taha 2015 (cited under \*General Overviews\*).

## AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVE

In addition to the immense amount of attention given to the novel form of narrative, the massive and lucrative industries promulgating audiovisual narrative have provided an enduring focus of interest. Analysis of audiovisual media started to grow in earnest, in the academy and beyond, contemporaneously with the establishment of the notion of “text” within the field of semiotics after the 1960s. Along with the rise of \*[Narratology](#)\*, also imbricated with the neutral concept of “text,” film and television emerged as legitimate and defined fields of study. Where narrative was concerned, however, it became clear to researchers that the methods applied to print for the explication of novels could not simply be carried over to film. Audiovisual media tend to “show” story events rather than “tell” them. Indeed, writings on early cinema reveal that, in the first few years after the Lumière brothers, “film” was a spectacle involving machines; it was not transformed into a narrative vehicle until over a decade later. If the history of film can be split up into two main periods of innovation, this would probably consist of the years 1895–1917, a period of rapid development and change that is, itself, made up of two periods of mainly “nonnarrative” film (1895–1908) and the emergence of narrative techniques (1908–1917), plus the period 1917–1960s, the epoch of “narrative” film during which there is seen to be little fundamental change or innovation. The essays in [Elsaesser and Barker 1990](#) expertly point to this development. Moreover, the dominant approach to film narration, exemplified by [Bordwell 1985](#) and [Branigan 1992](#), as derived from the tacit understandings of film narrative by spectators, also broadly adheres to this history. Of course, there are some features of print narrative that carry over to audiovisual narrative, and some that do not, as [Lothe 2000](#) and

Chatman [1981](#) demonstrate. Some features of cinematic narrative's sensual richness seem to be unique ([Garwood 2013](#)). Moreover, within the audiovisual narrative there is also a difference between film and the domestic technology of narrative that developed its own specific modes of address ([Williams 1974](#) and [Fiske and Hartley 1978](#)) and, more than any medium hitherto, suffused everyday life with narrative.

Bordwell, David. 1985. *Narration in the fiction film*. London: Methuen. [ISBN: 9780416421200]

A milestone in film narrative analysis. Drawing on Russian Formalism and some narratology, but eschewing much theory such as psychoanalysis, the volume outlines a number of "modes" of cinema, such as "Hollywood" and "art cinema." Principally, the analysis of audiovisual narrative hinges on the exposing of the tacit spectatorship embedded in different modes.

Branigan, Edward. 1992. *Narrative comprehension and film*. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415075114]

Influential take on film narrative and readership. It is "cognitivist" in orientation, not because it draws slavishly on cognitive theory, but because its fusion of contemporary film theory and narratology is in the service of explicating psychologically valid readings. Cognate with [Bordwell 1985](#).

Chatman, Seymour. 1981. What novels can do that films can't (and vice versa). In *On narrative*. Edited by W. J. T. Mitchell, 117–136. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press. [ISBN: 9780226532172]

Astoundingly comprehensive exposition of the issue in the essay's title. The focus is mainly on the differences between Renoir and Maupassant in the rendering of narratives in film and short fiction, respectively. Yet the essay manages to productively reference various other texts along the way. Revealing and entertaining, this essay is an example of approachable *\*Narratology\** and theory of the *\*Novel\**.

Elsaesser, Thomas, with Adam Barker, ed. 1990. *Early cinema: Space, frame, narrative*. London: British Film Institute. [ISBN: 9780851702445]

Landmark volume on the early years of movies, featuring superb essays by Burch, Elsaesser, Gaudreault (four), Gunning (three), and Salt. Detailed and informative, but above all illuminating in respect of the nature of audiovisual narrative as film's infancy is unraveled.

Fiske, John, and John Hartley. 1978. *Reading television*. London: Methuen. [ISBN: 9780416855609]

Old, but still rich, introductory survey of the forms of televisual address. Much of its focus is on issues germane to narrative. Merits rereading.

Garwood, Ian. 2013. *The sense of film narration*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780748640720]

Fascinating volume exploring the range of phenomena in narrative film. Using many examples of narrative film from the first decade of the 21st century, the analysis is particularly devoted to the sensuous dimension of film as it is evoked by sometimes clashing images and sounds. Sheds new light on audiovisual storytelling.

Lothe, Jakob. 2000. *Narrative in fiction and film: An introduction*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780198752325]

Excellent introduction, by a narrative specialist, to storytelling in fiction and film. The first part of the volume serves as a primer on key issues—such as narrative levels, time, narration, and so on—in both film and print fiction. The second part contains deft essays comparing four film adaptations of printed stories with their source material.

Williams, Raymond. 1974. *Television: Technology and cultural form*. London: Fontana. [ISBN: 9780006335719]

Extraordinarily fecund analysis of television, despite its age. Much that it predicted in respect of televisual modes of narrative has come to pass. It contains further observations which may yet prove to be prescient.

## **NARRATIVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

The great challenge or opportunity for narrative since the mid-1990s has been digitality. At the start of this period, great claims and speculation characterized the field, with suggestions that digital technology would soon allow full immersion in narratives, or that parallel interactive fiction (IF), text adventures, cybertexts, MUDs (multiuser domains), MOOs (object-oriented MUDs) and MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) would be the order of the day. What has happened most noticeably is that mobile computing devices have facilitated an ease of consumption of largely traditional audiovisual narratives and “written” ones. As Ryan 2004 notes, “digital media have no more impact on the cognitive model through which we filter texts and make sense of human action than the experiments of postmodern fiction” (p. 354). Much writing in the area in recent years has betrayed a more conservative approach to the possible transformation that digitality affords. It has focused on established narrative forms within digital media. These are forms that may be supplemented with games, fan paraphernalia, and other “add-ons;” nevertheless, they

remain traditional long-form narrative. Notwithstanding the transient phenomenon of “Twitter fiction” and “flash” or “micro” fiction (Nelles 2012), it seems that the public continue to enjoy the sustained interactivity that longer narratives allow. One of the major forces in media in the 2010s has been the rapid growth of social media. Yet, for all their supposed dominance of contemporary life, as well as their providing a home for certain kinds of story, social media have not wrought a transformation of narrative any more than e-mail or the telephone did, and research into the narratives that *are* circulated in social media has been sadly limited. Research into the relation of digitality and narrative seems to suggest that social media, the World Wide Web, and computing have encouraged the *production* of narratives by the growing number of people who have access to the relevant technology. At the same time, digitality has further increased the everyday *consumption* of narratives. It has intensified the realization of narrative’s close relation with identity (see [\\*Narrative and Identity\\*](#)), cognition (see [\\*Narrative and Cognition\\*](#)), time (see [\\*Time and Narrative\\*](#)) and everyday interaction.

Ciccorico, David. 2012. Focalization and digital fiction. *Narrative* 20.3: 255–276.

Ciccorico attempts to track the changes wrought by digital fiction (written for, and intended to be read on, a computer screen) on the central narratological concept of focalization. Ultimately, the argument reaffirms the importance of focalization amid the array of hypertext.

Hatavari, Mari, Matti Hyvärinen, Maria Mäkelä, and Frans Mäyrä, eds. 2015. *Narrative theory, literature, and new media: Narrative minds and virtual worlds*. New York: Routledge. [ISBN: 9781138854147]

Collection of essays on recent incarnations of narrative. As is often the case with volumes on narrative in new media, the narratives under discussion are actually quite conventional. However, the volume also contains contributions on online games, interviews and sadomasochism.

Hoffmann, Christian. 2010. *Narrative revisited: Telling a story in the age of new media*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. [ISBN: 9789027256034]

Collection that, refreshingly, contains contributions predominantly focusing on new media forms of narrative. These include message boards, blogs, computer-mediated communication in general, Internet live text commentaries, and hypermedia.

Nelles, William. 2012. Microfiction: What makes a very short story very short? *Narrative* 20.1: 87–104.

A discussion of the phenomenon in the title, from “veni, vidi, vici” to “Twitter fiction.” Despite the seemingly apposite vehicle of digitality for the very short form, the article implies that such stories have a significant existence beyond the digital.

Page, Ruth. 2013. Serial and storytelling in social media. *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 5:31–54.

Welcome discussion of the process of seriality in social networking sites. The article considers the sequencing and interactions on YouTube, Twitter, and Wikipedia.

Page, Ruth, and Bronwen Thomas, eds. 2011. *New narratives: Stories and storytelling in the digital age*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press. [ISBN: 9780803217867]

Informative and useful collection of essays. All the contributions, apart from one straggler, focus on online narrative, bringing strong theoretical formulations to bear.

Ruston, Scott W. 2010. Storyworlds on the move: Mobile media and their implications for narrative. *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 2:101–120.

Report by a practitioner on a project entitled [murmur], which “collects personal anecdotes linked to specific locations in a subject city that are submitted by local residents and then makes these audio vignettes available to a participant or passerby via mobile phone.” Offers a vivid picture of the way in which the (almost) always connected character of contemporary existence has allowed narrative to suffuse human life.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2004. Will new media produce new narratives? In *Narrative across media: The languages of storytelling*. Edited by Marie-Laure Ryan, 337–360. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press. [ISBN: 9780803289932]

Calls into question the millennial predictions about narrative and digital technology. Ryan refers to the visions of Landow (hypertext will reconfigure narrative experience by turning readers into coauthors), Murray (new media will be a new stage for playing out old narrative in new dimensions), Aarseth (narrative will be in the shadow of ludic uses of digitality) and Hayles (digital meaning equates to complexity, fragmentation, fluidity, resistance to totalization, and, ultimately, “post-narrative”). Useful for checking how many predictions have come to pass.

## “NATURALLY OCCURRING” NARRATIVE

While most research into narrative had been concerned with narrative’s embodiment in certain media or its appearance in specific forms, especially after [\\*Narratology\\*](#), it also became clear that narrative occurred frequently in everyday discourse. Serious analysis of naturally occurring narrative traces its roots back to a somewhat neglected essay, [Labov and](#)

Waletzky 1967, on the importance of recognizing and analyzing narrative in everyday communication. In “stumbling upon” data that was susceptible to analysis while exploring the complexity of black vernacular English, Labov opened up for researchers a seam that was often unmined or whose richness had been underestimated hitherto. Famously, Labov interviewed 120 people in New York City, ostensibly investigating their pronunciation of particular consonants and vowels. Yet part of his method for collecting data and drawing respondents into interaction involved people telling stories about themselves, and Labov found that he had amassed significant data in this sphere. His subsequent “narrative analysis” demonstrated that storytelling is not just a matter of folktales, literature, or media, but is deeply embedded in modes of interpersonal engagement, bound up with the expression of desires, needs, and the relations of the participants in the interaction. In contrast to [narratology](#), Labov’s “narrative analysis” demonstrated that stories are always partisan rather than neutral entities. In spite of the penetrating critique of this work by [Paterson 2008](#), it is evident in much analysis of naturally occurring narrative, including [Beynon 2006](#) and [Lambrou 2014](#), which betrays the influence of Labov and Waletzky. Yet other approaches, such as Conversation Analysis ([Sacks 1974](#)) have also borne fruit.

Beynon, John. 2006. “Lies” or “identity projects”? Inmate narratives in HMP. Cityton. *Subject Matters* 2.2: 1–32.

Compelling study of naturally occurring narrative. Beynon collected both public narrative (heard around the prison) and private narrative (related in one-to-one auto/biographical interviews), the latter of which is not, strictly, naturally occurring. The research demonstrates that the inmate narratives are “cultural scripts,” rooted in time and place, with a structure and point-of-view that gives order, coherence and structure to life events that are mired in a disordered environment.

Labov, William, and Joshua Waletzky. 1967. Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1966 annual spring meeting of the American Ethnological Society*. Edited by John Helm, 12–44. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press.

Essay that launched the practice of “narrative analysis,” focusing on oral narratives that occur in environments that do not necessarily call for narrative form. Labov inadvertently collected the data while he was carrying out research on pronunciation.

Lambrou, Marina. 2014. Narrative, text and time: Telling the same story twice in the oral narrative reporting of 7/7. *Language and Literature* 23.1: 32–48.

Article addressing an important question in studies of naturally occurring narrative and oral narrative in general: What happens when a very public event that has been narrated before is called to be narrated again? Following Labov and Waletzky 1967 in a case study of the 7/7 bombings in London, the article shows how prior “scripts” may impinge on the retelling, even by the same person, of a momentous story.

Langellier, Kristin M., and Eric E. Peterson. 2004. *Storytelling in daily life: Performing narrative*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9781592132126]

Overview of the embedding of narrative in quotidian communication. The volume presents research into four different modes: family narratives in Maine, storytelling among groups of women, public autobiographical narratives, and blog storytelling.

Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps. 2001. *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674004825]

Captivating and sometimes moving account of naturally occurring narrative, often featuring the authors’ experiences. Ochs and Capps find that narrative provides order but also stimulates exploration beyond worlds of order.

Paterson, Wendy. 2008. Narratives of events: Labovian narrative analysis and its limitations. In *Doing narrative research*. Edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 22–40. Los Angeles and London: SAGE. [ISBN: 9781412911962]

Illuminating critique of Labov’s view of naturally occurring narrative for its “event-centric” bearing. In redefining such narrative, Paterson cautions against the Labovian tendency to be overly credulous about the truth status of personal anecdotes, failing to take sufficient account of context, and tending to focus on past-tense clauses, isolating them from the rest of any transcript partly containing naturally occurring narrative.

Sacks, Harvey. 1974. An analysis of the course of a joke’s telling in conversation. In *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking*. Edited by Joel Sherzer and Richard Bauman, 337–353. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780521204958]

Oft-cited conversation analysis, by the procedure’s father, of the telling of a dirty joke. The analysis finds that the joke has a tripartite structure composed of event sequences that strongly constitute the joke as a narrative above all.

Smith, Brett, and Andrew C. Sparkes. 2005. Men, sport, spinal cord injury and narratives of hope. *Social Science & Medicine* 61:1095–1105.

Based on interviews and questionnaires, this research lies between elicited and naturally occurring narrative. Nevertheless, the research yielded intriguing results. Investigating responses of men to spinal cord injuries that they have suffered while participating in sport,

Smith and Sparkes found that the most common kinds of hope expressed by the men were shaped by three powerful narrative types that circulate in Western cultures: the *restitution narrative*; the *quest narrative*; and the *chaos narrative*.

## NARRATOLOGY

Narratology is a specific way of understanding narrative that was developed out of structuralism and Russian formalism. Sometimes “narratology” is the name given to any form of analysis of narrative, but this is misleading. The term, instead, refers to a particular period in the history of narrative analysis. What characterizes narratology most readily is a systematic, thorough, and disinterested approach to the mechanics of narrative—an approach that provides a stark contrast to those that observe or seek out “value” in some narratives (and not others), or that provide hierarchies of narratives based on spurious categories such as the “genius” of an author or artiste. Narratology’s ultimate ancestor is Aristotle (b. 384–d. 322 BCE) but the most solid foundation for narratology is the work of Russian formalism in the 1920s, and especially the work of a Russian folklorist with an oblique relation to formalism, Vladimir Propp ([Propp 1968](#)). Allied to Propp’s work in some ways, the procedure adopted by the structuralist-anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to interrogate the structure of myths, provided an impetus and blueprint for narratology. The methods of other structuralist thinkers investigating narrative forms—analysts such as Algirdas Julien Greimas ([Greimas 1983](#)) and Claude Bremond—added to this impetus. Key works establishing narratology include [Barthes 1977](#) and Tzvetan Todorov’s *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969), the latter of which actually coined the term *narratologie*. Such work not only encouraged the study of narrative in general, as opposed to the “pure” study of, say, the \*[Novel](#)\* or film, but it also grew out of the imperative to subject different forms to a “neutral” method of questioning. Plus, clearly, the advent of narratology had created a new narrative awareness on which the clock could not be turned back. However, the static or synchronic bearing of narratology, its limited ability to account for change in narrative genres and readership, meant that it lost its potential to recruit followers who were interested in the text’s relation with extratextual forces. Thus, as work on narrative in cognition and social science amounted to a recognition of narratology’s pitfalls and its benefits, in 1999 Herman coined the term “post-classical narratology” to illustrate narrative research’s new priorities.

Barthes, Roland. 1977. Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives. In *Image-music-text*. Edited and translated by Stephen Heath, 79–124. Glasgow: Fontana. [ISBN: 9780006861355]

Often considered the founding text of narratology, this long essay (originally from 1966) synthesizes the work of Greimas, Bremond, Jakobson, and Todorov to argue for a largely coded approach to narrative. Following Saussure's semiology, the essay proposes that narrative is to be analyzed through attention to its system (*langue*) rather than individual manifestations (*parole*)

Booth, Wayne C. 1961. *The rhetoric of fiction*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

Proto-narratological work that identifies what would become narratological preoccupations in the "rhetoric" of fictional works. Often didactic in tone, the exposition represents an Anglo-American form of narrative analysis that has its roots in the criticism of Lubbock in 1926 and, earlier still, in Henry James.

Brooks, Peter. 1984. *Reading for the plot: Design and intention in narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674748927]

An indispensable discussion of plot in narrative, judiciously using psychoanalytic theory to provide new insights. It focuses largely on the novel and the short story, as well as case histories in psychoanalysis. This is not a card-carrying work of narratology, but if classical narratology had focused more extensively on "plot" it might have produced a work of landmark theory such as this. Applicable to all narrative study.

Genette, Gerard. 1980. *Narrative discourse: An essay in method*. Translated by Jane Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780801410994]

Key work on narrative tropes that, to some extent, united Anglo-American and Francophone narratology in its discussion of "story time" and "discourse time." Originally published in French in 1972, the volume was especially influential in its formulations on focalization and temporal movement within narrative.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. 1983. *Structural semantics: An attempt at method*. Translated by Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press. [ISBN: 9780803221123]

Originally appearing in a 1966 special issue of the French journal *Communications*, the volume emphasizes the functional nature of Propp's "dramatis personae" by referring, instead, to "actants." These comprise "subject vs. object," "sender vs. receiver" and "helper vs. opponent." Narrative meaning in this formulation is played out through the various functions: thus, the "subject" *searches for* the "object"; the "sender" is on a quest, initiated by a "subject," for an "object"; and so on.

Hühn, Peter, et al. eds. *\*The living handbook of narratology*[<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de>]\*. Hamburg: Interdisciplinary Center for Narratology, Hamburg University.

Located at the University of Hamburg, this website features the original thirty-two print articles that began the project, as well as many more articles by leading scholars. Contains articles on post-classical narratology topics such as cognitive narratology, empathy, unreliable narrative, and so on.

Lodge, David. 1992. *The art of fiction*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin. [ISBN: 9780140174922]

Set of fifty short articles by a novelist who often professes to have remained aloof from narratology but is undoubtedly well-versed in it. Each article first appeared in a daily newspaper and, through discussions of specific authors, Lodge covers a considerable range of territory in the domain of classical narratology. A more pellucid introduction to narratological issues is yet to be found.

Lotman, Juri M. 1977. The structure of the narrative text. In *Soviet semiotics: An anthology*. Edited by Daniel P. Lucid, 193–197. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780801819803]

Seminal essay that establishes the importance of the sign-chain—the text—in understanding how narrative works. Within the laconic discussion there is also a comparison of “iconic” narrative and “verbal” narrative.

Propp, Vladimir. 1968. *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.

Originally published in Russian in 1928, then auspiciously translated into English in 1958, and appearing in book form ten years later, this work features an analysis of one hundred Russian folk stories. Propp identified thirty-one functions characterizing the tales (e.g., “One of the members of a family absents himself from home”; “An interdiction is addressed to the hero”; “The interdiction is violated”; through to “The villain is punished” and “The hero marries and ascends the throne”). He also isolated the seven basic roles of characters in his sample: the hero, the villain, the princess (sought-for) the dispatcher, the donor, the helper, and the false hero. Propp’s concluding comment on how modern literature would seem as susceptible to his approach as the highly formalized stories that he analyzed provided a spur to future narratologists.

## NARRATIVE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

In addition to [Labov and Waletzky 1967](#) (cited under \*‘‘Naturally Occurring’’ Narrative\*), which inaugurated a large amount of work on \*[naturally occurring narrative](#)\*, [Elliott 2005](#) suggests that a more “explicit interest” in narrative in the social sciences can be traced back to the early 1980s. She points in particular to a collection edited by Daniel Bertaux, followed

in the decade that followed by a flood of work culminating in 1991 with the setting up of the journal *Narrative and Life History* (now known as [\\*\\*Narrative Inquiry\\*\\*](#), cited under *\*Journals\**) that was launched in the United States in 1991, and a series of edited collections on *The Narrative Study of Lives*. One might add to this list Riessman 1993, a short but influential primer on how to do narrative research. More recently, the journal [\\*\\*Storytelling, Self, Society\\*\\*](#) (cited under *\*Journals\**) was established in 2004 for analysis of the *performance* of storytelling across all domains. In the 1960s, Barthes and others thought that they had democratized narrative study by insisting that its remit was a multitude of forms, such as myth, legend, fable, novella, tale, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, and conversation. Yet narrative in social science exceeded this somewhat static, producer-consumer model of narrative “pluralism” by finding narrative in memoir, biography, autobiography, diaries, archival documents, social service and health records, other organizational documents, scientific theories, folk ballads, photographs, and other art work (Riessman, 2008, p. 4). To these might be added the narrative dimensions of disability, trauma and medicine, and terrorism studies. Where narrative in social science is distinguished from the study of [\\*\\*“naturally occurring” narrative\\*](#) is that it often takes a narrative approach to its material from the outset, seeking narrative form in entities that are expected to crystallize into narratives, or in phenomena that are usually not expected to have a narrative basis. Research with human respondents usually involves asking them to tell stories, as opposed to the stories just happening. Given the importance of such methodological considerations, all the texts listed here are devoted to issues of theory and method in narrative approaches, including Charon 2005, which emphasizes the importance of a “narratological ear.”

Andrews, Molly, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou. 2013. Introduction: What is narrative research? In *Doing narrative research*. 2d ed. Edited by Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire, and Maria Tamboukou, 1–26. Los Angeles and London: SAGE. [ISBN: 9781446252659]

[Up-to-date and lucid introduction to the field that lays out what narrative research entails and discusses key examples, both historical and in recent years. Sober, balanced, and comprehensive.](#)

Bamberg, Michael. 2006. Stories: big or small? Why do we care? *Narrative Inquiry* 16.1: 139–147.

[Distinguishes between individually orientated “naturally occurring” narratives, in common human interactions \(conversations, for example\) and socially orientated exchanges](#)

(autobiography and life histories, memoirs, anecdotes, etc.) that are usually elicited in the research process. The first are “small” and the second termed “big” in this loose categorization.

Charon, Rita. 2005. Narrative medicine: Attention, representation, affiliation. *Narrative* 13.3: 261–270.

Article by a medic that draws on case studies to demonstrate how formulations about literary narrative can transform diagnosis and patient care. Outlines the efficacy of listening with a “narratological” ear, particularly to stroke victims that need to see their condition not in technicalities but in terms of differences before and after the stroke.

Elliott, Jane. 2005. *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London and New Delhi: SAGE. [ISBN: 9781412900409]

Possibly the best book-length introduction to narrative methods in social science, despite its age. Its value clearly lies in considering qualitative and quantitative approaches simultaneously, offering a general orientation in narrative research and providing practical pointers for potential researchers.

Holstein, James A., and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds. 2012. *Varieties of narrative analysis*. London: SAGE. [ISBN: 9781412987554]

Valuable collection of essays in which established narrative scholars engaged in empirical research (Bamberg, Shuman, Sparkes, and Smith *inter alia*) present chapters addressing general aspects of theory and method. Some expected topics recur—identity, dialogue, experience, genre, ethnography—but there are also innovative discussions of embodiment and, particularly welcome, Polletta’s essay on popular beliefs about storytelling.

Maynes, Mary Jo, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett. 2008. *Telling stories: The use of personal narratives in the social sciences and history*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780801446177]

Innovative theoretical work that outlines issues of agency and subjectivity in the investigation of personal narrative. Written from the perspective of practices in sociology and history, the authors valiantly stress the historical determination of all personal narratives, in terms of local contexts and broader governing constraints or affordances.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1993. *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE. [ISBN: 9780803947542]

Short book (88 pages) in a series that was devoted to providing primers of qualitative method in social science. Using some insights from Russian formalism and narratology (e.g., *fabula* and *szujet*), among other sources, the volume provides a step-by-step guide to

carrying out a narrative analysis, as well as promoting reflection about the process. For this reason it remains valuable today, despite its age.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. London: Sage. [ISBN: 9780761929970]

In some ways an expansion of her pioneering book *Narrative Analysis* (Riessman 1993), this volume also presents a historical overview of the use of narrative methods in social science and is organized with reference to “Thematic Analysis,” “Structural Analysis,” “Dialogic/Performance Analysis” and “Visual Analysis.” Refreshingly level-headed regarding what narrative methods can and cannot do.

## NARRATIVE AND COGNITION

Since the late 1990s, one of the major forces acting on the redefinition of narrative has been variously called “cognitive narratology” or simply “cognitive approaches to narrative.”

Cognitive approaches have attempted to figure narrative as central to consciousness and human apprehension of the world. They have taken their cue from Bruner 1990 and the critique of cognitive science’s reliance on an analogy between computers and the human mind. Thus the relation of narrative and cognition has come to be seen more in terms of meaning, generating such perspectives as those related to “theory of the mind”

(Zunshine 2006) or “the narrative practice hypothesis” (Hutto 2008). Cognitively orientated work on narrative is extensive, but some major themes recur. Chief among these are the cognitive processes involved in “cognitive maps,” “frames,” “scripts,” “schemata,” or “chunking” (Herman 2003). Also high on the agenda of cognitive study are questions to do with how narrative invites or promotes empathy, or whether it is closely related to a “mind-reading” or a “Theory of Mind” capacity. Zunshine 2006 is wedded to the idea that “theory of mind” is in-built in the human brain, as is some work on the origins of narrative (e.g., Scalise Sugiyama 1996, cited under \*Origins of Narrative\*); others are rather less convinced on this issue (Hutto 2008, Keen 2007). The subject of “frames” and “schemata” is very much to the fore (see the essays in Herman 2003), yet the extent to which this kind of processing in narrative dominates is questioned (Grishakova 2009). Some work, too, is very much allied to perspectives in narrative and cognition in general, while also being fiercely critical of it (Bruner 1990, Hogan 2003).

Bruner, Jerome S. 1990. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780674003606]

Much-referenced volume that, while critical of cognitive theory, also provides a useful overview of it. Bruner criticizes the information theory or computational underpinning of cognitivism and contrasts it with a meaning-based approach in which narrative is central to identity. Interestingly, he focuses on “folk psychology,” a phenomenon that was to be taken up by contributors to cognitive theories of narrative as different as Daniel [Hutto](#) and Lisa [Zunshine](#) (see Hutto 2008 and Zunshine 2006).

Gerrig, Richard J. 1990. The construction of literary character: A view from cognitive psychology. *Style* 24:380–392.

Relatively early and influential work on cognitive narratology focusing on character. Uses examples from the James Bond novels to explore levels of reader investment in characters.

Grishakova, Marina 2009. Beyond the frame: Cognitive science, common sense and fiction. *Narrative* 17.2: 188–198.

Essay incorporating a very useful explication of the theory of schema and frames, along with a provocative and stimulating use of the theory, to problematize the boundaries of fiction and nonfiction in narrative.

Herman, David, ed. 2003. *Narrative theory and the cognitive sciences*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications. [ISBN: 9781575864679]

Valuable collection of essays that, despite its age, is still pretty up-to-date. Serves as an excellent primer on cognitive theory in narrative and contains essays that both orientate and innovate, such as Gerrig and Egidi’s “Cognitive Psychological Foundations of Narrative Experiences,” Herman’s essay on “worldmaking” and “chunking,” and Palmer’s on cognitive processing.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. 2003. *The mind and its stories: Narrative universals and human emotion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780521825276]

Very well-stated thesis, somewhat out of the mainstream of cognitive narratology, on the role of emotion in narrative and how to conceive of narrative universals. Hogan argues that emotion terms are prototype-based, and that prototypical narratives are generated largely from prototypes, among which emotion prototypes are prominent.

Hutto, Daniel D. 2008. *Folk psychological narratives: The sociocultural basis of understanding reasons*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [ISBN: 9780262083676]

Work on the philosophy of mind that argues that children acquire folk psychology “competence” only when they are exposed to specific kinds of narratives that explicitly allow or encourage the understanding of beliefs and desires (mental states). The idea

challenges “theory of mind” arguments and strongly suggests that narrative is not the survival mechanism implied by literary Darwinists.

Keen, Suzanne. 2007. *Empathy and the novel*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780195175769]

Measured and sober account of an old topic in literary study—“empathy”—within the context of cognitive theory. As well as providing a rigorous overview of empathy and a contribution to the discussion of narrative and cognition, Keen’s account is especially valuable for its grip on, and sensitivity to, the insights brought to narrative from fields such as postcolonialism.

Zunshine, Lisa. 2006. *Why we read fiction: Theory of mind and the novel*. Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780814210284]

A volume that lays out the influential idea of “Theory of Mind” (sometimes called “folk psychology” and “mind reading”) in relation to narrative. Zunshine suggests, citing evolutionary psychology sources, that stories, especially through their depiction of the psychology of characters, exercise the human capacity for inferring the thoughts or disposition of others. Fictional narratives, in this formulation, manage to “cheat” Theory of Mind mechanisms into acting as if they were responses to real people.

## TIME AND NARRATIVE

Before the massive growth of interest in cognition, identity, and everyday life among narrative theorists, one of the key concerns had been narrative’s relation with time.

\*[Narratology](#)\* had repeatedly pursued the goal of revealing how time is manipulated in narratives, as in the example of [Genette 1980 \(cited under \\*Narratology\\*\)](#). Yet narratology was also criticized for the way it acts to “dechronologize” narrative and reduce stories to a series of dominating “paradigmatic” functions, leaving sequence to the mercy of the common-sense linear interpretation of time. The main source of this criticism was Paul Ricoeur’s three-volume work [Time and Narrative](#) (Ricoeur 1984–1986), which misleadingly calls narratology “semiotics of narrative.” Ricoeur holds that time is not just a part of the narrative apparatus, but that narrative *is* the human relation to time. For him, in an argument that is allied to [Brooks 1984 \(cited under \\*Narratology\\*\)](#), the plot or “emplotment” becomes the key element of narrative, providing causality and movement. Ricoeur’s hermeneutic take on narrative and time has been extraordinarily influential, with an impact especially on discussions of [\\*Narrative and Identity\\*](#) or selfhood ([Freeman 1998](#), [Stevens 1995](#)). Yet Ricoeur’s philosophy does not represent the final word on research into narrative and time by

any means. There have been critical alternatives presented (Brockmeier 2009, Copley 2009, Currie 2007); and one of the finest accounts of narrative exposition and time, Sternberg 1978, makes no reference to Ricoeur.

Brockmeier, Jens. 2009. Stories to remember: Narrative and the memory of time.

*Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 1:115–132.

Elegant essay on the relation of time, memory, and narrative. Focusing on Proust and Benjamin's autobiographical *Berlin Childhood*, the article concludes that autobiographical time is best understood as a product of narrative "worldmaking," rather than as a representation of an absolute past.

Copley, Paul. 2009. Time, feeling and abduction: Towards a new theory of narrative. In *Semiotics 2008: Specialization, semiosis, semiotics: Proceedings of the 33rd annual meeting of the Semiotic Society of America, 16–19 October 2008*. Edited by John Deely and Leonard Sbrocchi, 859–868. Toronto: Legas. [ISBN: 9781897493144]

Argues that narrative theory has been caught between rational "objective" time and "subjective" time, and between the world of the text and the world of the reader, in its attempts to understand temporal passage in narrative. Copley uses the Peircean theory of abduction and modeling systems theory in analyzing the emotional attachment to time in an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

Cubitt, Sean. 1991. *Timeshift: On video culture*. London: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780415055482]

Although it is a work focusing on an old technology—the VCR—this book remains an important reference point for the discussion of narrative and time. Two points in particular stand out: firstly, that the schedules of television that colluded with the temporalization of work were potentially disrupted by the "timeshifting" that VCR allowed; secondly, that the VCR, like cassette recording before it, was "itself a kind of production device" (p. 4) in the way that it allowed users to interfere with the flow of television programming, playing back and rerunning sequences. In an age of massive access to narrative online and "on demand" content, this volume still has lessons to yield.

Currie, Mark. 2007. *About time: Narrative, fiction and the philosophy of time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780748624249]

Excellent overview that covers both narratological evaluations of time and philosophical ones in relation to narrative. The book is both sensitive to and critical of Ricoeur's formulations, but it argues above all that narrative events lay in an uneasy relation between

past and present. The majority of the examples are from canonical literature, so work is required to apply Currie's theory to narrative in general.

Freeman, Mark. 1998. Mythical time, historical time, and the narrative fabric of the self. *Narrative Inquiry* 8.1: 27–50.

Important essay on narrative in the constitution of the self. However, at its heart there is also a supremely useful and digestible discussion of Ricoeur. The article concludes that a closer attention to time in narrative might help prevent the self becoming “frayed.”

Ricoeur, Paul. 1984–1986. *Time and narrative*. 3 vols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

The prospect of reading three volumes is daunting, but the volumes are short and the argument is immensely rewarding. The books attempt to show that the kind of temporality encountered in narrative has more to do with the interpretative mode of “expectation - memory - attention” than it has to do with the commonplace version of time as a series of instants arranged along a line. The end point of a narrative is seen as crucial, and thus the cornerstone of narrative structure is the plot.

Sternberg, Meir. 1978. *Expositional modes and temporal ordering in fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press. [ISBN: 9780253207913]

Exceptionally rich discussion of the role of time in narration. The splendid opening line of the first chapter sums up the challenge that this book faces: “As the whole of anything is never told, the writer of fiction is necessarily confined to presenting his characters in action within the limits of a certain fictive period of time.” Texts and authors analyzed include *The Odyssey*, the Bible, Balzac, Austen and, especially, Henry James.

Stevens, Bernard. 1995. On Ricoeur's analysis of time and narration. In *The philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Edited by Lewis Edwin Hahn, 499–506. Chicago: Open Court. [ISBN: 9780812692594]

Helpful commentary on Ricoeur. The essay offers a preliminary orientation point in presenting the human invention of the calendar as an example of narrative's mediating role between “objective” and “subjective” forms of time. The calendar corresponds to the movements of the heavens, but it is also a linear narrative sequence.