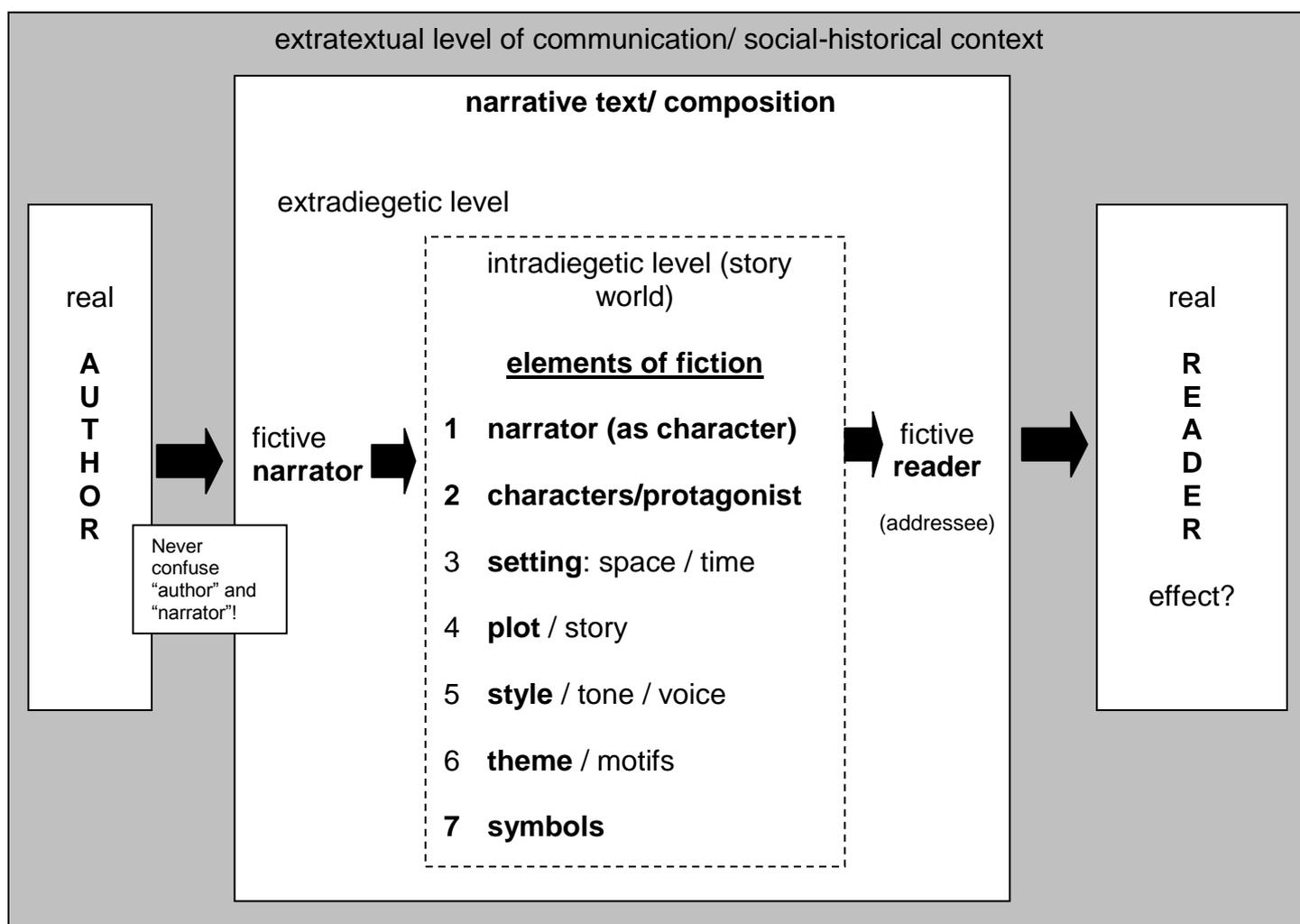


## Hand-out Prose

DEF: The **theory of narrative**, or narratology, focuses on the complex structures that constitute the narration of a story. It attempts to give a precise and systematic account of textual structures.



### Narrator

- the imagined 'voice' transmitting the story
- Narrators vary according to their **degree of participation** in the story:
  - first-person narratives: involved either as witnesses or as participants in the events of the story
  - third-person narratives: stand outside those events
  - omniscient narrator: outside the events but has special privileges such as access to characters' unspoken thoughts, and knowledge of events happening simultaneously in different places
- Narrators also differ in the **degree of their overtness**:
  - some are given noticeable characteristics and personalities (as in first-person narratives and in some third-person narratives)
  - 'covert' narrators are identified by no more than a 'voice' (as in most third-person narratives)
- Further distinctions are made between **reliable** narrators, whose accounts of events we are obliged to trust, and **unreliable** narrators, whose accounts may be partial, ill-informed, or otherwise misleading

### **Focalization**

- adoption of a limited ‘point of view’ from which the events of a given story are witnessed, usually by a character within the fictional world
- unlike the ‘omniscient’ perspective of traditional stories, which in principle allows the narrator privileged insight into all characters’, a focalized narrative constrains its perspective within the limited awareness available to a particular witness, to whom the thoughts of other characters remain opaque
- “showing” vs. “telling”: a focalizing observer is not necessarily the narrator of the story, but may be a character in an account given by a third-person narrator

### Different ways to **represent inner feelings and thoughts**:

- psycho-narration
- free indirect discourse
- interior monologue

### A few critical terms

**Ambiguity** allows for two or more simultaneous interpretations. Deliberate ambiguity can contribute to the effectiveness and richness of a work. It is often possible to resolve the ambiguity of a word, phrase, situation, or text by analyzing the context of a work.

**Irony** indicates a contradiction between an action or expression and what is meant, between the literal and the intended meaning of a statement; one thing is said and its opposite implied (e.g. “Beautiful weather, isn’t it?” when it’s raining). Ironic literature stresses the paradoxical nature of reality and the contrast between an ideal and actual condition.

(If used harshly, contemptuously for destructive purposes, it is sarcasm.)

**Satire** usually implies the use of irony or sarcasm. As a literary genre, it is very polemical and often directed at public figures, conventional behavior, social or political conditions, or it attacks human folly or vice.