

The Buddha Narrative

CHARACTERS

Think of a time when your character disagreed with someone.

Names of characters: *Buddha & his father.*

SETTING

Think of a setting they might have inhabited.

Time & place: *The Royal baths, midday.*

CONFLICT

Think of a point of disagreement between these two individuals.

Problem: *Buddha wants to leave the palace to go find himself.*

PLOT

--Begin the scene with two lines of dialogue which hint at tension between these two characters. You might start with a question and a response, for instance. Be sure to use speech tags and perhaps a facial expression or gesture to reveal character.

"You want to do what?!" the king demanded, his eyebrows knotted together.

"I want to find the cause of suffering," said the young prince.

--Interrupt the dialogue to describe the setting. Use imagery and sensory detail as a poet might. Reveal the mood of the characters or the cause of the conflict through this description.

They were in the royal baths, surrounded by beautiful young maidens who were sponging their backs gently. The midday sun shone brightly in the palace baths. By the arched doorway, a woman stroked a harp. This was the life Guatama had gotten used to. This was the life he no longer trusted. This life, he had decided, was a lie.--Next write two more short lines of dialogue. Consider using the question and answer format again. Don't forget speech tags.

The king exploded. "Have you gone mad?"

"I don't believe so, Father."

--Follow this with some background information which explains something about the source of disagreement between these two characters.

Venturing outside the palace gates for a royal parade weeks before, he had seen the withered faces of the sick, the old, and the dying for the first time. It was then that Guatama had felt his pampered life as the privileged prince of Nepal must come to an end. Now he was telling his father his intentions: he would renounce his throne, shed his princely robes, retreat into the forest, and seek enlightenment.

--Now, give the reader a dialogue exchange that is more in-depth and revealing. Allow each character to speak at least three to five sentences in an effort to explain his opinion. Don't forget speech tags and at least one reference to something happening in the setting so that you keep us grounded in the scene and show us how the character(s) is/are feeling.

"But you have everything you need right here," his father was saying now as he slapped one of the sponge girls away and sent her out of the baths. "If you want to study the ways of the mystics, I will bring in the wisest men in all of Nepal to teach you. No expense will be spared."

"I'm sorry, Father. But I must do this on my own. I do not expect you to understand, but perhaps someday you will. I believe I have been called to teach the world how to end its suffering, but I fear I cannot do so from your throne. I must humble myself."

--Get inside a character's mind here. Tell us what he is thinking and feeling. Connect his thoughts to something physical that he observes. Perhaps he sees a facial expression or gesture that sheds light on the disagreement in a new way. Or maybe he feels the argument is futile because of what he's hearing.

Guatama's father saw the conviction in his son's eyes and remembered the night of his miraculous birth, and the visit from the wise fortune tellers who told him Guatama was destined to be a great man, greater than the greatest of kings, and he knew now that he would not persuade his boy to remain in the palace no matter how hard he tried.

--Now, write two more short lines of dialogue. You might want to return to the question and answer format again, especially if you did it twice above.

"Very well," the king said, "but who will lead our people when I am dead?"

"Perhaps we will no longer need leaders by then," said Guatama, smiling weakly.

--Finally, describe a character action which suggests finality and creates closure. Perhaps the two ~~two~~ characters move closer together physically, or maybe they move further apart, or maybe one of them exits the scene.

His father, the king, just shook his head and rose up out of the bath, his strong back dripping and glistening in the midday sun.