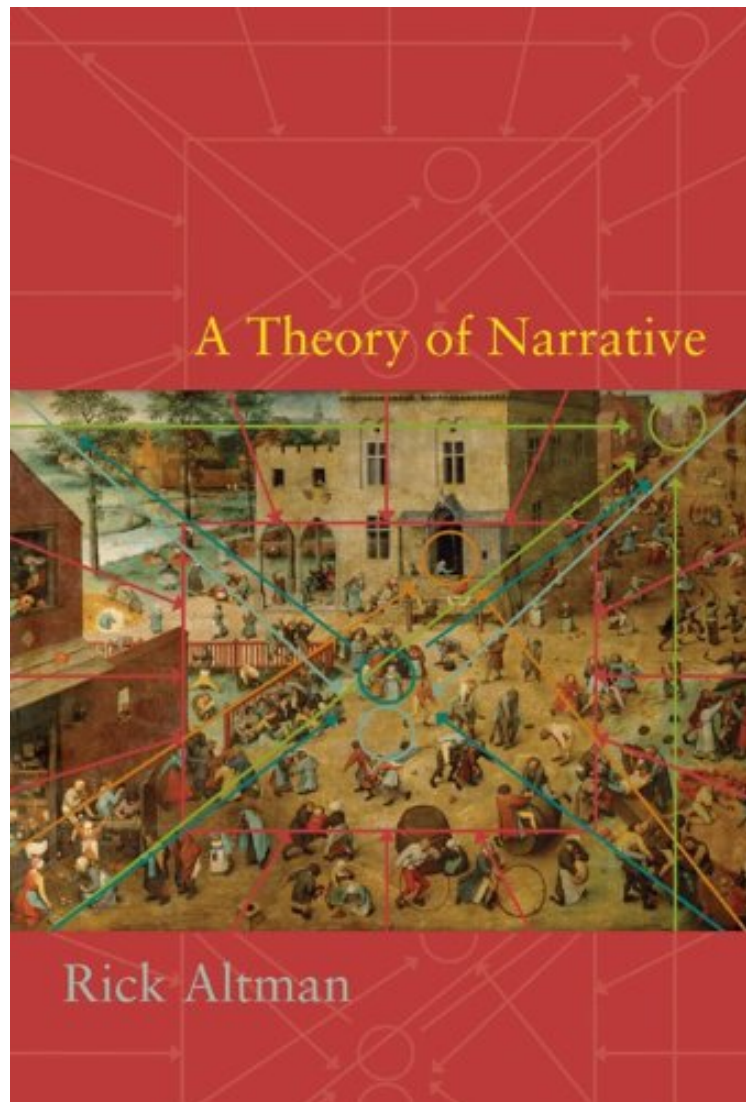


# A Theory of Narrative

*Rick Altman*

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**Rick Altman : A Theory of Narrative** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Theory of Narrative:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent, original approach to narrativeeBy A critical readerAn excellent and innovative theory of narrative by a specialist in film and in medieval literature. He casts his net wide, and he focuses not on plot as the fundamental feature of narrative but on what he calls "following." A narrative can follow one main character, or be structured to follow two different protagonists, with important consequences for the structure of the narrative, or multiple protagonists. Clear and well-written, without usual narratological technical terms.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy LEONARDO JULIOExcellent and innovative

account of narrative structure in literature, art, and film<sup>2</sup> of 2 people found the following review helpful. Excellent introduction to critical ideas in narrative theory  
By Bob Pat  
This is an excellent introduction to narratology and the study of narrative. In Chapter One, Altman offers a clear overview of "The Traditional Understanding of Narrative" and his suggestions for "A New Approach to Narrative Analysis." Chapter Two is a tour-de-force study of *The Song of Roland*, a medieval Anglo-Saxon epic (which in my opinion shows clear evidence of influencing Tolkien). I reread this chapter recently because I read *The Song of Roland* for the first time. Altman's ideas about "following patterns," "symmetry," "integration," and "polarity adjustment" are insightful and beautifully expressed. Altman's greatest strength in my opinion is that he brings the reader up to an understanding quickly, and does not obfuscate (bewilder, confuse, or stupefy) while making his case for his theories.

Narrative is a powerful element of human culture, storing and sharing the cherished parts of our personal memories and giving structure to our laws, entertainment, and history. We experience narrative in words, pictures, and film, yet regardless of how the tale is told, story remains independent from the media that makes it concrete. Narrative follows humans wherever they travel and adapts readily to new forms of communication. Constantly evolving and always up-to-date, narrative is a necessary strategy of human expression and a fundamental component of human identity. In order to understand human interaction, award-winning scholar Rick Altman launches a close study of narrative's nature, its variation in different contexts, and the method through which it makes meaning. Altman's approach breaks away from traditional forms of analysis, identifying three basic strategies: single-focus, dual-focus, and multiple-focus. Unpacking an intentionally diverse selection of texts, Altman demonstrates how these strategies function in context and illustrates their theoretical and practical applications in terms of textual analysis, literary and film history, social organization, religion, and politics. He employs inventive terminology and precise analytical methods throughout his groundbreaking work, making this volume ideal for teaching literary and film theory and for exploring the anatomy of narrative on a more general level.

This is a large, ambitious study that proposes an original, comprehensive theory of narrative. Rick Altman draws on examples ranging from the Bible to Hollywood films, from classical epic and pastoral to medieval heroic poetry, and from saints' lives to nineteenth- and twentieth-century French, British, and American novels, all analyzed within an impressively parsimonious scheme. (Peter Garrett, University of Illinois)  
An elegant and pertinent theory. (Matt Campora Media/Culture s)  
Rick Altman makes a genuinely rich and very useful move in the theory of narrative and does so with style, elegance, clarity, and verve. There are even some touches of humor, and the whole is immensely readable. He grounds his argument in a large number of examples, and a good deal of his book's persuasive force derives precisely from the range and variety of these examples. (L. Ross Chambers, professor emeritus, The University of Michigan)  
About the Author  
Rick Altman is professor of cinema and comparative literature at the University of Iowa. Among his many titles on film is *Columbia University Press's Silent Film Sound*, which won the Limina Award for Best Cinema Studies book, the Theater Library Association Award, and was a finalist for the Kraszna-Krausz Book Award.