

## Story Grammar

**Story:** *Nothing But the Truth*

**Author:** Avi

### Plot:

Philip Malloy wants to be on the track team, but Miss Narwin is “holding him back” by giving him a failing grade in English, where he only makes wisecracks. When Miss Narwin sends him to the principal for disrupting class—humming along with the National Anthem in the morning while he is supposed to be silent—he ends up being suspended. There is a big production made about civil rights and Patriotism, but no one is really listening to anyone, and some people are just yelling to make their voices heard. The school board fires Miss Narwin and Philip is sent to another school, where he is asked to sing the National Anthem, where he admits that he doesn’t know the words.

### Theme:

Lying—Telling Half Truths  
Respect/Disrespect—Undermining Authority  
Listening  
Patriotism—How do we show our love for our country



### Episode:

#### Setting:

The setting is an American School, in the Harrison School District, in the city of Harrison, New Hampshire. The setting is a little vague in order to be universal.

### Characters:

**Philip Malloy:** A troublemaker, a normal teenage kid who doesn’t have a mind to respect authority. He disrupts his English Class because he doesn’t like his teacher and doesn’t think that she’s very nice or a good teacher.

**Miss Narwin:** The English teacher who has been teaching for 21 years and just wants to help the kids love literature. She is frustrated because she sees that Philip has so much potential that he just won’t use.

**Dr. Gertrude Doane,** the Principal: She tries to keep the peace with the school board, and really likes Miss Narwin on a personal level. She steps in when things with Dr Pallen get out of hand.

**Dr. Joseph Palleni**, Assistant Principal: He handles all areas of discipline, and Philip is sent to him when he is sent out of Miss Narwin's class.

**Allison Doresett**: She is the girl that Philip likes and tries to impress with his crazy and disrespectful antics. She is a good student and a hard worker who doesn't approve of Philip's treatment of Miss Narwin.

**Coach Jamison**: The track coach who really likes Philip but won't let him on the track team by breaking any rules.

**Mrs. Malloy**: Philip's mom who is only interested in taking Philip's side and won't listen to what anyone else says. She is worried because she and Mr. Malloy don't spend enough time with Philip, and may be trying to make up for it by siding with him on this issue.

**Mr. Malloy**: He goes along with what his wife says and tries to talk to Philip about what is going on at school. He takes Philip to talk to their neighbor Tom Griffen who is running for the school board to see if they can make a big deal about what is going on.

**Mr. Lunser**: The teacher who is known for making jokes and not taking things seriously. He tries too hard to be a friend to the kids.

**Dr. Albert Seymour**: The Superintendent who tries to act as a buffer for the public and not ruffle any feathers—he is worried about being reelected.

**Ted Griffen**: The Malloys' neighbor who is running for the School Board. He takes Philip's side and makes a big political issue out of the situation, making a loud public stand.

**Anita Wigham**: Margaret Narwin's sister. Through their correspondence, we see Miss Narwin's side.

**Jake Barlow**: The radio personality with an attitude who voices the "public opinion" about the situation in Miss Narwin's class—and he closes the public off from any other opinion than Philip's.



## Chain of Events:

### Initiating event:

Philip is not allowed to join the track team, where he is sure that he would be a star, because of a failing grade in English. The coach, Mr. Jamison, expresses sympathy and sorrow that such a promising athlete won't be allowed on the team.

### Internal Response:

Philip is angry at Miss Narwin and, instead of talking with her to see what he can do about his grade, he decides to be a nuisance in her classroom in any way that he can, to get back at her for failing him.

### Attempt/Outcome:

Philip hums to disrupt class during the class's silent reverence when they play the National Anthem in the morning. Miss Narwin sends him to the Assistant Principal's office two times for the disruption, and the rule at the school is that is an automatic suspension. Philip is suspended and that is when his parents involve themselves, and then everyone becomes involved in this political issue that they assume deals with Patriotism.

### Resolution:

Miss Narwin is asked to take her retirement earlier than she had planned, and Philip goes to another school.

### Reaction:

The reaction isn't very developed, and it is mostly up to the reader to decide what Philip's real reaction to the situation was. All that is clear is that Philip cries when he admits that he doesn't even know the words to the National Anthem. That is a great point of discussion for the class.

