

Narrative Techniques to Develop Plot and Point of View in Fiction

Have you ever wondered what makes a story fascinating? Naturally, it is all about the way it is written. Narrative techniques influence all components of a work.

They determine how we communicate information to the audience. Basically, narrative techniques are different ways to develop and structure a story. They help the reader to navigate through a text, visualizing events and discovering deeper meaning. In this article, we will discuss narrative techniques that influence the foundation of any story—plot and point of view.

Picture 1 of Narrative Techniques to Develop Plot and Point of View in Fiction

Narrative Techniques for Plot

The plot of any story can be structured in a wide variety of ways. Here are some of the common narrative techniques.

Back-Story

This narrative technique serves to uncover events that precede the main story. It is a great way to show the background of your characters and thus provide a rationale for their behavior or choices. A back-story provides a solid context for narrative development, making it more rational and believable. It can be introduced in dialogues and characters' recollections or unfold parallelly to the main time frame of the story.

In Medias Res

In medias res technique is a perfect hook for the audience. With its help, the author can catch the attention of his or her readers from the very first lines. The essence of the technique is in starting a narrative in the middle of an important event. A good example is *Odyssey* by Homer. The epic poem begins with Odysseus being held captive on Calypso's island. However, readers do not have a clue about previous events that lead to this situation, nor have they been introduced to the characters.

Frame Story

When a narrative combines a set of stories within it, it is called a frame story. Usually, they are told by the main character. It is a popular narrative technique that appears in literature, cinematography, and opera. You can find it in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, where Robert Walton describes the story in letters to his sister, or *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, which includes two narrators: Lockwood and Nelly Dean.

Red Herring

Popular in detective fiction and thrillers, this narrative technique aims to distract the readers from something important and lead them to false conclusions. For example, the author may make someone innocent look suspicious to cover the actual villain. You can see this technique used by Dan Brown in *Angels & Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*.

Chekhov's Gun

Named after Anton Chekhov, this technique suggests including an important element early in the narrative but without revealing its true significance. It also supports the idea that every detail of a story should make sense. As Chekhov himself said, "If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off."

Narrative Techniques for Point of View

When we think about a point of view in literary works, we usually consider first person, second person, or third-person narration. Yet, there are more interesting options to use. Here are some of them.

Author Surrogate

An author surrogate is a character, often a protagonist, who represents the author's ideas and personality. The use of this technique can be intentional, for example, for humorous effect, or unintentional. You can find author surrogates in professional literary works and amateur writing. Examples include Kurt Vonnegut's *Kilgore Trout* and Michael Crichton's *Ian Malcolm*.

Stream of Consciousness

This narrative technique is based on the description of a character's thoughts and feelings. It mimics the thought process, reflecting its fragmentary and sensory elements. Stream of consciousness can be challenging to understand and interpret. Therefore, if you need a good book review with a detailed analysis of this narrative technique, consider custom writings services. Iconic examples of stream of consciousness are *Ulysses* by James Joyce and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf.

Breaking the Fourth Wall

The fourth wall is the term that names a "wall" between the audience and actors on stage. The concept implies that the fourth wall is invisible for the audience, and they can see the performance through it. Yet, the actors should perform as if there is a real wall. When a character or an author talks to the reader directly, they break the fourth wall. It allows including the audience in the story, making it more personal and vivid.

Unreliable Narrator

People are used to accepting everything that a narrator says. However, what if he or she is unreliable? Such narrators are usually biased or psychologically unstable. It is a powerful technique that helps to engage a reader and make him or her critically evaluate the story. It adds new hues to the plot and makes it unpredictable as readers will reconsider information multiple times.

Epiphany

If a character gets a sudden and unexpected insight that helps him or her understand or solve a problem, it is called an epiphany. This narrative technique is useful if there is a need to make a rapid change of perspective. It can be provoked by deep internal reflection or external help. You can observe an example of this narrative technique in James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*.

There are numerous ways to tell a story. Experiment with different types of narratives to find the best possible way to convey your ideas to the audience.

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