

The teacher's narrative structure:

**Setting:**

Ethan Frome takes place at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Starkfield, Massachusetts. This rural town is central to a New England farming community. As such, the environment is one where everyone knows everyone. A traveler on business is the narrator of the story, and he collects his information about Ethan Frome from various people. This brings the reader into the subsequent story of Ethan Frome and his tragic love story. The setting then transforms to Starkfield of twenty years previous. In this time frame, the novel's major storyline takes place.

**Plot:**

*Initiating event: Ethan and Mattie develop dramatic and intense emotions for each other. Ethan walks her home from a late night dance, the walk is full of subtle energy and attraction. Zeena leaves town for an evening, and though never stated, Ethan and Mattie are ecstatic. Nothing happens between Ethan and Mattie during this night, but the Zeena's suspicions reach a high point on her return. On Zeena's return, she demands Mattie move out.*

*Internal Response: Ethan is obsessed with Mattie and struggles to find a way to be with her.*

*An attempt: Ethan tries to be with Mattie when Zeena leaves town, but he does not have the courage. Ethan tries to raise money to fund a new life with Mattie, but stops because of guilt.*

*An outcome: Ethan and Mattie fail to be together. As Ethan takes Mattie to the train station, they pause for one final activity, sledding. Instead of separation, Mattie convinces Ethan to sled into a giant tree. In the rush of emotion and desperation, the characters slam into a tree, attempting to end their lives together.*

*A resolution: Neither Ethan or Mattie dies, but they are both crippled, Mattie more than Ethan. They continue to live with Zeena, their lives are submissive to Zeena's will. They must spend the rest of their lives in this condition.*

*Reaction: Ethan Frome works with human emotions to show how irrational decisions can be made. The novel's tragic story is entrancing and frustrating and would capture the attention of older students.*