

# Patients in Literature's Pages: First Day of Class Discussion Prompts

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- “Narrative creates order and the database does not. The database represents the world as an un-ordered list of items which causes the linear structure of a **narrative**—beginning/middle/end—to disappear, leaving us with the possibility of multiple interpretations and multiple stories.” *Ruth Stalker-Firth (Computer Science PhD and Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne blogger; 2016)*  
Reactions?
  
- “The brain has dual systems for experiencing reality and for remembering and constructing a **narrative** out of those experiences.” *John Lubbock (Communications Coordinator, Wikimedia UK; 2018)*  
Reactions?
  
- “It’s no wonder truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense.” *Mark Twain (American writer)*  
Reactions?
  
- “There is no doubt fiction makes a better job of the truth.” *Doris Lessing (Nobel Prize for literature winner; 1994)*  
Reactions?

- “Truth telling does not involve seeing both sides or objectivity; truth telling is unselfish inwardness”  
Knut Hamsun (Nobel Prize for literature winner; 1920)  
Reactions?

- “The plural of anecdote is data.” *Raymond Wolfinger (political scientist; 1969)*  
Reactions?

- “The plural of anecdote is **not** data.” (*a lot of other people after Wolfinger said it in 1969*)  
Reactions?

- Subjects were presented with the following statement: “Linda is 31 years old, single, outspoken, and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student, she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice, and also participated in antinuclear demonstrations.” Then subjects were asked to choose which of these two statements was more probable:

1. Linda is a bank teller.
2. Linda is a bank teller who is active in the feminist movement.

Researchers report that “in a large sample of statistically naive undergraduates, 86% judged the second statement to be more probable.” The students’ heuristic was faulty because the set of bank tellers active in the feminist movement is a subset of the set of bank tellers, which makes statement #2 less probable than statement #1. But students chose statement #2 because the added detail, which includes a more personal touch, makes it more *representative* of their mental impression of Linda. *D. Kahneman and A. Tversky (Nobel Prize winners in Economics; 2002)*

Reactions?