Annotation Guidelines for Narrative Levels

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

A set of narrative texts are to be annotated using XML tags. XML tags enclose a passage (span) of text with start and end markers. A start marker includes the tag name followed by a series of attribute/value pairs with the values in quotation marks. The end marker includes just the tag name, preceded by a forward slash.

```
<tag attribute1="value1" attribute2="value2">Some text.</tag>
```

XML tags may appear embedded within other XML tags. XML rules dictate that all such tags must be properly "nested" within one another; i.e., that any tags that start within the span of some other tag must finish there. Below (section 2.4) one exception to this rule is noted for the purpose of this annotation task.

Our annotation includes only one tag, the nframe tag.

2. THE NFRAME TAG

An nframe tag should be placed around any span containing a narrative. For the purpose of our assignment, a narrative is defined as a representation of a story (an event or series of events) by a narrator. The texts in our annotation set may contain a single narrative (and thus a single nframe tag) or may contain multiple narratives embedded within one another (nframe tags within nframe tags). If you come to a point in a text where you are uncertain whether to indicate a shift in narrative levels, imagine inserting the phrase "Let me tell you a story" right after the proposed division point. If the phrase fits, you should likely mark a new narrative level.

The nframe tag has two attributes.

2.1 level attribute

The level attribute is used to express the degree of embedding of a narrative. If the narrative is not embedded within any others, it is a top-level or *first-degree* narrative and should be given the attribute value of "A". A narrative embedded within an "A"-level narrative — a narrative within a narrative, or *second-degree* narrative — is given the attribute value of "B". A narrative embedded within a "B"-level narrative — a narrative within a narrative within a narrative, or *third-degree* narrative — is given the attribute value "C", and so on.

Note that a text may contain multiple narratives at each level. For instance, the *Thousand and One Nights* contains hundreds (in some tellings, exactly1,001) of "B"-level narratives — some of which contain "C"-level narratives of their own.

2.2 narr attribute

The narr attribute keeps track of the narrator who conveys the narrative. We will represent these with numbers. The first narrator you encounter should be numbered "1", the second "2", the third "3," and so on. If the narrator of a "B"-level narrative is the same as the narrator of the "A" level, both are numbered "1". If the narrator of a "B"-level narrative is different from the narrator at the "A" level, the first is numbered "1" and the second "2." And so on.

2.3 Sample annotations

A simple text containing only one narrative would be tagged as follows:

```
<nframe level="A" narr="1">It was a dark and stormy night. The wind blew and
the wolf howled. The wind blew open my window and the wolf entered. The wolf
bit me and I died.</nframe>
```

A text containing a single "B"-level narrative would be tagged as follows. (Since the narrator of the "B"-level narrative is different from that of the "A"-level narrative, it is given the narrator attribute of "2".)

```
<nframe level="A" narr="1">It was a dark and stormy night. The wind blew and
the wolf howled. The wind blew open my window and the wolf entered. The wolf
opened his mouth and spoke. <nframe level="B" narr="2">"Once upon a time, when
I was but a young pup, a wizard appeared before me and predicted my fate. He
told me that one day, I would leap through a window and eat a man whole. After
enduring many hardships, I have come to enact my fate."</nframe> He bit me and
I died.</nframe>
```

A text containing two "B"-level narratives and a single "C"-level narrative would be tagged as follows. (Since the narrator of the second "B"-level narrative is the same as the "A"-level narrative, they share the narrator attribute of "1".)

```
<nframe level="A" narr="1">It was a dark and stormy night. The wind blew and
the wolf howled. The wind blew open my window and the wolf entered. The wolf
opened his mouth and spoke. <nframe level="B" narr="2">"Once upon a time, when
I was but a young pup, a wizard appeared before me and predicted my fate. The
wizard told me, <nframe level="C" narr="3">'I was born in the east. My father
was a plumber and my mother an auto mechanic. From a young age, it was clear
that I had little talent for either profession, so I set off for the wizard
academy. My expert wizardry has brought me here to you. You, dear wolf, will
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some day leap through a window and eat a man whole.'</nframe> And so here I
am. After enduring many hardships, I have come to eat you."</nframe> Before he
had a chance to eat me, I tried to distract him with a story. <nframe
level="B" narr="1">"Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a
moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along
the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo..."</nframe>. But he found
the story boring and so he bit me and I died.</nframe>
```

2.4 Special Case: "Open Frames"

Some writers choose deliberately to leave frames "open." For example, in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess's "C"-level tale is framed within a Christmas fireside storytelling session by two narrators, the "A"-level "I" and the "B"-level Douglas. Yet after the governess finishes her tale, James does not return to the "A" or "B" levels to explicitly close them. Instead, they are left hanging. In your tagging, indicate such situations by withholding </nframe> end-tags.

For instance, in the following example, the "A"-level narrative is not explicitly closed by narrator 1 (presumably because he has been eaten and is unable to write) and so there is no </nframe> end-tag to explicitly close the opening "A"-level nframe tag.

```
<nframe level="A" narr="1">It was a dark and stormy night. The wind blew and
the wolf howled. The wind blew open my window and the wolf entered. The wolf
opened his mouth and spoke. <nframe level="B" narr="2">"Once upon a time, when
I was but a young pup, a wizard appeared before me and predicted my fate. He
told me that one day, I would leap through a window and eat a man whole. After
enduring many hardships, I have come to enact my fate."</nframe>
```

Although withholding this closing </nframe> end-tag violates XML rules, it is acceptable in this annotation project. If you make such an annotation, however, you must explain why you did so in the written statement that you submit with your annotation.

2.5 Special Case: "Mise-en-Abyme" Narratives

Some narratives, especially popular with postmodern writers, paradoxically embed a story within itself. This paradoxical situation can be represented by showing a series of "A"-level narratives embedded within one another:

```
<nframe level="A" narr="1">It was a dark and stormy night. The band of robbers
huddled together around the fire. When he had finished eating, the first
bandit said, <nframe level="A" narr="1">"Let me tell you a story. It was a
dark and stormy night and a band of robbers huddled together around the fire.
When he had finished eating, the first bandit said: <nframe level="A"
```

```
narr="1">'Let me tell you a story. It was a dark an stormy night
and…'"</nframe></nframe></nframe>
```

3. OTHER NOTES

Be careful not to delete any text while adding annotations. Re-read the file after you have put in the tags to make sure it still makes sense, and that all of the author's words appear, unaltered.

If a shift in narrative level occurs around a chapter break and you're unsure whether to put your nframe tag before or after the chapter header, put it after.