WRITING COOKBOOK

Dave Sinclair (ed)

'What an astonishing thing a book is. It's a flat object made from a tree with flexible parts on which are written lots of funny dark squiggles. But one glance at it and you're inside the mind of another person, maybe somebody dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, an author is speaking clearly and silently inside your head, directly to you. Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people who never knew each other, citizens of different epochs. Books break the shackles of time. A book is proof that humans are capable of creating magic.'

Carl Sagan, 1934 - 1996

Forms of Writing

Creative writing is writing that expresses ideas and thoughts in an original and imaginative way where emphasis is on narrative craft, character development, and the use of literary forms such as poetry, the novel, the short story, and material written for stage, tv, radio and cinema.   The author creates events, scenes and characters, sometimes even worlds from their own imagination, although they may also use their factual knowledge of the real world with their writing. Creative writing is distinguished from formal writing that is chiefly concerned with communicating facts. Examples of formal writing are journalism, academic writing, technical writing and textbooks.

Literature is the method of recording, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and entertainment. Thus, literature includes both formal writing (such as technical journals, newspapers) as well as creative writing (such as novels or poems) and works that may straddle both camps (such as biographies, diaries, journals).

From Wikipedia:

Literature

Literature broadly is any collection of written work, but it is also used more narrowly for writings specifically considered to be an art form, especially prose fiction, drama, and poetry.[2] In recent centuries, the definition has expanded to include oral literature, much of which has been transcribed.[3] Literature is a method of recording, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and entertainment.

Literature, as an art form, can also include works in various non-fiction genres, such as autobiography, diaries, memoir, letters, and the essay. Within its broad definition, literature includes non-fictional books, articles or other printed information on a particular subject.

Novels

A novel is a long, fictional narrative which describes intimate human experiences. The novel in the modern era usually makes use of a literary prose style. The development of the prose novel at this time was encouraged by innovations in printing, and the introduction of cheap paper in the 15th century.

Poetry

Poetry (derived from the Greek *poiesis*, "making") is a form of literature that uses aesthetic and often rhythmic[1][2][3] qualities of language—such as phonaesthetics, sound symbolism, and metre—to evoke meanings in addition to, or in place of, the prosaic ostensible meaning.

Drama

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance: a play, opera, mime, ballet, etc., performed in a theatre, or on radio or television.[1] Considered as a genre of poetry in general, the dramatic mode has been contrasted with the epic and the lyrical modes ever since Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BC)—the earliest work of dramatic theory.[2]

The term "drama" comes from a Greek word meaning "action" (Classical Greek: δρᾶμα, *drama*), which is derived from "I do" (Classical Greek: δράω, *drao*). The two masks associated with drama represent the traditional generic division between comedy and tragedy.

Plays

A **play** is a work of [drama](#), usually consisting mostly of [dialogue](#) between [characters](#) and intended for [theatrical](#) [performance](#) rather than just [reading](#).

Films

A **film**, also called a **movie**, **motion picture** or **moving picture**, is a work of [visual art](#) used to simulate experiences that communicate ideas, stories, perceptions, feelings, beauty, or atmosphere through the use of moving images. These images are generally accompanied by sound, and more rarely, other sensory stimulations.[1] The word "**cinema**", short for [cinematography](#), is often used to refer to [filmmaking](#) and the [film industry](#), and to the [art](#) form that is the result of it.

The moving images of a film are created by [photographing](#) actual scenes with a [motion-picture camera](#), by photographing drawings or miniature models using traditional [animation](#) techniques, by means of [CGI](#) and [computer animation](#), or by a combination of some or all of these techniques, and other [visual effects](#).

TV and Radio

In [film](#) and [television](#), **drama** is a category of [narrative](#) [fiction](#) (or [semi-fiction](#)) intended to be more serious than [humorous](#) in tone.[1] Drama of this kind is usually qualified with additional terms that specify its particular super-genre, macro-genre, or micro-genre,[2] such as [soap opera](#) (operatic drama), [police crime drama](#), [political drama](#), [legal drama](#), [historical drama](#), [domestic drama](#), [teen drama](#), and [comedy-drama](#) (dramedy). These terms tend to indicate a particular [setting](#) or subject-matter, or else they qualify the otherwise serious tone of a drama with elements that encourage a broader range of [moods](#).

All forms of [cinema](#) or [television](#) that involve [fictional stories](#) are forms of [drama in the broader sense](#) if their storytelling is achieved by means of [actors](#) who [represent](#) (*mimesis*) [characters](#). In this broader sense, drama is a [mode](#) distinct from [novels](#), [short stories](#), and narrative [poetry](#) or [songs](#).[3] In the modern era before the birth of cinema or television, "drama" within [theatre](#) was a type of [play](#) that was neither a [comedy](#) nor a [tragedy](#). It is this narrower sense that the film and television industries, along with [film studies](#), adopted. "[Radio drama](#)" has been used in both senses—originally transmitted in a live performance, it has also been used to describe the more high-brow and serious end of the dramatic output of [radio](#).

Life Writing

Life writing is the recording of memories, and experiences, whether one's own or another's. This applies to many genres and practices, under which can be found [autobiography](#), [biography](#), [memoir](#), [diaries](#), [letters](#), [testimonies](#), personal essays and, more recently, digital forms such as blogs and email.

Biography

A **biography**, or simply **bio**, is a detailed description of a person's life. It involves more than just the basic facts like education, work, relationships, and death; it portrays a person's experience of these life events. Unlike a profile or [curriculum vitae](#) ([résumé](#)), a biography presents a subject's life story, highlighting various aspects of their life, including intimate details of experience, and may include an analysis of the subject's personality.

Biographical works are usually [non-fiction](#), but fiction can also be used to portray a person's life. One in-depth form of biographical coverage is called legacy writing. Works in diverse media, from literature to film, form the [genre](#) known as biography.

An **authorized biography** is written with the permission, cooperation, and at times, participation of a subject or a subject's heirs. An **[autobiography](#)** is written by the person himself or herself, sometimes with the assistance of a collaborator or [ghostwriter](#).

Analyzing Literature

Notes on Analysing Literature, by Dr Lynda Morgan, Open University, an LRAC lecture: Nov 6 2021.

Join Dr Lynda Morgan, an experienced Open University lecturer and tutor, for this stimulating session to enhance your appreciation of literature.
In this study morning, Dr Morgan will be discussing what it means to do literary analysis, why we do it, and how we do it, exploring Drama, Prose Fiction, and Poetry.
This session will be relevant to students on A334, A335, A233 and A230. It may also be of interest to level 1 students and those of you with a general interest in literature.

Part of what we mean by a literary work is one in which what is said is to be taken in terms of how it is said. It is the kind of writing in which the content is inseparable from the language in which it is presented. Language is constitute constituent of the reality or experience rather than simply a vehicle for it (page 3)

Literary works are pieces of rhetoric as well as reports. They demand a particularly vigilant kind of reading, one which is alert to tone, mood, pace, genre, syntax, grammar, texture, rhythm, narrative structure, punctuation, ambiguity in fact everything that comes under the heading of form (page 2).

Terry Eagleton 2013, how to read literature, Yale University press, Newhaven and London

Nietzsche argues that a special form of reading is required when reading literary work- ie slow, vigilant reading where we are alert to the language as well as the plot. When we are reading a page turner, we will often read it as fast as possible because we are swept up in the plot. If we are reading it as a literary work though, we should be reading it in a more painstaking and forensic way. Slow reading will enrich our enjoyment and understanding of the text. Often when we are reading poetry, we will already by in slow reading mode. As students of literature part of our job is to deconstruct literature and understand how and why literature works, how it is constructed and how it achieves its effect on the reader. As literature students we are not only interested in the message in the work, but also the means by which that message is constructed and conveyed. Other consumers (eg 'normal' readers) will be just interested in the message, ie what happens next, what does each character feel and do.

The Darkling Thrush – Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

> I lent upon a coppice gate
> When frost was spectre grey,
> And Winters dregs made desolate
> the weakening eye of day.

A closer attention to language then one would apply to a laundry list or recipe
(Eagleton, page 7)

Here Hardy is inviting us into a particular poetic voice and a particular set of emotions - it is not just a factual report. He is suggesting a personal emotion - he is suggesting a metaphorical death here.

At first glance, poetry is more overtly literary than a novel or prose drama. Poetry uses specific positions of line endings and maybe this is the only key characteristic of poetry - poets may choose to use metre, rhymes, assonance, consonance etc optionally. Line endings are fixed by the poet however and cannot be changed by anyone else. So line endings are key aspect of the artifice of poetry and is a signal to the reader that this is not just a factual report but something rather more. Hardy is not really talking about thrushes but about something more complex and the fact that this is written in poetic form, and this is the signal to the reader to think harder.

Writers will always work within a set of conventions, based on the time they are writing, so Hardy writes in rhyming verse. Alan Ginsberg (beat poet 1950s) does not.

Ode to the West Wind, Percy Bysshe Shelley

I
O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II
Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,

The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III
Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

What is the emotive response of the listener/reader to this poem? (Only sections 1 and 3 were discussed in the talk).

Longing, passions, desire for youth, the first part paints a picture of swirling of leaves ,the second seems to be the emotions of the man feeling of excitement, anxious, sad, transcended, passionate, uses personification to make the scenery more wild.

How does Shelley achieve his effect?

- Repetition is used to create energy and a sense of urgency. 'yellow **and** black **and** pale **and** hectic'
- Punctuation and enjambment are used to make the reader seamlessly read from one line into the next - adding a sense of pace/speed.
- Shelley even has enjambment between stanzas.
- Shelley has caesura in many places to break up the flow in the middle of lines…
- It is iambic pentameter, but it would be hard for listener to work this out….   Shelly disturbs the metre to create energy.
- This poetry is meant to be read aloud.

In contrast to Shelley, consider the following:

Delia 31 (Samuel Daniel 1562-1619)

Look, Delia, how w' esteem the half-blown rose,
The image of thy blush and summer's honour,
Whilst yet her tender bud doth undisclose
That full of beauty Time bestows upon her.
No sooner spreads her glory in the air
But straight her wide-blown pomp comes to decline;
She then is scorn'd that late adorn'd the fair;
So fade the roses of those cheeks of thine.

No April can revive thy wither'd flowers
Whose springing grace adorns thy glory now;
Swift speedy Time, feather'd with flying hours,
Dissolves the beauty of the fairest brow.
Then do not thou such treasure waste in vain,
But love now, whilst thou mayst be lov'd again.

There is an earlier version too: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44071/delia-31-look-delia-how-we-steem-the-half-blown-rose-1592-version

- In Elizabethan the poetry the poets are more interested in word play, metaphor/simile
- The Elizabethan poet see themselves as craftsmen that could turn their hand to most subjects – they don't have to be in love to write a love poem (unlike the Romantic poets like Shelley), the Elizabethans regard the ability to write a love poem as an essential social skill and would present that poem to a general audience rather than to a specific lover. Daniel wrote many sonnets to Delia – perhaps she did not even exist?
- Here there is regular use of poetic metre and rhyme.
- Elizabethan sonnets often use overt symbolism - here the rose represents the woman's genitalia.
- Rose spreads her glory in the air -   an overt sexual image of opening up her private parts (genitals)
- Double meanings very common in Eliz poetry (and plays0`

The poem is really the man telling Delia that her beauty and attractiveness is only temporary and that she should acquiesce to his desires now, because later he will no longer want her. It is a message to make use of beauty while it is still in flower. The poem is objectifying the woman (in way that was acceptable in Tudor times) and is more of joke to amuse other men than intended to be read to a woman.

At the surface you have the controlled metre, the controlled form of the sonnet, it is quite courtly and refined. It sounds like it is a polite compliment and it is about a rose, but underneath it is more cruel and crude and about the young woman's body. This is more of a game rather than a practical attempt at seduction.

This poetry would be to 'courtly' circles, i.e. those we can read and had access to manuscripts.

Drama (ie Shakespeare's plays, Kyd etc) would be accessible to the illiterate too so would be much more widely heard – but still uses lots of word play, double meaning etc.

Drama

In drama (compared to Poetry) we not only consider language, but also consider characterisations, setting, scenery is the char alone on the stage or accompanied, or interacting with other chars. Drama is much more complex so requires similarly complex analysis. Eg are some chars eavesdropping, is one character taking the majority of the dialogue etc etc.

Contrast the following two speeches:

Enter the GHOST OF ANDREA, and with him REVENGE.

  GHOST. When this eternal substance of my soul
Did live imprison'd in my wanton flesh,
Each in their function serving others' need,
I was a courtier in the Spanish court:
My name was Don Andrea; my descent,
Though not ignoble, yet inferior far
To gracious fortunes of my tender youth,
For there, in prime and pride of all my years,
By duteous service and deserving love,
In secret I possess'd a worthy dame,
Which hight sweet Bel-imperia by name.
But in the harvest of my summer joys
Death's winter nipped the blossoms of my bliss,
Forcing divorce betwixt my love and me;
For in the late conflict with Portingal
My valour drew me into danger's mouth
Till life to death made passage through my wounds.
When I was slain, my soul descended straight
To pass the flowing stream of Acheron;
But churlish Charon, only boatman there,
Said that, my rites of burial not perform'd,
I might not sit amongst his passengers.
Ere Sol had slept three nights in Thetis' lap,
And slak'd his smoking chariot in her flood,
By Don Horatio, our knight-marshall's son,
My funerals and obsequies were done.
Then was the ferryman of hell content
To pass me over to the slimy strand
That leads to fell Avernus' ugly waves.
There, pleasing Cerberus with honeyed speech,
I passed the perils of the foremost porch.

(Thomas Kyd The Spanish Tragedy, 1.2.1-31, 158 5-88)

[Enter Faustus in his study.]
FAUSTUS.
Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess;
Having <mark>commenced</mark>, be a divine in show,
Yet level at the end of every art,
And live and die in Aristotle's works.(5)
Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me!
[Reads.] <mark>*Bene disserere est finis logices*</mark>.
Is, to dispute well, logic's chiefest end?
Affords this art no greater miracle?

Then read no more; thou hast attained that end;(10)
A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:
Bid *Oncaymaeon* farewell, Galen come,
Seeing, *Ubi desinit Philosophus, ibi incipit Medicus*:
Be a physician, Faustus; heap up gold,
And be eternised for some wondrous cure. (15)
[Reads.] Summum bonum medicinae sanitas,
The end of physic is our body's health.
Why, Faustus, hast thou not attained that end?
Is not thy common talk sound aphorisms?
Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,(20)
Whereby whole cities have escaped the plague,
And thousand desperate maladies been eased?
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.
Wouldst thou make men to live eternally,
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,(25)
Then this profession were to be esteemed.

Christopher Marlowe, Dr Faustus, II, 29-54 1590-1

Andrea is communicating how he was killed in battle and why he wants revenge.   This is straightforward exposition and Kyd sets it up that we are to trust Andrea's version of events. The language is straightforward, the facts simply laid out, the iambic pentameter regular, and the speech has a solid plausibility about it.

Faustus' speech seems to use more sophisticated rhetoric.   Here we see the inner thoughts of the character. Andrea knows what is going to say before he says it, Faustus is working it out as he goes along and we the audience have to interpret that…. Faustus uses more caesura - to simulate the thought process…to break up the speech, to indicate pauses for thought and re-flection.

(Note even though Modern drama is normally written in prose – caeseras are still used in a way since you get silence and pauses eg famously in Pinter and Beckett – also in modern drama, the stage directions can have the same effect as caesuras)

Contrast these speeches from Hamlet and Julius Caser:

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES,
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, and Attendants
KING CLAUDIUS
Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,--

With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,--
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,--
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose,--to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king, more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

(William Shakespeare, Hamlet, 1.2 c1599)

LUCIUS.
Sir, March is wasted fifteen days.

[Knocking within.]

BRUTUS.
'Tis good. Go to the gate, somebody knocks.--

[Exit Lucius.]

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:
The genius and the mortal instruments

Are then in council; and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.

[Re-enter Lucius].

LUCIUS.
Sir, 'tis your brother Cassius at the door,
Who doth desire to see you.

BRUTUS.
Is he alone?

LUCIUS.
No, sir, there are more with him.

BRUTUS.
Do you know them?

LUCIUS.
No, sir, their hats are pluck'd about their ears,
And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
That by no means I may discover them
By any mark of favor.

(Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, 2.1, c1599)

In Kyd, all the chars in the play speak In more or less the same way. In Hamlet this is far from true.

Here Claudius is trying to manipulate the audience - he is the oxymoronic honest politician. Here the chars are speaking individualistically and are differentiated by their language.

Claudius uses long sentences and makes you wait a long time for the punchline (I've married Gertrude) - so you are drawn into his world. The complexity of what he is saying helps obfuscate/distract the death of King Hamlet eg. Wisest sorrow - we are sorrowful but wise about it too…

Claudius spends a lot of time talking about opposites. - joyful marriage but unhappy funeral – another way of confusing the issues with what he has done.
He draws in the accomplices with phrases like 'which have freely gone with…..' thus attempting to diffuse his guilt.

Julies Caesar

In this quote note the use of iambic pentameter but is still there – if a little disguised. There is a fluidity and flexibility to it. Shakespeare's uses this type of speech here to show that Brutus is working out his own thoughts, and hence this is a complex speech, with stops and starts - it is difficult for us to read it fluidly - because Brutus is struggling to make sense of his

difficulties too and is also not speaking fluidly. Contrast this to Claudius's speech - he has already worked out what he wants to say completely beforehand and speaks in a very measured and smooth way (albeit still using a lot of complex syntax).

Novels

Huge flexibility in subject, POV etc, even more flexible than drama.

In the examples here the narrators are 3rd party omniscient - so they can recount the inner thoughts of all the characters if the writer so decides.   This form of narration enables the writer to cover everything and anything, what to reveal about each character and so on.

3rd party POV more flexible than 1st POV where you have a limited view.

Some questions to ask: What kind of voice is the narrator ? How is positioning the reader? Is it showing irony, sarcasm, humour, drama?

"No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard — and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence besides two good livings — and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as anybody might expect, she still lived on — lived to have six children more — to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself. A family of ten children will be always called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain, and Catherine, for many years of her life, as plain as any. She had a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair, and strong features — so much for her person; and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boy's plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush. Indeed she had no taste for a garden; and if she gathered flowers at all, it was chiefly for the pleasure of mischief — at least so it was conjectured from her always preferring those which she was forbidden to take. Such were her propensities — her abilities were quite as extraordinary. She never could learn or understand anything before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid. Her mother was three months in teaching her only to repeat the "Beggar's Petition"; and after all, her next sister, Sally, could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid — by no means; she learnt the fable of "The Hare and Many Friends" as quickly as any girl in England. Her mother wished her to learn music; and Catherine was sure she should like it, for she was very fond of tinkling the keys of the old forlorn spinner; so, at eight years old she began. She learnt a year, and could not bear it; and Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed her to leave off. The day which dismissed the music-master was one of the happiest of Catherine's life. Her taste for drawing was not superior; though whenever she could obtain the outside of a letter from her mother or seize upon any other odd piece of paper, she did what she could in that way, by drawing houses and trees,

hens and chickens, all very much like one another. Writing and accounts she was taught by her father; French by her mother: her proficiency in either was not remarkable, and she shirked her lessons in both whenever she could. What a strange, unaccountable character! — for with all these symptoms of profligacy at ten years old, she had neither a bad heart nor a bad temper, was seldom stubborn, scarcely ever quarrelsome, and very kind to the little ones, with few interruptions of tyranny; she was moreover noisy and wild, hated confinement and cleanliness, and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house.”

> — **Jane Austen, <u>Northanger Abbey</u>** (Vol 1, chapter 1)

“The anxiety, which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.”
> — **Jane Austen, <u>Northanger Abbey</u>** (Vol 2, chapter 17)

This is satire at the expense of Catherine Moreland.   We are told no one would expect her to be a heroine which makes us expect in fact she will be.

Austen gives slightly ridiculous examples of being girly (nursing a dormouse)

We are positioned at a distance from Catherine - Austen is going go be satirical at the expense of all the chars even the ones we are most likely to be sympathetic to.

In the second quote, Austen is poking fun at the novel form - saying we all know how this going to end then don’t we….

> At five o'clock the two ladies retired to dress, and at half past six Elizabeth was summoned to dinner. To the civil enquiries which then poured in, and amongst which she had the pleasure of distinguishing the much superior solicitude of Mr. Bingley's, she could not make a very favourable answer.
>
> Jane was by no means better. The sisters, on hearing this, repeated three or four times how much they were grieved, how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill themselves, and then thought no more of the matter; and their indifference towards Jane, when not immediately before them, restored Elizabeth to the enjoyment of all her original dislike.
>
> Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice (Vol 1 chapter 8)
>
> Mary, very much gratified by this attention, was delighted to receive him, while a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparation, the others appeared; they were in the drawing-room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's, a bow, a curtsey passed; she heard his voice; he talked to Mary, said all that was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices, but a few minutes ended

it. Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone, the Miss Musgroves were gone too, suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the sportsmen: the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could.

"It is over! it is over!" she repeated to herself again and again, in nervous gratitude. "The worst is over!"

Jane Austen Persuasion (Vol 1 chapter

Austen certainly breaks the 4th wall, so does speak directly to the audience, but I think if it was really 2nd person narration then the audience would actually have to be a character I the novel and they are not - they are just observers..she cleverly shows the indifference and the delicious last line adds to Elizabeth's characterisation
We understand that Elizabeth is not taken in by the sisters. The last line is brilliant. She is enjoying disliking them. We understand this human reaction.   I think Austen is being conspiratorial with the reader - we are being invited to join in (vicariously?) with Elizabeth's dislike of the sisters - we are being allowed to be nasty without really having to admit to being unkind ourselves...

Austen first shows the shallow nature of the sisters so sets it up for us and we are already thinking the sisters are not very caring and then we can further enjoy the same thought in Elizabeth's thoughts.

In the second quote, the tone is more serious, nervous, poignant, serious.   Persuasion is still comic but overall the novel is more serious than Pride and Prejudice, and so the reader is put in a different pace.

The rush of emotions, through Anne is achieved with short phrases, punctuation, repetition (seemed full, full.,.).

There is no physical description of Wentworth, because that would slow the pace down.

In persuasion we are allowed to get closer to the chars than in Pride and Prejudice - so we feel more sympathetic, we are asked to engage more emotionally.

Novel Writing

Novels and short stories are two different literary forms.

A short story is a tight, concise bundle of words, and generally is ruthless with word count, sub-plots, and omits anything that is extraneous.

> Short stories are tiny windows into other words and other minds and other dreams. They're journeys you can make to the far side of the Universe and still be back in time for dinner. (Neil Gaiman, www.writers.co.uk)

A novel is a much longer work, with in depth exploration of character development, and often contains multiple themes, concurrent narrative strands, greater complexity and multiple subplots.

The most significant difference between the novel and short story is not length, but the weight of meaning that the novel has to carry from page to page, scene to scene. The connections and relationships between the plots, characters, themes, and meanings in a novel distinguish it from a short story, rather than sheer volume of words. A short story, is more tightly controlled, focusing on a smaller number of ideas and often allowing less time for length character development and exploration. A scene in a short story—and there may be only one—operates with a lot more focus and concentration. But a scene in a novel can afford to spend a good deal of its energy in connections with other scenes, in flashbacks or flashforward, or in the development of subplots.

The novel requires a greater depth of characterisation and most importantly allows a detailed exploration of the journey of the characters. It has space for multiple central characters and multiple sub plots. A novel is a larger-scale project that takes a lot more stamina than a short story. It will take longer to write, so you need to make sure you have a *complex and sustainable* idea. The length of the novel also requires the writer to make more use of changes of pace than in a short story.

Henry James said:

> *The only thing we should require of a novel is that it be interesting.*

The following is from *The Difference Between Short Story and Novel Writing*

https://www.liminalpages.com/the-difference-between-short-story-and-novel-writing

Plots and subplots

The greater number of words in a novel do not mean there is more plot/action in a novel than a short story. Instead, there is more *development* of the events and characters – internal and external reactions from characters – there is more detail and less summary.

Subplots are mostly used in novels, but they are not excluded from short stories. A subplot is a story that progresses in parallel the main narrative (and is of connected to the main story)

that enrichens the main plot or the themes of the novel. Generally, there is not enough space in a short story for an extensive subplot.

Complexity of conflict

A short story focuses on problems that can be quickly resolved. This can be one aspect of a character's life, or a single dilemma, problem, or relationship in a character's life.

In a novel, the issues and conflict that are examined are both deeper and wider

For example, in the speculative short story 'The Light of Other Days' by Bob Shaw, the main characters, a married couple, are going on holiday to try and repair their fraught relationship. The husband thinks that 'doing something extravagant and crazy would set us right again', so they stop to look at some 'slow glass' for sale. By the end of the story, the conflict between the couple is hinted at being resolved because of their encounter with the slow glass. The story focuses on a single aspect of a relationship, then resolves it through a single event.

On the other hand, *Gerald's Game* is a novel by Stephen King about a married couple who go on holiday to try to repair their fraught relationship. Things take a dark turn, though, when the husband dies while the wife is handcuffed to the bed. The problems the protagonist faces keep getting worse and worse, allowing for an expansion of the plot and a deep dive into the character's past and psychology.

Timespan

The difference between a short story and a novel is unrelated to time span. Some novels are set in a day (for example, *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf). Some short stories can be set over several days, or even several years or different time periods (for example, 'The Hanging Girl' by Ali Smith). Usually, however, flash fiction (a very short story) is contained to one moment or one scene.

Depth and meaning

Although novels have more depth compared to short stories, they do not necessarily have more meaning. Short stories have as much potential as novels for meaning, but the novel offers the opportunity to provide more detail – by exploring a larger number of characters, details, thoughts and can more easily hold multiple points of view.

Short story writing

Hmm, some content needed here !

Theme and Sequences

The novelist Nigel Watts compares theme to 'a unifying thread, a line of thought that leads through a story upon which the plot events are strung like beads' (Watts, 1996, p.115). The thread, no matter what the genre, should not be too visible. If, like me, you prefer a musical metaphor in describing theme, then it is important that its echoes are not too loud. A sequence of chapters, a sequence of stories, a sequence of dramatic scenes and a sequence of poems need to be connected in a surreptitious and imaginative way, so that the reader can delight in glimpsing the thread, sensing the echo. Whether you are writing a novel or a play, or compiling collections of stories, dramatic episodes, or poems which are united by theme, take great pleasure in finding the best order – the richest, most tantalising and most powerful order or sequence. Laying the trail of your theme, as you discover it, is one of the most enjoyable experiences for any writer – and following the trail will engross your reader.

Theme and Sequences

Story, Plot and Structure

"If the plot flags, bring in a man with a gun." Raymond Chandler
"The king died and then the queen died is a story. The king died, and then the queen died of grief is a plot." E.M. Forster
"Stories happen because somebody wants something and has trouble getting it." David Mamet
"In the first act, your hero gets stuck in a tree. In the second act, you throw stones at him. In the third act, you get him out of the tree." George Abbott

What is a plot?

- Plot: the interrelationship of the main events in a play, novel, film (the behind scenes machinations of a story: you don't tell a plot, but it exists, you can extract it from the story)
- Story: an account of imaginary or past events; a narrative, tale, or anecdote
- Plot is the route you take; story is the journey you make. Paul Ashton (BBC Writers' Room)

So, a plot = **a chain of cause and effect**, a series of interrelated events.

- NB Not *just* events, not *every* event, but significant events in a story

- Significant because they have consequences and/or meaning
- Plot is deciding what is important in a story, then showing why it is important.
- These events need to build, through the growth of character and conflict, as the story progresses. That is, there needs to be increasingly more at stake, more suspense – it is this which makes the reader read on, they want to know WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
- These events are translated onto the page in scenes – scenes which advance story and demonstrate character
- There needs to be a constant question mark as to what's going to happen and how the plot's going to unravel in order for the reader to read on.
- How you choose to structure this plot, how you choose to present it, write it, relate it, is what makes your story different to anyone else's.
- 'the ship is always trying to get somewhere,'

Classic plots:

- Love (tragic, Romeo and Juliet, eternal triangle)
- Quest (Lord of the Rings, search for the Holy Grail)
- Revenge or Divine Retribution or your past catching up with you (Kill Bill, Hamlet)
- Rags-Riches or Happy ever after against all odds (Cinderella)
- An Outsider or the Hero with a Fatal Flaw (Othello)
- Good Vs. Evil (Hansel and Gretel, Star Wars)
- Transformation (Metamorphosis)

Classical Story Elements:

Most stories follow the classical which contains five sections:

1. A beginning – an inciting incident, an invitation.
2. A middle – conflict, progressive complications.
3. A crisis – something goes wrong.
4. A climax – a value change.
5. An end – a resolution.

The Seven basic plots: why we tell stories

From Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Basic_Plots

The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories is a 2004 book by Christopher Booker containing a Jung-influenced analysis of stories and their psychological meaning. Booker worked on the book for thirty-four years

The meta-plot

The meta-plot begins with the anticipation stage, in which the hero is called to the adventure to come. This is followed by a dream stage, in which the adventure begins, the hero has some success, and has an illusion of invincibility. However, this is then followed by a frustration stage, in which the hero has his first confrontation with the enemy, and the illusion of invincibility is lost. This worsens in the nightmare stage, which is the climax of the plot, where hope is apparently lost. Finally, in the resolution, the hero overcomes his burden against the odds.

The key thesis of the book: "However many characters may appear in a story, its real concern is with just one: its hero. It is the one whose fate we identify with, as we see them gradually developing towards that state of self-realization which marks the end of the story. Ultimately it is in relation to this central figure that all other characters in a story take on their significance. What each of the other characters represents is really only some aspect of the inner state of the hero himself."

The plots

Overcoming the Monster

> Definition: The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force (often evil) which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland.

> Examples: Perseus, Theseus, *Beowulf*, *Dracula*, *The War of the Worlds*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Guns of Navarone*, *Seven Samurai* (*The Magnificent Seven*), James Bond, *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Attack on Titan*.

Rags to Riches

> Definition: The poor protagonist acquires power, wealth, and/or a mate, loses it all and gains it back, growing as a person as a result.

> Examples: *Cinderella*, *Aladdin*, *Jane Eyre*, *A Little Princess*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Brewster's Millions*, *The Jerk*.

The Quest

> Definition: The protagonist and companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location. They face temptations and other obstacles along the way.

Examples: *The Iliad*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Lord Of The Rings*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Six of Crows*, *Watership Down*, *Lightning Thief*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*.

Voyage and Return

Definition: The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses or learning important lessons unique to that location, they return with experience.

Examples: *Ramayana*, *Odyssey*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Orpheus*, *The Time Machine*, *Peter Rabbit*, *The Hobbit*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Third Man*, *The Lion King*, *Back to the Future*, *The Midnight Gospel*, *Gulliver*, *Coming To America*.

Comedy

Definition: Light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.[2] Booker stresses that comedy is more than humor. It refers to a pattern where the conflict becomes more and more confusing, but is at last made plain in a single clarifying event. The majority of romance films fall into this category.

Examples: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Music and Lyrics*, *Sliding Doors*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *The Big Lebowski*.

Tragedy

Definition: The protagonist is a hero with a major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally good character.

Examples: *Anna Karenina*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Carmen*, *Citizen Kane*, *John Dillinger*, *Jules et Jim*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Madame Bovary*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamilton*, *The Great Gatsby*.

Rebirth

Definition: An event forces the main character to change their ways and often become a better individual.

Examples: *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Frog Prince*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Snow Queen*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Secret Garden*, *Peer Gynt*, *Groundhog Day*.

The Rule of Three

"Again and again, things appear in threes . . ." There is rising tension and the third event becomes "the final trigger for something important to happen". We are accustomed to this pattern from childhood stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, *Cinderella*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*. In adult stories, three can convey the gradual working out of a process that leads to transformation. This transformation can be downwards as well as upwards. Booker asserts that the *Rule of Three* is expressed in four ways:

1. The *simple*, or *cumulative* three, for example, Cinderella's three visits to the ball.
2. The *ascending* three, where each event is of more significance than the preceding, for example, the hero must win first bronze, then silver, then gold objects.
3. The *contrasting* three, where only the third has positive value, for example, *The Three Little Pigs*, two of whose houses are blown down by the Big Bad Wolf.
4. The *final* or *dialectical* form of three, where, as with Goldilocks and her bowls of porridge, the first is wrong in one way, the second in an opposite way, and the third is "just right".

Reception

Scholars and journalists have had mixed responses to *The Seven Basic Plots*. Some have celebrated the book's audacity and breadth. The author and essayist [Fay Weldon], for example, wrote the following (which is quoted on the front cover of the book): "This is the most extraordinary, exhilarating book. It always seemed to me that 'the story' was God's way of giving meaning to crude creation. Booker now interprets the mind of God, and analyses not just the novel – which will never to me be quite the same again – but puts the narrative of contemporary human affairs into a new perspective. If it took its author a lifetime to write, one can only feel gratitude that he did it." [Beryl Bainbridge], [Richard Adams], [Ronald Harwood], and [John Bayley] also spoke positively of the work, while philosopher [Roger Scruton] described it as a "brilliant summary of story-telling".

Others have dismissed the book, criticizing especially Booker's normative conclusions. Novelist and literary critic [Adam Mars-Jones], for instance, wrote, "He sets up criteria for art, and ends up condemning *Rigoletto*, *The Cherry Orchard*, [Wagner], [Proust], [Joyce], [Kafka] and [Lawrence]—the list goes on—while praising *Crocodile Dundee*, *E.T.* and *Terminator 2*". Similarly, [Michiko Kakutani] in *The New York Times* writes, "Mr. Booker evaluates works of art on the basis of how closely they adhere to the archetypes he has so laboriously described; the ones that deviate from those classic patterns are dismissed as flawed or perverse – symptoms of what has gone wrong with modern art and the modern world."

Freytag's pyramid:

1. **Exposition**: the background, setting, characters, setting the scene. The exposition sets up the story and lets the stakes become known.
2. **Inciting incident**: something happens to begin the action. The inciting incident is where the conflict begins. It could be a dramatic event. for example, the death of a character, or it could be something that is apparently trivial but triggers more significant subsequent events, eg a casual conversation. This incident will act ad s catalysis to cause the protagonist to think about taking future action. This phase continues with:
    Rising action: the story builds. The rising action reveals the problem and/or conflict the character attempts to resolve. The protagonist comes to understand their goal and begins to work toward it. Initial smaller problems may need to be overcome in this phase, and although these are minor setbacks they add to the build-up of tension. The protagonist is in jeopardy throughout this phase.
3. **Climax**: the point of greatest tension. This the turning point of the story. The protagonists and antagonist start executing their plan to overcome each other and the audience sees them in direct conflict for the first time. Neither win at this stage. The protagonist makes decisions which show their moral quality and who they are as a person, and which ultimately decide their fate. In a tragedy, the protagonist here makes poor decisions or a miscalculation that also determines their fate.
4. **Falling action**: events that happen as a result of the climax – this is where the protagonist begins to solve the problem, even though the antagonist may appear to have the upper hand at the end of the climax.
5. **Resolution**: **Denouement or Catastrophe**: The ending. Sometimes used as a foil, to balance the tension of the previous chapters. In a tragedy the catastrophe is where the hero meets his logical destruction or at least is worse off than at the beginning of the narrative. Freytag warns the writer not to spare the life of the hero in such a case. More generally the concluding part of the plot is known as the denouement and comprises events from the end of the falling action to the actual ending scene of the drama or narrative. Denouement is derived from the French *dénouer*, "to untie", from *nodus*, Latin

for "knot. It is thus the unravelling or untying of the complexities of a plot. If this is not a tragedy, then the protagonist is better off than at the story's outset. The author aims at satisfying the reader by showing how normality is re-establishes and conflicts are resolved, and tension is released. An **example** of a comic denouement is the final scene of [Shakespeare](#)'s comedy *As You Like It*, in which couples marry, an evildoer repents, two disguised characters are revealed for all to see, and a ruler is restored to power. In Shakespeare's tragedies, the denouement is usually the death of one or more characters.
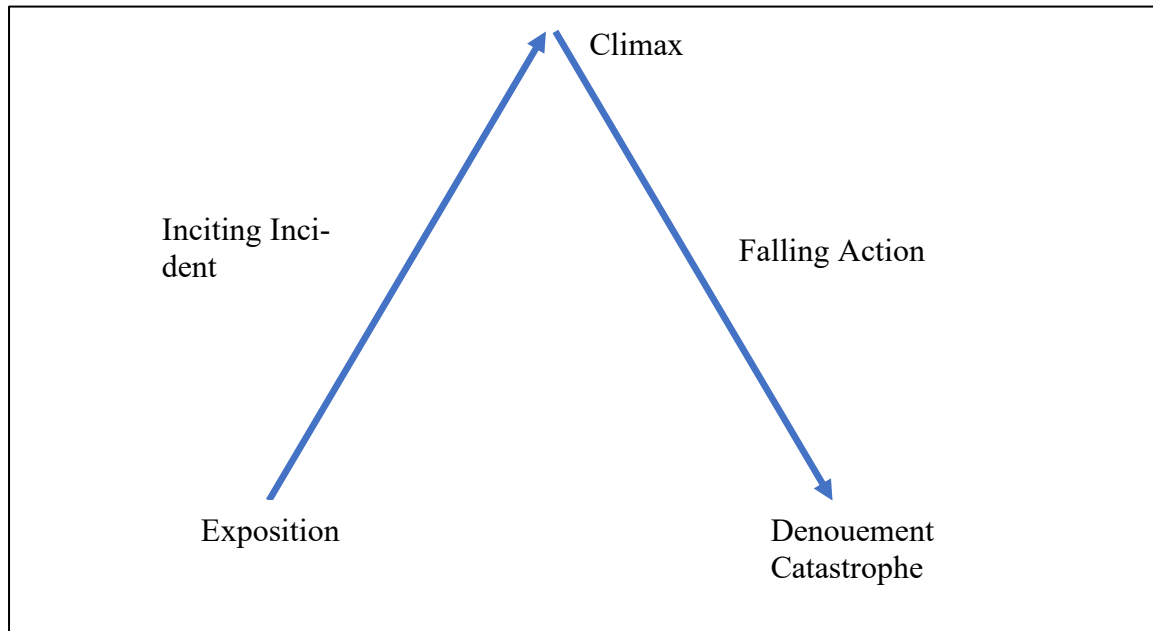
Figure 1: Freytag's Pyramid

Fortunately, unfortunately (via Emma Darwin)

> *Fortunately, Jane Bennet was invited to London. Unfortunately, it would have been improper for her to tell Charles Bingley that she was on her way. Fortunately, it was proper to tell his sister. Unfortunately, Caroline Bingley was a scheming bitch.*

So, a compelling story ("the journey you make") needs to be embodied in a plot ("the route you take") in which events *keep on* not letting the main character stay in the track they thought they were on scene after scene, chapter after chapter, "this" is followed by "but". As the thriller writers says, jeopardy must increase - the stakes must be raised - so as the story builds, steadily bigger fortunatelies are followed by steadily more potentially disastrous unfortunatelies, until we reach the crisis point where the ultimate Unfortunately looks likely to win over the ultimate Fortunately.

Therefore --- but

"Therefore... But..."

"X needed something, therefore they... but then... therefore they... but then... and so on."

Try using the idea of '**What if**' to get your reader hooked (what if all the oil ran out tomorrow? What if you woke up and you were a beetle?)

Hook the reader in at the beginning:

- Begin with an effect: good place to start, then go back to how it happened.
- Or show your protagonist in action, throwing the reader into the thick of things, so that they want to know how the character got into that predicament and how they will get out of it.

Think about your characters: Are there enough contradictions in your characters, enough strengths and weaknesses for the reader to relate to. Have you shown this through action and dialogue? A reader's involvement in character is what keeps them turning the page.

See also:

https://www.presentation-guru.com/on-structure-the-hidden-framework-that-hangs-your-story-together/

Aristotle's three act structure

The three-act structure is a model used in narrative fiction or drama that divides a story into three parts (acts), often called the Setup, the Confrontation, and the Resolution.

Act I: Setup

The setup introduces the reader to the characters and the world they inhabit.   An inciting incident introduces the conflict that leads the narrative into the second act.

Act II: Confrontation

Further obstacles may occur as the the tension builds up to the central crisis in the story. The stakes, continue to rise through the second, encouraging the audience to keep watching. The second act ends in a climax, where the protagonist and antagonist are locked in their final conflict.

Act III: Resolution or Payoff

The end winds down the tension, describing the outcome of the climax and should bring some kind of happy or sad resolution.
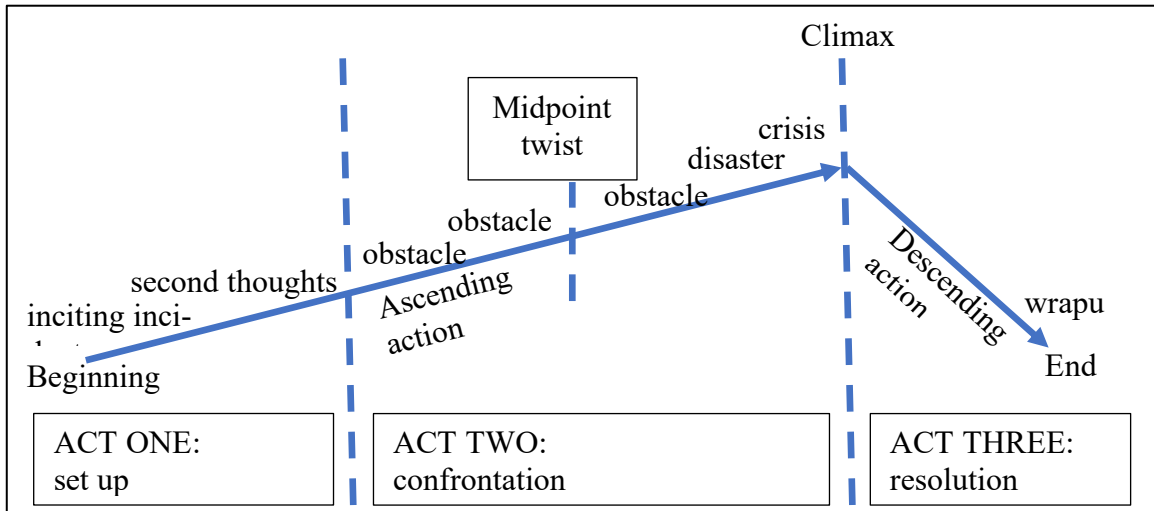
Figure 2: Three Act Structure

Sparkline

A story that simply moves linearly from A to B will lack interest and emotional involvement for the reader. Duarte suggests (in the context of business presentations) switching the audience back and forth between a state of what is, and what could be. This naturally create tension and release, and can be thought of a plotline that encounters and overcomes various obstacles ad crises. This can be summarised in a Sparkline chart:
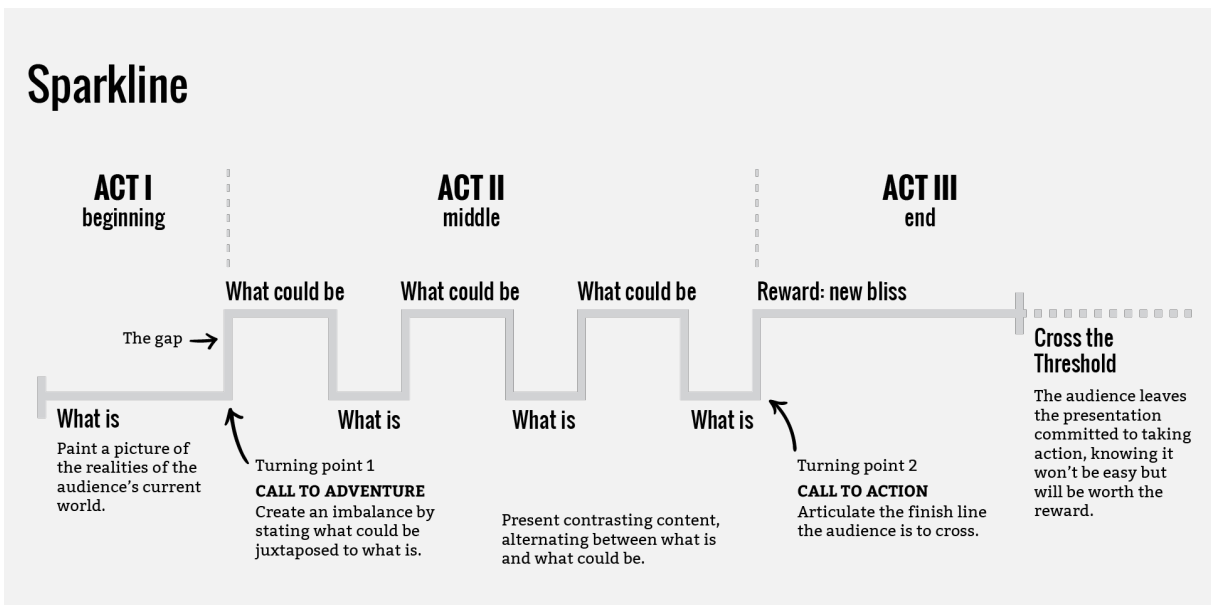
[Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences.](#)

The hero's journey

American scholar Joseph Campbell wrote *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* In it, he discussed the concept of the hero's journey. His work haa influenced the structure behind everything from Star Wars to Shrek.

The hero's journey starts with an ordinary character, going about an ordinary life in an ordinary world. A threat or quest then calls them away from that world. Although reluctant, the hero is compelled to accept the quest. They face and overcome many hazards and threats, often with the assistance of helpers they meet along the way. After a series of trials, the hero wins through and returns to their old world, seeing it now through new eyes.
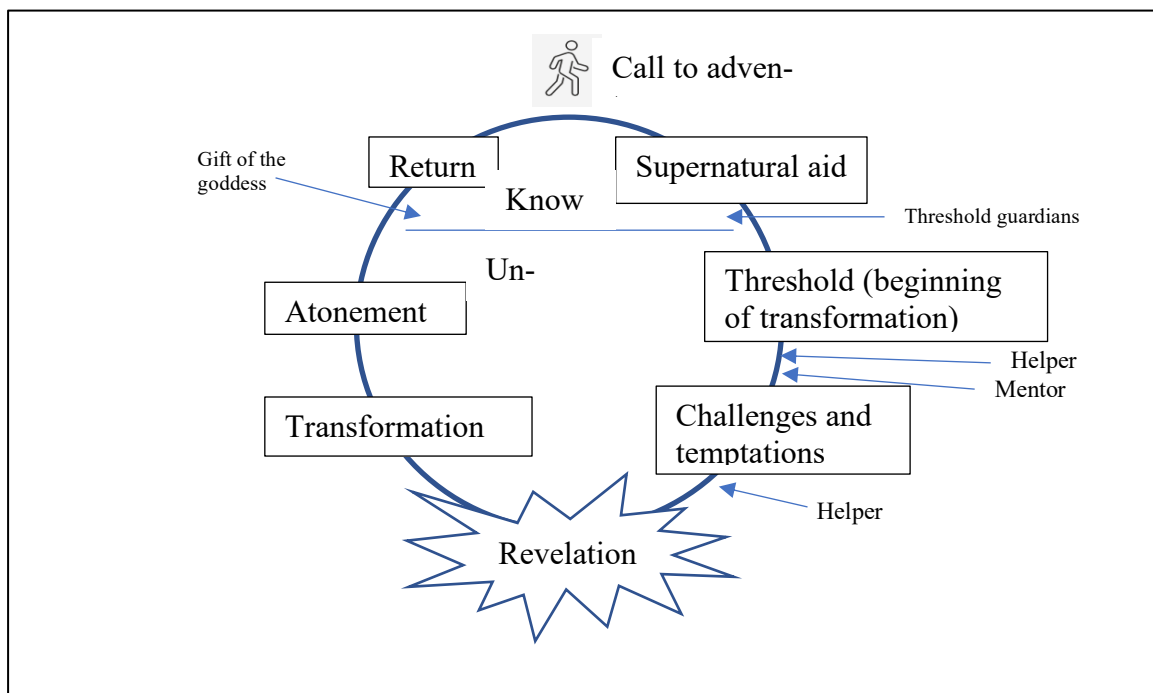
Figure 3: The Hero's Journey

The 12 Steps of the hero's journey

From: https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/story-structure/heros-journey/

The Hero's Journey is a model for both plot points and character development: as the Hero traverses the world, they'll undergo inner and outer transformation at each stage of the journey. The 12 steps of the hero's journey are...

1. The Ordinary World
2. The Call of Adventure
3. Refusal of the Call
4. Meeting the Mentor
5. Crossing the First Threshold
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies
7. Approach to the Inmost Cave

Believe it or not, this story structure also applies across mediums and genres (and also works when your protagonist is an anti-hero!). To show you how it can be used outside of your average sword-and-sorcery books, we've adopted the 1976 film *Rocky* as an example in each step.

1. Ordinary World

In which we meet our Hero.

The journey has yet to start. Before our Hero discovers a strange new world, we must first understand the status quo: their ordinary, mundane reality.
It's up to this opening leg to set the stage, introducing the Hero to readers. Importantly, it lets readers identify with the Hero as a "normal" person in a "normal" setting, before the journey begins.

🎬 *Rocky*: The Ordinary World:
Rocky Balboa is introduced as a mediocre boxer and loan collector — just doing his best to live day-to-day in a poor part of Philadelphia.

2. Call to Adventure

In which an adventure starts.

The call to adventure is all about booting the Hero out of their comfort zone. In this stage, they are generally confronted with a problem or challenge they can't ignore. This catalyst can take many forms, as Campbell points out in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The Hero can, for instance:
- **Decide to go forth of their own volition**, i.e. Theseus upon arriving in Athens,
- **Be sent abroad by a benign or malignant agent**, i.e. Odysseus setting off on his ship in *The Odyssey*,
- **Stumble upon the adventure as a result of a mere blunder**, i.e. Dorothy when she's swept up in a tornado in *The Wizard of Oz*,
- **Be casually strolling when some passing phenomenon catches the wandering eye and lures one away from the frequented paths of man**, i.e. Elliot in *E.T.* upon discovering a lost alien in the tool shed.

The stakes of the adventure and the Hero's goals become clear. The only question: will he rise to the challenge?

🎬 *Rocky*: Call to Adventure:

Apollo Creed, the undisputed World Heavyweight Champion, decides to make a big fight interesting by giving a no-name a chance to challenge him. Intrigued by the nickname, "The Italian Stallion," he rings Rocky up.

3. Refusal of the Call

In which the Hero digs in their feet.

Great, so the Hero's received their summons. Now they're all set to be whisked off to defeat evil, right?
Not so fast. The Hero might first refuse the call to action. It's risky and there are perils —
like spiders, trolls, or perhaps a [creepy uncle waiting back at Pride Rock](#). It's enough to give anyone pause.
In *Star Wars*, for instance, Luke Skywalker initially refuses to join Obi-Wan on his mission to rescue the princess. It's only when he discovers that his aunt and uncle have been killed by stormtroopers that he changes his mind.

🎬 Rocky: Refusal of the Call

Rocky says, "Thanks, but no thanks," to Creed's invitation. He's reluctant, given that he has no trainer and is incredibly out of shape.

4. Meeting the Mentor

In which the Hero acquires a personal trainer.

The Hero's decided to go on the adventure — but they're not ready to spread their wings yet. They're much too inexperienced at this point and we don't want them to do a fabulous belly-flop off the cliff.
Enter the mentor: someone who helps the Hero, so that they don't make a total fool of themselves (or get themselves killed). The mentor provides practical training, profound wisdom, a kick up the posterior, or something abstract like grit and self-confidence.
Wise old wizards seem to like being mentors. But mentors take many forms, from witches to hermits and suburban karate instructors. They might literally give weapons to prepare for the trials ahead, like Q in the James Bond series. Or perhaps the mentor is an object, such as a map. In all cases, they prepare the Hero for the next step.

🎬 Rocky: Meeting the Mentor

In steps former boxer Mickey "Mighty Mick" Goldmill, who sees potential in Rocky and starts training him physically and mentally for the fight.

6.   Crossing the First Threshold

In which the Hero enters the other world in earnest.

Now the Hero is ready — and committed — to the journey. This marks the end of the Departure stage and is when the adventure really kicks into the next gear. As Vogler writes: "This is the moment that the balloon goes up, the ship sails, the romance begins, the wagon gets rolling."
From this point on, there's no turning back.
Like our Hero, you should think of this stage as a checkpoint for your story. Pause and re-assess your bearings before you continue into unfamiliar territory. Have you:

- **Launched the central conflict?** If not, here's a post on types of conflict to help you out.
- **Established the theme of your book?** If not, check out this post that's all about creating theme and motifs.
- **Made headway into your character development?** If not, this character profile template and these character development exercises may be useful.

🎬 Rocky: Crossing the First Threshold

Rocky fully accepts the gauntlet to square up when he crosses the threshold into his love interest Adrian's house and asks her out on a date.

7. Tests, Allies, Enemies

In which the Hero faces new challenges and gets a squad.

When we step into the Special World, we notice a definite shift. The Hero might be discombobulated by this unfamiliar reality and its new rules. This is generally one of the longest stages in the story, as our protagonist gets to grips with this new world.
This makes a prime hunting ground for the series of tests to pass! Luckily, there are many ways for the Hero to get into trouble:

- In *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle,* Spencer, Bethany, "Fridge," and Martha get off to a bad start when they bump into a herd of bloodthirsty hippos.
- In his first few months at Hogwarts, Harry Potter manages to fight a troll, almost fall from a broomstick and die, and get horribly lost in the Forbidden Forest.
- Marlin and Dory encounter three "reformed" sharks, get shocked by jellyfish, and are swallowed by a blue whale en route to finding Nemo.

This stage often expands the cast of characters. Once the protagonist is in the Special World, he will meet allies and enemies — or foes that turn out to be friends and vice versa. He will learn a new set of rules from them. Saloons and seedy bars are popular places for these transactions, as Vogler points out (so long as the Hero survives them).

🎬 Rocky: Tests, Allies, Enemies

Rocky continues to try and win over Adrian while making a dubious friend in her brother, Paulie.

8. Approach to the Inmost Cave

In which the Hero gets closer to his goal.

This isn't a physical cave. Instead, the "inmost cave" refers to the most dangerous spot in the other realm — whether that's the villain's chambers, the lair of the fearsome dragon, or the Death Star. Almost always, it is where the ultimate goal of the quest is located.
Note that the protagonist hasn't entered the Inmost Cave just yet. This stage is all about the *approach* to it. It covers all the prepwork that's needed in order to defeat the villain.

🎬 Rocky: Approach to the Inmost Cave

The Inmost Cave in *Rocky* is Rocky's own mind. He fears that he'll never amount to anything — something that he reveals when he butts heads with his trainer, Mickey, in his apartment.

9. Ordeal

In which the Hero faces his biggest test of all thus far.

Of all the tests the Hero has faced, none have made them hit rock bottom — until now. Vogler describes this phase as a "black moment." Campbell refers to it as the "belly of the whale." Both indicate some grim news for the Hero.
The protagonist must now confront their greatest fear. If they survive it, they will emerge transformed. This is a critical moment in the story, as Vogler explains that it will "inform every decision that the Hero makes from this point forward."
The Ordeal is sometimes *not* the climax of the story. There's more to come. But you can think of it as the main event of the second act — the one in which the Hero actually earns the title of "Hero."

🎬 Rocky: Ordeal

The start of the training montage marks the beginning of Rocky's Ordeal. He pushes through it until he glimpses hope ahead while running up the museum steps.

10. Reward (Seizing the Sword)

In which the Hero sees light at the end of the tunnel.

Our Hero's been through a lot. However, the fruits of their labor are now at hand — if they can just reach out and grab them! The "reward" is the object or knowledge the Hero has fought throughout the entire journey to hold.
Once the protagonist has it in their possession, it generally has greater ramifications for the story. Vogler offers a few examples of it in action:

*   Luke rescues Princess Leia and captures the plans of the Death Star — keys to defeating Darth Vader.
*   Dorothy escapes from the Wicked Witch's castle with the broomstick and the ruby slippers — keys to getting back home.

🎬 Rocky: Reward (Seizing the Sword)

Rocky's reward is the return of his faith in himself. He regains the self-esteem to realize that he has the stuff to take on Apollo Creed — win or lose.

11. The Road Back

In which the light at the end of the tunnel might be a little further than the Hero thought.

The story's not over just yet, as this phase marks the beginning of Act Three. Now that he's seized the reward, the Hero tries to return to the Ordinary World, but more dangers (inconveniently) arise on the road back from the Inmost Cave.
More precisely, the Hero must deal with the consequences and aftermath of the previous act: the dragon, enraged by the Hero who's just stolen a treasure from under his nose, starts the hunt. Or perhaps the opposing army gathers to pursue the Hero across a crowded battlefield. All further obstacles for the Hero, who must face them down before they can return home.

🎬 Rocky: The Road Back

On New Year's Day, the fight between Rocky and Creed is held. Rocky realizes the challenge that lies before him in the first few rounds, in which both men are more or less equally matched.

12. Resurrection

In which the last test is met.

Here is the true climax of the story. Everything that happened prior to this stage culminates in a crowning test for the Hero, as the Dark Side gets one last chance to triumph over the Hero. Vogler refers to this as a "final exam" for the Hero — they must be "tested once more to see if they have really learned the lessons of the Ordeal." It's in this Final Battle that the protagonist goes through one more "resurrection." As a result, this is where you'll get most of your miraculous near-death escapes, à la James Bond's dashing deliverances. If the Hero survives, they can start looking forward to a sweet ending.

🎬 Rocky: Resurrection

Rocky's knocked down more than a few times as the fight continues. The entire fight winds up lasting 15 rounds and takes both men to the brink of exhaustion.

13. Return with the Elixir

In which our Hero has a triumphant homecoming.

Finally, the Hero gets to return home. However, they go back a different person than when they started out: they've grown and matured as a result of the journey they've taken.
But we've got to see them bring home the bacon, right? That's why the protagonist must return with the "Elixir," or the prize won during the journey, whether that's an object or knowledge and insight gained.
Of course, it's possible for a story to end on an Elixir-less note — but then the Hero would be doomed to repeat the entire adventure.

🎬 Rocky: Return with the Elixir

Rocky doesn't win the fight — but he doesn't care. He's won back his confidence and beaten his mental demons. And he's got Adrian, who tells him that she loves him.

How to plot a novel using the Snowflake Method

(from: https://jerichowriters.com/how-to-plot/)

1. Write your story in one sentence
2. Decide on your protagonist
3. Write a paragraph on settings
4. Add a beginning, middle and end to your story description
5. Write short character summaries
6. Expand your story description to 2 pages
7. Keep adding details until you're ready to write

How to ratchet up the tension in a plot

Method 1: Box in the character(s) by showing that they have exhausted all the possible solutions to the problem, until there is only one left. This should be a solution that is perilous or high risk. But eventually the character(s) makes this solution work.

Method 2: The false dawn. It looks like the solution is going to work, and everyone is optimistic, but then it is revealed that the solution will not in fact work and an alternative must be chosen, and the protagonist has to start again from scratch.

Tips to help with plot problems

Remember **conflict** is at the heart of all dramas. Ask yourself: what is at stake for my character/s? What levels of conflict are they facing?

- Internally – conflicts within character
- Interpersonally – conflicts between characters
- Externally – conflicts between character and outside world

Pay attention to **pacing**. Remember, there has to be a constant question mark as to what's going to happen and how the plot's going to unravel. Ask yourself, is there a situation that is static, or a section where nothing much really happens?

Harry Bingham's thoughts on plot twists

(from Jericho Writers: https://community.jerichowriters.com/page/view-post?id=361)

Plot twists and how to write them

Determined as I am to add value to my readers, always – I'll start by telling you the easiest way to write a plot twist.

Answer: you don't. You write a compelling, interesting narrative that doesn't have a plot twist anywhere.

This is advice I live by. If I think back over my fiction, I can think of almost nothing that boasts an honest-to-God plot twist. In all my books, I have only one proper plot twist (and even then, I don't think most readers or critics commented on the twist specifically; they gave a broader view about the entire book.)

Now, admitting that my books mostly don't have plot twists is not at all the same thing as saying they're dull. I blooming well hope they're not. On the contrary, I hope they're full of surprise and hope my readers never quite know where the book will be going next.

But a twist is different from a surprise. Here's the difference:

A plot surprise

Something happens that is perfectly in keeping with what's gone before. There may even have been some kind of foreshadowing. But the surprise does not unsettle a reader's expectation, because the reader had not formed any particular expectation in relation to this particular issue.

Examples of this kind of surprise are plentiful. In *The Dead House,* Fiona spends a long time draining a boring-looking pond. The reader has no idea what she's going to find. When she finds the (previously flooded) entrance to a cave, the reader is surprised. ("Good heavens! A cave! I never expected that!") But they're not unsettled. They simply had no idea what the whole pond-drainage thing was leading up to.

Readers are gripped because they want to know what significance the cave has. But they're not confounded or startled, because they didn't have any prior expectations about what might be the case.

A plot twist

For something to count as a plot twist, the plot movement needs to surprise, of course. It also needs to be perfectly consistent with what's gone before. There may well have been some rather subtle foreshadowing that only makes sense in retrospect.

But in addition – and this is the new element – the plot development needs to overturn, and *violently* overturn, an assumption that the reader had previously held with total confidence.

There are a ton of examples of twists such as these. In Hitchcock's *Psycho*, we simply assume that Janet Leigh – the huge star at the heart of the film – will at the very least survive to the last 10 minutes. (After all: she's a huge star, she's box office gold, and the first half of the film centres on her almost completely.)

It's not that the viewer *consciously* wonders whether Leigh will survive or not. They simply assume they know how movies work, and you don't kill the film's obvious lead

character in the middle of the film. But Hitchcock did exactly that – and the film swerved off in an utterly unpredictable direction.

In Clare Macintosh's debut hit, *I Let You Go*, we assume that the lead (first person) character has one particular relationship to a dead child. It turns out that the relationship is very different from what we think.

In Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl,* we assume that Amy's diaries (in the first half of the book) can be taken at face value. In the middle of the book – well, we discover something different.

And so on.

Why readers love plot twists – and whether you need one

Naturally, a surprise that comes with the added force of confounded the reader both seems more surprising and also carries a whiff of technical bravado. ("You want a twist, baby? Look at *this* little beauty!") There's something of the circus trick about them, a difficult manoeuvre carried out with dazzle.

That performative quality is why, I think, readers love twists and tend to comment on them. With works like *Psycho, I Let You Go* and *Gone Girl*, you just don't hear critical commentary that doesn't home in on the plot twist itself.

And of course, if you want to think about embedding a twist in your book, the place to start is always with the reader's own expectations.

The one time I've written a book with a proper twist, I worked hard to embed the expectation – and then overturn it. The sequence ran roughly like this:

1. Get the reader to think that art thieves have stumbled onto real-life evidence of a major Arthurian artefact. ('King' Arthur was almost certainly not a king, but it's perfectly plausible that there was a major British warlord of that name who fought and won a major battle against the Saxons. So for someone to find archaeological evidence of his existence would be unlikely, but not at all absurd. For what it's worth, I think that warlord probably did exist, it's just that no one can prove it.)

2. Reinforce that expectation by making it clear that other people around Fiona share it – and grown-up people too: academic archaeologists, the police, and so on.

3. Foreshadow and hint at the truth, but in a way no one could possibly understand.

4. Boom! Overturn the expectation abruptly and unexpectedly.

5. At the same time make it clear that, if you look carefully, there's only one way to read the sequence of events up to this point. So the view that the reader (and lots of others held) was actually impossible to sustain.

6. Develop the book along the new lines. More surprises may follow, but (probably) no more actual twists.

If you like the whole twist idea, it's worth taking time just to think through what expectations your reader has – or could have, if you went to the trouble of building false expectations. The more solid and unquestioned those expectations, the more enjoyable the act of exploding them will be.

Once you have that basic notion, you just need to backfill with everything else: embed those expectations as carefully as you can, foreshadow the real truth, detonate as explosively and loudly as you can.

That, my old buddies, is the art of the plot twist. As I say, it's not actually a route I've travelled down all that much and it's definitely not essential to writing a great book – not even if, like me, you dwell in crime-thriller-land, where twists are much talked about.

That's me done for this week. Have a lovely weekend.

Till soon.

Harry

Plot devices

Name	Definition	Example
Backstory	Past events or background that add meaning to current circumstances.	Though The Lord of the Rings trilogy takes place in a relatively short period towards the end of the 3021-year Third Age, the narration gives glimpses of the mythological and historical events which took place earlier in the Third age leading up to the action in the novel, and in the First and Second Age.
Chekhov's Gun	A dramatic principle that requires every element in a narrative to be irreplaceable, with anything else removed.	"Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. 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. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." — Anton Chekhov
Cliff-hanger	A chapter or episode ends with some issues unresolved, often leaving the protagonists in a position of physical, emotional or psychological peril, with the intent of making the audience read/watch the	The ending of most Dr Who episodes.

Name	Definition	Example
	next instalment.	
Deux a Machina (a machination, or act of god; lit. "god out of the machine")	Resolving the primary conflict by a means unrelated to the story (e.g., a god appears and solves everything). This device dates back to ancient Greek theatre but can be a clumsy method that frustrates the audience.	The phrase originates from Medea, an ancient Greek drama. An example occurs in Mighty Aphrodite and the Tamil movie Inga Enna Solluthu.
Eucatastrophe	Coined by J. R. R. Tolkien, a climactic event through which the protagonist appears to be facing a catastrophic change. However, this change does not materialise, and the protagonist finds himself as the benefactor of such a climactic event; contrast peripety/peripateia.	At the end of The Lord of the Rings, Gollum forcibly takes away the Ring from Frodo, suggesting that Sauron would eventually take over Middle Earth. However, Gollum celebrates too eagerly and clumsily falls into the lava, whereby the ring is destroyed and with it Sauron's power. In a way, Gollum does what Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring intended to do through the whole plot of the trilogy, which was to throw the ring into the lake of fire in the heart of Mount Doom.
Flashback (or analeptic reference)	A scene that reveals some past actions or events that inform the reader about what is happening in the current timeframe in the novel.	The story of "The Three Apples" in Arabian Nights tale begins with the discovery of a young woman's dead body. After the murderer later reveals himself, he narrates his reasons for the murder as a flashback of events leading up to the discovery of her dead body at the beginning of the story.
Flashforward, prolepsis		Occurs in A Christmas Carol when Mr. Scrooge visits the ghost of the future. It is also frequent in the later seasons of the television series Lost.
Foreshadowing	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.
Frame story, story within a	A main story encompasses series of linked shorter stories.	Early examples include Panchatantra, Kalila and Dimna, Arabian Nights, and

Name	Definition	Example
story		The Decameron. More modern examples are Brian Jacques's 1999 The Legend of Luke and Ramsay Wood's 2011 Kalila and Dimna update, subtitled Fables of Conflict and Intrigue.
Framing Device	A single action, scene, event, setting, or any element of significance at the beginning and end of a work. The use of framing devices allows frame stories to exist.	In *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade, the newly wed wife to the King, is the framing device. As a character, she is telling the "1,001 stories" to the King, in order to delay her execution night by night. However, as a framing device her purpose for existing is to tell the same 1,001 stories to the reader.
In media res	Starting the story in the middle of the action without any detailed preamble. Intended to immediately draw the reader into the narrative and cause them to continue to read on.	The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer are prime examples. The latter work begins with the return of Odysseus to his home of Ithaka and then in flashbacks tells of his ten years of wandering following the Trojan War.
MacGuffin	A goal or object introduced often with little or no narrative explanation and which is important to the plot. The term was introduced by Alfred Hitchcock: Alfred Hitchcock told it something like this: Two men were riding on a train in Scotland. One turned to the other and said, "What's in that black box on the luggage rack?" "A MacGuffin," the other replied. "What does it do?" "It catches lions on the Scottish Highlands." "But there are no lions on the Scottish Highlands," the man protested.	The Maltese Falcon is a powerful MacGuffin in the film of the same name, a supposedly jewel encrusted black bird which creates the greed which propels every character, even the hero.

Name	Definition	Example
	"Oh? Then that's no MacGuffin." A MacGuffin is **a plot device used in films or books that sets the characters into motion and drives the story**. A MacGuffin is an object, idea, person, or goal that the characters are either in pursuit of or which serves as motivation for their actions. Usually, the MacGuffin is revealed in the first act	
Mise-en-scène	"placing on stage" is the stage design and arrangement of actors in scenes for a theatre or film production,[1] both in visual arts through storyboarding, visual theme, and cinematography, and in narrative storytelling through direction. The term is also commonly used to refer to single scenes that are representative of a film. *Mise-en-scène* has been called film criticism's "grand undefined term". When applied to the cinema, *mise-en-scène* refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement—composition, sets, props, actors, costumes, and lighting.[3] The "mise-en-scène", along with the cinematography and editing of a film, influence the verisimilitude or believability of a film in the eyes of its viewers.[	

Name	Definition	Example
Narrative Hook	A dramatic opening that immediately captures readers' attention so they will keep reading,	Any non-fiction book is often introduced with an interesting factoid.
Plot twist	An expected outcome or direction in the plot. See also twist ending.	An early example is the Arabian Nights tale "The Three Apples". A locked chest found by a fisherman contains a dead body, and two different men claim to be the murderer, which turns out to be the investigator's own slave.
Poetic Justice	Virtue ultimately rewarded, or vice punished, by an ironic twist of fate related to the character's own conduct	Wile E. Coyote coming up with a contraption to catch the Road Runner, only to be foiled and caught by his own devices. Each sin's punishment in Dante's Inferno is a symbolic instance of poetic justice.
Quibble	Plot device based on an argument that an agreement's intended meaning holds no legal value, and that only the exact, literal words agreed on apply.	For example, William Shakespeare used a quibble in *The Merchant of Venice*: Portia saves Antonio in a court of law by pointing out that the agreement called for a pound of flesh, but no blood, so Shylock can collect only if he sheds no blood.
Red herring	Diverting attention away from an item of significance.	For example, in mystery fiction, an innocent party may be purposefully cast as highly suspicious through emphasis or descriptive techniques to divert attention from the true guilty party.
Self-fulfilling prophesy	Prediction that, by being made, makes itself come true.	Early examples include the legend of Oedipus, and the story of Krishna in the Mahabharata. There is also an example of this in Harry Potter when Lord Voldemort heard a prophecy (made by Sybil Trelawney to Dumbledore) that a boy born at the end of July, whose parents had defied Voldemort thrice and survived, would be made marked as his equal. Because of this prophecy, Lord Voldemort sought out Harry Potter (believing him to be the boy spoken of) and tried to kill him. His parents died protecting him, and when Voldemort tried to cast a killing curse on Harry, it

Name	Definition	Example
		rebounded and took away most of his strength, and gave Harry Potter a unique ability and connection with the Dark Lord thus marking him as his equal.
Story within a tory – hypodiegesis	A story told within another story. See also frame story.	In Stephen King's *The Wind Through the Keyhole*, of the *Dark Tower* series, the protagonist tells a story from his past to his companions, and in this story, he tells another relatively unrelated story.
Ticking clock, time bomb	Threat of impending disaster—often used in thrillers where salvation and escape are essential elements	In the TV show *24*, the main character, Jack Bauer often finds himself interrogating a terrorist who is caught in order to disarm a bomb.
Unreliable narrator	The narrator of the story is not sincere or introduces a bias in their narration and possibly misleads the reader, hiding or minimizing events, characters, or motivations.	An example is The Murder of Roger Ackroyd. The novel includes an unexpected plot twist at the end of the novel. In the last chapter, Sheppard describes how he was an unreliable narrator.

Table 1: List of plot devices

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Show not Tell

(From Catherine Wilcox)

Fiction uses a combination of 'tell' and 'show'.

Tell

This is like a report or summary of the action. Tell is used when you need to cover ground and move the story on. Remember: *some things aren't worth showing*.

Show

This is where the action is dramatized – it happens in the narrative present. Show is used when you need to cover ground and move the story on
Remember: *some things aren't worth showing*.

Two good ways of 'showing' not 'telling':

- Dialogue
- Free indirect speech (3rd person narration)

Examples

Telling

> Jodie walked home from school feeling miserable because her parents
> wouldn't let her go to Emily's party. She got angry with a boy for staring at her.

Showing

> Jodie walked home from school. Another day wasted. She swung her
> satchel at the boy staring at her.
>
> 'Get lost!'
> '*You* get lost, weirdo!'
> What was the point of living, even? If only her parents weren't totally
> obsessed with exams, maybe they'd let her go to Emily's party.

Showing and telling: the basics

(from https://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/showing-and-telling-the-basics.html)

Darwin E (2011), Showing and Telling the Basics, *This Itch of Writing Blog* [online] [retrieved 14 Apr 2021], https://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/showing-and-telling-the-basics.html

It's often quoted as "Show, don't tell" because, on the whole, beginner writers do too much telling when they should be showing. But of course it's not nearly as simple as that. Both have their value; the key is to understand their respective strengths, and use each to your story's best advantage. Mind you, like everything in writing, it isn't even binary, but a spectrum, from the telliest tell, to the showiest show.

SHOWING is for making the reader *feel* they're in there: feel as in smell, touch, see, hear, believe the actual experience of the characters. As **John Gardner** says, it's by being convincing in the reality and detail of how we evoke our imagined world - by what the characters do and say - that we persuade the reader to read the story we're telling *as if* it really happened, even though we all know it didn't. That means working with the immediate physical and emotional actions and experience of the characters: your rage beating in your ears, the wind whipping your cheeks, a beggar clutching at your coat. The more I talk about Showing, the more I call it **evoking,** sometimes **presenting**, and occasionally **channelling.**

TELLING is for covering the ground, when you need to, as a narrator (whether the narrator is a character, or an implied, external narrator in a third person narrative). It's supplying information: the storyteller saying "Once upon a time", or "A volunteer army was gathered together", or "The mountains were covered in fine, volcanic ash". So it's a little more removed from the immediate experience of the moment. The more I talk about Telling, the more I call it **informing**, sometimes **explaining**, and occasionally **understanding.**

Telling/informing: *The temperature had fallen overnight and the heavy frost reflected the sun's rays brightly.*

Showing/evoking: *The morning air was bitter ice in her nose and mouth, and dazzling frost lay on every bud and branch.*

Telling/informing: *The taller man was a carpenter, complete with the tools of his trade.*

Showing/evoking: *A saw and hammer dangled from his belt and an adze was hooked into it, one thumbnail was black, and when he bowed she saw several long wood-shavings caught in his curly hair.*

Telling/informing: *They stood close and wrapped their arms round each other in a passionate embrace, so that she became aware that he had been riding, and then that he was as nervous as she was.*

Showing/evoking: *They gripped each other and the tweed of his jacket was rough under her cheek. His hand came up to stroke her hair; she smelled leather and horses on the skin of his wrist. He was trembling.*

Note that though showing is often a bit longer than telling the same thing (and I explored that issue **here**), it isn't here, and it needn't be. There is also a good case for sometimes leaving things more open and un-particularised, for the reader to read their own imagined stuff into; I explored that question **here**. But, usually, you're trying to make the world and the experience of the characters come alive for us, with the vivid, immediate scratch-and-sniff of life: "convincing in the reality and detail". This is most important, of course, at the important moments of change in a story, the crucial events in the characters' journey through the plot;

they, above all, must live for us as vividly as possible, by being fully embodied - fully evoked:

Telling/informing: *James was tall and attractive to women, being so charming to them that they fell for him immediately and never guessed how little he cared for them.*

Showing/evoking: Show us how James stands at the bar, give us what he says, show us Anna looking up into his face and seeing love in his smile... and then show us what James says, in the gents' toilet, about making sure this girl - "What's her name? Anna?" - doesn't discover his address.

More thoughts about showing vs telling

Dialogue is always Showing in the basic sense, as it directly evokes sounds and actions. But do be careful that a) the character's voice is right for who they are and the way they talk is characteristic, and b) you don't use dialogue as a way of stuffing in slabs of Tell-ing which just happens to have "" round it. There's more about **writing dialogue here**.

Straight physical description - of red hair and freckles, or the mountain having dark cliffs and a rocky plateau on the top - is also showing in the basic sense, but it may not do much more to evoke the actual *experience* of that person or landscape than saying that he was beautiful or the landscape was dangerous. For more about how to make description a fully-paid-up part of your *story*telling, **try this post**.

Psychic distance, **and showing and telling,** are closely related. I've blogged in more detail about **Psychic Distance here**; for now, just have a look at Gardner's range of psychic distances, and see how they're points on the spectrum from the telliest tell, to the showiest show:

1 It was winter of the year 1853. A large man stepped out of a doorway into a snowstorm.
2 Henry J. Warburton had never much cared for snowstorms.
3 Henry hated snowstorms.
4 God how he hated these damn snowstorms.
5 Snow. Under your collar, down inside your shoes, freezing and plugging up your miserable soul.
6

See how Tell is brilliant at - well - telling us exactly where we are, and what's going on, and Show is brilliant at evoking the physical and emotional experience of the character. But each has the vices of its virtues. Showing is not nearly so good at informing us about the wider context - where and who they (and so we) are - or may have to do so in a very laborious way. Telling is not nearly so good at evoking the vivid, living quality of this world and this character. For more on this issue, **click here**; for now, the thing to understand is that *you need both*.

If you've been told to "avoid adjectives and adverbs", which I dug into in **more detail here** at heart it's a Showing-and-Telling issue. If you tell us a house is *imposing* and a character approaches *nervously and wearily*, it's not nearly as vivid as if you give us her experience of the house, using words which *embody* that moment. She has to *crane* her neck to see the roof, and the stone eagles *look down their noses* at her as she climbs *on and on* up the steps until her legs are *aching*. Embodying the effect of the setting on a character-in-

action makes our bodies feel it too, because the mind doesn't know the difference between an imagined thing and a real one. What does "imposing" feel/look like? What does "approaching nervously" actually look like? It informs us what the effect is, but it doesn't evoke the character's experience. But I know what craning my neck feels like, and walking up steps that seem to go on forever.

Showing/evoking often gives you another advantage. In her point of view, the eagles are looking down their noses at her: the evocation of their posture is filtered through her perception. So we are given the physical experience, and her emotional experience at the same time. And because we're aware that it's *her* emotion, we know it might not be the whole story (someone else might see the eagles as nodding in friendly welcome, a third person wonder which species they're supposed to be) and our sense of her character, and her subjective experience, is heightened.

Part of **using speech tags well** (which I blogged about in more detail **here**). is tied into Showing. Don't inform us that "he shouted furiously", evoke for us the furious words and actions, so that the fury is evoked in the reader too. Don't inform us "she said jokingly" or "she joked", write the joke and trust the reader to know it is one. If the speech really could be taken a different way from how you intend, then show us its effect on the speaker (he's taken aback by the fury that's burst out of himself?) or the other characters. Indeed, show us the effect of the joke anyway, as that's really what's interesting in the scene: she tells a joke, she waits for the laugh, he smiles, Granny snorts in disapproval. Even less successful, usually, are speech tags which comment on the speech, i.e. which Tell us how to take what's said: "he laughed ingenuously" "she whispered unhelpfully". If in doubt, stick to "said", which is invisible, with "shouted" "cried" etc. when you really need to indicate volume.

But don't be put off Telling. Telling is for covering the ground when you need to, and it's very valuable: it can be a huge part of making a story come alive, because it's so easy to keep things moving and concentrate the reader's attention where it really matters. And you can still colour it with a character's voice and point of view - make it Show-y - even when you are covering the ground:

Bad Telling: *The weather in the months of November and December was inclement, as she saw every time she looked up from her day's work. The work made good progress, on the whole, but the horses suffered from the wet weather. She waited for him to get in contact with her, but he didn't, and as Christmas approached she had almost managed to persuade herself to give up hope that he would ever contact her. She had decided that she would nonetheless celebrate the season by decorating the Christmas tree, when she finally heard her mobile make the sound which indicated that someone was trying to get in contact with her.*

Good Telling: *November became December and the tweed on the loom grew steadily, while under her window the horses stood with their heads hanging in the rain. And still he didn't ring. By Christmas she had begun to give up hope. But she decided to get a tree anyway, and she was trying to get the first bauble to hang straight when her phone bleeped.*

Character's Telling: *November it rained - poured - buckets, on and on and on. It felt like one long wet weekend, and the horses stood miserably in the field, and I got on with the tweed. I know it always rains in the autumn but this time it felt as if it was raining on me personally, just as my phone was refusing to ring out of spite. It rained all through*

December, too, and even opening the box of Christmas decorations didn't make me feel better. And then my phone bleeped...

Notice that because I'm Telling, the narrative doesn't get right close in - the psychic distance is hovering around the 2-3 mark, and perhaps 3 for the Character's Telling. But it *is still specific*: it covers the ground, but it doesn't generalise about numbers of months and inclement weather and celebrating the season. Everything is embodied in physical, tangible, imaginable things: time is embodied in the tweed growing, her mood in the depressed-looking horses in the rain, the gradual erosion of hope in the phone not ringing while the tweed grows.There's even an active verb in "became", despite the abstractness of the idea of months. And although Character's Telling does use Tell-y things - "always rains" "didn't make me feel better" - again, the fact that they're a product of the character's voice and point of view makes them more alive.

And when she answers the phone, we'd go into full Show of character-in-action: what's said, done, felt, thought. As with the earlier example of Anna falling in love, generally speaking, the more crucial the scene - the characters-in-action, the setting - the more full-on showing you'll be doing. Almost all of your big scenes will probably happen in real time, because these are *the* crucial moments of change, conflict, decision and experience, and they need and deserve to be evoked as fully and vividly as possible. It's like a train: Showing is the compartments and carriages where it all happens, Telling is the good, strong, flexible couplings that lead from one carriage to the next.

Mind you, **there is often a case for compressing some bits of an important scene:** there are often things we need to know happened - moments when we need to sense the shape of the scene without the blow-by-blow details - and **I explored that here.** For more on, as it were, how to make your Telling Showy, **click here.** For more on the times when, actually, you *want* to be as plain and Tell-y as possible, to leave spaces for the reader to imagine in, **click here**.

Especially at the beginning of a novel, **the balance between showing and telling** can be very tricky to get right, because on the one hand you need to draw the reader as quickly as possible into the characters' lives and feelings and get us to care about them, and so want to stick around and find out more. On the other hand, we need to know a certain amount of what and where and why, again, if we're to care about them enough to keep reading. Going back to psychic distance, if you start at 1, then you'd better draw us closer into Henry's world quickly. If you start at 5, you've got some explaining to do...

And one final point, about what you might call **the fable-like story, or the tale;** the kind which is very much told by a storyteller, and the narrator's voice is ever-present. The archetypal story of this kind is the fairy tale, which is pretty much all Tell. In this kind of writing the voice of the storyteller is even more critical than it is in other writing: to make up for the distancing effect of the narrator keeping us with them and not the characters, the narrator and what they're saying must be extra-engaging in itself. But if you read the great modern exponents of the tale - **Angela Carter** comes to mind - you'll see that even with a very tell-y narrative, a very present narrator, the physical and emotional experience of the world we're watching is extraordinarily vivid. That's what Showing is all about - and you'll be Telling at the same time.

Showing, telling, and a truckload of nonsense

Showing and telling is probably the topic on which more nonsense is spoken than anything else – but is also an area where, if you truly understand what you're doing, you can make a colossal difference to your work.

One of the main bits of nonsense around this topic is the idea that, as per this quote from autocrit.com, "Show Don't Tell. It's the first rule of writing and for good reason." It's not the first rule. I don't think there is a first rule, but if there were it would have to do with the basics of character and story.

I've also seen it suggested that any telling is bad. That agents will reject a piece of work that has telling in it. That statements like "Jane was angry" are bad. And so on. This is all untrue.

Indeed, many of the examples of telling (=bad) and showing (= good) are unconvincing and, worse, actively unhelpful as a tool for explaining how to write. Here, for example, is a list from the (generally perfectly dependable) Jerry Jenkins. In all the pairs that follows, Jenkins favours the shown version, not the told version.

Telling: *When they embraced, she could tell he had been smoking and was scared.*

Showing: *When she wrapped her arms around him, the sweet staleness of tobacco enveloped her, and she shivered.*

Of those two sentences, the first is clearly better. The word "embrace" means "to wrap your arms round someone", so the second sentence is simply preferring a more cumbersome way of saying the exact same thing. Cleaner is better.

As for the second clause ("could tell he had been smoking" versus "sweet staleness of tobacco") – well, you could go either way on that one, depending on what the purpose of your sentence was. But it looks like the purpose of the sentence is to connect (A) her awareness that he's been smoking and (B) her emotional reaction to that knowledge. In which case, the first sentence does the job with economy and elegance. The second sentence actually clouds that understanding by avoiding direct statement.

Telling: *It was late fall.*

Showing: *Leaves crunched beneath his feet.*

Here again, I suspect the first sentence is preferable in most cases. You wouldn't ever, in a novel or memoir, say, "It was late fall", unless you were at some transition point – in other words, some significant time had elapsed since the last piece of action. And what easier way to mark the transition, than simply to say, "It was late fall"? That gives you what you need to know and does so with speed and clarity. Sure, in the rest of the scene, there'll be plenty of crunchy leaves and chilly wind and slanting sun and whatever else you like. But mark the transition, then move on. That's helpful storytelling.

Telling*: Suzie was blind.*

Showing*: Suzie felt for the bench with a white cane.*

Again, what on earth is wrong with that first sentence? Nothing. It transmits the key information without any problem at all. If you only had the second sentence, the reader is liable to think, "Suzie must be blind, right? But if so, why is the author not just telling me? Is there some mystery around this?"

And look, you don't have to take my word for this. EL Doctorow was one of the great writers of his generation, and one of his books (Homer and Langley) begins with these words:

"I'm Homer, the blind brother."

That's telling, right? And EL Doctorow wasn't a dummy, so presumably that sentence is OK. What's more it's the opening sentence of a beautiful paragraph:

"I'm Homer, the blind brother. I didn't lose my sight all at once, it was like the movies, a slow fade-out. When I was told what was happening, I was interested to measure it, I was in my late teens then, keen on everything. What I did this particular winter was to stand back from the lake in Central Park where they did all their ice skating and see what I could see and couldn't see as a day-by-day thing. The houses over to Central Park West went first, they got darker as if dissolving into the dark sky until I couldn't make them out, and then the trees began to lose their shape, and then finally, this was towards the end of the season, maybe it was February of a very cold winter, and all I could see were these phantom shapes of the ice skaters floating past me on a field of ice, and then the white ice, that last light, went grey and then altogether black, and then all my sight was gone though I could hear clearly the scoot scut of the blades on the ice, a very satisfying sound, a soft sound though full of intention ..."

Now I'm pretty sure that no sane reader would read that paragraph, and think, "Well, nice try, EL, but the first sentence is pure telling, as is the second and the third. Personally, I have to consider the writing rubbish until we get to the fourth sentence."

In fact, what I think an alert reader would notice is that:

- There is a gradual movement from very blunt telling to very expansive showing.
- Also, from short sentences to long.
- Also, from full vision to total blindness.
- Also, from rather general statements "I'm the blind brother" to ones – that last one – with real granular detail about how the world manifested to one particular individual.
- The emotional movement feels wholly reassuring and absorbing.
- And it's wonderful writing, from first word to last.

And this, remember, is the first paragraph of a book. The blunt opening sentence sets a scene. The next two give a bit of context. The subsequent sentences then make use of the reader's position of knowledge ("We have a teenager, going gradually blind"), to

elaborate on what that experience is like. The first sentences create the opportunity for what follows.

So one useful observation from all this is that telling is (generally) best used at transition points. The blunt information download would feel empty if that's all you gave the reader. But of course, you won't stop there. You'll go on to deliver more flavoursome, showing-type language as you get into the scene.

Equally, sometimes there are points within the scene, where it would be just nuts to try to show something. For example: "The CIA is broken into four departments, or directorates – of operations, intelligence, administration, and science and tech. The Directorate of Operations is also known the Clandestine Service, and is responsible for collecting foreign intelligence from human sources, or assets."

It might be necessary for a reader to know something like that to make sense of what's happening in your story. But *how* would you show that? *Why* would you? Would you want a scene with the Director of the CIA gazing at a wall chart with an org-chart on it, while a helpful secretary says, "Sir, am I right in thinking that the Directorate of Operations is sometimes also known as the Clandestine Service?"

Pretty clearly, telling is fine at any transitional point in the book. It's pretty damn useful for data download. And all books are a mixture of telling and showing.

That's it from me. Do read the PSes. I have hidden a dumpling for you there.

Till soon.

Harry

From Jericho Writers:

https://community.jerichowriters.com/page/view-post?inf_contact_key=ac33e9ee798180e7da5e3c12963d1c05b7af0999dac2af6212784c39e05d2aef&id=474

Showing and telling in the first person narrative

The reader is sitting on your shoulder, noticing what you notice...

Telling in the first person POV

I went into the rainy garden, climbed my favourite tree and read a book.

Showing in the first person POV

The lawn was still wet from the storm and before long my trainers were drenched. Rain dripped from the branches of my favourite cherry tree, but I climbed up anyway. Showers of white petals fell like confetti. Yes, nothing had changed—the curved

branch still as comfy as an old chair, the view of the church spire beyond the rooftops. I settled back against the trunk and opened my book.

Kill those modifiers

From: John Gingerich: https://litreactor.com/columns/get-rid-of-those-modifiers

One hallmark of bad writing can be found in descriptive passages that rely heavily on modifiers. Adverbs and adjectives are necessary in language — I've already used both, in the first two sentences of this column — but used too often, they contribute to uninspired sentences and an overall sense of descriptive flatness. They don't convey the specificity or immediacy that's needed in storytelling. As such, you should kill them whenever you can. Sentences that force your readers to reach for a dictionary are usually a bad idea.

A lot of beginning writers have a penchant to use modifiers with abandon. Needless to say, sentences that force your readers to reach for a dictionary are usually a bad idea, but I don't think that's the intended goal in most of these cases. I can only speak from personal experience and say that, because I knew modifiers' role in language was to qualify an action or object, I presumed that meant they specified them, or gave added emphasis. Unfortunately, the opposite is often true. Modifiers do very little in a sentence; usually, they can be removed without changing a sentence's meaning at all. If your descriptions rely too much on these unnecessary add-ons — if you've simply given us a general statement and tacked on a modifier at the end, in other words — the resulting passage will probably be unclear and verbose. Compare the two examples below. As you can see, adverbs can tempt writers to resist hunting for the right verb that would have otherwise driven a sentence home.

Bad

> *He ran down the stairs quickly.*

Better

> *The stairs flew beneath him.*

Another reason modifiers won't cover your descriptive bases is the fact that they're unimaginative. Adjectives are easy; it doesn't take much effort to open a thesaurus and find a provocative word. It's much more difficult to find the right noun or verb that perfectly pinpoints what you're trying to say. Instead of relying on two-cent adjectives, you should look for verbs that have vigour, and nouns that invoke unique images.

Bad

> *Her erubescent face gave her the appearance of a stop sign.*

Better

> *Her rashed face gave her the appearance of a stop sign.*

Nailing a descriptive passage takes a lot of work, but the more concrete and stimulating your words are, the more likely the reader will grab onto them. Get specific, get close, and draw an

image as accurately as possible of the thing or event you're trying to describe. Choose your verbs carefully. The best verbs imply movement; they suggest that your characters are in motion.

Bad

> *She smiled excitedly.*

Better

> *She flashed a row of teeth.*

Also, make sure your descriptions arouse the senses. When you appeal to our sensory faculties you're telling us not only how something looks, but you're asking us to imagine how something *feels*. Appeal to as many senses as you can. It makes a difference.

Bad

> *It was 100-degrees in the city.*

Moderately bad

> *It was incredibly hot in the city.*

Better

> *The pavement released its heat in waves, fanning an asphalt wind over the city that pulled at the throat and sat in the lungs like a fume.*

As you can see from the above example, figurative language is used to usher in some extra descriptive strength. Simile and metaphor are great. They turn statements into comparisons, establishing relationships in otherwise dissimilar things, which causes the reader to see a small part of the world in a different way. If you *really* want to be imaginative and economical in your descriptions, try using a metaphor as a verb.

Bad

> *He beat on the floor with his fists like a drum.*

Better

> *He drummed on the floor.*

When you're looking at a draft of your work, always ask yourself: is it possible for me to ditch this adjective in exchange for a noun that offers the reader a better image? Am I using this adverb simply to modify a vague and general verb? Are the verbs I've chosen the most accurate I can find in depicting the action on the page? Do my nouns accurately describe my subjects? Has my writing stimulated the senses? And does it highlight causal relationships that provoke a reader's imagination? Is it possible for me to ditch this adjective in exchange

for a noun that offers the reader a better image? Am I using this adverb simply to modify a vague and general verb?

This doesn't mean you should delete every modifier in your work. There are some great books out there that are stuffed with them (Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, or Will Self's *Great Apes* in particular, are both loaded with adverbs). If your story is *really* good we might overlook them entirely. Just avoid modifiers when you can. Allow them only when it's absolutely essential to the strength and clarity of your sentences. Use them, but don't push your luck.

References

Darwin E (2011), Showing and Telling the Basics, *This Itch of Writing Blog* [online] [retrieved 14 Apr 2021], https://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/showing-and-telling-the-basics.html

John Gingerich: https://litreactor.com/columns/get-rid-of-those-modifiers

(From Catherine Wilcox)

Developing character

How does the sequence of events affect and change the characters?   How will the characters change throughout the story?

Characters are invented 'inside out'. Do not ask what makes the character likeable – instead ask what the character wants - what is their motivation?   You must ask yourself how would the character react/behave in various situations?   You should have an unending curiosity about your characters. What are the oddities and quirks that make the character interesting? What is the character feeling - what is their short and long term mindset ?

Henry James' two questions:

> What does she want?
> What will she do?

And a third:

> What stands in her way?   What conflicts are involved? What are the opposing forces?

The character is a plot generating engine, driven by what the character wants.

Character

An idea - the puzzle/problem. -e.g., a body on the carpet, who is the murderer?

Events - things that happen. - each event has a cause and effect

Setting - where do things happen? With strong characters you might have a neutral setting, e.g. The State of the Union, with other plots the setting is more important - e.g., Gulliver's Travels, Poldark. - the setting could add to the tension, it could be the impediment to the resolution of the idea/problem - e.g., Guns of Navarone.

The process:

Invention - the idea or character
Putting the character into a place
Construction - putting down the framework, a timeline
The writing….
Revision

Jeopardy - there must be something at stake for the character - otherwise why does the reader care about the fate of the character?

Creating a character:

(from Maidy Clarke):

Essential questions to ask (fiction or non-fiction!)

- Name
- Gender
- How old is the character?
- What is their occupation? Do they have one? Do they like it? Would they rather be doing something else? If so, what?
- What do they look like? eyes, hair (colour/length), shape of face, nose, distinguishing marks (scars/tattoos/twitch/stammer)
- What are they wearing?
- Where do they live? Countryside/city/town. House/flat/mansion/squat
- What car do they drive? Motorbike/cycle/walk/bus/train/taxi/chauffeur
- What is their politics?
- Religious beliefs?
- Family? – ethnic background/married/single/children/siblings
- What do they have in their pockets/purse/handbag/wallet? - The answer to this question can really define a character, be very revealing and also sometimes cause quite a surprise!
- What is their Secret? Could be as awful as being a serial killer, or as simple as being allergic to nuts.

The questions below may come up later, if you are doing a longer piece of work – (I have found it helpful to answers these question once I have written quite a bit. It's like when you first meet someone, you get to know the obvious things about them, but over time they reveal more about themselves.)

- What is their favourite food?
- What is their favourite piece of clothing?
- Was their childhood a happy place to be?
- Have they ever been in love?
- Do they have any hobbies?
- What would they do in the case of an emergency? Run or help?
- Would they kill for any reason?
- Do they have a secret? What is it?

Remember, you do not need to (and won't have the space) divulge all of this to your reader – it is enough that you know it all, and as you write, your character will come to life. Even if you are writing for Radio, your own knowledge of how your character looks is important to you.

What makes a good story?

- Good characters
- Drama
- Conflict
- Tension
- Setting
- Atmosphere
- Showing

- Editing
- Presentation
- Layout
- Grammar
- Language – use of language
- Dialogue – realistic

How to build up a character

Static Character – what does the character look like, what is their name, job, environment, appearance, mannerism, vocabulary, the way they speak, what kind of pet do they have…

Character in Action – how do they behave? Are they introvert, extrovert, slow, fast, how do they inhabit their body? How do they move, what is their inner tempo, are they laid back, do they have nervous tension? What are their appetites? `what is their sexuality - does it drive them?   Are their bodies a burden to them?

Character Interaction – how do they interact with other characters?

Character Motivation –

What do they want?
What is in the way?
What makes them ashamed?
What are they proud of?

Develop your view of your character by imagining what they would do in various situations: E.g. what would they order in the pub, what would they do if they encountered a drunk? If they found a roll of banknotes in the road etc

Example character descriptions

Raymond Chandler, The Big Sleep and Other Novels (Penguin Modern Classics) (p. 8). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

She was twenty or so, small and delicately put together, but she looked durable. She wore pale blue slacks and they looked well on her. She walked as if she were floating. Her hair was a fine tawny wave cut much shorter than the current fashion of pageboy tresses curled in at the bottom. Her eyes were slate-grey, and had almost no expression when they looked at me. She came over near me and smiled with her mouth and she had little sharp predatory teeth, as white as fresh orange pith and as shiny as porcelain. They glistened between her thin too taut lips. Her face lacked colour and didn't look too healthy. '
Tall, aren't you?' she said.
'I didn't mean to be.'
Her eyes rounded. She was puzzled. She was thinking. I could see, even on that short acquaintance, that thinking was always going to be a bother to her.
'Handsome too,' she said. 'And I bet you know it.'
I grunted.
'What's your name?'

'Reilly,' I said. 'Doghouse Reilly.'

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Books*

A black shadow dropped down into the circle. It was Bagheera the Black Panther, inky black all over, but with the panther markings showing up in certain lights like the pattern of watered silk. Everybody knew Bagheera, and nobody cared to cross his path, for he was as cunning as Tabaqui, as bold as the wild buffalo, and as reckless as the wounded elephant. But he had a voice as soft as wild honey dripping from a tree, and a skin softer than down.

Philip Pullman, *The Golden Compass*

Lord Asriel was a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that seemed to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It was a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronize or pity. All his movements were large and perfectly balanced, like those of a wild animal, and when he appeared in a room like this, he seemed a wild animal held in a cage too small for it.

Dennis Lehane, *A Drink Before the War*

Sterling Mulkern was a florid, beefy man, the kind who carried weight like a weapon, not a liability. He had a shock of stiff white hair you could land a DC-10 on and a handshake that stopped just short of inducing paralysis.

Writing Secondary Characters

https://event.webinarjam.com/replay/127/nom5vbxncz2blksr4mx

From Kira-Anne Pelican:

A psychological approach
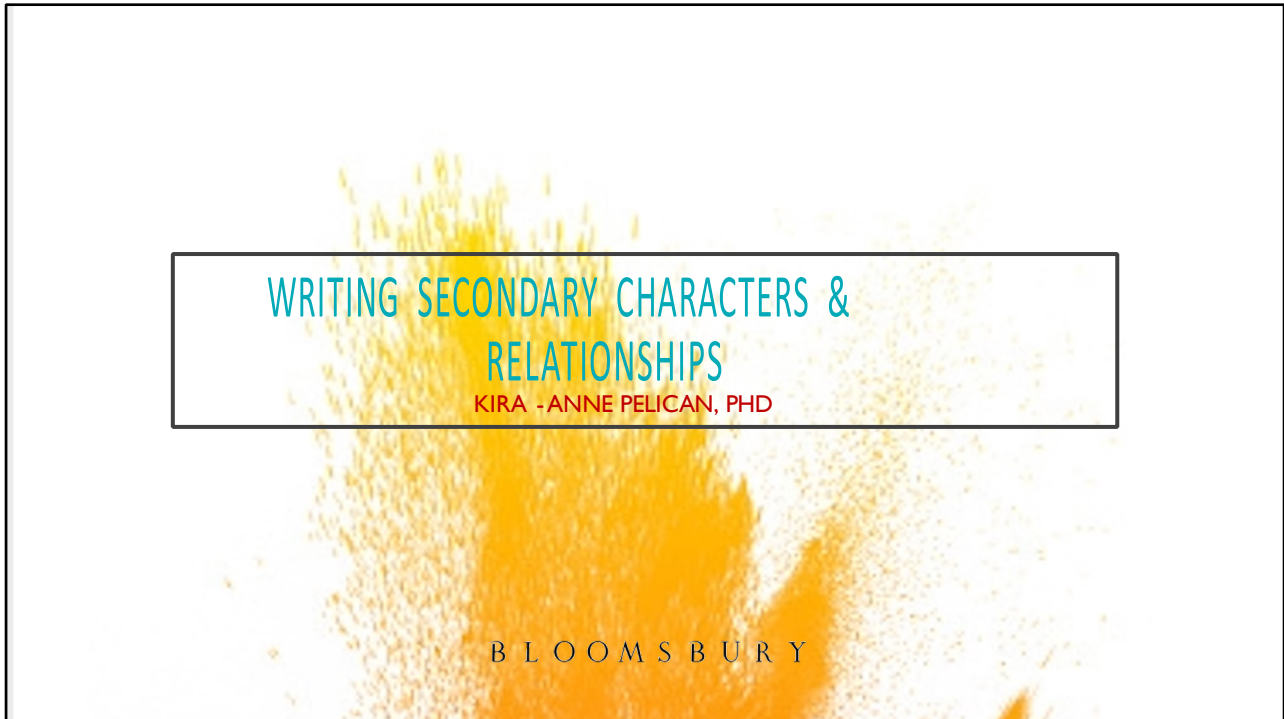
OVERVIEW

USING THE BIG 5 DIMENSIONS TO CREATE CONTRASTING SECONDARY CHARACTERS

USING THE INTERPERSONAL CIRCUMPLEX TO CREATE COMPELLING CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

CONSIDERING RELATIONSHIP CHEMISTRY

CREATING DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS

HOW INTIMACY IS EXPRESSED IN DIALOGUE

WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING RELATIONSHIP?

- BELIEVABLE
- SOMETHING WE LEARN FROM (MAY HAVE SURPRISES)
- HAS ITS OWN PARTICULAR CHEMISTRY
- WHICH COMES FROM THEPERSONALITIES OF THOSE INVOLVED
  - AS WELL AS THEIRMOTIVATIONS, BELIEFS AND BACKSTORIES
- IS GENERALLY DYNAMIC (IN ADULT LITERATURE)
- HAS CONFLICT

TWO APPROACHES TO CONSIDER RELATIONSHIPS

- BIG FIVE DIMENSIONS

- INTERPERSONAL CIRCUMPLEX

BIG FIVE DIMENSIONS

THE BIG FIVE

EXTRAVERSION	1	INTROVERSION
AGREEABLENESS	2	DISAGREEABLENESS
NEUROTICISM	3	EMOTIONAL STABILITY
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	4	LACK OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	5	CLOSED TO EXPERIENCE

EXTROVERT - INTROVERT

AGREEABLE - DISAGREEABLE

NEUROTIC — EMOTIONALLY STABLE
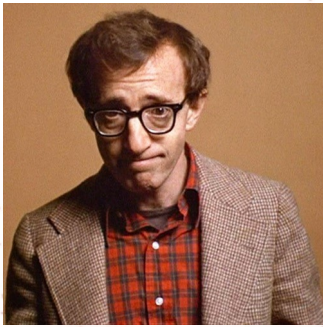
CONSCIENTIOUS - UNCONSCIENTIOUS

OPEN - CLOSED

ROUNDED VS FLAT CHARACTERS

AVERAGE PERSON

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

MEMORABLE PERSON

MEMORABLE PERSON

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH
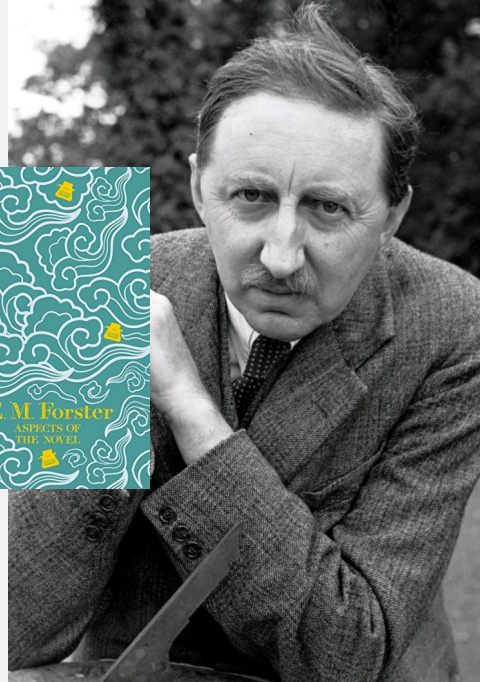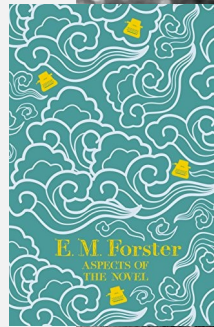
RATING ON PERSONALITY DIMENSION
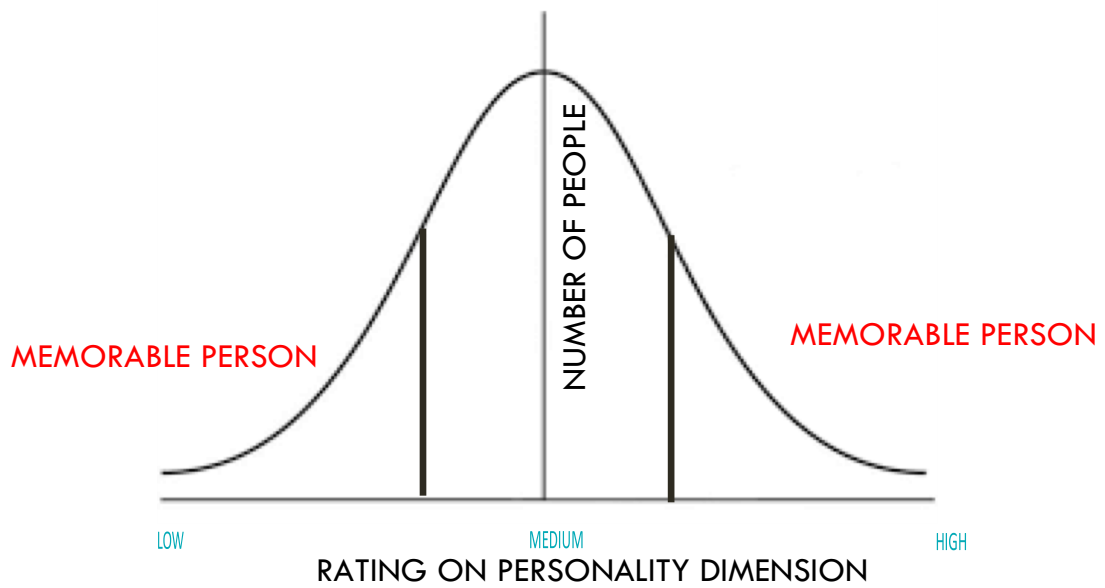
THE BIG FIVE IN CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

- WHICH DIMENSIONS DO YOUR CHARACTERS HAVE IN COMMON?

- AND ON WHICH DIMENSIONS ARE THEY POLES APART?

- CONFLICT OFTEN COMES FROM DIFFERENCES ON OPENNESS

- OR CHARACTERS BEING DISAGREEABLE AND ASSERTIVE

THE BIG FIVE IN CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

- AGREEABLENESS AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY ARE ATTRACTIVE QUALITIES IN RELATIONSHIPS

- DISAGREEABLENESS IS ANTAGONISTIC

- NEUROTICISM CAN BE DIFFICULT IN RELATIONSHIPS

INTERPERSONAL CIRCUMPLEX

Dominant
(Assertive)

Hostile – Dominant
(Arrogant, calculating)

Friendly – Dominant
(Gregarious)

Agency/Status

Hostile
(Cold-hearted)

Friendly
(Warm)

Communion

Hostile-Submissive
(Aloof)

Friendly-Submissive
(Modest, trusting)

Submissive
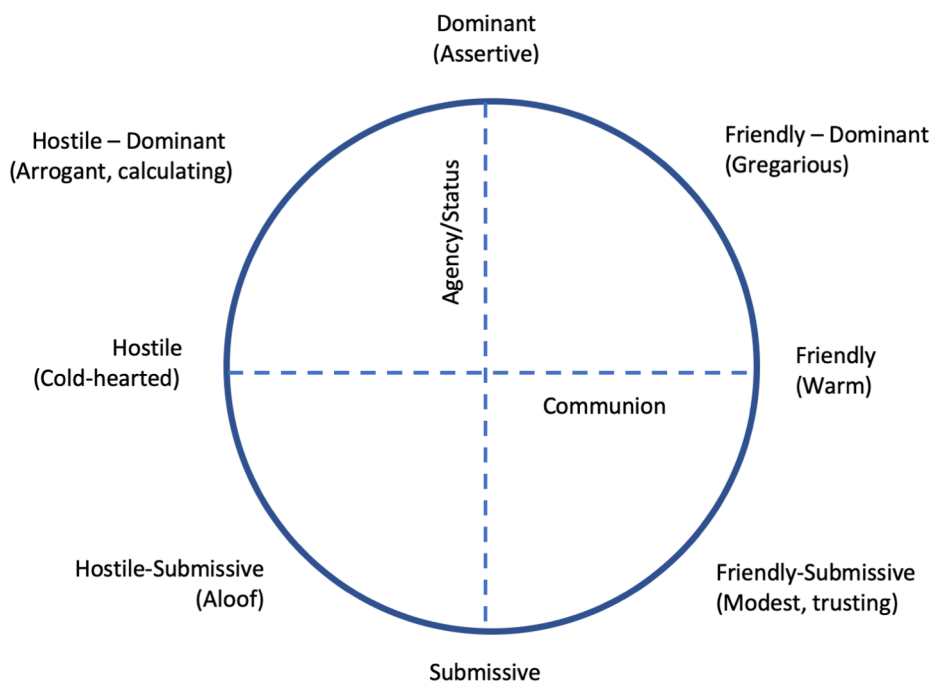
RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

- WE CHANGE, THEREFORE OUR RELATIONSHIPS CHANGE

- PARTICULARLY DURING EMOTIONALLY INTENSE LIFE EVENTS

CHEMISTRY

- WHAT'S THE MOOD OF YOUR CHARACTERS' RELATIONSHIP?
- WHAT IS UNUSUAL THAT THEY BRING OUT IN EACH OTHER?

- RELATED TO THIS, WHERE DO THEY USUALLY MEET?
- WHAT DO THEY USUALLY DO, TALK ABOUT?

BACKSTORY

MOOD

MOTIVATIONS / WHAT'S ADVANTAGEOUS?

HOW DIALOGUE REVEALS INTIMACY

WHEN CHARACTERS DON'T CONNECT:

THEY DON'T ALWAYS LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

NON SEQUITURS

LINGUISTIC STYLES VERY DIFFERENT

WHEN CHARACTERS CONNECT:

THEY LISTEN VERY CLOSELY

OFTEN REPEAT EACH
OTHER'S LANGUAGE

WE HEAR THEIR INTIMATE
CONNECTION IN THEIR
DIALOGUE

Fashion in Character Description

https://crimereads.com/why-classic-crime-fiction-was-obsessed-with-fashion/

Fashion in Character Description

Narrative Techniques

A **narrative technique** (known for literary fictional narratives as a **literary technique**, **literary device**, or **fictional device**) is any of several specific methods the creator of a narrative uses to convey what he or she wants—in other words, a strategy used in the making of a narrative to relay information to the audience and particularly to develop the narrative, usually in order to make it more complete, complex, or interesting. Literary techniques are distinguished from literary elements, which exist inherently in works of writing.

Narrative techniques

(from Wikipedia)

Setting

Name	Definition	Example
Setting	The setting is both the time and geographic location within a narrative or within a work of fiction. A literary element, the setting initiates the main backdrop and mood of a story, often referred to as the story world.	The novel *Ulysses* by James Joyce is set in Dublin, Ireland, the action taking place on a single day, 16 June 1904. The action of the novel takes place from one side of Dublin Bay to the other, opening in Sandycove to the South of the city and closing on Howth Head to the North. While the novel parallels the story of Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic poem *Odyssey*, whose role is carried by Leopold Bloom, much of the setting is described realistically, with great attention to detail. The locations within Dublin also represent locations in the Odyssey. Bloom's home is at 7 Eccles Street, and at the same time, Ithaca, the home of Odysseus. The Post office, Westland Row and Sweny's pharmacy in Lombard Street represent the Dublin location for Episode 5, Lotus Eaters; the National Library of Ireland parallels Episode 9, Scylla and Charybdis and so on.

Plots

Name	Definition	Example
Backstory	Story that precedes events in the story being told—past events or background that add meaning to current circumstances	Though *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy takes place in a relatively short period towards the end of the 3021-year Third Age, the narration gives glimpses of the mythological and historical

Name	Definition	Example
		events which took place earlier in the Third age leading up to the action in the novel, and in the First and Second Age.
Chekhov's gun	A dramatic principle that requires every element in a narrative to be irreplaceable, with anything else removed.	"Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. 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. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." — Anton Chekhov
Cliffhanger	The narrative ends unresolved, to draw the audience back to a future episode for the resolution.	Almost every episode of TV shows like *Dexter* and *Breaking Bad*[2] ends with one of the characters in a predicament (about to be caught by thugs, about to be exposed by the authorities, or a family member or a friend finds out the main character's dirty secret).
Eucatastrophe	Coined by J. R. R. Tolkien, a climactic event through which the protagonist appears to be facing a catastrophic change. However, this change does not materialize and the protagonist finds himself as the benefactor of such a climactic event; contrast peripety/*peripateia*.	At the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Gollum forcibly takes away the Ring from Frodo, suggesting that Sauron would eventually take over Middle Earth. However, Gollum celebrates too eagerly and clumsily falls into the lava, whereby the ring is destroyed and with it Sauron's power. In a way, Gollum does what Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring intended to do through the whole plot of the trilogy, which was to throw the ring into the lake of fire in the heart of Mount Doom.

Name	Definition	Example
Flashback (or analeptic reference)	General term for altering time sequences, taking characters back to the beginning of the tale, for instance	The story of "The Three Apples" in *Arabian Nights* tale begins with the discovery of a young woman's dead body. After the murderer later reveals himself, he narrates his reasons for the murder as a flashback of events leading up to the discovery of her dead body at the beginning of the story.
Flashforward	Also called prolepsis, a scene that temporarily jumps the narrative forward in time. Flashforwards often represent events expected, projected, or imagined to occur in the future. They may also reveal significant parts of the story that have not yet occurred, but soon will in greater detail.	Occurs in *A Christmas Carol* when Mr. Scrooge visits the ghost of the future. It is also frequent in the later seasons of the television series *Lost*.
Foreshadowing	Implicit yet intentional efforts of an author to suggest events that have yet to take place in the process of narration. See also repetitive designation and Chekhov's gun	A narration might begin with a male character who has to break up a schoolyard fight among some boys who are vying for the attention of a girl, which was introduced to foreshadow the events leading to a dinner time squabble between the character and his twin brother over a woman, whom both are courting at the same time.
Frame story, or a story within a story	A main story that hatches a linking series of shorter stories.	Early examples include *Panchatantra*, *Kalila and Dimna*, *Arabian Nights*, and *The Decameron*. More modern examples are Brian Jacques's 1999 *The Legend of Luke* and Ramsay Wood's 2011 *Kalila and Dimna* update, subtitled *Fables of Conflict and*

Name	Definition	Example
		Intrigue.
Framing device	A single action, scene, event, setting, or any element of significance at the beginning and end of a work. The use of framing devices allows frame stories to exist.	In *Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade, the newly wed wife to the King, is the framing device. As a character, she is telling the "1,001 stories" to the King, in order to delay her execution night by night. However, as a framing device her purpose for existing is to tell the same 1,001 stories to the reader.
In medias res	Beginning the story in the middle of a sequence of events. A specific form of narrative hook.	The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of Homer are prime examples. The latter work begins with the return of Odysseus to his home of Ithaka and then in flashbacks tells of his ten years of wandering following the Trojan War.
Narrative hook	Story opening that "hooks" readers' attention so they will keep reading	Any non-fiction book is often introduced with an interesting factoid.
Ochi	A sudden interruption of the wordplay flow indicating the end of a rakugo or a kobanashi.	A Rakugo is a Japanese verbal entertainment usually lasting 30 minutes which ends with a surprise punch line, a narrative stunt known as ochi (fall) or sage(lowering). Twelve kinds of ochi are codified and recognized. The earlier *kobanashi* was a short comical vignette ending with an ochi.
Plot twist	Unexpected change ("twist") in the direction or expected outcome of the plot. See also twist ending.	An early example is the *Arabian Nights* tale "The Three Apples". A locked chest found by a fisherman contains a dead body, and two different men claim to be

Name	Definition	Example
		the murderer, which turns out to be the investigator's own slave.
Poetic justice	Virtue ultimately rewarded, or vice punished, by an ironic twist of fate related to the character's own conduct	Wile E. Coyote coming up with a contraption to catch the Road Runner, only to be foiled and caught by his own devices. Each sin's punishment in Dante's *Inferno* is a symbolic instance of poetic justice.
Predestination paradox	Time travel paradox where a time traveller is caught in a loop of events that "predestines" them to travel back in time	In *Doctor Who*, the main character repeatedly finds himself under the obligation of having to travel back in time because of something his future character has done.
Red herring	Diverting attention away from an item of significance.	For example, in mystery fiction, an innocent party may be purposefully cast as highly suspicious through emphasis or descriptive techniques to divert attention from the true guilty party.
Self-fulfilling prophecy	Prediction that, by being made, makes itself come true.	Early examples include the legend of Oedipus, and the story of Krishna in the *Mahabharata*. There is also an example of this in *Harry Potter* when Lord Voldemort heard a prophecy (made by Sybill Trelawney to Dumbledore) that a boy born at the end of July, whose parents had defied Voldemort thrice and survived, would be made marked as his equal. Because of this prophecy, Lord Voldemort sought out Harry Potter (believing him to be the boy spoken of) and tried to kill him. His parents died

Name	Definition	Example
		protecting him, and when Voldemort tried to cast a killing curse on Harry, it rebounded and took away most of his strength, and gave Harry Potter a unique ability and connection with the Dark Lord thus marking him as his equal.
Story within a story (Hypodiegesis)	A story told within another story. See also frame story.	In Stephen King's *The Wind Through the Keyhole*, of the *Dark Tower* series, the protagonist tells a story from his past to his companions, and in this story he tells another relatively unrelated story.
Ticking time bomb scenario	Threat of impending disaster—often used in thrillers where salvation and escape are essential elements	In the TV show *24*, the main character, Jack Bauer often finds himself interrogating a terrorist who is caught in order to disarm a bomb.
Unreliable narrator	The narrator of the story is not sincere, or introduces a bias in their narration and possibly misleads the reader, hiding or minimizing events, characters, or motivations.	An example is *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. The novel includes an unexpected plot twist at the end of the novel. In the last chapter, Sheppard describes how he was an unreliable narrator. Another example is Don Palathara's 1956, Central Travancore. The film progresses through several stories told by various characters, but the viewer has to decide which among those stories can be believed.

Perspective

Name	Definition	Example
Audience surrogate	A character who expresses the questions and confusion of the audience, with whom the audience can identify. Frequently used in detective fiction and science fiction, where the character asks a central character how he or she accomplished certain deeds, for the purpose of inciting that character to explain (for the curious audience) his or her methods, or a character asking a relatively educated person to explain what amounts to the backstory.	Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Scott Evil, played by Seth Green, son of Dr. Evil in the Austin Powers movies.
Author surrogate	Characters which are based on authors, usually to support their personal views. Sometimes an intentionally or unintentionally idealized version of them. A variation is the Mary Sue or Gary Stu, which primarily serves as an idealized self-insertion.	Socrates in the writings of Plato. Plato never speaks in his own voice in his dialogues. In the *Second Letter*, it says, "no writing of Plato exists or ever will exist, but those now said to be his are those of a Socrates become beautiful and new".
Breaking the fourth wall	An author or character addresses the audience directly (also known as direct address). This may acknowledge to the reader or audience that what is being presented is fiction, or may seek to extend the world of the story to provide the illusion that they are included in it.	The characters in *Sesame Street* often break the fourth wall when they address their viewers as part of the ongoing storyline, which is possible because of the high level of suspension of belief afforded by its audience—children. The American political drama show *House of Cards* also uses this technique frequently to let the viewers know what the main character Frank Underwood is thinking and planning. Ferris Bueller in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* frequently addresses the audience.

Name	Definition	Example
Defamiliarization	Taking an everyday object and presenting it in a way that is weirdly unfamiliar so that we see the object in a new way. Coined by the early 20th-century Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in "Art as Technique."	In Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, when Gulliver visits the land of the giants and sees a giant woman's skin, he sees it as anything but smooth and beautiful when viewed up close.[3] Another common method of defamiliarization is to "make strange" a story (fabula) by creating a deformed plot (syuzhet). Tristram Shandy is defamiliarized by Laurence Sterne's unfamiliar plotting,[4] which causes the reader to pay attention to the story and see it in an unjaded way.
First-person narration	A text presented from the point of view of a character, especially the protagonist, as if the character is telling the story themselves. (Breaking the fourth wall is an option, but not a necessity, of this format.)	Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* uses the title character as the narrator, while *Sherlock Holmes* is primarily told from Watson's perspective. The film, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, uses this technique where the protagonist narrates the film's events throughout, providing clarity that could not be gained from the picture and dialogue alone.
Magical realism	Describing events in a real-world setting but with magical trappings, often incorporating local customs and invented beliefs. Different from urban fantasy in that the magic itself is not the focus of the story.	Particularly popular with Latin American authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges. Elsewhere, Salman Rushdie's work provides good examples.
Multiperspectivity	A narrative that is told from the viewpoints of multiple characters that incorporate various perspectives, emotions, and views from witnesses or actors to varying particular events or circumstances that might not	The films of Robert Altman. *2666* by Roberto Bolano features European literary critics, a Chilean philosophy professor, an African-American journalist, detectives investigating Santa Teresa murders and an obscure German writer named Benno Von

Name	Definition	Example
	be felt by other characters in the story.	Archimboldi. *Pale Fire* by Vladimir Nabokov features literature professor John Shade, Charles Kinbote, a neighbour and colleague of Shade's and Charles the Beloved, king of Zembla. Kinbote is the ultimate unreliable commentator.
Second-person narration	A text written in the style of a direct address, in the second-person.	*Homestuck*.
Stream of consciousness	The author uses narrative and stylistic devices to create the sense of an unedited interior monologue, characterized by leaps in syntax and punctuation that trace a character's fragmentary thoughts and sensory feelings. The outcome is a highly lucid perspective with a plot. Not to be confused with free writing.	An example is *Ulysses*. At one point Leopold Bloom saunters through Dublin musing on "Pineapple rock, lemon plant, butter scotch. A sugar-sticky girl shovelling scoopful of creams for a Christian brother. Some school treat. Bad for their tummies."
Third-person narration	A text written as if by an impersonal narrator who is not affected by the events in the story. Can be omniscient or limited, the latter usually being tied to a specific character, a group of characters, or a location.	*A Song of Ice and Fire* is written in multiple limited third-person narrators that change with each chapter. *The Master and Margarita* uses an omniscient narrator.

Style

Name	Definition	Example
Allegory	Symbolic fiction as presented in a story	C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is a religious **allegory** with Aslan as Christ

Name	Definition	Example
		and Edmund as Judas.[5]
Alliteration	Repeating the same letter or consonant sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.	In the film *V for Vendetta* the main character performs a couple of soliloquies with a heavy use of alliteration, e.g., "Voilà! In view, a humble vaudevillian veteran, cast vicariously as both victim and villain by the vicissitudes of Fate. This visage, no mere veneer of vanity, is a vestige of the vox populi, now vacant, vanished, as the once vital voice of the verisimilitude now venerates what they once vilified. However, this valorous visitation of a bygone vexation stands vivified, and has vowed to vanquish these venal and virulent vermin vanguarding vice and vouchsafing the violently vicious and voracious violation of volition. The only verdict is vengeance; a vendetta held as a votive, not in vain, for the value and veracity of such shall one day vindicate the vigilant and the virtuous. Verily, this vichyssoise of verbiage veers most verbose vis-à-vis an introduction, and so it is my very good honour to meet you and you may call me V."
Amplification (rhetoric)	Amplification refers to a literary practice wherein the writer embellishes the sentence by adding more information to it in order to increase its worth and understanding.	E.g., Original sentence: The thesis paper was difficult. After amplification: The thesis paper was difficult: it required extensive research, data collection, sample surveys, interviews and a lot of fieldwork.
Anagram	Rearranging the letters of a word or a phrase to form a new phrase or word.	E.g., An anagram for "debit card" is "bad credit". As you can see, both phrases use the same letters. By mixing the letters a bit of humour is created.

Name	Definition	Example
Asyndeton	When sentences do not use conjunctions (e.g., and, or, nor) to separate clauses, but run clauses into one another, usually marking the separation of clauses with punctuation.	An example is when John F. Kennedy said on January 20, 1961 "...that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."
Bathos	An abrupt transition in style from the exalted to the commonplace, producing a ludicrous effect. While often unintended, bathos may be used deliberately to produce a humorous effect.[6][7]	The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.[8]
Caesura	A break, especially a sense pause, usually near the middle of a verse, and marked in scansion by a double vertical line, (or a comma). This technique frequently occurs within a poetic line grammatically connected to the end of the previous line by enjambment.	E.g., in "Know then thyself. ‖ Presume not God to scan." The following short poem by Robert Graves uses pararhyme, and is a demonstration in English of the *cynghanedd groes* form, in which each consonant sound before the caesura is repeated in the same order after the caesura (Graves notes that the *ss* of 'across' and the *s* of 'crows' match visually but are not the same sound): Billet spied, Bolt sped. Across field Crows fled, Aloft, wounded, Left one dead.[1]
Distancing effect	Deliberately preventing the audience from identifying with characters in order to let them be coolly scrutinized.[9]	Popularized by 20th century playwright Bertolt Brecht.

Name	Definition	Example
Dramatic visualization	Representing an object or character with abundant descriptive detail, or mimetically rendering gestures and dialogue to make a scene more visual or imaginatively present to an audience.	This technique appears at least as far back as the *Arabian Nights*.[10]
Euphuism	An artificial, highly elaborate way of writing or speaking. Named from *Euphues* (1579) the prose romance by John Lyly.	"Is it not far better to abhor sins by the remembrance of others' faults, than by repentance of thine own follies?" (Euphues, 1, lecture by the wise Neapolitan)
Hyperbole	Exaggeration used to evoke strong feelings or create an impression which is not meant to be taken literally. Hyperbole can be used for serious, ironic, or comic effects.[11]	Sally could no longer hide her secret. Her pregnant belly was bigger than the planet on which she stood.
Imagery	Forming mental images of a scene using descriptive words, especially making use of the human senses. The same as *sensory detail*.	When the boots came off his feet with a leathery squeak, a smell of ferment and fish market immediately filled the small tent. The skin of his toes were red and raw and sensitive. The malodorous air was so toxic he thought he could almost taste his toes.
Leitwortstil	Purposefully repeating words that usually express a motif or theme important to the story.	This dates back at least to the *Arabian Nights*.[12]
Metonymy	Word or phrase in a figure of speech in which a noun is referenced by something closely associated with it, rather than explicitly by the noun itself. This is not to be confused with synecdoche, in which a	Metonomy: The boxer threw in the towel. Synecdoche: She gave her hand in marriage.

Name	Definition	Example
	part of the whole stands for the thing itself.	
Overstatement	Exaggerating something, often for emphasis (also known as hyperbole)	Sally's pregnant belly most likely weighed as much as the scooter she used to ride before she got pregnant.
Onomatopoeia	Words that imitate/spell a sound or noise. Word that sounds the same as, or similar to what the word means.	"Boom goes the dynamite." "Bang!" "Bark." (comic books)
Oxymoron	A term made of two words that deliberately or coincidentally imply each other's opposite.	"terrible beauty"
Paradox	A phrase that describes an idea composed of concepts that conflict.	"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." (*A Tale of Two Cities*)
Parody	Ridicule by overstated imitation, usually humorous.	*MAD Magazine*
Pastiche	Using forms and styles from another author, generally as an affectionate tribute.	Such as the many stories featuring Sherlock Holmes not written by Arthur Conan Doyle, or much of the Cthulhu Mythos.
Pathos	Emotional appeal, one of the three modes of persuasion in rhetoric that the author uses to inspire pity or sorrow towards a character—typically does not counterbalance the target character's suffering with a positive outcome, as in Tragedy.	In *Romeo and Juliet*, the two main characters each commit suicide at the sight of the supposedly dead lover, however the audience knows these actions to be rash and unnecessary. Therefore, Shakespeare makes for the emotional appeal for the unnecessary tragedy behind the young characters' rash interpretations about love and life.
Polyptoton	Words derived from the same root in a sentence.	"Not as a call to **battle**, though **embattled** we are." John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*, January 20, 1961.
Polysyndeton	Polysyndeton is the use of several conjunctions in close succession, this provides a sense	An example of this is in the first chapter of *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens: "A

Name	Definition	Example
	of exaggeration designed to wear down the audience.	man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin"
Satire	The use of humour, irony or exaggeration to criticize.	An example is *Network*. One of the earliest examples is Gulliver's Travels, written by Jonathan Swift. The television program *South Park* is another.
Sensory detail	Sight, sound, taste, touch, smell. The same as *imagery*.	The boot was tough and sinewy between his hard-biting teeth. There was no flavour to speak of except for the blandness of all the dirt that the boot had soaked up over the years. The only thing the boot reminded him of was the smell of a wet-dog.
Understatement	A diminishing or softening of a theme or effect.	The broken ends of the long bone were sticking through the bleeding skin, but it wasn't something that always killed a man.

Theme

Name	Definition	Example
Irony	This discrepancy between expectation and reality occurs in three forms: situational irony, where a situation features a discrepancy between what is expected and what is actualized; dramatic irony, where a character is unaware of pivotal information already revealed to the audience (the discrepancy here lies in the two levels of awareness between the character and the audience); and verbal irony, where one states one thing while meaning another. The difference between verbal irony and sarcasm is exquisitely subtle and often contested. The concept of irony is too often misunderstood in popular usage. Unfortunate circumstances and coincidences do not constitute irony (nor do they qualify as being *tragic*). See the *Usage controversy* section under irony, and the term tragedy.	A person hears a prophecy about himself. His endeavour to stop the prophecy from coming true, makes it come true.

Name	Definition	Example
Metaphor	A metaphor is a figure of speech that, for rhetorical effect, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another.[1] It may provide (or obscure) clarity or identify hidden similarities between two different ideas. Metaphors are often compared with other types of figurative language, such as antithesis, hyperbole, metonymy and simile.	Her tears were a river flowing down her cheeks.
Thematic patterning	Distributing recurrent thematic concepts and moralistic motifs among various incidents and frames of a story. In a skilfully crafted tale, thematic patterning may emphasize the unifying argument or salient idea that disparate events and frames have in common.	Each of the chapters of *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

Character

Name	Type	Notes
Anthropomorphism	Form of personification that applies human-like characteristics to animals.	*The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Colloid or the Cheshire Cat of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
Hamartia	The character flaw of an initially rich and powerful hero that leads to his tragic downfall. This is also referred to as the tragic flaw.	Oedipus kills his own father because he doesn't understand his true parentage.
Pathetic fallacy	Reflecting a character's (usually the protagonist) mood in the atmosphere or inanimate objects. Related to anthropomorphism and projection	For example, the storm in William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which mirrors Lear's mental deterioration.
Personification	Using comparative metaphors and similes to give characteristics to abstract concepts	Taken from Act I, Scene II of *Romeo and Juliet*: "When well-apparelled April on the heel / Of limping winter treads."[13]

Narrative Perspectives

Name	Definition	Example
Audience surrogate	A character who expresses the questions and confusion of the audience, with whom the audience can identify. Frequently used in detective fiction and science fiction, where the character asks a central character how he or she accomplished certain deeds, for the purpose of inciting that character to explain (for the curious audience) his or her methods, or a character asking a relatively educated person to explain what amounts to the backstory.	Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Scott Evil, played by Seth Green, son of Dr. Evil in the Austin Powers movies
Author surrogate	Characters which are based on authors, usually to support their personal views. Sometimes an intentionally or unintentionally idealized version of them.	Socrates in the writings of Plato. Plato never speaks in his own voice in his dialogues. In the Second Letter, it says, "no writing of Plato exists or ever will exist, but those now said to be his are those of a Socrates become beautiful and new".
Breaking the fourth wall.	An author or character addresses the audience directly Acknowledges to the reader or audience that what is being presented is fiction or may seek to extend the world of the story to provide the illusion that they are included in it.	The characters in Sesame Street often break the fourth wall when they address their viewers as part of the ongoing storyline, which is possible because of the high level of suspension of belief afforded by its audience—children. The American political drama show House of Cards also uses this technique frequently to let the viewers know what the main character Frank Underwood is thinking and planning. Ferris Bueller in Ferris Bueller's Day Off frequently addresses the audience.
Defamiliarization	Taking an everyday object and presenting it in a way that is weirdly unfamiliar so that we see the object in a new way. Coined by the early 20th-	In Swift's Gulliver's Travels, when Gulliver visits the land of the giants and sees a giant woman's skin, he sees it as anything but smooth and beautiful when viewed up close.[3]

Name	Definition	Example
	century Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in "Art as Technique."	Another common method of defamiliarization is to "make strange" a story (fabula) by creating a deformed plot (syuzhet). Tristram Shandy is defamiliarized by Laurence Sterne's unfamiliar plotting,[4] which causes the reader to pay attention to the story and see it in an unjaded way.
First person narration	A text presented from the point of view of a character, especially the protagonist, as if the character is telling the story themselves. (Breaking the fourth wall is an option, but not a necessity, of this format.)	Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn uses the title character as the narrator, while Sherlock Holmes is primarily told from Watson's perspective. The film, The Wolf of Wall Street, uses this technique where the protagonist narrates the film's events throughout, providing clarity that could not be gained from the picture and dialogue alone.
Magical Realism	Describing events in a real-world setting but with magical trappings, often incorporating local customs and invented beliefs. Different from urban fantasy in that the magic itself is not the focus of the story.	Particularly popular with Latin American authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges. Elsewhere, Salman Rushdie's work provides good examples.
Multiperspectivity	A narrative that is told from the viewpoints of multiple characters that incorporate various perspectives, emotions, and views from witnesses or actors to varying particular events or circumstances that might not be felt by other characters in the story.	The films of Robert Altman. 2666 by Roberto Bolano features European literary critics, a Chilean philosophy professor, an African-American journalist, detectives investigating Santa Teresa murders and an obscure German writer named Benno Von Archimboldi. Pale Fire by Vladimir Nabokov features literature professor John Shade, Charles Kinbote, a neighbour and colleague of Shade's and Charles the Beloved, king of Zembla. Kinbote is the ultimate unreliable commentator.
Second person narration	A text written in the style of a direct address, in the second-person.	Homestuck
Stream of	The author uses narrative and	An example is Ulysses. At one point

Name	Definition	Example
conscious	stylistic devices to create the sense of an unedited interior monologue, characterized by leaps in syntax and punctuation that trace a character's fragmentary thoughts and sensory feelings. The outcome is a highly lucid perspective with a plot. Not to be confused with free writing.	Leopold Bloom saunters through Dublin musing on "Pineapple rock, lemon plant, butter scotch. A sugar-sticky girl shovelling scoopful of creams for a Christian brother. Some school treat. Bad for their tummies."
Third person narration	A text written as if by an impersonal narrator who is not affected by the events in the story. Can be omniscient or limited, the latter usually being tied to a specific character, a group of characters, or a location.	A Song of Ice and Fire is written in multiple limited third-person narrators that change with each chapter. The Master and Margarita uses an omniscient narrator.

Table 2: List of narrative perspectives

Narrative Voice

> *'The house of fiction has many windows, but only one or two doors. I can tell a story in the third person, or in the first person, and perhaps in the second person singular or the first person plural, though successful examples of these latter two are rare indeed. And that's it…*
> *In reality, we are stuck with third- or first-person narration.'*

James Wood, *How Fiction Works*.

Narration is the use of a written or spoken commentary to convey a story to an audience (Huhn, Summer 2021). Narration is provided by a narrator: a specific person or unspecified literary voice. The narrator gives information to the reader, about the plot but may also discuss characters emotions, desires, motivation, setting, political environment. Different styles and types of narrator may be used for different effects, including unreliable narrators. Narration is generally a required element of all written stories (novels, short stories, poems, memoirs, etc). In films, plays, television shows, and video games, the story is usually conveyed without a narrator, using dialogue between characters or visual action. Of course, there is no black and white, the story in written stories is also advanced by character action and dialogue as well.

Narrative point of view, perspective, or voice: this is the person within or outside the story used to tell the story - also the scope of the knowledge or information that the narrator presents

Narrative tense: the choice of either the past or present grammatical tense to tell the story.

Narrative technique: this is the method used to the narrate a story. It can include establishing the story's setting both in time and space, the development of characters, the themes explored in the story, the structure of the plot. It is the storytelling devices and linguistic styles used to narrate the story.

Narration includes both ho tells the story and how the story is told. The narrator may be a character in the story or the author themself as a character. The narrator may participate in the story or may merely recount it as an external observer. The may have different levels of knowledge of characters' thoughts and motivations varying from no knowledge at all, through knowledge of one or characters internal thoughts, or may have a god like omniscience. Multiple narrators can be used to describe what happens to different characters at different times, creating a story with a complex perspective. The method used to tell the story could be a stream of consciousness or an unreliable narrator or it could be a set of journal entries or twitter feed etc.

First person point of view

Here the storyteller recounts events from their own point of view using the first person such as "I", "us", "me", "our" and "ourselves". The narrator is within the story and relates relating their experiences directly. The narrator is able to recount their inner thoughts, feelings and motivations the reader to the audience. The first person narrator has limited perspective as they are not able describe the inner thoughts of other characters and can only describe those

events in the story that they are able to physically witness. Their viewpoint us essentially subjective and the information they relay to the reader will reflect their own interpretation of the situation. The reader can only see, hear, smell and feel what the character sees, hears, smells and feels and can only hear about other character's thoughts or motivations second hand. As the story progresses, the reader can only know   As we move through the story, the reader can only know what the 'I' character knows. The reader may therefore not see the whole, accurate truth of events. The first-person narrator may be the focal character but this is not necessarily the focal character: examples of supporting viewpoint characters include Scout in To Kill a Mockingbird, Doctor Watson, and Nick Carraway of The Great Gatsby.

The role the narrator plays in a story determines the type of first-person point of view. The elements of a story—like genre—can help determine who is best suited to serve as narrator and which first-person voice to use.

First person central

In first-person central, the narrator is also the protagonist at the heart of the plot. Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* employs first-person central point of view. The story is based on a historical event: a double murder that occurred in 1843 in which a manservant was tried and hanged for the murder of his employer. Grace Marks, a maid, was tried and imprisoned as his accessory. The novel is told in through Grace's point of view as she speaks to the doctor hired to exonerate her.

First person peripheral

In first-person peripheral, the narrator is a witness to the story but she or he is not the main character. In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald created the character of Nick, a friend of the protagonist, Jay Gatsby. Nick tells the story of Gatsby trying to win the love of Nick's cousin, Daisy. Telling the story this way keeps the focus on the protagonist but also creates some distance, so the reader is not privy to their thoughts or feelings. This deliberately keeps Gatsby as a mysterious character and enables Nick to tell the story with a slant, drawing on his experience with Gatsby and his opinion of him to colour the narration.

First-person narrative is the most immediate and intimate point of view, but it can lack flexibility and result in narrative that contains too much telling and reporting rather than showing. If used throughout an entire novel, first person POV can be limiting, since readers can only access one version of events, there can only be one interpretation of events and we are forced to trust that the narrator's telling is reliable, even if it is not.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird* (p. 5), Harper Lee keeps the use of 'I' to a minimum and yet the prose is strongly and powerfully based on the first person. The prose is rich and distinct, rather than the more neutral tone we'd expect from third-person objective narration.

> *Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it. In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the court-house sagged in the square. Somehow, it was hotter then; a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. […]*
> *We lived on the main residential street in town – Atticus, Jem and I, plus*

> *Calpurnia our cook. Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment. […]*

Instead of being told how the narrator experienced the world we are shown the world in front of our own eyes. The first person point of view offers the author the following opportunities:

- To build a rapport with the readers by sharing a personal story directly with them. Bringing the reader in close makes the story credible. From the opening line of Herman Melville, in his epic sea tale, *Moby Dick*, makes his narrator address the reader on a first-name basis: "Call me Ishmael." This familiarity encourages the reader to believe implicitly in what they are being told.

- To build intrigue, suspense and tension. The reader will only know and experience what the first person narrator knows and experiences. This limited access to information is an effective method for building suspense and creating intrigue in stories. It can also help the reader identify with the characters as readers tend to identify with characters who are learning like they are. In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes mysteries, Watson is the narrator. By this means, Holmes becomes a more opaque character, mysterious and thus more interesting, and who only reveals his methods to Watson (and hence to the reader) when the case is solved.

- To express an opinion. A narrator tells a story through a lens filtered by their opinions. Because the use of the pronoun "I" establishes a sense of familiarity and intimacy between reader and narrator the writer can colour the story with the narrator's supposes opinions, biases and beliefs. In *To Kill A Mockingbird* the story is told by the six year old Scout with the innocence and naiveté of a child's world view. By telling this story about race in the American South through this young character's eyes forces Harper Lee makes the reader to examine and question the inequalities of race. If Harper Lee had chosen an adult character as the narrator, then the reader would have seen events through the established prejudices and bias of a mature adult, but by choosing a child, these prejudices have yet to be formed.

Advantages of the first person point of view

- Immediate and intimate
- Closes the gap between narrator and protagonist
- Tension generated by uncertain outcome since the narrator has a limited view of the world
- Allows the use of an unreliable narrator

Disadvantages of the first person point of view

- Detachment—the character is always observing/narrating
- All the disadvantages of present tense and 1st person combined!
- Having to narrate and 'act' simultaneously
- Hard to maintain suspension of disbelief for entire novel
- Limited point of view

- Less scope for dramatic irony

Care may be needed when using the first person in the present tense when using the first person. Action scenes may be better written using the past tense. More static scenes or where the character spends time in retrospection and analysis may work equally well in the past or the present tense.

Second person point of view

In the second-person point of view, the narrator is directly addressing the reader, and using personal pronouns such as you. The audience is effectively made into a character. This is done with the use of second-person pronouns like *you*. Alternatively the second-person referent of these stories is actually some character within the story.

Use of the second person point of view is uncommon. It provides an intimate, intrusive narration, as if the author is talking directly to the reader as a character. The narrator tells the reader what they thought and did (as opposed to the first-person narrator who tells the reader what the narrator thought and did). The reader is addressed as a participant, telling the character what they are seeing and doing in the story. This places the reader at the centre of the story, but leaves them somewhat disconnected as the reader knows less than the narrator.

Examples

Jay McInerney's Bright Lights, Big City (1984) is an example of the use of the second person POV:

> *"You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here you are, and you cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy."*

Text-based interactive fiction, such as Colossal Cave Adventure and Zork have conventionally used descriptions written in the second person POV.

Iain Banks uses the second-person viewpoint in *Complicity* (p. 9) where the narrator reports on the actions and thoughts of an unnamed serial killer addressed as 'you'.

> *There is another faint crunching noise as the body spasms once and then goes limp. Blood spreads blackly from his mouth over the collar of his white shirt and starts to drip onto the pale marble of the steps. [...]*
> *You go downstairs and walk through the kitchen, where the two women sit tied to their chairs; you leave via the same window you entered by, walking calmly through the small back garden into the mews where the motorbiked is parked.*
> *You hear the first faint, distant screams just as you take the bike's key from your pocket. You feel suddenly elated.*
> *You're glad you didn't have to hurt the women.*

The use of the second person POV makes the reader fell as if they are complicit in the action and also encourages their curiosity encouraging the reader to ask: who is this 'you', and how is it that the narrator knows so much about them? Only sections of the novel use the second

person; these sections fall between those of a first-person viewpoint character, journalist Cameron Colley.   This gives a complex view of events as the reader is given both Cameron's version of events and what was witnessed by the narrator.

Advantages of the second person point of view

- Places the reader at the heart of the story.

Disadvantages of the second person point of view

- May result in a lack of control that could alienate the audience.

Third person point of view

In the third-person point of view, the author is narrating a story about the characters, referring to them by name, or using the third-person pronouns "he," "she," and "they." The narrator is outside of the story and is often simply some disembodied commentary, rather than a character within the story.

It is possible to alternate between different third person points of view within the story. This is often done at chapter boundaries. An examples are A Song of Ice and Fire series by George R. R. Martin. The Harry Potter series focuses on the protagonist for much of the seven novels, but deviates to other characters on occasions, particularly during the opening chapters of later novels in the series, which switch from the view of the eponymous Harry to other characters (for example, the Muggle Prime Minister in the Half-Blood Prince).

Robust character development. Third person has a wider narrative scope than its first and second-person counterparts and can shine the spotlight on more than one character. These multiple angles give a reader a 360-degree view of the plot, each adding information that another character doesn't have, creating a rich, complex narrative.

Narrative flexibility. Third person can offer more flexibility—you can be everywhere, help your reader see everything, and switch between various characters' stories. You can go from complete omniscience to a limited or close third point of view. This latter style gives you the ability to be inside a character's thoughts, feelings, and sensations, which can give readers a deeper experience of character and scene.

An authoritative, trustworthy narrator. Writing from third-person stations the narrator above the action, creating a bird's-eye-view of the story. This angle, along with the ability of the narrator to know at least one character's thoughts—in both omniscient and limited third person—gives the narrative a more authoritative, reliable voice, since the narrator has nothing at stake.

The choice of omniscient, limited, or objective perspective can allow the author to enhance the story. For example, author Dan Brown uses a close third narrative to add depth to his villains. Brown humanizes his characters by revealing their innermost thoughts. This viewpoint can also be used to reveal more or less about each character, their desires and their motivations. The characters that perhaps have the most to lose are the ones to follow closely, because their thoughts with carry the most tension. In a limited perspective, revealing the world through the eyes of one or more characters can give that reader a

unique perspective of that world. Since the narrator is limited by the characters limitations the reader will be see the world through the opinions, biases and emotions of that particular character. This might not be the full picture and the reader will probably be aware of that, particularly if they are familiar with a similar world in real life. This can add interest as the reader contrasts their view of that world, with what the characters are telling them about that world. On the other hand, the omniscient view allows the author free rein to construct and communicate all attributes of the story world to the reader, giving the author great freedom and flexibility.

Third person point of view, limited

(Sometimes called 'close third'). The narrator sticks closely to one character but remains in third person. The narrator can do this for the entire novel or switch between different characters for different chapters or sections. This point of view allows the author to limit a reader's perspective and control what information the reader knows. It is used to build interest and heighten suspense.

The narrator only describes what the characters say and do.   The narrator does not have access or relay the characters internal thoughts or motivations. Often in limited third-person point of view an anonymous narrator will follow a single character perspective, and there will be no direct description of events that occur when that character is not present in the scene. This is the most common narrative point of view in literature since the early 20th century. Examples include the Harry Potter books and J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace.

Third person point of view, omniscient

The narrator has full access to the thoughts and experiences of all characters in the story. The narrator knows everything that happens within the world of the story, including what each of the characters is thinking and feeling. The narrator can enter anyone's mind, move freely through time, and give the reader their own opinions and observations as well as those of the characters. This narrative perspective is common in classic novels, including works by Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, and George Eliot. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is told from a third-person omniscient point of view, giving the reader full access to the main character, Elizabeth, as well as the characters others around her.

The third-person omniscient narrator is the least capable of being unreliable and as a consequence it enhances the truthfulness of the plot. Nevertheless the character of omniscient narrator can have its own personality, offering juments and opinions on the behaviour of the story characters.

Third person point of view, objective

Third-person objective point of view has a neutral narrator that does not have access to characters' thoughts or feelings. The narrator is essentially an observer, voyeur or eavesdropper. Ernest Hemingway employs this narrative voice in his short story *Hills Like White Elephants*. An unknown narrator relays the dialogue between a couple as they wait for a train in Spain.
Omniscience is not a binary attribute – various levels of omniscience can be employed according to need and taste.

Total omniscience: This is a god-like narrator who has full knowledge of the story's events and of the motives and unspoken thoughts of the various characters. Any events that occur in the world of the story can be described by the narrator, even if they are happening concurrently in different places. Full knowledge of what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future is also available to the narrator should the author choose to use it. Example: George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

'Partial' omniscience: Here the narrator limits themselves to one character's point of view, (or that of a small group of characters). The narrator cannot describe the internal thoughts of other characters in the story, so must portray these non-POV characters only as they are seen by the small number of POV characters. This is more distant style of narrative, where the narrator does not always feature in the foreground of story. Thus the narrator (and hence the reader) does not know everything about everything. Taken to extreme this can result in a 'close-up' POV that feels almost like a 1st person narrative. Free indirect style is invaluable in producing this effect. Example: Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr Ripley*.

No omniscience: Here the narrator is simply an observer, without any access to the goings on inside the characters' heads. The narrator therefore does not have any privileged information and cannot use such privileged information to explain the characters' motives or actions. This is very much like real life where cannot know what people think/feel, we can only hear what those people say they think and feel and speculate whether this information is actually true.

Advantages of types of third person point of view

- Omniscience
- Broad perspective
- Tension
- Stays close to central character's perspective
- More flexible than 1st person

Disadvantages of types of third person point of view

- Can be less intimate
- Tendency to 'tell' not 'show'
- Less scope for unreliability

Omniscience

An omniscient narrator, by definition, knows everything about all the characters and the world they inhabit. This does not mean the omniscient narrator should move freely between the viewpoints of all the characters in the story. In fact, the omniscient narrator should stay within the viewpoint of a single character. The omniscient narrator need not "go into" the viewpoints of the other characters, because it doesn't have to. The narrator does not *go into* different viewpoint, it simply *chooses* which information to convey about which characters at which moments. Since the omniscient narrator remains within a single viewpoint, the narrator's voice should not change when describing the thoughts and feelings of each different character, otherwise this will give the effect of head hopping. This means that the vocabulary, sentence structure, and word choices should not change when different

characters are explored. Fred may swear like a trooper and Jim may speak like a stuffy old public-school teacher, but when their emotions and thoughts are described from the omniscient viewpoint, the narrative should read with the exact same voice unless it is italicized as a direct thought.   The difference between the narrator's opinion and a character's opinion should always be clear to the reader.

Knowing everything does not mean the omniscient narrator should reveal everything. The narrator may choose to omit things to make the story more interesting or exciting. In many cases, omniscient narrators seem "God-like but should only reveal the characters emotions and thoughts when it is important and serves the needs of the narration. Revealing too much will impact suspense.

Head hopping

Head-hopping occurs when the narration moves from one character's perspective to another in the middle of the action, revealing the inner thoughts and feelings of multiple characters, without a proper scene break or clear signal. This jars the reader, disrupts their intimacy with the scene and makes the reader wonder which character they should identify with. Head hopping, on the other hand, often has switches that are erratic, that serve no purpose, and are put there simply because it's easier to switch perspectives all the time than it is to convey things without going into the heads of different characters. In head hopping there is no sense that there is one consistent voice "behind the camera" directing the novel and pulling the reader through the story.

Reasons to avoid head hopping

1. Head hopping can be confusing.   The reader has to keep track of which thoughts and emotions are being experienced by which character and to realign their perspective on the characters each time the narration moves to a new character.   This makes it easier for the reader get lost in the middle of the changing points of view.
2. Head hopping make the story less immersive.   Without head hopping the reader experiences the story through the eyes of a single character. The reader is immersed in that character's view of the world.
3. Head hopping makes the story less authentic – in real life we cannot head hop, we are limited our own personal view. Head hopping reminds us that we are reading a book that is artificial.
4. Head hopping reduces suspense. If the reader is limited to the viewpoint of a single character, then the reader must make assumptions and speculate on the observations that this character can make. This introduces uncertainty, encouraging the reader to keep on reading and find out more. When head hopping, everything that is every character's head can be known, and the uncertainty and suspense is killed.

The following extract from Hemingway's 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' is written in the third person limited viewpoint.

> "You are an old man who may not live long."
> "I am an old man who will live until I die," Anselmo said.
> "And I am not afraid of foxes." Pablo said nothing but picked up the pack.

"Nor of wolves either," Anselmo said, picking up the other pack. "If thou art a wolf."

"Shut thy mouth," Pablo said to him. "Thou art an old man who always talks too much."

"And would do whatever he said he would do," Anselmo said, bent under the pack. "And who now is hungry. And thirsty. Go on, guerrilla leader with the sad face. Lead us to something to eat."

It is starting badly enough, Robert Jordan thought. But Anselmo's a man. They are wonderful when they are good, he thought. There is no people like them when they are good and when they go bad there is no people that is worse. Anselmo must have known what he was doing when he brought us here. But I don't like it. I don't like any of it.

The only good sign was that Pablo was carrying the pack and that he had given him the carbine. Perhaps he is always like that, Robert Jordan thought. Maybe he is just one of the gloomy ones.

No, he said to himself, don't fool yourself. You do not know how he was before; but you do know that he is going bad fast and without hiding it. When he starts to hide it he will have made a decision. Remember that, he told himself. The first friendly thing he does, he will have made a decision. They are awfully good horses, though, he thought, beautiful horses. I wonder what could make me feel the way those horses make Pablo feel. The old man was right. The horses made him rich and as soon as he was rich he wanted to enjoy life. Pretty soon he'll feel bad because he can't join the Jockey Club, I guess, he thought. Pauvre Pablo. Il a manqué son Jockey.

Hemingway, Ernest. For Whom the Bell Tolls (Scribner Classics) (pp. 16-17). Scribner. Kindle Edition.

Robert Jordan is the viewpoint character. Thus, we can only see inside Jordan's head – the internal thoughts and experiences of the other two characters (Pablo and Anselmo) are hidden from us. We can only deduce what their thoughts are emotions from the evidence of their actions and their dialogue. We only sew what Jordan sees, hear what he hears and think what he thinks. The narrator shows the conflict between Pablo and Anselmo by their dialogue, rather than directly telling the reader about it. Their differing ages is also implied by the content of their conversation rather than being baldly stated by the narrator. We hear Jordan's thoughts reflect his conclusion too about the relationship between the other two characters and also Jordan's assessment of his situation. The narrator has only the limited omniscience of seeing inside Jordan's mind and the ability to observe the overall scene.

When re-written to show how badly head hopping can mess up the effectiveness of the scene, the text becomes:

Viewpoint	
Anselmo	"You are an old man who may not live long." "I am an old man who will live until I die," Anselmo said, uncertain if Pablo was truly serious. "And I am not afraid of foxes." Pablo said nothing but picked up the pack. "Nor of wolves either," Anselmo said, picking up the other pack. "If thou art a wolf."

Pablo	"Shut thy mouth," Pablo said, thinking to himself that the old man talked too much.
	"And would do whatever he said he would do," Anselmo said, bent under the pack.
Jordan	It is starting badly enough, Robert Jordan thought. But Anselmo's a man. They are wonderful when they are good, he thought. There is no people like them when they are good and when they go bad there is no people that is worse. Anselmo must have known what he was doing when he brought us here. But I don't like it. I don't like any of it.
Anselmo	Anselmo meanwhile was thinking, I'm hungry, who will lead us to food?
Pablo	Pablo was carrying the pack and, after a moment's thought, when he realised that Jordan could be trusted, he had given him the carbine. Perhaps he is always like that, Robert Jordan thought. Maybe he is just one of the gloomy ones.
Jordan	No, he said to himself, don't fool yourself. You do not know how he was before; but you do know that he is going bad fast and without hiding it. When he starts to hide it he will have made a decision. Remember that, he told himself. The first friendly thing he does, he will have made a decision. They are awfully good horses, though, he thought, beautiful horses. I wonder what could make me feel the way those horses make Pablo feel. The old man was right. The horses made him rich and as soon as he was rich he wanted to enjoy life. Pretty soon he'll feel bad because he can't join the Jockey Club, I guess, he thought. Pauvre Pablo. Il a manqué son Jockey.

In thus butchered example, Robert Jordan remains as the primary viewpoint character, but we are also shown the internal thoughts and emotions of Pablo and Anselmo. The narrator tells the reader directly about the conflict between Pablo and Anselmo. The narrator's viewpoint bounces rapidly between the three characters, and this has a dislocating effect on the narration. Instead of the intimacy established between the reader and Jordan in the original piece, the reader feels decoupled from all the characters. The rapid head hopping may also confuse the reader regarding who is thinking what at a particular moment.

From Harry Bingham's Blog (Jericho Writers):

One scene, two heads

Oh ye people, last week I was in Devon on a beach. The wind blew, the rain rained, but my four kids – none of whom had seen the sea before – were wild with joy. Me too. I can't say I come back rested, but I come back knackered in a different way. In the world of parenting, that's a win.

While I was away, I read a book that's been on my TBR list awhile: *Where the Crawdads Sing*, by Delia Owen. The book ends up as a well-executed courtroom thriller, but the

heart of the book is a coming-of-age story set in the marshlands of North Carolina with, as its heroine, the semi-feral Catherine 'Kya' Clark.

It's an excellent book, with enough good writing and character depth to give a basically commercial novel some real swagger. But one scene in particular struck me, because it was such a deft example of head-hopping.

I'll look at that scene in a moment, but first, a quick refresher on the normal guidelines:

In general, the advice given to new writers is to limit yourself to one point of view per scene or, in nearly all cases, one point of view (POV) per chapter. The reason is that passages such as this one feel clashingly awful:

Peter Piper felt his heart racing. He'd never have a better moment than this. He crept towards the dark shelves at the back of the shop. The place smelled of molasses and candied lemon and boiled sugar, all his favourite things. He had just reached the shelf, when -

'Stop, thief,' roared Old Mother Hubbard. She was so angry, she wanted to take a swing at him. The little villain!

The problem here is simple.

We start with Peter Piper. We, the reader, are committed to him. We're with him, creeping through the dark shop, feeling both excitement and fear. If the writing until this point has been decent, we'll be fully invested in Peter and his delinquent quest.

Only then, without warning, we're pulled out of the young man's head and plunged into OM Hubbard's interior world. She has her emotions too, but how can we commit to her inner landscape, if two seconds before we were fully committed to Peter's?

The answer is that we can't. I've published maybe one and a half million words of fiction and I should think I've broken the "1 point of view / 1 chapter" rule maybe on only four or five occasions in all that time.

And yet – I *have* broken the rule. And did so consciously. And did so because the story demanded it.

The reasoning behind those exceptions is fascinating and somehow uplifting. We'll get into that in a second, but first of all an example.

Here's Delia Owen breaking the rule and doing so with ease, grace and purpose. I've edited the passage somewhat for length. The whole thing runs to about two pages. The text itself is in italics. My comments are square bracketed and in bold.

She [Kya] walked into the trees without looking, and there, leaning against the stump, was the feather boy. She recognized him as Tate, who had shown her the way home through the marsh when she was a little girl. Tate who, for years, she had watched from a distance ... He was calm, smiled wide, his whole face beaming ...

[This passage is all Kya's POV. We are given a description of her interior knowledge – matching this young man up with his ten-year-old predecessor. We are given a physical description of Tate entirely from Kya's eyes.]

She halted, shaken by the sudden break in the unwritten rules. That was the fun of it, a game where they didn't have to talk or even be seen. Heat rose in her face.

[Still Kya. Their game involved exchanges of gifts at a distance, but it's Kya's perspective on that game we're hearing about, not Tate's.]

Tate couldn't help staring. She must be thirteen or fourteen, he thought. But even at that age, she had the most striking face he'd ever seen. Her large eyes nearly black, her nose slender over shapely lips, painted her in an exotic light ...

[Bam! We've jumped straight into Tate's head, and now we're seeing Kya through his eyes, just as we saw him through hers.]

Her impulse, as always, was to run. But there was another sensation. A fullness she hadn't felt for years ...

[Back to Kya. More of her deep inner world. Then there's a bit of dialogue, and a modest amount of action. She tells him she can't read. He, without shaming her, explains what was in the notes he'd been leaving. Then ...]

Kya hung her head and said, 'Thank you for the [feathers]; that was mighty fine of you.'

[Neutral. No particular POV. This could be written by a neutral observer simply conveying external data.]

Tate noticed that while her face and body showed early inklings and foothills of womanhood, her mannerisms and turns of phrase were somewhat childlike, in contrast to the village girls whose mannerisms – overdoing their makeup, cussing and smoking – outranked their foothills.

[Not a great sentence, I think. The inklings, foothills and outranking end up delivering a rather muddled image. But look: now we've got to Tate's innermost thoughts – and we've got there without any sense of clashing gears or abrupt switching. The scene finishes by switching back to Kya and Tate's simple, astonishing offer, 'You know, I could teach you to read.']

I think there are several things to pick out from this.

First, notice that the sequence moves like this:

1. We start with Kya's interior thoughts and relatively neutral action descriptions that aren't heavily stamped with any particular POV.

2. We see him through her eyes; then – within a sentence or two – we see her through his eyes. That's intimate and interior, yes, but not deeply interior. We're still just recording how someone looks.

3. There's a bit of dialogue in which she makes herself vulnerable (revealing she can't read) and in which he responds with kindness (he doesn't judge her.)

4. She hangs her head – an act of submission or yielding – and says a proper thank you. We've read 100 pages by this point, and this is the most yielding Kya has ever been.

5. We go straight into Tate's innermost, innermost thoughts about her.

In other words, the passage initially touches each point of view in turn, but quite gently – noting physical descriptions only, not plunging far into each separate soul.

That first exchange of perspectives is followed by what is effectively a little trial of love ('Do you mind that I'm illiterate?') and honour ('Not at all.')

That exchange, and her acknowledgement of it, allows the leap to complete intimacy, and access to Tate's innermost thoughts. In other words, the passage ends up claiming full access to both inner worlds, and does so in a way that feels beautiful and right, rather than clashing and false.

The tiptoe approach to that full intimacy is a critical part of what makes it all work.

Second, the scene starts and finishes with Kya's point of view. That matters. I don't think you can easily enter a scene with person X and leave it with person Y. There are probably exceptions here, but they don't immediately leap to mind.

Third, these two, Kya and Tate, are going to become lovers. You already know (100 pages into a 370 page book) that this is the critical first scene in a love story.

That's no coincidence, because if you want biggest single qualification to the "1 point of view / 1 chapter" rule it's simply this: "except where the two people are deeply, deeply intimate." Usually that will be between two lovers, but it could certainly be between a parent and a child. I once head-hopped in a critical scene between two brothers. If the intimacy is there, the head-hopping can feel natural.

And – fourth – you may as well add this qualification too: "and except where the scene involves breaking into a higher level of intimacy than the pair had before." This scene is a perfect example of it. It's not that Tate and Kya are intimate. They're not. In a way, this is their first true meeting. But they are breaking through into a wholly new level of intimacy. (And for Kya, a somewhat dangerous one.)

The dual-perspective trick both generates that sense of intimacy and is the crowning proof of the intimacy achieved. It's a beautiful thing to feel and even more beautiful to write.

That's the good news. The bad news is that you won't write many such scenes. They're sweet, because they're rare.

(Incidentally, I bet there are other examples of head-hopping scenes that don't fit this model, but I couldn't think of any while writing this. If you have good examples of well-written head-hopping, then do drop me a line and tell me about them.)

Meantime, I'm going to go and shake Old Devonian sand out of my beach shorts and clear the car of broken crab shells. Is it possible I still smell of seaweed?

Till soon.

Harry

Viewpoint characters: What the reader can access

- Emotional responses
- Thoughts
- What they can sense, ie see, smell, hear, touch, taste

Non-viewpoint characters: What the reader can access

- Observable behaviour: movements, expressions and gestures
- Audible behaviour: dialogue, breathing noises (eg panting) and vocal gestures and tics (eg sighs, gasps, grunts).

Multiple viewpoints

It is not uncommon for there to be more than one viewpoint character in a story or book, however special care must be taken to avoid head-hopping. This is generally achieved by restricting the narration to a single viewpoint within a given section or chapter. Examples are the Game of Thrones series, George R Martin or Hotel World, Ali Smith.

Examples of the use of multiple viewpoints

In Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea the author shows the reader the thoughts of numerous characters in the same scene. This is not head hopping, since Hemingway is using a third person omniscient narrator who can peer into the mind of any of the characters at will. It would be head hopping if a third person limited narrator had been used instead, as this narrator would be confined to the thoughts of one character per scene. In addition, the narrative is fluid, and we are not actually in any of the character's heads – we are firmly in the narrator's head all the time and they are guiding us through the thoughts and feelings of the character.

> He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream, and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.

> It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast.

> The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him.

> Others, of the older fisherman, looked at him and were sad. But they did not show it and they spoke politely about the current and the depths they had drifted their lines at and the steady good weather and of what they had seen.
>
> "Yes," the old man said. He was holding his glass and thinking of man years ago.

To avoid head hopping and establish the third-person omniscient point of view, establish the point of view within the first one or two paragraphs of the scene.

Sustaining interest with other interpretations

In *The Word is Murder* (p. 208), author Anthony Horowitz is one of the characters! The viewpoint is first person (his). The author is like a floating camera; we see the protagonist – the detective (Hawthorne) who solves the crime – through Horowitz's eyes as he accompanies him to interviews with suspects and on visits to crime scenes.

The author-character offers his own theories, even pursues his own lines of investigation, and interjects with stories about his life and career. This adds interest but, ultimately, it's the detective who grounds the crime story, brings reliability to the narrative, and drives the novel forward; it's through him that we access the procedural elements and the answer to whodunnit. Here's an excerpt:

> *They'd used blue and white tape to create a cordon which began at the front door and blocked off the stairs. I wasn't sure how they would deal with the neighbours on the upper and lower floors. As for me, although I hadn't been questioned, a woman in a plastic suit had asked me to remove my shoes and taken them away. That puzzled me.*
> *'What do they need them for?' I asked Hawthorne.*
> *'Latent footprints,' he replied. 'They need to eliminate you from the enquiry.'*

Subjective or objective

(from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narration#Subjective_or_objective)

Subjective point of view is when the narrator conveys the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of one or more characters. If this is just one character, it can be termed third-person limited, in which the reader is limited to the thoughts of some particular character (often the protagonist) as in the first-person mode, except still giving personal descriptions using third-person pronouns. This is almost always the main character (for example, Gabriel in James Joyce's The Dead, Nathaniel Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown, or Santiago in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea). Certain third-person omniscient modes are also classifiable as using the third person, subjective mode when they switch between the thoughts and feelings of all the characters.

In contrast to the broad, sweeping perspectives seen in many 19th-century novels, third-person subjective is sometimes called the "over the shoulder" perspective; the narrator only describes events perceived and information known by a character. At its narrowest and most subjective scope, the story reads as though the viewpoint character were narrating it; dramatically this is very similar to the first person, in that it allows in-depth revelation of the protagonist's personality, but it uses third-person grammar. Some writers will shift

perspective from one viewpoint character to another, such as in Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time, or George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire.

Objective point of view employs a narrator who tells a story without describing any character's thoughts, opinions, or feelings; instead, it gives an objective, unbiased point of view. Often the narrator is self-dehumanized in order to make the narrative more neutral. This type of narrative mode is often seen outside of fiction in newspaper articles, biographical documents, and scientific journals. This narrative mode can be described as a "fly-on-the-wall" or "camera lens" approach that can only record the observable actions but does not interpret these actions or relay what thoughts are going through the minds of the characters. Works of fiction that use this style emphasize characters acting out their feelings observably. Internal thoughts, if expressed, are given through an aside or soliloquy. While this approach does not allow the author to reveal the unexpressed thoughts and feelings of the characters, it does allow the author to reveal information that not all or any of the characters may be aware of. An example of this so-called camera-eye perspective is "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway.

This narrative mode is also called third-person dramatic because the narrator, like the audience of a drama, is neutral and ineffective toward the progression of the plot—merely an uninvolved onlooker.

Alternating person

(from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narration#Alternating_person)

While the tendency for novels (or other narrative works) is to adopt a single point of view throughout the entire novel, some authors have utilized other points of view that, for example, alternate between different first-person narrators or alternate between a first- and a third-person narrative mode. The ten books of the Pendragon adventure series, by D. J. MacHale, switch back and forth between a first-person perspective (handwritten journal entries) of the main character along his journey as well as a disembodied third-person perspective focused on his friends back home. Margaret Atwood's Alias Grace provides one character's viewpoint from first-person as well as another character's viewpont from third person limited. Often, a narrator using the first person will try to be more objective by also employing the third person for important action scenes, especially those in which they are not directly involved or in scenes where they are not present to have viewed the events in first-hand. This mode is found in Barbara Kingsolver's The Poisonwood Bible. In William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, even the perspective of a deceased person is included.

Audrey Niffenegger's The Time Traveller's Wife alternates between an art student named Clare, and a librarian named Henry. John Green & David Levithan's novel Will Grayson, Will Grayson rotates its viewpoint between two boys both named Will Grayson. It alternates between both boys telling their part of the story, how they meet and how their lives then come together. Nick Hornby's A Long Way Down has four narrators, who also are its main characters. These four characters meet at the top of a tall building known as "the suicide spot" and begin to talk instead of jumping. They then form a group and continue to meet up.

Narrative techniques

Stream-of-consciousness

Stream of consciousness gives the (typically first-person) narrator's perspective by attempting to replicate the thought processes—as opposed to simply the actions and spoken words—of the narrative character. Often, interior monologues and inner desires or motivations, as well as pieces of incomplete thoughts, are expressed to the audience but not necessarily to other characters. Examples include the multiple narrators' feelings in William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying, and the character Offred's often fragmented thoughts in Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale. Irish writer James Joyce exemplifies this style in his novel Ulysses.

Unreliable narrator

Unreliable narration involves the use of an untrustworthy or untruthful narrator. This mode may be employed to give the audience a deliberate sense of disbelief in the story or a level of suspicion or mystery as to what information is meant to be true and what is meant to be false. Unreliable narrators are usually first-person narrators; however, a third-person narrator may be unreliable. An example is J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, in which the novel's narrator Holden Caulfield is biased, emotional, and juvenile, divulging or withholding certain information deliberately and at times quite unreliable.

Free indirect speech/style

This is a style of **third-person** narration, which uses some of the characteristics of third person along with the **essence** of first-person direct speech. What distinguishes free indirect speech from normal direct or indirect speech is the lack of an introductory expression such as "he said" or "she thought". The narrative voice is coloured by the thought and speech patterns of the main character, so that the point of view is so close it *feels* almost like first person. Most writers slip in and out of free indirect speech naturally. (See the Katherine Mansfield short story 'Bliss' for a good example.)

Examples

Direct or quoted speech:

> The shoemaker took the shoes in his hands and looked carefully at them. 'Never in my life have I have seen a pair of shoes so well-made,' he said.

> Jennifer entered the flat. 'What a ghastly room,' she said. 'The carpet is hideous. There's no way I can live with that. This whole idea is a big mistake.'

> 'Time I hung up my deerstalker,' said Rathbone. 'That Cumberbatch chap's doing a sterling job with Holmes.'

Indirect or reported speech:

The shoemaker took the shoes in his hands and looked carefully at them. He said to himself that he had never in his life seen a pair of shoes so well-made.

Jennifer entered the flat. What a ghastly room it is, she thought. The carpet is hideous and there was no way she could live with that. It seemed to her that the whole idea was a big mistake.

Rathbone thought Cumberbatch's portrayal of Sherlock Holmes was excellent and decided it was time to hang up his deerstalker.

Free indirect speech:

The shoemaker took the shoes in his hands and looked carefully at them. Quite astonishing. Never in his life had he seen a pair of shoes so well-made.

Jennifer entered the flat. Oh my God. Hideous, completely hideous. There was no living with a carpet like that. Big mistake, the whole renting idea.

Time to hang up his deerstalker – that Cumberbatch chap was doing a sterling job with Holmes.

Interior monologue

'Interior monologue [is] where the discourse is first person, present tense, and the effect is rather like wearing headphones plugged into somebody's brain, listening to their thoughts.' (David Lodge, 'The best stream-of-consciousness novels' *Guardian*.)

Examples

Well, now, would you look at that! I've seen some well-made shoes in my time, but never in all my years of cobbling have I encountered a pair like this. Why, the stitches are so tiny they could have been sewn by the fairy folk themselves. I'll show the wife. Where's she gone? Off to the shops, no doubt. Oh well.

Omigod, omigod! Orange shagpile? You've got to be kidding me. It looks like a dead orangutan. No way can I live here. Just smile and nod and say lovely, you'll go away and think about it. Now what am I going to do? *Orange*! Just like Granny's bungalow. Kill me now.

Using POV for flexibility and interest

Here's an example from **Val McDermid's *Insidious Intent*** (p. 14). She begins with a more distant third-person narrator who reports what had been on Elinor Blessing's mind, and when. Then she shifts to free indirect speech (the bold text). This gives us temporary access to Blessing's innermost thoughts – her irritation – and her lightly sweary tone, but still in the third person:

> *It had been on her mind for days. The last thing on her mind as she let the oblivion of sleep overtake her, the first thought on waking.*
>   *Earlier that morning, she'd groaned at the invasive ringtone from her partner's*

iPhone. **Bloody cathedral bells. How could such a small slab of silicone produce so much noise? At this rate, she was going to end up as the Quasimodo of the A&E department.** *'Paula,' she grumbled sleepily. 'It's my day off.'*

Philip Prowse employs a similar shift in **Hellyer's Trip** (p. 194):

Then the interrogation ceased. He knew he should have been scratching lines on the cell walls to mark the passing of time. **But what was the point? He wasn't the Count of effing Monte Cristo.**

A leaner narrative

Direct speech and thoughts are often tagged so that the reader knows who's speaking/thinking:

- 'Blah blah,' she said.
- *Blah blah*, she wondered.

With regard to thoughts, there's nothing wrong with a reader being told that a character thought this or wondered that, but tagging can be interruptive and render your prose overworked and laboured if that's the only device you use.

Imagine your viewpoint character is in a tight spot – a fight scene with an arch enemy. The pace of the action is lightning quick, and you want that to be reflected in how your viewpoint character experiences the scene. FIS enables you to ditch the tags, focus on what's going on in the character's head, and maintain a cracking pace.

The opening chapter of **Stephen Lloyd Jones's** *The Silenced* contains numerous examples of free indirect speech dotted about. Mallory is being hunted by the bad guys. She's already disarmed one in a violent confrontation and fears more are on the way. Jones keeps the tension high by splintering descriptions of step-by-step action with free-indirect-styled insights into his protagonist's deepest thought processes as, ridden with terror, she tries to find a way out of her predicament:

She tensed in the doorway, holding herself erect, terrified that by moving she would give away her position and feel the wet kiss of a blade, or bone-shattering impact of a hammer.
Another press of air lifted fronds of her hair from her face. Abruptly, she recalled the window she had found at the back of the house, open to the night.
Of course. **That** *was the source of the breeze.*
[...]
Was there anything she had forgotten? The Nissan's keys were in her right-hand pocket. She had the two books from the study.
That was it.
Reaching for the deadbolt, she carefully drew it back.
Breathe in. Breathe out.

Here's an excerpt from **Lee Child's** *The Hard Way* (p. 64). Child *doesn't* use FIS to close

the narrative distance. Instead, he opts to shift into first-person thoughts. Reacher is wondering if he's been made, and whether it matters

> *Reacher asked himself: did they see me? He answered himself: of course they did. Close to certainty. The mugger saw me. That was for damn sure. And these other guys are smarter than any mugger. [...] Then he asked himself: but were they worried? Answered himself: no, they weren't. The mugger saw a professional opportunity. That was all.*

Some might argue that this is a little clunkier than going down the FIS route, but perhaps he wanted to retain a sense of Reacher's clinical, military-style dissection of the problem in hand.

If Child had elected to use FIS, it might have looked like this:

> ***Had they seen him? Of course they had. Close to certainty. The mugger saw him – that's for damn sure. And those other guys were smarter than any mugger. [...] But had they been worried? No, they'd seen a professional opportunity. That's all.***

It's a good reminder that choice of narrative style isn't about right or wrong but about intention – what works for your writing and your character in a particular situation.

Deeper insight into characters

A third-person narrator is the bridge between the character and the reader. As such, it has its own voice. If there's more than one viewpoint character in your novel, we can learn what we need to know via a narrator, but the voice will not be the same as when the characters are speaking in the first person.

FIS allows the reader to stay in third-person but access a character's intimate world view and their voice. It closes the distance between the reader and the character because the bridging narrator is pushed to the side, but only temporarily.

That temporary pushing-aside means the writer isn't bound to the character's voice, state of mind and internal processing. When the narrator takes up its role once more, the reader takes a step back.

Furthermore, there might be times when we need to hear that character's voice, but the spoken word would seem unnatural:

- Perhaps they don't have time to verbalize (a high-octane escape scene).
- Maybe they're on their own and talking to themselves isn't a known trait.
- Speaking out loud would give them away.
- Dialogue would seem forced because a character wouldn't give voice to the words in real life.

Free independent speech therefore allows a character to speak without speech – a silent voice, if you like.

Think about transgressor narratives in particular. If you want to give your readers intimate

insights into a perpetrator's pathology and motivations, but are writing in the third-person, FIS could be just the ticket.

Here's an example from **Harlan Coben's *Stay Close*** (chapter 25). Ken and his partner Barbie are a murderous couple bound together by sadism and psychopathy. Ken is preparing for the capture and torture of a police officer whom he believes is a threat:

> *The cop, Broome, entered the house. Ken wanted to curse, but he never cursed. Instead, he used his favourite word for such moments –* setback. ***That was all this was. The measure of a man isn't how many times he gets knocked down; it's how many times he gets back up again.*** *He texted Barbie to stay put. He tried to listen in, but it was too risky. [...]*
> ***What more could any man want?*** *He knew, of course, that it wouldn't be that simple. He had compulsions, but even those he could share with his beloved.* ***What was he waiting for?*** *He turned back toward the house.*

This excerpt is from an audiobook. While listening, I could hear how the voice artist, Nick Landrum, used pitch to shift narrative distance.

The book's entire narrative is in the third-person, but Landrum used a higher pitch when presenting the narrator voice. Ken's dialogue, however, is in a lower pitch, and so is the free indirect speech of this character – we get to *hear* the essence of Ken even when he's not speaking out loud.

If you're considering turning your novel into an audiobook, FIS could enrich the emotionality of the telling, and the connection with your listener.

Narrative distance

To decide whether to play with free indirect speech, consider narrative distance and the impact it can have on a scene.

Look at these short paragraphs, all of which convey the same information. All are grammatically correct, but the reader's experience is different because of the way in which the information is given, and by whom.

	Dave glanced at the guy's hand and spotted the absence of the signature tattoo. It forced him to consider the integrity of the intel he'd been given. Again. And it bothered him.
1	**Third-person: A narrator reports the situation and what the character's thinking.** *Most distant. There's shallower emotional connection between the reader and the viewpoint character. The narrator's voice is more clinical and dominates.*
	Dave glanced at the guy's hand and spotted the absence of the signature tattoo. 'Christ,' he muttered under his breath, not for the first time questioning the integrity of the intel he'd been given.
2	**Third-person: A narrator reports the situation and most of what the character's thinking.** **First-person: A character reports a little of what he's thinking.** *Less distant. The dialogue burst gives voice to the character, which introduces tension.*

3	Dave glanced at the guy's hand and spotted the absence of the signature tattoo. *Christ*, he thought. *Maybe my intel's been compromised yet again.* **Third-person: A narrator reports the situation.** **First-person: A character reports what he's thinking.** *Closer. Readers might find italic thoughts and tags disruptive, or believe that such well-structured thoughts aren't authentic.*
4	Dave glanced at the guy's hand and spotted the absence of the signature tattoo. 'Christ, maybe my intel's been compromised again,' he muttered. **Third-person: A narrator reports the situation.** **First-person: A character shares his concerns out loud.** *As close as (3) above. Dialogue might seem forced, unnatural, spoken purely to help the reader understand what the problem is.*
5	Dave glanced at the guy's hand. No signature tattoo. Christ, had his intel been compromised again? **Third-person: A narrator reports the situation, and a character reports what he's thinking via free indirect style.** *We're right inside the character's head but there's no cluttering italic, speech marks or tagging. The free indirect style feels natural precisely because it's rendered in the third-person and yet it holds the intimacy of a first-person experience offered in (3) and (4).*
6	I glanced at the guy's hand. There was no signature tattoo. Christ, had my intel been compromised again? **First-person: A viewpoint character reports the situation and what he's thinking.** *Closest. We're right inside the character's head, there's no clutter, and the narrative feels completely natural. However, this only works if you've chosen a first-person narrative for this viewpoint character throughout the book, which you might find limiting.*

Your choice will depend on your intention. Think about your character, their personality, the situation they're in, which emotions they're experiencing, and the degree to which you want your reader to intimately connect with them.

Consider the following examples in relation to the table above:

- Is the scene fast-paced and do you want to **keep your sentences lean and keen to reflect that pace**? The viewpoint character might not have the mental space to articulate fully rounded thoughts or speech because they're in a fight or trying to escape. In that case, the free indirect style of 5 might suit you. So might 6 if you're writing in the first person.
- Is the viewpoint character hiding, observing something going on but invisible to those around them? If they feel **in command but are taking care to remain unnoticed**, 2 might offer you the required tension while enabling you to retain tight control over the narrative via a narrator.
- If your character has the **space to think but is panicking**, you might prefer 3 or 4. Anxiety can lead people to articulate complex thoughts, even voice them out loud, in the search for clarity.
- If your viewpoint character's personality is **cooler, more detached**, you might prefer the emotional disconnectedness of 1.
- And if you're writing in the third-person, but want the reader to feel **intimately connected** with the viewpoint character, you might swing back to the free indirect style of 5.

Psychic Distance: what it is and how to use it

(from https://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting/psychic-distance-what-it-is-and-how-to-use-it.html)

John Gardner (1983, The Art of Fiction) describes "psychic distance" as the "distance that the reader feels between himself and the events of the story" (p.111)

The more a reader has access to a fictional character's innermost thoughts and emotions the closer the psychic distance. If, on the other hand, if the psychic distance is great or high, the reader is kept remote from the viewpoint character. If the Psychic distance is zero the reader and viewpoint character become one. Different levels of psychic distance therefore have ra-ther different effects and the particular the psychic distance you choose depends on *how you want your story to affect your readers*. Varying the psychic distance for characters within a story, scene or paragraph can also powerfully influence the reader's experience.

Psychic Distance is similar to Narrative Distance or Emotional Distance.

Large Psychic Distance	Small Psychic Distance
Distant	Close
Zoomed out	Zoomed in
Objective	Subjective
Telling/Informing	Showing/Evoking
Low intensity	High intensity
Dissociated	Associated
Passive	Active
Long shot	X ray
No consciousness	Steam of consciousness
Philosophy/Intellectualising	Feeling/Actively experiencing
Withdrawing	Engaging
Time passing	In the moment
Abstract	Specific
Lack of sensory information	Abundance of sensory information
Outside opaque characters	Inside a character's head
Open	Claustrophobic

Gardner defines five levels of psychic distance.

Each level brings the reader closer to the character, with increasing informality, and moves from a narrator towards the character's voice.

Level	Description	Example
PD1	an external distanced narrator	It was winter of the year 1853. A large man stepped out of a doorway.
PD2	Slightly zoomed in	Henry J. Warburton had never much cared for snowstorms.

PD3	Seeing a character's POV but the narrator remains in control	Henry hated snowstorms.
PD4	We hear actual thoughts, but in the past tense and third person	God how he hated these damn snowstorm
PD5	no narrator, but inside the character's head.	Snow. Under your collar, down inside your shoes, freezing and plugging up your miserable soul

Since it is sometimes hard to see how this can equally well apply in first person, Emma Darwin has done a version which does both. In this version there still an "act-or", you could think of them as being), but this time they are the same person:

1. In the far-off days of Uther Pendragon, witches stalked the earth.
2. Every village had its witch, and we feared or consulted her according to how desperate we were.
3. When I was a child Mistress Margit frightened me, and when she walked down the street the big ones would shout "Here comes Old Margit!", while I hid and crossed myself.
4. And here came Old Margit, with her ragged clothes and her big black cat, and I shivered and prayed because St Mary would save me, wouldn't she?
5. Margit's coming and her cloak like little demons dancing and what'll I do – mustn't catch her eye – hide in the ditch cold and wet but Black Peter will see me – Mother Mary save me, he'll look at you and then Margit can see into your mind and plant demons in there and...

Narrative distance is not really just divided into 5 distinct steps, it is a gradual spectrum of distances.   But it is convenient to try and map it into 5 steps.

In more detail:

PD1 - General View

PD1 uses a formal, objective tone that is detached from the narrator. The readers are simply observers from afar who are told the story rather than shown the story. This level has a simplicity and directness that makes it suitable for folktales and tales for young children. Readers do not feel the characters emotions. The story is a flat sequence of factual description. The narrator tells the reader where the characters are, what they say, what they are doing and what happens to them. The narrator does not tell the reader the thoughts and emotions of the characters. The characters are therefore opaque objects rather than humans with consciousness.

This risk with PD1 is that the reader is distanced from the characters and it is difficult to show how the characters experience the world and themselves, The readers may therefore not care about the character's fate.

PD2 - View and People

PD2 uses a less formal tone and more dialogue than PD1 and ells the reader more about place, individuals or groups, and reveals a little more about their…. However the character

depiction is still shallow and the reader still will not feel they know the characters. Telling rather than showing is still the order of the day. In cinematic terms this is comparable to a voice-over or a wide-angle shot of a scene

Ernest Hemingway wrote short stories that include description that is told (not shown) and dialogue that moves the story forward without giving depth to his characters. Here's the opening of Hemingway's *An Alpine Idyll* (2004: 105), a short story with a first-person narrator:

> It was hot coming down into the valley even in the early morning. The sun melted the snow from the skis we were carrying and dried the wood. It was spring in the valley but the sun was very hot. We came along the road into Galtur carrying our skis and rucksacks. As we passed the churchyard a burial was just over. I said, 'Grüsse Gott,' to the priest as he walked past us coming out of the churchyard. The priest bowed.

> 'It's funny a priest never speaks to you,' John said.

Hemingway gives no clue as to the age or appearance of the narrator. He wants readers to use their imagination and fill in the gaps. Although the story is interesting because of its Alpine setting, readers' emotions are not stirred. The story is very similar to a folktale. The use of direct speech introduces another dimension – what characters said to each other – which enriches characterisation, but the characters remain shallow.

PD3 – Character

PD3 is more particular and more personalised still, though the reader's view or the character is still filtered through the narrator. This is the 'standard realistic narrative' in James Wood's ***How Fiction Works***, and is probably the most common narrative distance in the majority of fiction. the narrator remains in control, shows us the experience of this world and that of individual characters and quotes their speech directly. PD3 in cinematic terms is like using a single static camera, with a single view.

The problem with PD3 is that is use PD3 throughout the story then you provide a very even, level, experience for the reader. It is hard to inject climaxes and lulls and to provide the contrasting levels of excitement need to retain a reader's interest.

PD4 – Thoughts

In PD4 the narrator provides access inside the character's head and colours the voice of the narrator with the vocabulary and point of view of the character. The narrator no longer telling the story in an impersonal but is talking directly to readers. This helps the readers feel that have just not been lectured told a sequence of facts but they have got to know and learnt something about the characters. The readers will feel that characters are now speaking directly to them and will form opinions about whether they like, sympathise, despise etc these characters based on their emotional reactions to what they observe. PD4 makes use of **free**

indirect style, as invented by Jane Austen: "God how he hated ... " and "St Mary would save me, wouldn't she?".

As PD4 has moved the narrator's viewpoint closer to the characters, the reader is now told rather less of the things that the characters cannot directly see or experience.

PD5 - Emotions

In PD5 the reader only hears the characters' voices and can only see the characters' direct situation. The story is told in the form of a **stream of conciousness**. The narrator's voice has disappeared and the reader only sees a tight close up of the characters. This is essentially a subjective view.

The risk now is that that the reader may not get a sufficient view of the big picture that they may never understand what's going on. This extreme narrative distance also limits the writer's scope for moving between different characters and their different consciousnesses.

PD5 often uses sentence fragments and disrupted punctuation. Stream of consciousness, chains of association and repetition also occur frequently. Characters often interrogate their selves, and mentally wrestles with their selves, often showing frustration and passion as well as self-calming, emotional flashbacks and doom-filled future predictions as well as directly addressing other characters(?).

Emma Darwin gives some real-world examples of writers working (very probably unconsciously) **with different levels of psychic distance, click here** and an exploration of **the advantages of the far-out distances**.

The point is *not* that one narrative distance is better than the other. Nor should you limit yourself to one particular narrative distance. Just as it adds interest to have a changing rhythm of action and reflection, so it increases reader engagement to have a variation in intimacy and distance.

Moving between levels of psychic distance

> It was the winter of the year 1853. Temperatures had remained below zero for many weeks and, for the first time in living memory, the Thames had frozen over. Few ventured forth unless their business was urgent.
> One such man was Henry J Warburton. In a wind-swept back street in Pimlico he stepped out o a doorway, pulling up his coat collar and shivering. How I hate this damn snow, he thought, as the icy flakes stabbed the exposed skin of his cheeks.
> God, how he hated it. Hated the way it slid under his collar, down inside his shoes, freezing and plugging up his miserable soul. Come on, man, brace yourself and move.

In general, you don't want to stay too long at any PD level, you need to move between the levels, according to what you are trying to achieve at that particular point in the story. For example:

PD1 is good for back story, scene setting.
PD5 does not tell us much about scene or setting or even tell us who the character is but tells us a lot about what the character is feeling. It increases the intensity of the moment.

Extreme shifts of PD level can introduce to much of a jolt to the reader, so generally you want to side smoothly across the spectrum. If you do this effectively, then uou don't need, in PD4-5, to put a character's thoughts in italics because the PD transition itself will carry the reader with you. Similarly you do not need attribution tags, as they belong to the narrator and simply get in the way.

Examples

The following 3rd person POV examplesStarts in the middle of the spectrum (PD3). And then still in 3rd person and still in past tense we move to the characters voice (PD4) and then we move inside the child's head (PD5) with the phrase: Noise of the boys, term, vacation. Finally we return to the narrator at PD3.

> It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended. He felt small and weak. When would he be like the fellows in poetry and rhetoric? They had big voices and big boots and they studied trigonometry. That was very far away. First came the vacation and then the next term and again the vacation. It was like a train going in and out pf tunnels and that was like the noise of the boys eating in the refectory when you opened and closed the flaps of your ears. Term vacation; tunnel, out; noise, stop. How far away it was! It was better to go to bed than sleep. Only prayers in the chapel and then bed. He shivered and yawned.

> James Joyce – A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

In this first person example we start with narration and no emotion. So PD1. Then we move to internal thoughts in the past tense - so the narrator is standing in the future, looking back in the past.   So the narrator is fairly certain about the events. But if the narrator was closer and more unsure about the events, then it would be in present tense. This is quite restrained.

> Ed the Barber put a comb in my long hair. He lifted it experimentally, making snipping sounds with his scissors. The snipping was only a kind of mental barbering, a limbering up. This gave me time for second thoughts. What was I

doing? What if Dr Luce was right? What if that girl in the mirror really *was* me. How did I think I could defect to the other side so easily? What did I know about boys, about men? I didn't even like them that much.

Jeffrey Eugenides - Middlesex

In this more extreme example (which uses an unreliable narrator) we start calmly and the prose is informing use. Then she explains what she said to him and what she is feeling. That then triggers the trauma, and she goes into the rant, and she is enraged, all the emotion spills out, then the shutter's come down and she say's Let Lyle deal with it. (This character has repressed rage because of past events).

I ended up making Lyle handle all the arrangements. I told him I couldn't get through to the right person, was overwhelmed by it all, but the truth was I just didn't want to. I don't have the stamina: press numbers, wait on hold, talk, wait on hold, then be real nice to some pissed-off woman with three kids and annual resolutions to go back to college, some woman just wiggling with her the hope you'll give her an excuse to pull the plug on you. She's a bitch alright, but you can't call her that or all of a sudden there you are, chutes-and-laddered back to the beginning. And that's supposed to make you nicer when you phone back. let Lyle deal with it.

Gillian Flyn – Dark Places

Since it more difficult to cover the full range of PD levels in First person present than third person POV you need a good reason to use the First person POV, present tense - eg a character with amnesia, or in the voice of a young child…

Here the story comes from a young child, and the author has the difficulty of describing the action and reaction at the same time.

At the beginning we are in PD1, as Stella is described, but then we see PD3, then pd5

Stella pulls my hand again and she says, 'You must want to play with something, Jesika. What about the sand? You loved the stand last week', and her voice is squeaky happy but her eyes are zapping like Mummy's so maybe she's cross that I tried to hit Mummy too and I think if she is cross why is her voice not cross? How can you do cross eyes and a squeaky-happy voice at the same time? And she's smiling and zapping and zapping and smiling and I don't *like* it and I can feel my heart thumping and thumping and I pull back my hand but still holds my hand tight and she's pulling and pulling and I want my Mummy, I want my Mummy…
hand-stuck-let-go-not-Mummy-scared-LET-GO-BITE!
Oh!

Amanda Berriman

NB - reading aloud helps you identify the PD levels, and this is definitely the case in the above example.

What happens if you need to swap POV within a scene? In general you should avoid this, unless there is a good reason for it.

If you have 2 chars in a scene and you need to show both interiors you could
- (a) show the scene twice using a different POV in each instance or
- (b) show the scene once and then have the second char reflect on it in the next scene.

In the following single scene

We start outside Andy Pandy
- Then we move into Andy Pandy
- Then we move back to the narrator
- Then we move to nanny's point of view

How does Emma get away with this?   If you are moving POV you must be close to each POV and the POVs must be noticeably different, so that the reader knows where they are at any one point.

> Andy Pandy looked at the bears with an indulgent eye. He didn't like seeing the bears all growly and cross, but he did like seeing them when they were all jolly and he could play with them. He jumped down into the pitm oblivious to Nanny Jill's cries. She, by contrast, didn't trust the bears an inch. They were dirty, and greedy, and not at all the kind of playmates a nicely brought up boy-doll should have, and if Mrs Pandy ever asked her about it, that's what she would say.
>
> Emma Darwin - http://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting

As Emma Darwin says (http://emmadarwin.typepad.com/thisitchofwriting)

> Understanding psychic distance is also **the key to working with a moving point of view.** Even if you limit your narrative to a single point of view, how far inside your character's head you take the reader will vary. But if your third-person narrative moves between several points-of-view within a chapter, say, then you have to start coping with the transitions. Many beginner writers are guilty of "head-hopping", which is switching points-of-view too often and too abruptly. But it's not necessarily that the transitions happen too often (though it may be, and some teachers and editors are very doctrinaire about it), but that you haven't handled them properly. Handle them properly, and you'll find that said teachers and editors may not even notice, let

alone disapprove. If you want to know more, have a look at my post on **Moving Point of View**, which is part of the big series on **Narrators and Point of View**, and a specific post listing **ten ways to move point-of-view**, and the pros and cons of each.

It's also helpful to bear in mind that jumping straight from, say, PD1 to PD5, may risk leaving the reader behind. If you wrote: *It was winter of the year 1853. A large man stepped out of a doorway. Snow. Under your collar, down inside your shoes, freezing and plugging up your miserable soul,* there'd be nothing to tell the reader that the man we were shown stepping from a doorway is the same as this person with snow down his (her?) neck. Competent readers will make the assumption, but everything they read till their assumption is confirmed is, as it were, provisional, and means they can't be so involved with the story. Other readers, not feeling secure in the world of the story and the line of the narrative, may give up.

So be aware of this need to take the reader with you: either work your way by stages from, say, PD1 to PD3 to PD5, or make sure you give the reader some handholds, so that you keep them with you at all times. It might only need you to do something like: *...A large man stepped out of a doorway. Snow, he thought. Under your collar, down inside your shoes...*

The takeaway idea, if you like, is that **different voices - the narrator's and the characters' - combine to make the narrative, interpenetrating each other to different degrees depending on the writer's decision about the best psychic distance for that moment in the story.**

Examples

PD1 – large psychic distance

Internal Narrator:

My name, in those days, was Susan Trinder. People called me Sue. I know the year I was born in, but for many years I did not know the date and took my birthday at Christmas. I believe I am an orphan. My mother I know is dead. But I never saw her, she was nothing to me. I was Mrs Sucksby's child, if I was anyone's, and for father I had Mr Ibbs, who kept the locksmith's shop, at Lant Street, in the Borough, near to the Thames.

Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith*, (London: Virago, 2003) p.3

External Narrator:

The gardens of Lambourne House ran down to the north bank of the River Cam. The previous owner, Mr Whichcote's great-uncle, had built the elegant pavilion there; its tall windows had a fine prospect over the water, with Jesus Green and Midsummer Common beyond. On the ground floor was a loggia where one could sit and take the air on fine afternoons. The pavilion seemed far removed from the bustle of Cambridge, though in fact Mr Essex's Great Bridge into the town was only a few

hundred yards away in one direction, and the gaol in the castle gatehouse a few hundred yards in another.

Andrew Taylor, *The Anatomy of Ghosts* (London: Penguin, 2011) p.75

PD5 – close psychic distance

Internal Narrator:

Lying awake from midnight until half past three and then going out in the moonlight with a bottle of gin to try and get another Rumpler [German plane]. Waiting with the mechanics till the first streaks of light showed down on the horizon, watching the Handley Pages coming back from some night raid. Like great cathedrals, two Rolls Eagles, seven hundred and fifty horsepower and four men in them. The heavy dew upon my flying boots, the gin in my mouth. Contact, and the men swinging on the prop, the swish and crackle, the spitting back, the blipping till she warmed [...] The ground fire, much worse than before. Machine guns everywhere, all spitting flame at me. God this is bad. Must, must keep low. They hit, several times, but not me.

Nevil Shute, *The Rainbow and the Rose*, (London: Heinemann, 1958) p.101-2

External Narrator:

Thinking no harm, for the family would not come, never again, some said, and the house would be sold at Michaelmas perhaps, Mrs. McNab stooped and picked a bunch of flowers to take home with her [...] There it had stood all these years without a soul in it. The books and things were mouldy for, what with the war and help being hard to get, the house had not been cleaned as she could have wished. It was beyond one person's strength to get it straight now [...] This had been the nursery. Why it was all damp in here; the plaster was falling. Whatever did they want to hang a beast's skull there for? gone mouldy too. And rats in all the attics. The rain came in. But they never sent; never came. Some of the locks had gone, so the doors banged. She didn't like to be up here at dusk alone neither. It was too much for one woman, too much, too much.

Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse* (1927) (London: Penguin 1992) p.147-9

Have you noticed the relative publication dates of my examples? I didn't choose them for that, but they demolish the idea that stepping back to narrate from a distance is automatically "old-fashioned", and it's automatically "modern" to get close in. Good writers have *always* done both, giving the text energy and dynamism by mixing things up and moving to and fro. Good writers know, too, that far-out *may* well mean Telling in a good way, and far-in may well mean Showing (same link!) also in a good way, but that it's not nearly as simple as that. And here are some of my favourite examples of how gloriously un-simple it can be:

FAR-OUT TO CLOSE-IN and other mixtures

External Narrator:

New Year 1529: Stephen Gardiner is in Rome, issuing certain threats to Pope Clement, on the king's behalf; the content of the threats has not been divulged to the cardinal. Clement is easily panicked at the best of times, and it is not surprising that, with Master Stephen breathing sulphur in his ear, he falls ill. They are saying that he is likely to die, and the cardinal's agents are around and about in Europe, taking soundings and counting heads, chinking their purses cheerfully. There would be a swift solution to the king's problem, if Wolsey were Pope. He grumbles a little about his possible eminence; the cardinal loves his country, its May garlands, its tender birdsong. In his nightmares he sees squat spitting Italians, a forest of nooses, a corpse-strewn plain.

Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall* (2009) (London: Fourth Estate) p.142

Internal Narrator:

Glasgow Empire. Prince's, Edinburgh. Royalty, Perth. Freeze off a girls' bum, the winters up there. Somebody threw a grouse on stage, once, as a gesture of appreciation. Not even a pair. That was in Aberdeen. Tight as arseholes, in Aberdeen.

We pounded the boards like nobody's business because, by that time, Perry had lost all his moolah in the Wall Street crash, every red cent, and couldn't keep up his contributions anymore, so it was just as well we girls could earn our living because after that we had to.

When he came to say goodbye, it was by tram. Lo, how the mighty have fallen. No cab softly ticking away on the kerb, this time ... Not that we cared. We only thought how much we'd miss him. We sat on the arms of his chair, one on each side, and watched him eat his buttered crumpets, too down at heart to eat anything ourselves.

Angela Carter, *Wise Children* (1991) (London: Chatto & Windus) p.94

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Active and Passive Voice

(From Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voice_(grammar)):

In grammar, the **voice** of a verb describes the relationship between the action (or state) that the verb expresses and the participants identified by its arguments (subject, object, etc.). When the subject is the agent or doer of the action, the verb is in the active voice. When the subject is the patient, target or undergoer of the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice.[1][2][3] When the subject both performs and receives the action expressed by the verb, the verb is in the middle voice. VoiErickce is sometimes called **diathesis**.[4]

The following pair of examples illustrates the contrast between active and passive voice in English. In sentence (1), the verbform *ate* is in the active voice, but in sentence (2), the verbform *was eaten* is in the passive voice. Independent of voice, *the cat* is the Agent (the doer) of the action of eating in both sentences.

(1) *The cat ate the mouse.*

(2) *The mouse was eaten by the cat.*

In a transformation from an active-voice clause to an equivalent passive-voice construction, the subject and the direct object switch grammatical roles. The direct object gets *promoted* to subject, and the subject *demoted* to an (optional) adjunct. In the first example above, *the mouse* serves as the direct object in the active-voice version, but becomes the subject in the passive version. The subject of the active-voice version, *the cat*, becomes part of a prepositional phrase in the passive version of the sentence, and can be left out entirely.

The casserole was cooked in the oven (Passive Voice)

The casserole cooked in the oven (Middle Voice)

The casserole was cooked in the oven by Lucy

'Most contemporary writers use the active voice as much as possible because it livens up their prose. Passive-voice verbs often make a passage hard to understand and remember. In addition, writers sometimes use the passive voice to avoid taking responsibility for what they have written. A government official who admits that 'mistakes were made' skirts the pressing questions: made by whom? However, the passive voice can work to good advantage in some situations. Journalists often use the passive voice to protect the confidentiality of their sources, as in the phrase it is reported that. The passive voice is also appropriate when the performer of an action is unknown or less important than the recipient." --The St. Martin's Handbook, page 608.

From Grammarly:

In general, the active voice makes your writing stronger, more direct, and, you guessed it, more active. The subject is something, or it does the action of the verb in the sentence. With the passive voice, the subject is acted upon by some other performer of the verb. (In case you weren't paying attention, the previous two sentences use the type of voice they describe.)

But the passive voice is not incorrect. In fact, there are times when it can come in handy. Read on to learn how to form the active and passive voices, when using the passive voice is a good idea, and how to avoid confusing it with similar forms.

The difference between active and passive voice

While tense is all about time references, voice describes whether the grammatical subject of a clause performs or receives the action of the verb. Here's the formula for the active voice: [subject]+[verb (performed by the subject)]+[optional object]

> *Chester kicked the ball.*

In a passive voice construction, the grammatical subject of the clause receives the action of the verb. So, the ball from the above sentence, which is receiving the action, becomes the subject. The formula: [subject]+[some form of the verb to be]+[past participle of a transitive verb]+[optional prepositional phrase]

> *The ball was kicked by Chester.*

That last little bit—"by Chester"—is a prepositional phrase that tells you who the performer of the action is. But even though Chester is the one doing the kicking, he's no longer the grammatical subject. A passive voice construction can even drop him from the sentence entirely:

> *The ball was kicked.*

How's that for anticlimactic?

When (and when not) to use the passive voice

If you're writing anything with a definitive subject who's performing an action, you'll be better off using the active voice. And if you search your document for instances of was, is, or were and your page lights up with instances of passive voice, it may be a good idea to switch to active voice.

That said, there are times when the passive voice does a better job of presenting an idea, especially in certain formal, professional, and legal discussions. Here are three common uses of the passive voice:

Reports of crimes or incidents with unknown perpetrators

> *My car was stolen yesterday.*

If you knew who stole the car, it probably wouldn't be as big a problem. The passive voice emphasizes the stolen item and the action of theft.

Scientific contexts

> The rat was placed into a T-shaped maze.

Who places the rat into the maze? Scientists, duh. But that's less important than the experiment they're conducting. Therefore, passive voice.

When you want to emphasize an action itself and the doer of the action is irrelevant or distracting

> *The president was sworn in on a cold January morning.*

How many people can remember off the top of their heads who swears in presidents? Clearly the occasion of swearing in the commander in chief is the thing to emphasize here. In each of the above contexts, the action itself—or the person or thing receiving the action—is the part that matters. That means the performer of the action can appear in a prepositional phrase or be absent from the sentence altogether.

Creative ways to use the passive voice in writing

The above examples show some formal uses of the passive voice, but some writers take advantage of the shift in emphasis it provides for other reasons. Here are moments when the passive voice is a stylistic decision that suits the author's writing goals. 1 Avoid getting blamed There are times when you want to get away with something without making it crystal-clear who's at fault. The classic example:

> *"Mistakes were made." —most politicians*

Who made them? Is anyone taking responsibility? What's the solution here? One political scientist dubbed this structure the "past exonerative" because it's meant to exonerate a speaker from whatever foul they may have committed. In other words, drop the subject, get off the hook.

> *Beat around the bush*

Jane Austen is a master of poking fun at her characters so euphemistically that it seems almost polite, and the passive voice is one of her favourite methods for doing that.

> *"[He] pressed them so cordially to dine at Barton Park every day till they were better settled at home that, though his entreaties were carried to a point of perseverance beyond civility, they could not give offense." —Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility*

Austen could have rephrased this sentence like so:

> *"Though Mr. Middleton carried his entreaties to a point of perseverance beyond civility, they could not give offense."*

Though maybe she means something closer to:

> *"Mr. Middleton pushed his invitations beyond the point of politeness and into pushiness, but he still meant well."*

In cases like this, the passive voice allows for more polite phrasing, even if it's also a little less clear.

Make your reader pay more attention to the something

This is like the president getting sworn in: the thing that gets the action of the verb is more important than the people performing the action.

> *"That treasure lying in its bed of coral, and the corpse of the commander floating sideways on the bridge, were evoked by historians as an of the city drowned in memories." —Gabriel García Márquez, Love in the Time of Cholera*

Here, you could invert the sentence to say "Historians evoked that *emblem* treasure (and so on)." But that would take the focus away from that oh-so-intriguing treasure and the corpse. And since the historians are less important here, the author makes the choice to stress the key idea of the sentence through the passive voice.

Here's another famous example that puts the emphasis on what happens to the subject, instead of on what the subject is doing:

> *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." —The Declaration of Independence, 1776*

"All men" (and these days, women, too) get boosted to the front of the phrase because their equality and rights are the focus. It makes sense that a statement declaring independence would focus on the people who get that independence, after all.

So writers use it. Can you?

The above examples lean toward the literary side of things, but don't forget that there are times when the passive voice is useful and necessary in daily life. In each of the sentences below, the passive voice is natural and clear. Rewriting these sentences in the active voice renders them sterile, awkward, or syntactically contorted. Passive: Bob Dylan was injured in a motorcycle accident. Active: A motorcycle accident injured Bob Dylan. Passive: Elvis is rumored to be alive. Active: People rumor Elvis to be alive. Passive: Don't be fooled! Active: Don't allow anything to fool you!

Passive voice misuse

Sometimes what looks like passive voice isn't passive voice at all. If you're not careful, even the most careful eye can mistake the following sentences for passive voice.

> *Chester's favorite activity is kicking. The bank robbery took place just before closing time. There is n*othing we can do about it. There were a great number of dead leaves covering the ground.

Despite what any well-meaning English teachers may have told you, none of the sentences above are written in the passive voice. The sentence about the leaves, in fact, was (wrongly) presented as an example of the passive voice by none other than Strunk and White in The Elements of Style. Here's how to remember: using the verb to be doesn't automatically put a

verb phrase into the passive voice. You also need a past participle. That's how to keep passive voice masqueraders from fooling you.

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Ken Kesey, Sometimes a Great Notion – 4 pov.
https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/multiple-pov

Which tense—past or present?

Present tense narrative—just a current fad?

> *"The storyteller, in film or novel, should take charge of the story and not feel shifty about it. Put the camera in the place from which it can see the action most clearly. Make a decision about where that place is. Put it on something steady to stop that incessant jiggling about. Say what happened, and let the reader know when it happened and what caused it and what the consequences were, and tell me where the characters were and who else was present – and while you're at it, I'd like to know what they looked like and whether it was raining."* Philip Pullman

> http://www.theguardian.com/global/2010/sep/18/philip-pullman-author-present-tense

> *"[The present tense] is humble and realistic – the author is not claiming superior knowledge – she is inside or very close by her character, and sharing their focus, their limited perceptions. It doesn't suit authors who want to boss the reader around and like being God."* Hilary Mantel.

> http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/21/rise-of-the-present-tense-in-fiction-hilary-mantel?CMP=share_btn_tw

(from http://booksbywomen.org/writing-advice-past-tense-present-tense)

The simplest way to say something is often the best way.

(adapted from an article by Karen Reiser, suite101.com website)

Progressive tense verbs

Is something wrong with the following sentences?

> 'Jill was running through the park.'
> 'Alex was opening the door.'
> 'Diane is asking for help with her homework.'

The sentences above are grammatically sound, so in that sense, there's nothing wrong with them. You will recognize the verb form as the progressive tense, formed by combining the verb "to be" with the present participle form (verb plus -ing). This verb tense shows the subject of the sentence engaged in continuous action. So what's the problem? Some writers use progressive tense when simple past or present tense would be more appropriate, and when they do this, the action in their sentence takes a secondary role to the linking verb.

Simple past or present tense verbs

Compare the sentences above to the following:

> 'Jill ran through the park.'

'Alex opened the door.'
'Diane asks for help with her homework.'

See the difference? It's subtle, but there's definitely a difference. These simple past and present tense verbs tighten up the sentence, improving the pace for the reader and the rhythm of the prose. These verbs also have more impact than their progressive tense counterparts.

The next time you consider using progressive tense in your writing, make sure you have a reason to use it. If not, use simple past or present tense verbs instead. It will strengthen your verbs by letting them stand alone without a linking verb, and more importantly, it will improve the rhythm of your sentences.

Read more at Suite101: Progressive Versus Simple Tense: The Simplest Way to Say Something is Often The Best Way

http://www.suite101.com/content/progressive-versus-simple-tense-a22953#ixzz1E2m5HYq0

Advantages of present tense

- Immediacy
- Realism in time
- Disorientation
- simplifies handling tenses

Disadvantages of present tense

- Less scope for varying pace
- Narrow focus
- Includes trivia
- Difficult to include flashbacks/exposition

Advantages of past tense

- Manipulating time
- Flexibility of pace
- Suspense
- Control of backstory
- Wider context

Disadvantages of past tense

- Lack of tension
- Loss of pace
- More complex to use
- Tendency to be dull

Use of the present tense

In narratives using present tense, the events of the plot are depicted as occurring in the narrator's current moment of time. A recent example of novels narrated in the present tense are those of the Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins. Present tense can also be used to narrate events in the reader's past. This is known as "historical present". This tense is more common in spontaneous conversational narratives than in written literature, though it is sometimes used in literature to give a sense of immediacy of the actions.

(from https://thewritepractice.com/past-tense-vs-present-tense/)

Advantages of the present tense

1. Present Tense Feels Like a Movie

   One reason authors have used present tense more often in the last century is that it feels most film-like.

   Perhaps writers think they can get their book adapted into a movie easier if they use present tense, or perhaps they just want to mimic the action and suspense found in film, but whether film is the inspiration or the goal, its increasing use owes much to film.

   John Updike himself credits film for his use of present tense, as he said in his interview with the Paris Review: *Rabbit, Run* was subtitled originally, 'A Movie.' The present tense was in part meant to be an equivalent of the cinematic mode of narration…. This doesn't mean, though, that I really wanted to write for the movies. It meant I wanted to make a movie. I could come closer by writing it in my own book than by attempting to get through to Hollywood.

   Christopher Bram, author of *Father of Frankenstein*, says much the same, "I realized I was using it because it's the tense of screenplays."

2. Present Tense Intensifies the Emotions

   Present tense gives the reader a feeling like, "We are all in this together." Since the reader knows only as much as the narrator does, it can draw the reader more deeply into the suspense of the story, heightening the emotion.

3. Present Tense Works Well With Deep Point of View

   Deep point of view, or deep POV, is a style of narrative popular right now in which the third person point of view is deeply embedded into the consciousness of the character. Deep POV is like first person narrative, and has a similar level of closeness, but it's written in third person. By some accounts, deep POV accounts for fifty percent of adult novels and seventy percent of YA novels.

   Present tense pairs especially well with a deep point of view because both serve to bring the narrative *closer* to the reader.

4. Present Tense Works Best In Short-Time-Frame Stories With Constant Action

Present tense works well in stories told in a very short time frame—twenty-four hours, for example—because everything is told in real time, and it's difficult to make too many transitions and jumps in time.

5. Present Tense Lends Itself Well To Unreliable Narrators

    Since the narrative is so close to the action in present tense stories, it lends well to unreliable narrators. An unreliable narrator is a narrator who tells a story incorrectly or leaves out key details. It's a fun technique because the reader naturally develops a closeness with the narrator, so when you find out they're secretly a monster, for example, it creates a big dramatic reversal.

    Since present tense draws you even closer to the narrator, it makes that reversal even more dramatic.

Drawbacks of Present Tense

As useful as present tense can be in the right situation, there are reasons to avoid it. Here are five reasons to choose past tense over present tense:

1. Some Readers Hate Present Tense

    The main reason to avoid present tense, in my opinion, is that some people *hate* it. Philip Pullman, the bestselling author of the *Golden Compass* series, says:

    What I dislike about the present-tense narrative is its limited range of expressiveness. I feel claustrophobic, always pressed up against the immediate.

    Writer beware: right or wrong, if you write in present tense, some people will throw your book down in disgust. Past tense is a much safer choice.

2. Present Tense Less Flexible, Time Shifts Can Be Awkward

    The disadvantage of present tense is that since you're so focused on into events as they happen, it can be hard to disengage from the ever-pressing moment and shift to events in the future or past.

    Pullman continues: I want all the young present-tense storytellers (the old ones have won prizes and are incorrigible) to allow themselves to stand back and show me a wider temporal perspective. I want them to feel able to say what happened, what usually happened, what sometimes happened, what had happened before something else happened, what might happen later, what actually did happen later, and so on: to use the full range of English tenses.

    Since you're locked into the present, you're limited in your ability to move through time freely. For more flexibility when it comes to navigating time, choose past tense.

3. Present Tense Harder to Pull Off

Since present tense is so much less flexible that past tense, it's much more difficult to use it well. As Editorial Ass. says:

Let me say that present tense is not a reason I categorically reject a novel submission. But it often becomes a contributing reason, because successful present tense novel writing is much, much more difficult to execute than past tense novel writing. Most writers, no matter how good they are, are not quite up to the task.

Elibeth McCraken continues this theme:

I think a lot of writers choose the present tense as a form of cowardice. They think the present tense is really entirely about the present moment, as though the past and future do not actually exist. But a good present tense is really about texture, not time, and should be as rich and complicated and full of possibilities as the past tense. They too often choose the present tense because they think they can avoid thinking about time, when really it's all about time.

4. No or Little Narration

While present tense does indeed mimic film, that can be more of a disadvantage than an advantage. Writers have many more narrative tricks available to them than filmmakers. Writers can enter the heads of their characters, jump freely through time, speak directly to the reader, and more. However, present tense removes many of those options out of your bag of tricks. As Emma Darwin says:he thing is, though, that film can't narrate: it can only build narrative by a sequence of in-the-present images of action.
To get the widest range of options in your narrative, use past tense.

5. Present Tense Is More Limited

As Writer's Digest says, with present tense you only have access to four verb tenses, simple present, present progressing, simple future, and occasionally simple past. However, with past tense, you have access to all twelve verb tenses English contains.

In other words, you limit yourself to one-third of your choices if you use present tense.

Writing Dialogue

Dialogue is part of the action of the piece rather than merely being a passive filler. It adds pace, energy, tension and drama. It should reveal, conceal, surprise, anger, excite, mystify, and captivate. Dialogue should move the plot forward and enhance the readers understanding of the characters. Poor dialogue on the other hand impedes the progress of the story and obscures the nature of the characters.

Whenever a character speaks, they are trying to get a point across, to establish, enforce or cement their place in the character. The characters want to communicate and the reader needs to hear and understand this communication so that they understood the characters motives, desires and objectives. Dialogue therefore has multiple layers of meaning: the characters are communicating with each other, and the author is communicating with the reader.

Good dialogue engages the reader. Conversation between characters brings stories to life. Dialogue breaks up blocks of text and allows writers to change the pace of their narrative. Well-written dialogue informs readers about the character of the people speaking it.

Dialogue can

- Advance the plot, moves the story forward, showing without telling
- break up the narrative summary
- illuminate and differentiate characters (through dialect and word choice)
- creates atmosphere
- moves the story forward, showing without telling.

The ability of readers of fiction to hear a character's thoughts directly is one of the huge advantages that novels have over films. You can't hear what's going on inside a movie character's head (unless of course the film uses an overlaid narrative voice). You can't hear a person's thoughts in real life, either – unless of course they voice them out loud. But even then, you don't know if they're being altogether truthful. Body language, facial expression, actions also help an observer speculate what a character is thinking, but the only time we get to hear another person's thoughts word for word is when we read interior monologue in fiction.

Good dialogue is an exchange between characters that adds to the reader's enjoyment, tells them something about the characters and in some way progresses the narrative. Good dialogue drives a plot, but it also allows readers to connect emotionally with the characters speaking it, which deepens their understanding and enjoyment of the fictional world you have created for them. Similar to the way we get to know people by talking to them, readers get to know characters by engaging with their dialogue. Knowing how to write dialogue in a story is a way for you, the writer, to show readers who your characters are without telling them through lengthy blocks of description.

Bad dialogue is clunky, unrealistic and used by the author as a vehicle for info dumping:

> *'Hello Arthur, how nice it is to see you after all these years. After spending such a long time in prison, you must be pleased to be out. It was terrible how you got stitched up for a crime you didn't commit.'*

Dialogue should never be used as 'filler' content, which is why it's really useful to know how to structure dialogue in your story. Writers love writing dialogue because it's fun and it fills pages. That's all great – but if it's there as padding or for self-indulgent reasons it will detract from the forward motion of your story and readers will lose interest.

Writing dialogue is about giving an impression of real life conversations, not about directly replicating it. Real life has 'um', 'er' etc, incomplete sentences, jumps between topics randomly, is broken up by irrelevant interrupts, participants speak over one another etc. These are only needed in dialogue in creative writing under specific circumstances – in general they distract.

Contrast those with the dialogue between Tom and his Aunt Polly in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain.

> *"There! I mighta thought of that closet. What you been doing in there?"*
>
> *"Nothing."*
>
> *"Nothing! Look at your hands. And look at your mouth. What IS that truck?"*
>
> *"I don't know, aunt."*
>
> *"Well, I know. It's jam—that's what it is. Forty times I've said if you didn't let that jam alone, I'd skin you. Hand me that switch."*
>
> *The switch hovered in the air—the peril was desperate—*
>
> *"My! Look behind you, aunt!"*
>
> *The old lady whirled round and snatched her skirts out of danger. The lad fled on the instant, scrambled up the high board fence, and disappeared over it.*

Such dialogue sets the tone for the entire story and clearly differentiates characters.

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Twain delineates between the Southern white boy and Jim, the runaway slave, by hinting at their respective accents. Twain doesn't need to tell who's speaking, yet the reader never confuses the two.

> *"Jim, did y'all ever see a king?"*
>
> *Y'all is the only word in that sentence that implies a Southern accent, but it's enough.*
>
> *"I sho enough did."*
>
> *"You liar, Jim. You never seen no king."*
>
> "I seen foh kings in a deck of cards."
>
> Huck's grammar and Jim's sho and foh are the only hints of their dialects.

Too much phonetic spelling would have slowed the reading.

Good dialogue can condense a character's backstory:

> *A woman in a restaurant whispers to her lunchmate, "You know who that is over there, don't you?"*
>
> *The other says, "No, who?"*
>
> *"That's just it. She's had so much work done, you don't recognize her. That's Betty Lou Herman."*
>
> *"No."*
>
> *"Yeah, she's had her nose done, her cheeks lifted, and a hair transplant."*
>
> *"Why?"*
>
> *"She's going into politics."*
>
> *"Seriously, that's really her?"*

In that brief exchange, backstory is layered in, showing where there would otherwise have been too much narrative summary in the form of telling.

Allow readers to experience the enjoyment of having a story naturally emerge rather than spelling out every detail.

Instead of writing clunky dialogue like this:

> *"Just because you're in this hospital because you were nearly killed in that wreck when Bill was driving, doesn't mean you shouldn't forgive him."*

Try this:

> *"What are you going to do about Bill? He feels terrible."*
>
> *"He ought to."*
>
> *"Well, has he visited?"*
>
> *"He wouldn't dare."*

What actually happened, and why, can emerge in further realistic dialogue as the story progresses. If you were walking past a hospital room and heard this conversation, they wouldn't be spelling the whole thing out like the first example did. In a normal conversation between two characters — not there only to dump information on the reader — you'd have to deduce what's going on.

Consider this exchange from Matthew Quick's novel The Silver Linings Playbook (2008):

> Sitting on the couch with my mother, I ask her, "When were Caitlin and Jake married?"
>
> My mother looks at me strangely. She doesn't want to mention the date.
>
> "I know it happened when I was in the bad place, and I also know that I was in the bad place for years. I've accepted that much."
>
> "Are you sure you really want to know the date?"
>
> "I can handle it, Mom."
>
> She looks at me for a second, trying to decide what to do, and then says, "The summer of 2004. August seventh. They've been married for just over two years now."
>
> "Who paid for the wedding photos?"
>
> My mother laughs. "Are you kidding me? Your father and I never could have afforded that fancy sort of wedding album. Caitlin's parents were very generous, putting together the album for us and allowing us to blow up whatever photos we wanted and–"
>
> "Did they give you the negatives?"
>
> "Why would they give us–"
>
> She must see the look on my face, because Mom stops speaking immediately.
>
> "Then how did you replace the photos after that burglar came and stole all the framed photos in the house?"

In less than a page of dialogue, Quick has conveyed a substantial amount of information to both his readers and his main character, Pat. Dialogue here gives backstory, as Pat's mother fills him in on important family events he missed while he was in a psychiatric hospital. This information could have just as easily been conveyed to the reader in a prose paragraph. However, through his skilled use of dialogue, Quick has created a point of tension between his characters as Pat catches his mother out in a lie. The ways in which mother and son deal with this drama are also revealing of their characters, temperaments, and motivations.

Now read the following passage from Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847), a conversation that takes place between a young Jane and Mr Brocklehurst, the supervisor of the boarding school which she is about to attend:

> "No sight so sad as that of
>
> a naughty child," he began, "especially a naughty little girl. Do you know where the wicked go after death?"

"They go to hell," was my ready and orthodox answer.

"And what is hell? Can you tell me that?"

"A pit full of fire."

"And should you like to fall into that pit, and to be burning there for ever?"

"No, sir."

"What must you do to avoid it?"

I deliberated a moment: my answer, when it did come, was objectionable: "I must keep in good health and not die."

Jane's "objectionable" answer provides a moment of comic relief and is revealing of her precocious and defiant nature as a child. This conversation with Mr Brocklehurst is, however, ominously foreboding of Jane's education at Lowood School. The supervisor's conviction that children are inherently wicked foreshadows the treatment

Jane will receive at the school, and her unintentionally contrary answer to his question reveals that she will have a difficult time there.

In these examples, we have two very different authors, writing very different stories more than 160 years apart from one another. Both, however, have used dialogue to great effect, not just to move the story along, but to reveal their characters and create tension, tone, anticipation and suspense within their plots.

The character's natural speaking voice

In a first person novel, you hear the leading character's natural speaking voice directly. In third person, you only hear it directly in dialogue or monologue rendered in the first person.

For the rest of the time, you hear the narrator's voice, which is less subjective, less colourful, less colloquial than the character's direct voice.

The third person narrator's neutral voice begins to approximate the character's natural speaking voice when the camera moves behind their eyes, so to speak, and the scene "warms up."

During the "cooler" opening section of a scene, any lines of monologue are best written neutrally and factually (and should probably be "tagged," too).

Simple. In a first person novel, whether written in the past tense or present tense, interior monologue is easier still. Why? Because it happens naturally, all by itself.

The biggest challenge you face in a third person novel is making it clear that the words are indeed the character's thoughts, and not the narrator's words.

That is why, when the viewpoint character is being viewed from a distance, you might use a "thought" tag to make it clear that these words are indeed the character thinking, and only drop using tags once the camera has moved behind the character's eyes, so to speak.

But in a first person novel, the camera is always behind the character's eyes, and so it's obvious when we hear their direct thoughts.

Verbatim real speech makes poor dialogue

Written dialogue is not simply a transcript of real-life speech. Everyday speech will often ramble aimlessly, breaking off, restarting on a different subject, is full of stops and startd and contains um and err and other oddities. The natural patterns of speech do not therefore translate well to paper. Written dialogue needs to be more structured and deliberate in its delivery but still appear to the reader to be natural and fluid – too much structure runs the risk of sounding stilted or forced.

People don't always speak and write with the same rhythms: when we write letters or emails, for example, we tend to be more formal, with more complicated grammatical structures and elaborate vocabulary than we might use in conversation. The trick, then, is to find the balance between the two.

Things that appear in real conversations that should not appear in written dialogue

1. Conversational tics such as 'um', 'er', 'like', 'you know' will be annoying to the reader unless used for particular effect.
2. A lot of every day real conversation does not matter. Eg what the dog did this morning or what was on TV last night – omit this if it does not move the action on, or illuminate the characters and their relationships.
3. Accents. While accents may be key to a character's background, they can be distracting and obscure the underlying of the dialogue. If a characters words are written phonetically to reflects their accent, this can be confusing, distracting and annoying for the reader. Use a light touch when it comes to writing in dialects. On the other hand the use of the patterns of real-life banter can add to atmosphere, authenticity and realism of the dialogue

Things that appear in real conversations that should appear in written dialogue

1. Real characters use nicknames. How often do you use the full name of a lover, family member or close friend in conversation? Having your characters use nicknames when they talk to each other is a great way to establish the closeness of their relationship. On the other hand, using full names can demonstrate a character's uncertainty, awkwardness, anger or frustration. (You always know you're in trouble when your mom calls you by your full name...)
2. In real life we rarely say exactly what we are feeling. Consequently, if in fiction, a character baldly says how they are feeling, then this is unrealistic and stilted and

will lose a readers attention. A character's emotions should be revealed more subtly through their actions and thoughts.
3. In real life, people interact with non-verbal cues and gestures. Similarly in written dialogue, there is a place for the characters respond with gestures (eg a nod or a shrug, the raising of an eyebrow etc). Provided this is not overdone, it will add realism to the writing.
4. In real life we don't always speak grammatically. We don't always stick to the strict 'subject-verb-object' structure of a grammatically Although dialogue needs to be clear and make sense, there is some room to play with the rules of grammar when your characters are in conversation.
5. In real life, interruptions add tension or excitement in an argument or passionate exchange. Similar interruptions can be used in dialogue to achieve the same results.
6. In real life, the vocabulary and grammar we choose when having a conversation depends on our social, educational and historical background. Generally we keep things simple though. In written dialogue the same principle applies. Overcomplex grammar or vocabulary will sound stilted and unnatural and is likely to the distract the reader. Different characters will use different grammar and vocabulary that reflect the nature of that character.

Illustrative dialogue

The true nature of a character (or the nature they choose to show the world) is shown their own individual voice.   Here 'showing' rather than 'telling' is the more powerful technique. Rather than just telling the reader that a character is kind and caring, this can be more powerfully shown by having the character ask thoughtful and compassionate questions of those around them. Dialogue can be uses to reveal almost anything about a character:

Age: Different generations tend to draw on different kinds of speech patterns: teenagers, for example, might be more likely to use obscure slang or speak in contracted sentences, while older generations may use antiquated or quaint idioms. Younger children, meanwhile, will be more likely to make grammatical errors.

Education: The vocabulary of your characters will depend on their educational background. A college English professor, for example, will use a very different lexicon to a character who dropped out of high school. Be very careful, however, that you don't fall back on stereotypes that will not only undermine the quality of your writing, but could potentially offend and alienate your readers.

Background: Having your character speak with an accent or in dialect will alert your reader to their background or where they grew up. If one of yourcharacters is foreign, for example, the occasional grammatical error, odd sentence construction or foreign word or phrase is an effective way to convey this. Again, however, be wary of stereotyping your characters – this is also true, and particularly problematic, of attempting to depict a character's race through accent or dialect.

Using accents and dialects is a great way to reveal a character's background and heritage. Writing accents should always be approached carefully, however. Be sure to keep a light touch and don't overdo it: the occasional, phonetically-spelled word will achieve your aim,

without becoming difficult or annoying for your reader to understand. If you have to read a sentence twice to understand, you may need to rethink your approach. Also, be sure that you've done your research and that you're accurately depicting the accent you're using. The same goes for using foreign words in your dialogue – make sure you don't overdo it, and ask a native language speaker for help rather than relying on Google translate!

Temperament

A person's true nature is never more apparent than in moments when emotions are running high. The way your characters react during moments of stress, excitement or danger is especially revealing of who they are: do they remain calm? Do they panic and make the situation worse? Do they take charge or turn to others for a solution? Are they sensible or impulsive?

Don't forget, though, that quieter moments also provide great opportunities for exploring the more natural temperament of your characters. Are they high-energy, continuously chatty and excitable? Or are they more reserved, preferring to listen than offer up their opinions? Are they domineering, steering conversations and interrupting others? Are they considerate, kind, rash, thoughtless, distant, bubbly, sarcastic, serious, vivacious, mean-spirited? Consider all these traits and how they may be exposed through what your character says, how they say it, and when they say it.

Quirks

Keep in mind that the surest way to create realistic, believable dialogue is to have your characters speak in slightly different ways. Ideally, each of your major characters should have a distinct way of speaking, or some sort of conversational quirk or tic that you can subtly weave into scenes of dialogue (although be sure not to overdo it!). These tics or quirks can include the tendency to repeat a certain word or gesture a lot, or a habit of turning statements into questions (or vice versa).

Be conscious of what these tics and gestures reveal about your character.

If they bite their lip or refuse to make eye contact, they may be nervous or hiding something.

A constant need for affirmation, expressed through a character always asking if people agree with what they're saying, can indicate a deep-seated insecurity. Someone who talks softly might be shy.

Try to vary the rhythms of your characters' speech patterns, too. For example, some characters (like 'real-life' people) could talk in short, staccato sentences, while others might ramble on for ages. Varying these speech patterns gives your characters individual voices and makes dialogue more interesting to read.

Illustrating relationships

A mother doesn't speak to her partner in the same way she speaks to her children (well, hopefully not, anyway!). A middle manager changes his demeanour when he's speaking to his boss versus giving orders to his sub-ordinates. A woman addresses a stranger on the street differently to how she would an old friend.

We all adopt different mannerisms, styles of speaking and tones depending on the situations in which we find ourselves.

Remember that there are two layers to every relationship in your novel: the general and the individual. The general relationship refers to that perceived by the outside world: father and son, husband and wife, close friends, colleagues or strangers, for example. The individual relationship refers to how that more general affiliation is unique to the pair in question. A brother and sister share a familial connection, for example, but their individual relationship with each other could be close, cordial or completely estranged. Two colleagues may like each other and develop a close, comfortable bond, or they could be rivals who are barely civil to one another.

Take these different layers of a relationship into account when you are writing dialogue. The exchanges between two characters should reflect not only their affiliation with one another, but also what they truly feel about each other.

Keep the following tips in mind when writing dialogue to reveal relationships:

- The more comfortable two characters are with one another, the more informal their speech patterns are likely to be.
- Use nicknames sometimes to demonstrate a level of familiarity between two characters.
- If a character is hesitant, clumsy or stumbles for words, it could reveal that the person they converse with is intimidating, whether it's because that person is powerful or menacing, or because they are attractive or successful.
- The use of gestures is a great shorthand for communication between characters who are close to one another. A lot can be conveyed through a look or a shrug.
- When a character is trying to impress someone, they're more likely to use elaborate words and grammatically correct sentences.
- Swearing can, when used correctly, be quite revealing of the relationship between two characters. Context is key here: a reader might expect two football players to swear during conversation on the pitch, but the same reader might be surprised if a teenager swears when they're talking to their mother.
- Silence is powerful. Once again, the power of silence depends on the context: it can be comfortable silence between two old friends, or it can be an awkward, uncomfortable silence between two lovers following an intense argument.

(from 'How to write dialogue: Module 2: Illustrative Dialogue, Bridget McNulty)

The best way to appreciate the power of illustrative dialogue is to see it in action. Below are several examples of illustrative dialogue taken from popular novels, each followed by a brief discussion of what that dialogue reveals about the novels' characters and their relationships.

Example 1: Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn

> "My mom," he starts, and sits down. "Shit. My mom has cancer. Stage four, and it's spread to the liver and bones. Which is bad, which is..."
> He puts his face in his hands, and I go over and put my arms around him. When he looks up, he is dry-eyed. Calm. I've never seen my husband cry.

"It's too much for Go, on top of my dad's Alzheimer's."

"Alzheimer's? Alzheimer's? Since when?"

"Well, a while. At first they thought it was some sort of early dementia. But it's more, it's worse." I think, immediately, that there is something wrong with us, perhaps unfixable, if my husband wouldn't think to tell me this. Sometimes I feel it's his personal game, that he's in some sort of undeclared contest for impenetrability. "Why didn't you say anything to me?"

"My dad isn't someone I like to talk about that much."

"But still –"

"Amy. Please." He has that look, like I am being unreasonable, like he is so sure that I am being unreasonable that I wonder if I am. "But now. Go says with my mom, she'll need chemo but... she'll be really, really sick. She'll need help."

"Should we start looking for in- home care for her? A nurse?"

"She doesn't have that kind of insurance."

He stares at me, arms crossed, and I know what he is daring: daring me to offer to pay, and we can't pay, because I've given my money to my parents.

"Okay, then, babe," I say. "What do you want to do?"

In this example, a lot is revealed about the state of Nick and Amy Dunne's marriage in just a few lines of dialogue: they are so disconnected from one another that Nick did not even tell his wife that his father was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Beyond the basic content of their conversation, however, is the insidious psychological abuse that Nick inflicts on his wife through the way in which he talks to her. Nick is revealed in this passage as resentful, perverse, lacking in empathy, narcissistic and taciturn. Amy, meanwhile, is depicted as downtrodden, bullied and somewhat weak-willed when it comes to dealing with her husband, but she nonetheless draws the sympathy of the reader because of Nick's treatment of her. (Of course, those who have read the novel will know that there is more to the scene than meets the eye!)

Example 2: The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

"I'll tell you something, Charlie. I feel good. You know what I mean? Really good. Like I'm free or something. Like I don't have to pretend anymore. I'm going away to college, right? It'll be different there. You know what I mean?" [Patrick said.]

"Sure," I said.

"I've been thinking all night about what kind of posters I want to put up in my dorm room. And if I'll have an exposed brick wall. I've always wanted an exposed brick wall, so I can paint it. Know what I mean?"

I just nodded this time because he didn't really wait for a "sure."

"Things'll be different there. They have to be."

"They will be," I said. "You really think so?" "Sure."

"Thanks, Charlie."

Patrick's youth is revealed in this exchange through his optimism and the short sentence structures of his speech; his repeated need for affirmation from Charlie, however, reveals that he's not just excited but also a little insecure and anxious. He needs to believe that his circumstances will improve, suggesting that he has been through an emotionally difficult time.

Charlie, meanwhile, is only too happy to appease his friend and tell him exactly what he wants to hear. This is not only revealing of Charlie's compliant nature and his need to please people, but also of the relationship between Patrick and Charlie. Charlie seems to need Patrick's approval and is not confident enough to give Patrick anything other than what he wants from their exchange.

Example 3: The Casual Vacancy by JK Rowling

> "Morning," said Howard, when Parminder approached the counter with a bottle in her hand.
> "Morning."
> Dr Jawanda rarely looked him in the eye, either at Parish Council meetings, or when they met outside the church hall. Howard was always amused by her inability to dissemble her dislike; it made him jovial, extravagantly gallant and courteous.
> "Not at work today?"
> "No," said Parminder, rummaging in her purse.
> Maureen could not contain herself.
> "Dreadful news," she said, in her hoarse, cracked voice. "About Barry Fairbrother."
> "Mm," said Parminder, but then, "What?"
> "About Barry Fairbrother," repeated Maureen.
> "What about him?" Parminder's Birmingham accent was still strong after sixteen years in Pagford. A deep vertical groove between her eyebrows gave her a perennially intense look, sometimes of crossness, sometimes of concentration.
> "He died," said Maureen, gazing hungrily into the scowling face. "Last night. Howard's just been telling me."
> Parminder remained quite still, with her hand in her purse. Then her eyes slid sideways to Howard.
> "Collapsed and died in the golf club car park," Howard said. "Miles was there, saw it happen."
> More seconds passed.
> "Is this a joke?" demanded Parminder, her voice hard and high-pitched.
> "Of course it's not a joke," said Maureen, savouring her own outrage. "Who'd make a joke like that?"
> Parminder set down the oil with a bang on the glass-topped counter and walked out of the shop.
> "Well!" said Maureen, in an ecstasy of disapproval. "'Is this a joke?' Charming!"

The strained relationship between Parminder and the shop owners, Maureen and Harold, is immediately apparent – they clearly don't like each other. Maureen is revealed as vindictive and mean-spirited as she delights in being the one to impart bad news to Parminder. Her hypocritical and self-righteous nature is also evident in her "ecstasy of disapproval". Her husband is equally unpleasant as he goes out of his way to exploit Parminder's discomfort.

What is particularly interesting about this exchange is the veiled suggestion of an inappropriate relationship between Parminder and Barry Fairbrother, the man who has died. Parminder is not close enough to him or his family to be told of his death, but seems deeply shaken by the news. Their potentially illicit relationship may be suspected by Maureen and Harold, as they seem to know how much the news will upset her.

Example 4: Emma by Jane Austen

"Only think of our happening to meet him! – How very odd! It was quite a chance, he said, that he had not gone round by the Randalls. He did not think we ever walked this road. He thought we walked towards the Randalls most days. He has not been able to get the Romance of the Forest yet. He was so busy the last time he was at Kingston that he quite forgot it, but he goes again to-morrow. So very odd we should happen to meet! Well, Miss Woodhouse, is he like what you expected? What do you think of him? Do you think him so very plain?"

"He is very plain, undoubtedly – remarkably plain: – but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility. I had no right to expect much, and I did not expect much; but I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, to totally without air. I had imagined him,
I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility."

"To be sure," said Harriet, in a mortified voice, "he is not so genteel as real gentlemen."

That Harriet is smitten with Mr Martin is obvious from her excitement at having bumped into him. Harriet's naivety and sweet, compliant nature are evident. So are Emma's rather mean-spirited, self-interested motives in ruthlessly disparaging her friend's potential suitor. This exchange reveals the imbalance of power in their supposed friendship: Harriet is desperate for Emma's approval, and Emma is all too aware of her influence.

Example 5: Beloved by Toni Morrison

"Ain't you got no brothers or sisters?" [Paul D said.]
Beloved diddled her spoon but did not look at him. "I don't have nobody."
"What was you looking for when you came here?" he asked her.
"This place. I was looking for this place I could be in."
"Somebody tell you about this house?"
"She told me. When I was at the bridge, she told me."
"Must be somebody from the old days," Sethe said. The days when 124 was a way station where messages came and then their senders. Where bits of news soaked like dried beans in spring water – until they were soft enough to digest.
"How'd you come? Who brought you?"
Now she looked steadily at him, but did not answer.
He could feel both Sethe and Denver pulling in, holding their stomach muscles, sending out sticky spiderwebs to touch one another. He decided to force it anyway.
"I asked you who brought you here?"
"I walked here," she said. "A long, long, long, long way. Nobody bring me. Nobody help me."
"You had new shoes. If you walked so long why don't your shoes show it?"
"Paul D, stop picking on her."

Morrison uses local dialect and accent in Beloved to reflect the characters' background in Kentucky following the American Civil War. Note, however, that she does not labor this technique and uses it sparingly and for impact. Paul D's astute and suspicious nature is evident here, as is Beloved's evasiveness: her reaction to his questions suggests that she is, in fact, hiding something. Sethe is quick to smooth over any potential upset, however,

suggesting that she feels protective of Beloved and prefers to avoid confrontation (or, perhaps, the truth of Beloved's arrival in her home). The tension in this scene is palpable and masterfully handled.

General recommendations

1. Avoid characters holding forth

2. Don't always use full sentences in dialogue

3. Be oblique – think about what is not being said – leave room for the character's imagination

4. Keep it succinct

5. Use vocabulary appropriate for the character

6. Use colloquial language

7. Don't go over the top with accents. Don't spell accents phonetically unless you really know what you are doing.

8. Give each character their own manner of speaking – which might mean that the use certain words or phrases or sentence structures repeatedly.

9. Avoid unnecessary swearing and expletives.

10. Remember the beats. In a story or screenplay, a beat is an occurrence that changes something or moves your story along. Each piece of dialogue your characters deliver should in some way add to your reader's knowledge and progress your narrative. You want the dialogue between your characters to propel the story forward.

11. Do not use dialogue simply to convey information. Dialogue should set the scene, advance action, give insight into characterization, remind the reader, and foreshadow. Dialogue should always be doing many things at once.

12. Keep the character's voice in mind but keep it readable. Dialogue doesn't have to be grammatically correct; it should read like actual speech. However, there must be a balance between realistic speech and readability.

13. Don't use too much slang or misspelling in order to create a character's voice. Also remember to use speech as a characterization tool. Word choice tells a reader a lot about a person: appearance, ethnicity, sexuality, background, and morality.

14. Tension! Sometimes saying nothing, or the opposite of what we know a character feels, is the best way to create tension. If a character wants to say, 'I love you!" but their actions or words say, 'I don't care,' the reader cringes at the missed opportunity.

15. Real people don't monologue. Though Shakespeare was famous for his dramatic monologues, they don't usually work well in novels. People rarely go off on long, complicated solo speeches in real life, and having a character do this in your novel is likely to come across as unnatural.

16. Don't feel the need to tell the reader *everything*.
17. Shun internal monologue that spells out the entirety of your character's past, his present struggles, his hopes for the future, his feelings for other characters, his plan of action for the next five years, and his general theological and philosophical ramblings.

Dialogue tags

A dialogue tag *attribute* a line of dialogue to a character, so that the reader knows who is speaking. Dialogue tags are purely **functional**. When a writer uses dialogue tags **stylistically**, it just looks amateurish, e.g.

> *'Get out of the house', she said imperiously.*

> *'No!', he said firmly.*

Better to write:

> *She tossed her hair back and furrowed her brow.*
> *'Get out of the house', she said.*

> *'You can tell me as many times as you like, but I'm not going,' he said.*

Attribution tags—*he said, she said,* etc.—are usually all you need to indicate who's speaking, so resist the urge to get creative.   Don't use: he snorted, she grimaced, I affirmed, she responded etc

Avoid mannerisms of attribution. People *say* things. They don't *wheeze, gasp, sigh, laugh, grunt,* or *snort* them.

They might do any of those things *while* saying them, which might be worth mentioning, but the emphasis should be on what is said, and readers just need to know who is saying it.

Keep it simple. All those other descriptors turn the spotlight on an intrusive writer.

Sometimes people *whisper* or *shout* or *mumble*, but let their choice of words indicate they're grumbling, etc.

If it's important that they sigh or laugh, separate that action from the dialogue.

> *Jim sighed. "I can't take this anymore."*

Not:

> *Jim sighed, "I can't take this anymore."*

Though you read them in school readers and classic fiction, attribution tags such as *replied*, *retorted*, *exclaimed,* and *declared* have become clichéd and archaic.

You'll still see them occasionally, but I suggest avoiding them.

Often no attribution is needed.

Use dialogue tags only when the reader wouldn't otherwise know who's speaking, eg

> *Jordan shook his head and sighed. "I've had it."*

Another common error is having [characters](#) address each other [by name](#) too often.

Real people rarely do this, and it often seems planted only to avoid a dialogue tag. Fictional dialogue should sound real.

Don't start your dialogue attribution tag with *said.*

...said Joe or *…said Mary* reads like a children's book. Substitute *he* and *she* for the names and that will make it obvious: *...said he* or *said she* just doesn't sound right.

Rather, end with *said* for the most natural sound: *...Joe said* or *...Mary said.*

Resist the urge to explain and give the reader credit.

The amateur writer often writes something like this:

> *"I'm beat," exclaimed John tiredly.*

Besides telling and not showing—violating a cardinal rule of writing—it uses the archaic *exclaimed* for *said*, misplaces *that* before the name rather than after, and adds the redundant *tiredly* (explaining something that needs no explanation).

The pro would write:

> *John dropped onto the couch. "I'm beat."*

That shows rather than tells, and the action (*dropped onto the couch*) tells who's speaking.

Dialogue tags that are probably best avoided

dialogue tags:

accused	cried	insisted	persisted	relented	stammered
asserted	declared	inquired	proposed	roared	stuttered
babbled	demanded	laughed	quipped	shouted	urged
bellowed	exclaimed	lied	raged	smiled	uttered
blurted	giggled	lisped	reasoned	snapped	yelled
cajoled	groaned	mumbled	reassured	sniggered	wailed
claimed	gushed	nagged	rebuked	sobbed	whispered
continued	hissed	noted	recounted	soothed	yawned

Recommendations

1. Use 'said' in preference to 'asked', 'shouted', 'whispered', 'retorted', 'mumbled' etc. Dialogue tags should be as unobtrusive as possible – the fact that the character is say mumbling should be shown by the language or speech chosen. If you must use a verb other than 'asked' then choose the simplest one possible, e.g., instead of 'he boomed', use 'he shouted'.

2. Never add an adverb to a tag. Using adverbs means you are telling and not showing. Things like 'he said imploringly' or 'he thundered darkly', seems amateur or lazy to the reader, the writer has taken a short cut and not put the effort in to show the reader what is happening. Adverbs in dialogue tags also give the impression of overwriting. Adverbs can be distracting too and may well obscure hidden depths in the character. E.g.,

   'My hamster just died', she said sadly.

   Instead say:

   She did not look him. 'My hamster just died', she said, looking across at the empty cage, now with its door open, and the shoebox next to it.

3. Use as few dialogues tags as possible. Using *too few* tags is annoying for a reader (we've all had to "count backwards" to figure out which character is speaking). Using *too many* tags is equally annoying…Less obviously, remember that a dialogue tag is only there to make it clear who is speaking. If you can make it clear in other ways (i.e., *without* using a tag), do so. Here are some of the ways to do that…

4. Let the characters occasionally use each other's names, e.g.,

   'Hello, Fred'

5. Use action interspersed or implied in the dialogue

6. Use context

7. Use vocabulary. For example, if one character talks a lot and the other is more the Clint Eastwood type, you don't need a whole load of dialogue tags to make things clear. The long speeches are clearly spoken by the chatterbox, while the one-word answers come from the strong-and-silent character. Or in a conversation between a grandmother and her young grandson, it might be perfectly obvious who is saying what from the words alone…

8. Include a little variety. So occasionally use a simple verb instead of asked. Splurge out on an adverb on very rare occasions.

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Dialogue generally fails into two classes

- **Internal dialogue** is when a character talks or thinks something to themselves.
- **Outer dialogue** is when a character talks to another character in the story or play. This is the classic dialogue you see most of the time, set off by quotation marks.

An interior monologue may be either *direct* or *indirect*:

- *direct*, in which the author seems not to exist, and the interior self of the character is given directly, as though the reader were overhearing an articulation of the stream of thought and feeling flowing through the character's mind.

indirect, in which the author serves as selector, presenter, guide, and commentator.

A character's thoughts are important in written fiction because it's the only place you can find them. …

Internal dialogue

A short interior monologue tends to happen in the middle of a scene. Because scenes are generally characterized by talk and action, you don't want to destroy the pace with too many lengthy thoughts from the viewpoint character.

That is why you tend to get just a line of thought here and there – enough to directly connect us to the viewpoint character's mind, but not enough to disrupt the flow of the scene.

All other clues about how the viewpoint character is feeling can be presented indirectly – that is, through their words, actions, facial expressions, and so on.

A long interior monologue tends to happen during the slower bits in between action scenes. Here, a breakneck pace isn't necessary, and so having direct access to the character's every thought for a few sentences or paragraphs, or even a few pages, is not a problem.

Also, it's natural for a character to do the bulk of their thinking *in between* scenes…

- During the scene, they're too busy doing things and saying things, and reacting to things being done and said to them, to have the time for a lengthy internal monologue.
- Once the scene is over and they can pause to draw breath, they have plenty of time for a good long think. Plus, of course, they will have plenty to think about, given that the scene just ended will probably not have gone according to plan, and they must now decide what to do next.
- You start with some narration, just to show the reader what the character is doing (in the case of the example above, the character is driving and listening to music).
- Then you launch into the monologue itself, perhaps introducing it with a phrase like "he thought about…" or "she wondered if…" (Hornby wrote that the character "found himself thinking about…")

Short, one-liner interior monologues in the middle of a scene are trickier, simply because you need to make it clear to the reader that this particular sentence, in the middle of all the talk and action, is indeed the viewpoint character thinking.

The following extract from James Joyce's *The Dead* ,combines **narration**, and *direct and indirect interior monologue*:

> ***Gabriel hardly heard what she said. Now that supper was coming near he began to think again about his speech and about the quotation****… Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window.* How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park!…How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!…***He repeated to himself a phrase he had written in his review:*** 'One feels that one is listening to a thought- tormented music'…Miss Ivors had praised the re*view. Was she* sincere?…*Perhaps she would not be sorry to see him fail in his speech."*

An example of a long internal monologue:

You ignore me and then you ask me to just get up and go to the store with you? What kind of person does that? I'm busy today anyway. I have to clean the house. It's a total disaster because I'm a horrible homemaker. I can't do anything right. I can't cook, clean, take care of the kids, hold a job, finish school, be a good wife, etc. I'm just worthless really. What is the point in trying They aren't responding to me now that I told them no anyway. Of course not. I told them no so now they aren't going to talk to me until they need me again the next time. Why do I keep trying to make them happy? They are so terrible. I'm so done talking to them. All they want is for me to be around to do things for them. What kind of relationship is that?

How to punctuate dialogue

1. Keep punctuation inside dialogue

   'Hi,' Fred said. 'How are you?'

2. If the dialogue tag comes at the beginning of the paragraph, follow it with a comma:

   Fred said, 'Hi – how are you doing?'

3. Start a new paragraph for each speaker.

   Fred said, 'Hi – how are you doing?'

   'Not bad at all,' Jemima said. 'Unless you want to hear about my haemorrhoids….'

   If dialogue for the same character runs over more than one paragraph, omit the quote at the start of all the paragraphs but the first. Generally, though, dialogue needs to be short and punchy, so think hard if you really do need such a large block of speech by a single character.

   'The usual way of punctuating dialogue,' he said, 'is to start the speech with quotation marks and to close the quotes when the character stops speaking a sentence or two later. However, if it's a long speech then you will want to break it up into paragraphs.

   "Like this. Notice that there are no quotation marks at the end of the previous paragraph, but that they do *appear at the start of this new one. It's only when you reach the end of the final paragraph of the speech that you close the quotation marks. Like this!'*

4. You can use single or double quotes. But be consistent. There is an argument to say that you should keep double quotes for when there is speech within a speech. The contrary argument is that if you use single quotes, then things like

   'Hi, we're going on a picnic!', Freddy said.

look odd to the programming community as there are an odd number of quotes in the text. Chances are your publisher will have a house style they will want to use anyway.

5. Use ellipses to indicate a character chose to not finish their sentence, e.g.,

    'I plan to go to Brighton, or maybe Worthing, or maybe…'

    (Note – three dots – there is no need for a full stop as well.

    'I plan to go to Brighton, or maybe Worthing, or maybe---'

    'Come on, Joe, make your mind up!'

6. When dialogue ends with a question or exclamation mark, the dialogue tag following the quotation marks should be lowercase

    a. *"I'm glad you're here!" she said.*

7. Place punctuation inside the quotation marks, the dialogue tag outside

    "John was just here asking about you," Bill said.

8. Put the attribution after the first clause of a compound sentence.

    "Not tonight," he said, "not in this weather."

9. Action before dialogue requires a separate sentence.

    Anna shook her head. "I can't believe she's gone!"

10. Quoting within a quote requires single quotation marks.

    "Lucy, Mom specifically said, 'Do not cut your bangs,' and you did it anyway!"

11. When action or attribution interrupts dialogue, use lowercase as dialogue resumes.

    "That," she said, "hurt bad."

How to format interior dialogue

1. Thought written in first person present, italicized, tagged

    Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. *This summer has been so perfect*, she thought. *I don't want it ever to end.*

2. Thought written in first person present, italicized, not tagged

    Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. *This summer has been so*

perfect. I don't want it ever to end.

3. Thought written in first person present, not italicized, tagged

   Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. This summer has been so perfect, she thought. I don't want it ever to end.

4. Thought written in first person present, not italicized, not tagged

   Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. This summer has been so perfect. I don't want it ever to end.

5. Thought written in third person past, not italicized, tagged

   Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. This summer had been so perfect, she thought. She didn't want it ever to end.

6. Thought written in third person past, not italicized, not tagged

   Mary closed her eyes and lifted her face to the sun. This summer had been so perfect. She didn't want it ever to end.

Examples of all of the above appear in published fiction, so in a sense it's a matter of personal choice. The only hard and fast rule that exists is to be consistent throughout…

Should a character's thoughts be italicized?

Italics are used to represent a character's thoughts as they actually think them in their head (i.e., the *precise* words they use). For that reason, italicized thoughts are always written in…

- First Person – because we don't think about ourselves in the third person.
- Present Tense – because we don't think about what is happening *now* in past tense.

(Obviously, we *sometimes* think in the third person past tense, when we think about what somebody else did yesterday, for example: "John made such a fool of himself last night.")

The advantage of using italics for a line or two of interior monologue is that they make the thought *stand out*.

Doesn't using first person italicized thoughts for some of the time, and third person non-italicized thoughts for the remainder, contradict my earlier advice about remaining consistent?

Nope. The "convention" you would have decided on would be to use…

- Third person non-italicized thoughts for the bulk of the interior monologue, and

- First person italicized thoughts in just a handful of places, when the power of the character's words demand extra emphasis.

The reader will quickly pick up on this convention if you use it consistently. What they would find confusing would be if you used, for example, an illogical mixture of italics and non-italics for those occasional emphatic thoughts.

- If you *do* use this device of writing the occasional powerful thought in the first person present, you really *should* use italics if you don't want to confuse the reader, and ideally a separate paragraph too. This makes the first person thought stand out clearly from the surrounding third person text.
- Next best, if you don't use italics, is to add a "he thought" tag to the words.
- And the least emphatic of all is to use neither italics nor thought tags.

Things NOT to do when writing dialogue

From Catherine Wilcox

- interrupt the flow of the dialogue with huge chunks of exposition
- slow the pace with plenty of vague generic description
- should ensure that your characters all sound the same
- use as many clichés as possible, and patronise your regional characters by rendering their speech phonetically. E.g. "'Och aye the noo,' said Hamish in his Scots accent." "'It ain't arf ot, me ole china,' said the cockney geezer."
- Use as the perfect vehicle for imparting information and showing off your research
- Never underestimate the contribution to crap dialogue that is
- made by typos, inconsistencies, redundancies, factual errors, accidental rhymes, repetitions, and repetitions
- include redundant gestures such as shrugging shoulders, smirking, clenching fists (angrily), flashing eyes etc

Remember: dialogue is not like real conversation. A great deal of editing is needed to make dialogue seem realistic on the page. Don't clutter your dialogue with unnecessary actions/gestures. Cut, cut and cut again.

Screenwriting dialogue tips

From:

https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/article/five-essential-scriptwriting-tips-from-femi-kayode/

Know your main character

Funny how fundamental this is, and yet so easily missed. Knowing who the main character is in a story grounds the reader/audience. Think of it as an anchor in a sea of worlds, stories, and themes. When we know who the main character is in a story, we know who to follow and root for. It is the north star of writing a script that we must know what the main character wants, and simultaneously what is stopping s/he/they from getting it.

Just as your main character can be one person, it can also be a collective, bound by one singular goal. Think *Saving Private Ryan.* The same goes for who or what is stopping the main character from getting what s/he/they want. That obstacle can be anyone or anything: the weather (common in disaster stories), a person, or sometimes, it can be from *within* the main character, forcing him/her/them to overcome an internal conflict before attaining the goal.

Orchestrate change

Characters change when they realize what they *want* is not want what they *need*. This is the primal reason why stories enthral: to experience the journey of a hero/heroine from point A to B, rooting for them as they battle seemingly insurmountable challenges, almost giving up, then getting up to go after the prize, only to discover that what was driving their desire, is actually a deeper and more emotional need.

Think of it this way: Wall Street lawyer fights to get the top job, by any means necessary, but in the process, jeopardizes their family relationship. On getting the top job, our lawyer realizes that their desire for success is driven by the more primal need for security. They then resolve to forsake the top job for a more meaningful and loving connection with their family. Their willingness to make that sacrifice is rewarded by said family encouraging them not to give up their job. The arc is complete, and the audience does not feel cheated. This is the scriptwriter's most important task: orchestrating, through the unfolding of plot, the main character's journey from chasing their goal to realising their deeper, more emotional need.

Show, don't tell

Action reveals character. The camera cannot shoot intention just as the audience can't see the inner workings of a character's mind. Before you write a single word of dialogue, consider: how can I show this through action? Remember the old adage; 'do as I do, not as I say'? What this means for scriptwriters is simple: people's words are not always true reflections of their intentions. Our actions, on the other hand, are much more revealing and makes for a much more memorable experience for the audience. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words. Even in a medium like radio, the aim must always be to paint a picture in the theatre of the audience's mind.

The temptation to make your main character stronger than the force against them is the sure-fire way of writing a weak script. Resist it.

Create a fair fight

Conflict is determined by the extent of danger when confronting a desire. For us to root for the main character, we must believe there are overwhelming odds against them. The temptation to make your main character stronger than the force against them is the sure-fire way of writing a weak script. Resist it. The stronger the opposition, the more exciting, bloodier even, the fight. The fiercer the fight, the greater our joy when the main character wins. The tougher the challenge, the deeper the main character will have to dig in to find the strength to overcome it. No one roots for a weak hero/heroine, just as no one respects a winner who cheats, takes the easy way out or beats a clearly, weaker opponent. It is a cardinal sin to break this rule.

Write in Love

Every character deserves love. When we appreciate where characters are coming from, and what drives them (motivation), it is so much easier to care for them. There is a tendency to place a lot of love on your main character (irrespective of their flaws) while painting an unsympathetic picture of the villain/opposition. This must be avoided at all costs as it is guaranteed to create flat, one-dimensional characters, setting the stage for an 'unfair' fight that makes your story weaker and ultimately, less interesting.

Consider Hannibal Lecter. How did the writer create one of the most beloved villains in cinema? I think it's because the writer *understood* the character, they could write with empathy. Point is: if you don't write your script in love by caring for the characters (good *and* bad), the audience will know, and because it is clear you don't care, they won't either. You don't want that. Ever.

Quotes on Dialogue

- Good dialogue encompasses both what is said and not said. – *Anne Lamott,* Bird by Bird
- Dialogue is a lean language in which every word counts.   *Sol Stein*
- All the information you need can be given in dialogue.   *Elmore Leonard*

Read more: https://www.wisesayings.com/dialogue-quotes/#ixzz6mMaFrQgs

- Two monologues do not make a dialogue. Andy Sivell

- Dialogue is the most fun to write. It's kind of like a tennis match. Sally Rooney

Read more at: https://www.wisesayings.com/dialogue-quotes/#ixzz6mMa6K0EB

Novel dialogue

(from https://www.nownovel.com/blog/writing-dialogue-examples/)

Writing dialogue in a novel requires more than knowing how to write a conversation. Good dialogue intrigues, informs, moves a story along. Read 7 dialogue examples and the insights they give us into crafting effective character conversations:

Defining dialogue

Written dialogue (as opposed to spoken conversation) is challenging in part because the reader does not have auditory clues for understanding tone. The subtle shades of spoken conversation have to be shaded in using descriptive language.

'Dialogue' as a noun means 'a conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play or film' (*OED*). But it's useful to remember the definition of dialogue as a verb: To 'take part in a conversation or discussion to resolve a problem'. In storytelling, great

dialogue often follows the verbal definition. It solves the story's problems, sketches in clues, builds anticipation, suspense and more.

So how do you write dialogue that carries this purposeful sense of the word?

Make your written dialogue cut to the chase

In spoken conversations, we often change subjects, ramble, or use filler words like 'um' and 'like'. Make your written dialogue cut to the chase. We often begin phone calls with pleasantries, for example, such as 'Hi, how are you?' Yet effective dialogue skips over the boring bits.

For example, here is a phone conversation from Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992):

> 'My voice was slurred and the operator wouldn't give me the number of a taxi company. 'You have to give me the name of a specific taxi service,' she said. 'We're not allowed to-'
> 'I don't know the name of a specific taxi service,' I said thickly.'There's not a phone book here.'
> 'I'm sorry, sir, but we're not allowed to-'
> 'Red Top?' I said desperately, trying to guess at names, make them up, anything. 'Yellow Top? Town Taxi? Checker?'
> Finally I guess I got one right, or maybe she just felt sorry for me.' (pp. 142-143)

Tartt's narrator Richard is staying in desperately cold quarters in winter, and the dialogue reflects the urgency of his situation. Note how Tartt uses concise narration to precede the call. Tartt cuts to the reason for Richard's phone call right away, and also includes interruption. This reinforces the sense of urgency.

Tartt also slips back into narration rather than have a pointless outro where Richard and the operator say goodbye. Similarly, lead directly into the crux of dialogue and minimize filler. [Take Now Novel's 4-week dialogue writing course to develop your dialogue writing skills. You'll get workbooks, course videos, and professional feedback on a final assignment].

Blend dialogue with descriptive narration well

Often when we write dialogue, we forget to keep the backdrop and surrounds in focus. The effect is similar to the backdrop of a theatre being hauled away whenever the actors start to speak.

To keep an active sense of place, slip in narration that adds setting details. For example, here Tartt describes Richard's encounter with a girl in his dorm's bathrooms:

> 'I was in no mood for talk and I was unpleasantly surprised to find Judy Poovey brushing her teeth at the sink. […]
> 'Hi, Richard,' she said, and spit out a mouthful of toothpaste. She was wearing cut-off jeans that had bizarre, frantic designs drawn on them in Magic Marker and a spandex top which revealed her intensely aerobicized midriff.
> 'Hello,' I said, setting to work on my tie.

'You look cute today.'
'Thanks.'
'Got a date?'
I looked away from the mirror, at her. 'What?'
'Where you going?'
By now I was used to her interrogations.' (pp. 51-52)

In this dialogue example, Tartt drops in details from the bathroom setting (Judy spitting out toothpaste, Richard adjusting his tie and looking away from the mirror). These small details are enough to create a consistent backdrop. Note too that even though Judy and Richard start with pleasantries, the dialogue quickly passes on to anticipatory details about Richard's plans (signalled to Judy by his tie).

Tartt also does not use dialogue tags, because it's unnecessary to say 'he said' or 'she said'. There are only two speakers present and line breaks and indentation distinguish them. The surrounding text adds an element of scenery and realism to their exchange.

Use dialogue to reveal key character information

Dialogue is an excellent vehicle for character-building. A character's voice, from their style of speech to the subjects they frequent, builds our understanding of story characters.

For example, early dialogue in a story set in a school could show a bully belittling another pupil. When a new kid who speaks their mind and doesn't take abuse joins the class, the memory of the preceding dialogue creates anticipation. We know before the bully and the new kid even meet that any dialogue between them could prove explosive.

In *The Secret History*, Edmund 'Bunny' Corcoran is the narrator's fellow student. Bunny is opinionated and bigoted, and wheedles his friends into giving him money. Tartt creates unlikable character traits in Bunny that explain crumbling relationships within Bunny's friend group. Much of this she does through dialogue that shows Bunny's tactless, bolshy and judgmental nature:

> 'By the way, love that jacket, old man,' Bunny said to me as we were getting out of the taxi. 'Silk, isn't it?'
> 'Yes. It was my grandfather's.'
> Bunny pinched a piece of the rich, yellowly cloth near the cuff and rubbed it back and forth between his fingers.
> 'Lovely piece,' he said importantly. 'Not quite the thing for this time of year, though.'
> 'No?' I said.
> 'Naw. This is the East Coast, boy. I know they're pretty laissez-faire about dress in your neck of the woods, but back here they don't let you run around in your bathing suit all year long.' (pp. 54-55)

This dialogue example illustrates the overbearing aspects of Bunny that gather and grow, testing the limits of the others' patience. The dialogue is thus oriented towards building resentments between characters that explain later character choices.

Learn how to write dialogue that drives plot

There are several ways good dialogue drives plot. As outlined above, it can help develop character traits and motivations. The context of dialogue – the circumstances in which characters speak or overhear others speaking – is also useful for plot.

The overheard conversation is a hallmark device in suspense writing, for example. Eavesdropping can supply a character with handy information. For example, a villainous or malevolent character might overhear a conversation that plays into their hands. The criminal wanted in a murder investigation overhears friends of the detective discussing the detective's daily routine, for example.

Dialogue can also drive plot and suspense via interruption. If two characters' urgent conversation is cut off by a third's arrival, the reader must wait until the characters may resume talking.

Tartt crafts suspense finely in a scene where her protagonist overhears snatches of conversation between his new acquaintance Henry and their lecturer, Julian:

> 'It was Julian and Henry. Neither of them had heard me come up the stairs. Henry was leaving; Julian was standing in the open door. His brow was furrowed and he looked very somber, as if he were saying something of the gravest importance […].
>
> Julian finish speaking. He looked away for a moment, then bit his lower lip and looked up at Henry.
>
> Then Henry spoke. His words were low but deliberate and distinct. 'Should I do what is necessary?'
> To my surprise, Julian took both Henry's hands in his own. 'You should only, ever, do what is necessary,' he said.' (p. 81)

Using dialogue overheard by a third party, Tartt creates suspense that ripples out from this brief exchange. The brief scene creates anticipation of a secret agreement between Henry and Julian coming to light. This colours our reading of future interactions between these three characters.

Avoid unnecessary, distracting or absurd dialogue tags

Dialogue tags – words such as 'she said' and 'he grumbled' – help to show who in a conversation between two or more characters is speaking. Sometimes (when alternate words for 'said', such as 'grumbled') are used, they also show the emotional state of the speaker. Yet using unnecessary tags has a clunky effect. For example:

> 'Hello,' I said.
> 'Is it really you? I can't believe it's been so long,' she said.
> 'Sorry I've been such a hermit', I said, smiling.

The placement and repetition of 'said' here has a deadening, unnatural effect. Compare:

'Hello.'
She gave a start, surprised. 'Is is really you? I can't believe it's been so long!'
'Sorry I've been such a hermit,' I said, smiling.

The second allows us to focus our attention more on the content of what characters say (and less on the fact that we're reading dialogue).

Alternative words for said (such as 'shrieked', 'whispered', 'spat' and so forth) are like seasoning. Don't burn the reader's palate with too many. It's widely considered good style for dialogue tags to be as invisible as possible. Heavy tag use is like an invisibility cloak cut too short – you can see the author's clumsy feet sticking out.

Use specific dialogue to illustrate general relationships and situations

Besides using dialogue as a character development aid or to further plot, you can use dialogue as a narrative device to illustrate a general situation. For example, In *The Secret History*, Tartt uses a typical conversation between Bunny's girlfriend Marion and Richard, the protagonist, to reveal the nature of Bunny and Marion's relationship.

'Lemme in, old man, you gotta help me, Marion's on the warpath…' Minutes later, there would be a neat report of sharp knocks at the door: rat-a-tat-tat. It would be Marion, her little mouth tight, looking like a small, angry doll.
'Is Bunny there?' she would say, stretching up on tiptoe and craning to look past me into the room.
'He's not here.'
'Are you sure?'
'He's not here Marion.'
'Bunny!' she would call out ominously.
No answer.
'Bunny!'
And then, to my acute embarrassment, Bunny would emerge sheepishly in the doorway.' (p. 101)

Tartt uses the modal verb 'would' to show a typical conversation, an exchange that is an example of many like it. You can use dialogue this way to show a conversation that is often repeated, perhaps with different wording but the same underlying effect. For example:

'Tidy your room,' mom's always saying. 'What am I, The Dalai Lama?'
'Yeah, and if you were, she'd be like 'Wear your best robes. Iron out those creases.'
This is how Jim and I would banter all summer, trading the injustices of being teenagers in a world that had its priorities dead wrong.

Here, an example conversation shows how two boys on a summer camp became friends.

Start writing dialogue examples and good advice down

Whenever you come across examples of dialogue you love, or an insightful quote on writing dialogue, copy it out. It's an effective way to improve your ear for written speech. In addition, read the dialogue you write aloud. Rope someone else in to read the other

character's part if possible. The ear seldom lies about the difference between dialogue that works and character conversations that fall flat.

Seven dialogue rules for writing fantastic conversations

(from https://www.nownovel.com/blog/fantastic-dialogue-tips/)

Dialogue rules aren't set in stone but help us create believable characters who have distinct, memorable voices. The best dialogue gives insights into characters and their motivations. Getting dialogue punctuation right is important, as is keeping dialogue entertaining. Here are 7 dialogue rules for writing conversations worthy of eavesdropping:

Learn dialogue rules for good punctuation

Before you can write conversations that bristle with tension or brim with excitement, you need to master the rules for punctuating dialogue. [Below is a brief guide but our 4-week course covers much more. At the end, you'll submit a piece of dialogue incorporating what you've learned for professional critique. Learn more.]

Rule 1: Remember to open and close speech marks to set dialogue apart from surrounding narration.

At the end of a line of dialogue, if you use a dialogue tag, remember to use a comma before 'he said' or 'she said' instead of a full stop. The tag is still part of the same sentence. This is a mistake we often see in beginner authors' critique submissions on Now Novel. An example of good dialogue punctuation:

> "I wish you would use a comma and not a full stop before your dialogue tag," she grumbled.

The second rule: If a character's speech is interrupted by a dialogue tag or action, close and re-open speech marks.

Commas before the dialogue tag always go inside the quoted speech, just before the closing quotation mark. Here's an example:

> "I wish you would stop interrupting," she said, holding up her palm, "and let me finish!"

The third rule: Always start a new paragraph when a different character starts speaking. This way it's clear who says what in a scene involving two or more characters.

> "I wasn't interr-"

> "There you go again." She glared.

The fourth rule: If one character speaks over multiple paragraphs, only close quotation marks at the end of the final paragraph.

This is used when a character has a long monologue, such as when retelling an event or story. This prevents the reader from erroneously thinking a new character has started talking. An example:

"There you go again." She glared. "As I was saying, I've told you the rules of dialogue before but you keep forgetting.

"Where was I? I can see from your face you think I'm being unnecessarily hars- no, don't interrupt again."

Keep dialogue tags to a minimum

As a rule, if you can establish who is speaking and how they are speaking *without* dialogue tags, avoid them. Compare the following:

"I thought you said you were arriving at four," he said angrily, his face thunderous.

And:

He stood scowling, his arms crossed. "I thought you said you were arriving at four?"

Because the character action (the character stands in a posture suggestive of anger or frustration) precedes the dialogue, you don't need to attribute the words in the second example. It's clear the man with folded arms says the cross, rebuking words.

Where possible, minimize dialogue tags using body language and gesture instead. This helps us to hear a character mid-conversation and see them too. This is one way to make dialogue more vivid.

Cut out filler words that make dialogue too lifelike

You might be thinking, 'Hold on, surely dialogue should be lifelike?' Dialogue in a story differs from real-world conversation, though.

In real life we repeat ourselves sometimes. We exchange pleasantries before we get to the real core of what we want to talk about. In writing fiction, you can get to the crux of a great conversation faster. Filler words may be true to life, but don't bore the reader.

The difference between dialogue in life and dialogue in stories is that in stories, you need to cut day-to-day conversation that is extraneous or irrelevant. Even if you are showing a romantic duo engaged in an intimate, ordinary moment, let your characters' personalities, fears, motivations and desires come through in their words.

For example, a bland everyday scene could run as follows:

I heard the key in the front door. It was him. "Hi, love. How was your day?"
"Good thanks and yours?"
"It was fine thank you," I reply.

Instead, something more interesting could proceed as follows:

> I heard the key turn in the front door. He stomped in and threw his bag down.
> "Bad day, huh?"
> He shrugged, grimacing while making a beeline for the kitchen. "It was fine," came his voice, sounding too measured. Something was clearly up.

In the latter example, there's immediately a sense of story. Surrounding the dialogue are actions (the throwing down of the bag and the anxious worrying of the viewpoint character) that make the dialogue pregnant with a sense of event.

Cut out filler words and instead focus on finding the emotional core of each conversation in your story. What does it show about your characters and their circumstances?

The above example could show that the viewpoint character is anxious and confused because her significant other is failing to communicate something bothering him. Most importantly, it shows us that there is a revelation of some kind in waiting – it drives the story forwards by making us ask, 'what happened?' and 'what will happen next?'

Give readers vital story information through dialogue

Good dialogue consists of engaging or illuminating conversations. It often helps us [understand characters' strengths and limitations, goals and obstacles](#).

Beginning writers who aren't practiced with writing conversations often create exchanges that make the story meander rather than get to a destination.

When you write any piece of dialogue, write down answers to the following questions before you start:

- What do I want my dialogue to tell readers about my characters' personalities?
- How will my dialogue to tell readers about my characters' present situation?
- What [future expectations or questions will the reader have](#) about the story's plot because of this conversation?

Asking questions about your dialogue will help you learn how to write good dialogue. Purposeful dialogue that adds depth to characters while entertaining will keep readers interested.

Show characters' surrounds while they talk

Remember that [tone and mood are essential components of a story](#). If your characters seem to speak in a vacuum, their exchanges will feel dry and bland.

If your characters are meeting in a restaurant, for example, use this setting to your advantage. Perhaps service staff could interrupt to take their order at a key point, when you are just about to release a vital piece of information answering a question the reader has been harbouring. This device would help create a more suspenseful mood. Involve readers in the emotional crux of your scene by bringing your characters' surroundings into their conversation.

Don't always make characters say exactly what they feel

If you think about real people, everyone tells little lies from time to time. We might feel awful and walk into a social occasion with a broad grin, not wanting to dampen the mood. There are hundreds of ways to say 'I feel terrible', including 'I feel great' – it's the *way* you say things that matters.

[Making a character's words at odds with their body language](#) can be effective for characterizing your novel's cast. A character might have a motivation for not showing any vulnerability in a situation, and thus might grin and be outwardly jovial. You can show the chinks in their armour using body language and small actions, such as fidgeting. This is why it is important to not only use characters' voices and words but their bodies and movements in dialogue too.

Remember context in dialogue (the reason for the conversation)

To make your dialogue interesting, remember that fantastic dialogue lets us see the 'why' behind it.

Two romantic leads might fight over doing chores, or what to do over their weekend. Yet the dialogue should tap into the underlying subtext. Why this fight, and why at this moment in the story? Perhaps one character has realised the other does not fulfill them on a fundamental level.

Think about dialogue at multiple scales: Think about what's going on immediately in this scene, right now. Yet also think about where its roots lie in prior actions and scenes and how your characters' words can reveal glimpses of these roots to the reader or viewer.

Writing conversations using setting

Writing conversations that don't involve setting is like writing action scenes that don't involve movement. Great dialogue has more than disembodied voices. It anchors us in a place, in the context that occasions characters' interaction. Read tips for creating realistic dialogue by involving your setting:

Include details about nearby structures and objects

What does a conversation beneath a neon light look like versus a conversation in a sunny, flower-filled field? Showing how characters look mid-dialogue is one way to write conversations that feel real. When all we have is the flow of characters' words to anchor us, an exchange can feel without place.

An example of showing how setting affects characters' appearances in dialogue

Barbara Kingsolver's debut novel *The Bean Trees* tells the story of plucky rural Kentucky native, Taylor Greer. Determine to escape her rural life and what seems the only option (having babies), Taylor travels west. On her road trip, a woman abandons a baby with her outside a bar in Oklahoma, saying it is her dead sister's child, and asking Taylor to take care of her.

Kingsolver weaves the setting – a neon-lit rest-stop – into her dialogue masterfully:

> "Take this baby," she said.

> […]

> "Where do you want me to take it?"

> She looked back at the bar, and then looked at me. "Just take it."

I waited a minute, thinking that soon my mind would clear and I would understand what she was saying. It didn't. The child had the exact same round eyes. All four of those eyes were hanging there in the darkness, hanging on me, waiting. The Budweiser sign blinked on and off, on and off, throwing a faint light that made the whites of their eyes look orange.' (p. 17)

Notice how Kingsolver:

- **Includes detail about surrounding structures** in relation to her characters: The woman looks back to the bar
- **Uses time of day to** add tone and mood **to the conversation:** A bleak, sad quality creeps in when Kingsolver describes the woman and child's eyes 'hanging there in the darkness'
- **Uses other setting details that shape appearances:** The Budweiser sign blinking on and off alters the whites of woman and child's eyes. This small, vivid detail makes the scene lifelike

Create tone in dialogue via interactions with setting

When writing conversations between characters, think about objects in the scene as though they are props on a stage. How could they add detail, colour, humour or interest to the scene?

Think of objects that create obstacles between characters, too. How does a locked door stuffed with a towel muffle the sound of voices?

Example of characters interacting with setting in dialogue

Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* opens with the character Archie Jones deciding to take his life in his car while parked outside a Halaal butchery. Hearing of what's going on outside his business, the butchery's owner intervenes:

> 'No one gases himself on my property,' Mo snapped as he marched downstairs. 'We are not licensed.'
>
> Once in the street, Mo advanced upon Archie's car, pulled out the towels that were sealing the gap in the driver's window, and pushed it down five inches with brute, bullish force.
>
> 'Do you hear that mister? We're not licensed for suicides around here. This place halal. Kosher, understand? If you're going to die round here, my friend, I'm afraid you've got to be thoroughly bled first.' (p. 7)

Here, Smith includes Mo pulling out the towels sealing Archie's car. The force of this gesture establishes the cross tone of the dialogue, because it shows Mo's impatience.

Think of how characters' interaction with setting in your dialogue may:

- **Create the tone of the conversation:** How do emotions in characters' mid-dialogue (or pre- or post-dialogue) actions affect the tone of their spoken words?

- **Change the physical setup of the scene:** We go from Archie being isolated in his car to Mo's cross (and darkly comical) intrusion

Develop background imagery throughout dialogue

A good tactic for writing conversations that feel real and anchored in a background sense of place is to develop imagery throughout the exchange.

For example, a character might sit on a chair when everyone present hears a loud 'crack!'

Throughout the ensuing conversation, you could show them shift their weight every now and then, until the chair collapses. Weaving the 'set' of your story into conversation like this adds colour and character. An incident like the chair drama adds extra suspense and tension because we don't know what consequences await.

Example of extending background imagery in dialogue

In her novel *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy writes the following scene. The main character's aunt, Baby Kochamma, is rubbing a cucumber at the start of a conversation with her grand-niece Rahel whom she hasn't seen in years. Roy develops her imagery, keeping a unified, realistic sense of scene:

> In the old house on the hill, Baby Kochamma sat at the dining table rubbing the thick, frothy bitterness out of an elderly cucumber. […] She worked on the cucumber with an air of barely concealed triumph. She was delighted that Estha had not spoken to Rahel. […]
> 'I told you, didn't I?' she said to Rahel. 'What did you expect?' Special treatment? He's lost his mind, I'm telling you! He doesn't *recognize* people any more! What did you think?' (p. 21)

Further on, when Rahel stays silent, Baby asks another question and we see the cucumber's return:

> The silence sat between grand-niece and baby grand aunt like a third person. A stranger. Swollen. Noxious. Baby Kochamma reminded herself to lock her bedroom door at night. She tried to think of something to say.
>
> 'How d'you like my bob?'
>
> With her cucumber hand she touched her new haircut.' (p. 21)

By returning to the image of the cucumber the aunt has been rubbing, Roy maintains a sense of where we are – in the aunt's kitchen. We remember background activities. They add character and continuity. A simple, small detail like a 'cucumber hand' masterfully keeps us in the scene, creating more realistic conversation

Include aspects of time in your dialogue

Time is also an important element of setting. Setting is not only 'where' characters are but 'when' they are, too. Writing conversations that reflect the time aspect of setting means:

- **Including time of day or seasonal details that affect how characters speak:** For example, teens at a sleepover who're awake past midnight might whisper so as not to wake others. A character's teeth might chatter while talking to a friend as they walk a snowy sidewalk
- **Including details that suggest time period or era:** For example, in a historical novel set in the 1500s, there are some archaic words you could use, while avoiding modern words (such as 'bromance') that ruin the 'period' effect

Example of using time setting in dialogue

In the first section of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas*, a sailor in the Caribbean, Adam Ewing, comes across a ship doctor who is collecting teeth on the beach. The doctor tells Ewing:

> 'Teeth, sir, are the enamelled grails of the quest in hand. In days gone by this Arcadian strand was a cannibals' banqueting hall, yes, where the strong engorged themselves on the weak.' (p. 3)

The doctor proceeds to tell Ewing of his plans to sell his finds for false teeth for the wealthy back home:

> 'Mr Ewing, are you acquainted with Marchioness Grace of Mayfair? No? The better for you, for she is a corpse in petticoats. Five years have passed since this harridan besmirched my name, yes, with imputations that resulted in my being blackballed from Society.' (pp. 3-4)

After Ewing expresses consolation for the doctor's experience, the man continues to reveal his elaborate plan for revenge:

> 'I thank you, sir, I thank you, but these ivories,' he shook his 'kerchief, 'are my angels of redemption. […] Permit me to elucidate. The Marchioness wears dental-fixtures fashioned by the aforementioned doctor. Next yuletide, just as that scented She-Donkey is addressing her Ambassadors' Ball, I, Henry Goose, yes, *I* shall arise & declare to one & all that our hostess masticates with cannibals' gnashers!'

Mitchell's dialogue clearly conveys the sense of an earlier time, adding an element of historical realism. The frequent 'gentlemanly' and archaic use of the word 'sir' contributes to the effect. So do the many long, complex words (such as 'besmirched' meaning 'to ruin') that are not commonly used in modern conversation.

The example is a masterclass in writing conversations that seem to belong to a different time and place.

Realistic dialogue: Creating characters' speech patterns

(from https://www.nownovel.com/blog/talking-character-speech/)

Realistic dialogue moves stories along. When you give each character an interesting voice and persona, it's a joy to read their conversations. Varied, entertaining speech takes readers into the heart of your characters. Here are six ways to make characters' speech colourful and interesting:

Make characters' voices reflect their place and time

Great dialogue illustrates its speakers. Who is this person? Why do they speak this way? What odd curse words or phrases do they use that are particular to their era or home town? Dialogue executed well develops characters, adding rich texture to the personalities filling your story. One way to make dialogue effective is to have it reflect your characters' place and time.

In Shakespeare's plays, we gain a strong sense of an older time through characters' use of archaic language. For example, characters say 'thy' and 'thou' in place of 'your' and 'you'.

Era-appropriate character speech helps to establish setting and context. If your character lives in the 21st Century but speaks as though they're living in 1700, this will confuse readers. The reverse is also true. If a 19th century teenager speaks as though it is the 21st century, this can jolt your reader right out of the story.

So how do you make characters' speech show where they are in place and time?

- Use occasional language appropriate to the time period in dialogue. In the 60's, for example, common slang terms in parts of the US included 'old lady' and 'old man' for a person's significant other
- Make sure characters don't use language more modern than their time period – if you're unsure when a word was coined, Google its etymology
- Use regional accent details

The third suggestion should be used in moderation. Trying to recreate how different groups speak in dialogue using written accents can create stereotypes. This is particularly the case when there are sensitive issues of culture or race involved. Read this post for tips on creating regional speech patterns without using stereotypes as a crutch.

Show characters' unique personalities in their speech

What do we mean when we talk about a character's 'voice'? 'Voice' in characterization refers to two things:

1. The actual way a person's voice sounds to the ear (details such as pitch, volume, placement (is it nasal or throaty?) and tone.
2. The personality that comes across in how a character expresses themselves. Do they seem blunt and bolshie? Or is their voice gentle, kind and reserved?

Pause for a second and think of people you know well. Write down an adjective (describing word) that sums up their voice for you. What creates this effect? Are they loud? Soft-spoken? Confident? Self-doubting? Comical?

Include brief descriptions of voice when you are writing character sketches for your outline. You can create full, detailed character outlines using Now Novel's dashboard process. Decide:

1   What a character's general personality will be: Are they sanguine/happy-go-lucky, melancholic, plodding and pragmatic, irritable and aggressive?
2   How these personality details could show in your character's voice – an irritable character could curse a lot, while a melancholic character may enjoy grumbling. Also think of ways characters can be against type. A deeply melancholic character could put on a bright, sunny voice to avoid dragging others down, for example.
3   Think of other elements of speech, such as whether a character is a greater talker or listener.

Remember to use gestures or beats too to make characters' speech have even more personality. These can reinforce or contradict what a character says. They also help you to be more nuanced about what a character feels while they are talking. Does the character speak with dramatic, outsized gestures? Might your character have memorable recurring gestures such as running a hand through her hair or taking off his glasses and polishing them? Believable dialogue involves the character as a fully embodied person, not just a talking head.

Find more of our articles on describing characters via our character writing hub.

Show background in how characters talk

Think about each character's background and how that may affect the character's speech. How educated is the character, and does that show in the character's speech? Where is the character from? What is the character's social class?

Perhaps your character grew up poor in an uneducated family and has returned home. How does the character feel about coming home and her family and old neighbours? Maybe she has picked up words and phrases in the big city that people poke fun at her for using. Details such as these in characters' speech bring them to life, and add vivid colour to character portraits. For the same example, the character could resent or feel embarrassed of where she comes from. In that case, she might deliberately speak in a mannered way that sets her apart from her family back home.

How we speak isn't entirely arbitrary. We might talk a certain way because we've embraced a subculture and particular identity, for example. Think about how 'bros' perform their masculinity to each other. They might speak quite differently when conversing with a grandparent versus a friend. Maybe their language is more 'proper' and less slang-filled when speaking to an elder. Or maybe they make no effort to modulate their speech at all. Even this can suggest your character's personality – how much their speech changes depending on who they're with.

Paying attention to details such as these will help you write realistic dialogue and bring your characters' voices to life.

Use the 'shibboleth' to create realistic dialogue between outsiders and others

Sometimes how a person speaks can be particularly revealing if they are trying to assimilate into an unfamiliar group. The 'shibboleth' is a word that distinguishes one in-group from another. That group might be as small as a clique or as large as an entire nationality.

In the past, shibboleths have been used to identify spies or enemy combatants. But a Shibboleth can also trip your character up in a social sense. The wrong pronunciation or choice of vocabulary might reveal that person as someone who is 'different'. A foreign exchange student for example may stumble over strange idioms the locals use that don't make immediate sense. For example, an English character studying in Germany might be confused why everyone's talking about sausages and pony farms.

Show how characters' speech changes according to their situation

A character's speech should change according to the situation they're in.

If we spoke with one limited range of vocabulary and intonation all the time, we'd be boring speakers. Consider what speech might reveal about your character under duress. Perhaps a character who seems mild-mannered might suddenly burst into a flurry of obscenities?

Subtle differences in speech depending on what's happening can show details such as how your characters handle stress and tension.

Remember differences between everyday speech and written dialogue

Although we talk of 'realistic dialogue', much fictional dialogue is far from how people *actually* speak. Yet it creates the *effect* of realistic speech. Here are important differences to remember when creating characters' voices and the unique things they say:

- Good dialogue rarely represents ordinary speech accurately. It generally leaves out the 'Hi, who's speaking?' as well as other commonplace stock phrases and words

- In day to day speech, we obviously don't have 'he said' and 'she said' punctuating our conversations. Try to keep dialogue tags to a minimum. Remove them where it's clear from context who has just spoken. And use actions and gestures leading into or following from dialogue to show who the speaker is

- A few writers can get away with writing in dialect, but again, here is where it is better to create the *impression* of the way a character speaks. A little goes a long way. Don't make every single phrase a culturally-specific idiom or exclamation

- Similarly, avoid overuse of punctuation marks like exclamation marks and ellipses. These are dramatic effects and the words characters use and their ideas should do most of the expressive 'heavy lifting'

Writing for multiple characters

(from https://www.nownovel.com/blog/writing-dialogue-multiple-characters/)

1. Place your characters clearly within your scene

In a stage play, it's easy to tell who's speaking most of the time because the characters are positioned on the stage so that we know where each voice is coming from. We don't have this aural (hearing) element in a book, of course. To write clearer dialogue between multiple characters, begin by placing characters clearly in a scene.

For example, imagine a tense exchange in a kitchen. If you seat one character mid-activity (e.g. chopping onions), and have the other two standing by a sink, you can show who is speaking by dropping in these elements of 'staging':

Sarah was chopping onions, scrunching her eyes tight and trying not to remove a thumb.

"Could you two stop bickering for a second?" She put down her knife, glaring over to where Tom and Judy lounged against the double sink.

Tom turned to wash his hands, grumbling, "I only came in to wash my hands. Why do we always end up talking politics anyway?"

"Because yours are so freaking shitty," Judy said, her voice soft as Sarah caught her eye, showing with a withering stare her displeasure at her daughter's casual cursing.

Here the simple actions and objects in the scene – the table with the vegetables, the sinks, give us a sense of characters' position in relation to each other.

Note how you don't need endless 'he said' and 'she said' (dialogue tags). There's only one 'said' (Judy's) in this piece, yet it's clear throughout (through character placement and action) who is saying what.

2. Practice writing dialogue with and without closeups

Another convention we have in film and TV that we achieve differently in writing is the 'close-up'. In a show, we might see a close-up of a character's face as they deliver a particularly emotional, funny or beguiling line. In dialogue in books, we have to achieve these effects using character description.

As is the case in TV and film, be sparing with visual closeups of characters in dialogue. Showing characters' faces is a useful way to describe how characters react to conversation when there are more than two in a scene. Yet if every new line of dialogue is an animated facial description, your story could start to read like a soap opera or children's book. For example:

Sarah stopped chopping.

"Will you stop this continuous bickering?" She glared at her children.

Tom glowered and turned his back to wash his hands, grumbling, "I only came in to wash my hands. Why do we always end up talking politics anyway?"

Judy rolled her eyes. "Because yours are so shitty," she smirked, but Sarah caught her eye and glared, showing her displeasure at her daughter's casual cursing.

Although this isn't 'wrong', *balance* is key. Here, the continuous focus on characters' facial expressions is at least broken up and given variety by Tom washing his hands.

Practice rewriting a piece of dialogue with facial descriptions for every line of dialogue. Then try rewrite the same dialogue and make characters' words communicate the emotions their faces showed before. Take out any narration describing their faces. Which works better?

3. Give each character a distinctive voice

'Voice' is a crucial element of writing dialogue. In stage, film and TV we have the sound of individual characters' voices and their identifying features (the way they laugh, if they sigh a lot when they're sad or bored, etc.) to tell characters apart. In writing, dialogue needs to convey these differentiating elements with words.

When we talk about characters' 'voices', we don't just mean the *sound* of a voice. It's also the character – the personality – that shines through their speech. Details such as:

- Favourite subjects (for example, a Charles Dickens character might humble-brag a lot about how poor they were growing up to show others they're a self-made man)
- Striking vocal features (a high/low/soft/loud voice, speaking fast, speaking slow, slurred speech)
- Vocabulary (does a character speak mostly in elegant, complex phrases, or is their speech rough around the edges?)
- Accent – this is something that's easy to overdo. Read tips on writing accents and dialects without stereotyping characters here

Here's an example from George Eliot's classic novel *Middlemarch* illustrating the above. The character Sir James wooing Dorothea, yet she's more interested in the dry, pious Mr Casaubon and is annoyed by Sir James' attention. Dorothea's sister Celia is more interested in Sir James herself. Sir James starts:

'I saw you on Saturday cantering over the hill on a nag not worthy of you. My groom shall bring Corydon for you every day, if you will only mention the time.'
'Thank you, you are very good. I mean to give up riding. I shall not ride any more,' said Dorothea, urged to this brusque resolution by a little annoyance that Sir James would be soliciting her attention when she wanted to give it all to Mr Casaubon.
'No, that is too hard,' said Sir James, in a tone of reproach that showed strong interest. 'Your sister is given to self-mortification, is she not?' he continued, turning to Celia, who sat at his right hand.
'I think she is,' said Celia, feeling afraid lest she should say something that would not please her sister, and blushing as prettily as possible above her necklace.

The tone of Sir James' voice is chivalrous. Single-minded Dorothea's voice by comparison is curt, abrupt. Her sentences are short and full of purpose ('You are… I mean… I shall not').

Compare to Celia's voice, which is more uncertain, and shows how the younger sister tiptoes around her older sister because of Dorothea's high standards regarding people's words and behaviour.

James' subject (lending Dorothea a horse to ride) is typical of the character. He appears generous and affable. Solicitous (aiming to please) suggestions are typical of him. Celia's uncertainty and hesitance in her dialogue is similarly typical. Through the *kinds* of things characters say, we tell them apart in dialogue easier. Eliot also uses small elements of staging (Celia sitting at James' right hand) to clarify the focal character for each line of dialogue.

4. Use dialogue tags where necessary to keep dialogue clear

Dialogue tags are a necessary evil – use too many of them in one conversation between characters, and your reader becomes too aware of the author's presence.

For example, you could solve the problem of how to write dialogue between multiple characters simply by putting '[character name] said' after each utterance:

'I want to go to the beach,' James said.
'Ugh, too much sand,' Jane said.
'You're such a killjoy,' Sarah said.

This isn't *completely* bad. The characters' voices are at least differentiated clearly: Jane is clearly dramatic and perhaps a little negative. Sarah's accusing tone makes her sound like the scolding, judgmental one of the group. James simply states a clear desire, thus his voice is more neutral.

Even so, the end-placement of each dialogue tag is clunky. You could rewrite the same better, thus:

'I want to go to the beach.'
'Ugh, *why*, James? Too much sand!' Jane shuddered.
'You're such a killjoy,' Sarah said.

Here's why the above is better:

- There's more anticipation and delay: We wonder (until the next line), who spoke the desire to go to the beach
- The author's presence is subtler (there's less of a sense of 'here the author is using dialogue tags to show who's speaking') – dialogue tags are less intrusive
- Some tags are replaced with gesture and action, emphasizing the emotion *behind* characters' words ('Jane shuddered')
- We know who said the first line thanks to another character using the speaker's name in response – *context* supplies some of the information

Try write a piece of dialogue using 'he/she/other pronoun said' after every utterance. Then leave some lines without dialogue tags, change others to gestures or actions, and think carefully about where a simply dialogue tag ('said') would make the most sense.

Context and Subtext

Context

Context is all about situation: where, why and how something comes about. Context includes the circumstances in which your characters find themselves, and the influences that surround them and shape their exchanges. Context is vital to crafting a convincing narrative that will grip your readers.

Context can be a little tricky to handle, however, because it involves multiple aspects of a scene. You need to keep track of your characters and their particular temperaments and motives; the setting in which the dialogue takes place and how that might impact on the conversation; the point at which the dialogue takes place in your overall story; and, most importantly, what you hope to *achieve* through this scene – in other words, the scene's purpose.

In a scene with dialogue, the reader needs to know

1   **Why is that dialogue taking place?** Why do the characters involved need to have this conversation. The conversation should be a natural consequence of preceeding events in the story, or the motivations and desires of the characters, some of whom at least will be expecting to get something out that conversation. Does the conversation arise because one or more characters drives the initiation, or does it come about because of a random or unrelated event and the characters are then taking advantage of the circumstances? Is there a specific pretext to the conversation? Maybe one character has heard a rumour about another character and wants to confirm that rumour by talking to a third character. Having established the point of initiation for the conversation consider how this might affect the conversation.   Would a confrontation result in a denial in the case of the rumour? Or a confession? Or is it the nature of the initiating character to use a more subtle approach?

2   **Who is involved?** What are the personalities and temperaments of the characters involved. The tone and content f the dialogue needs to reflect the nature of the characters, rather than simply conveying information to the reader. The dialogue should develop the characters involved. Inserting an extra character into the dialogue may help enhance the tension or atmosphere of the scene, particularly if they are a mismatch for the existing characters, or if they bring knowledge of something the other characters do not know. If the characters involved are too similar this can lead to a bland scene and uninteresting dialogue.

3   **Where is the scene set?** Setting enhances the tone of the scene and its dialogue. It may even by why the conversation takes place (eg a couple parting at an airport). The setting will often dictate the nature of the conversation. For instance a couple breaking up in the privacy of their kitchen will behave and speak differently to what they would do say if they were breaking up in a restaurant or at a wedding or indeed at a funeral. In a public place the recipient of the breakup may feel they wish to hide their surprise at being dumped, but in the privacy of their flat they may well be more outspoken. If the breakup occurs at a wedding party, then there is the pathos of the contrast of the happy bride and groom and the unhappy protagonists particularly if the couple have to hide their feelings when talking to the other guests. Thus the scene

adds drama and tension.

Use of the setting may also be used to balance the dialogue. Details of what is happening in the setting (background activity such as people arriving, meals being serves, snippets of surrounding conversations, a description of the physical setting) all can be used to punctuate and pace the dialogue between the main characters. In a dimly lit pub for instance, the characters may have to lean closer to each other, adding to the intimate nature of the conversation.

4   **When does the conversation take place?** What time of day does the dialogue take place? How does this affect the characters. If they have just woken up they may be sleepy? If it is late at night they might be coming back from the pub, so it could be boozy, boastful talk. Is it winter, summer etc?   When does the conversation take place in the context of the story?   What do the characters know at this point in the plot and what are they prepared to reveal?   The conversation should add to the timeline and progress of the story.

5   **What is the point?** How does the dialogue drive the story forward. The content of the conversation provides information to the characters (and the reader) and advances and develops the plot and the characters. During every exchange something has to be at stake. It need not be a life changing issue, but it does need to add purpose to the conversation. Not all conversations are high drama, but there needs to be some level of tension and potentially a release to keep the reader interested. A conversation may reveal a major secret or it might show some subtle change in the relationship between the characters. In any case the conversation needs to add to the reader's understanding or experience of the story to earn its place in the story.

Subtext

Subtext is the implied and unspoken information beneath the surface of your dialogue. The subtext in real life dialogue is often more interesting and revealing than the surface meaning. Subtext is all about implication: it's the secondary message that is conveyed not by *what* is said, but what is *not said* or the *way* things are said . Subtext requires subtle methods of conveying the deeper meaning of the dialogue without spelling it out. Subtext is very much a question of showing rather than telling. Subtext can emerge through a character's body language, emotions, thoughts, or history. Cultivating a particular atmosphere or escalating tension and suspense can also inform the subtext of a particular scene.

The layers of secondary meaning in a characters supposedly innocent observations are implied by tone, body language, thought and the history the characters share. The subtext reveals the truth of your characters: their feelings, desires and intentions. Sometimes subtext is implied by a tense moment between two characters in conversation. Subtext can also be the cause of tension. Either way subtext heightens the suspense and drama in your novel.

Hints and tips

1   Show, don't tell. Let the reader experience the story for themselves, rather than spelling it out for them.
2   Get in late, leave early. There is no need to record every word in a conversation. The reader is smart, and they'll find it patronizing if you explain the obvious.

3   Cut and cut again. Start the scene when the dialogue is already in full progress, rather than starting with endless pleasantries Ending the scene on a dramatic line is more effective than ending with a bunch of 'goodbyes'. It is okay if the dialogue on the page may be quite unrealistically to the point – readers want dialogue that moves the story along.

4   Minimise the use dialogue tags – only include them when it's necessary to indicate to the reader who is talking, eg at the start of a dialogue or after a pause.

5   Use 'said' as dialogue tag the great majority of the time. Only creative or interesting tags when they are needed for impact or to inform the tone of a character's speech – mostly though their tone and emotion should be clear from the content of their speech. Dialogue tags such as 'Fred said angrily' or 'Peter said in disbelief' shouldn't be necessary, because these emotions should be clear from the situation and what the characters say. Use waves of tension and release. Characters my say unexpected things, disagree argue or dispute with passionate. If everyone agrees with each other all the time, it makes for dull reading. Dialogue should be about conflict. This doesn't mean that your characters should be arguing all the time (though the odd altercation does add interest to the narrative); rather, it means that they each come to the conversation with their own intentions, views and motives. Ensure that one or more of your participants don't simply become a passive recipient of another character's objective.

6   Never lose sight of the fact that dialogue should always have a purpose. It may be to major plot twist or simply to enhance characterization but each piece of dialogue should earn its place on the page.

7   Avoid using dialogue for exposition (in other words, explaining the nitty gritty of what's going on). Of course, there will be certain information you need your reader to know, but don't make characters speak solely to info dump.

8   Break up dialogue with action or description of the setting, background action and what the characters are doing. Control the pace of the dialogue (and the scene) so that reader doesn't get exhausted or overwhelmed by excessively long chunks of dialogue.

9   What isn't said is often just as important as what *is* said. The secrets and thoughts that a character chooses to keep to themselves are especially revealing of their true nature.

Tips for making dialogue sound more natural:

1   Use contractions like 'don't', 'can't' and 'won't' to ensure that your characters' dialogue unless the speech is formal.   Avoiding such contractions (ie use do not etc) may help when depicting the speech of someone speaking in what is not their first language.

2   Natural speech often uses phrases or shortened sentences, rather than complete, fully grammatical ones.

3   Vary the length of your sentences to improves the flow and pace.

4   Having characters interrupt one another can be effective where emotions (whether excitement or anger) are running high. stumble and stutter. Hesitations and restarts can be used to heighten emotional intensity.

5   Slang and colloquialisms work well to make dialogue sound more realistic, but don't overdo it or you'll annoy your readers. Also, keep in mind that slang ages very quickly and may make your novel seem quaint in a few years' time.

6   The setting for a scene of dialogue needs to be considered when selecting accents, and speech mannerisms etc.

7   Don't allow one character to speak for too long. Monologues are unusual in real life and can become boring.

8   Character will change the way they speak depending on the situation and who they are talking to. Are they dominant character or subservient in that particular conversation? Are they trying to be sympathetic and supportive or indifferent or aggressive?
9   Read the dialogue aloud – if it does not sound right, it is not right!

Tips for improving characterization through dialogue

1   A character's voice will depend on their age, education and background.
2   Each character will have a personal vocabulary, that again depends on their age, education and background. Groups of characters of similar age and background will share a similar vocabulary which will then contrast with the vocabularly and patterns of speech od characters from a different generation.
3   Beware of stereotyping.
4   Use accents and dialects to enhance characterization, but with discretion.. Be sure that you use accents thoughtfully and with discretion.
5   Evasiveness and silence can play a powerful part of a dialogue.

Writing dialogue in context

One of the tools a writer has that instantly draws a reader into the story is credible dialogue. It gives the sense that the characters are real and that the history in the novel is true.

How the characters speak in a story depends on several factors:

- Where they live
- The time period in which they live
- Their age
- Their ethnic and cultural background
- Their class
- Their emotional state

Dialogue must serve the story and the characters, it must move the story forward, increase or release suspense, give the readers insights into the nature of the character(s) and their motivations and desires.

Dialogue represents the interaction that occurs between characters as they speak. While it must have a natural flow, it can fragmentary, can contain slang or use dialects. Realistic dialogue is not simply a transcription of a real-life conversation, it is instead an edited and curated version of that conversation.

Readers need to build up a picture of the characters in their setting, so dialogue should refer to appearance, setting, actions, or thoughts. The reader should be able to imagine where the characters are, what they are doing, how they are doing it and what their thoughts are from the clues in the dialogue. Without this material the characters simply become talking heads.

If dialogue in a piece of historical fiction is simply an accurate reflection of the language of that period then it will generally be unappealing and ineffective in terms of engaging the readers. Interest and in advancing the story. For example,

Ther is, at the west syde of Ytaille,
Doun at the roote of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playne, habundant of vitaille,
Where many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde
That founded were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many another delitable sighte,
And Saluces this noble contree highte.

This is from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, written in the 1300s. It contains words some words that we still use today and others whose meaning that we probably guess, eg toun for town and fadres for fathers. Other words though are completely opaque to the modern reader, eg highte (which means name of something).

Words also change over time. The word lusty meant joyful or pleasant to Chaucer. To us today it means strong sexual desire. In reading Chaucer's poem, it is hard for us, as casual readers, to blank out our knowledge of the modern meaning of the word and get to Chaucer's original intentions.

These considerations mean that, in historical fiction, we need to use a representation of the characters' dialogue rather than an exact facsimile. We can use words and even spellings that were in current use in the historical period we are describing, but only if we account for how the modern reader, in their modern context, will respond to these words and spellings.

On the other side of the coin, dialogue in historical fiction cannot simply be the same as in contemporary prose. If the historical fiction is set in year X, then after year X speech, language and writing styles will have developed changed as will have the physical world. Various elements of modern language are inappropriate for the year X and should be excluded. For example:

- Physical anachronisms - a person in middle ages shouldn't be talking about "faster than an airplane" or "sharper than a rapier" since those things did not yet exist
- Other anachronisms - a medieval monk will not know that the Earth goes round the sun, and certainly won't know modern physics, biology or chemistry, so these cannot be discussed. Equally modern views on philosophy, religion, economics etc would also be an anachronism in a medieval setting.
- Slang expressions that did not exist in the year X should also be omitted. A medieval knight that says 'I'll be back In a mo.' Is likely to lack authenticity in the readers eyes. Current slang is out of place in a novel with historical characters.

The writer must be careful to only allow the characters to say what they would be allowed to say, given the context and period of the story.

Accents are caused by the influence of a speaker's native language or native dialect on the English words they speak. The differences can be found in pronunciation, diction (word choice), syntax (word order), grammar (how parts of speech are structured), and idiom (peculiarities of certain phrases). Accent and dialect can convey differences in ethnicity, geography, demographics, class, education, and culture.

On the surface of it then, the writer of historical fiction is between a rock and a hard place. They cannot use the words that the characters would really have spoken (as many readers won't understand these, particular the further back in history the fiction is set), but the writer must also avoid modern speech, syntax and vocabulary. The solution adopted by many authors is to find a middle ground, where the characters use words to convey the tone, context snd setting of what is being said, without appearing too modern or too historical.

This approach inevitably means the the writer must allow certain *word choice* anachronisms. If for instance, a Saxon character in 900 says "God knows that children are innocent ..." this is an anachronism because the word 'knows', meaning to experience or have knowledge of did not come into use until after 1200. The correct sentence would be "Good woot that children are innocent… " because modern readers would not necessarily understand what was meant from the context (and making them work too hard decoding many unknown words is likely to make them lose interest anyway). The reader will forgive the author substituting "knows" for "woot" because it is facilitates the reader's understanding and does not impact on the drama or characterisation depicted in the prose. The reader might be less happy if the author had written "Good appreciates that children are innocent … " as the use of appreciate in that way only came into English in about 1650. Of course, most readers have no direct knowledge of the etymology of the words in English and so are extremely unlikely to

consciously analyse and identify words that are badly chosen in this way. But we can speculate that many readers have a subconscious knowledge of what is anachronistic and what is not. This subconscious knowledge would be built up over time based on the historical fiction (or non fiction) has already encountered in books films, TV and other media.

Words have a finite lifetime, albeit often occupying many centuries. Even phrases have this issue. In medieval times they would say "sad corage" when they wanted to give the impression of "steadfast spirit".

Although we cannot write in medieval language as modern readers would not know how to interpret it. We therefore are forced to use modern words. We have to use words that came into being after our time period. The author should nevertheless seed the dialogue with elements that suggest the time period in question. This means the judicious use of syntax, vocabulary and ?????????????????

In historical fiction (as in any fiction) a character's speech should not only reflect their status in life and their character, but also their intellectual interests, their personality, their motivations, their class and life history. A writer must therefore build up a list of words, phrases and syntactic elements that reflect the times that they are writing and the nature of the character who is speaking. The writer can allocate different types of phrases, or different levels of formality to each character or group of characters to provide differentiation. While the writer may write mostly using modern English, the inclusion of a few of these elements will make the reader feel that the dialogue authentically reflects the period. Often a writer will rely on their instinct for the appropriate types of expression and words. Writers can also use various sources to build up their library of phrases etc:

- Written materials from the time period in question, including books, poems, songs, plays, religious manuscripts - these provide actual examples of the language at use in the period and may well need modification and simplification before they are suitable for the modern reader.
- The conventions established by other writers in books, poems, Tv, radio, films, stage drama that depicts the period in question.

	You shall stay and dine with me.
	Though ever so willing, I cannot
	What prevents you?
	Do you say the real truth in speaking to me this?
	I give you my word for it.
	I wonder at it.
	I am persuaded of the contrary. I can hardly believe it.
	Well met, Sir, for I can tell you some very interesting news.
	There is talk of a siege…
	I assure you that it is an untruth.

In *The Gobetween* L.P. Hartley said, *'The past is a foreign country - they do things differently there.'* This underlines that, in a sense, characters from the past speak in a foreign language - the language of that time. (Of course, if they are in a foreign country as well, eg as in Napoleonic France then they truly do speak in a foreign language, as well as speaking in a historic version of that language.). It seems reasonable therefore that the writer can apply similar techniques when writing in foreign accents and writing historical dialogue. This can involve nonstandard spellings and contractions. In either case, the objective is to write dialogue that sounds authentic to a remote place or a remote time.

Today's readers don't have much patience when decoding phonetic spellings and odd contractions so the writer must be careful not to overdo this. This is contrast to Victorian literature where it was seen to be desirable to use every scrap of phonetic pronunciation to render a character realistic. In *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Mark Twain wrote:

> *Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin' en grab her up in my arms, en say, 'Oh, de po' little thing! De Lord God Amighty fogive po' ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to fogive hisself as long's he live!' Oh, she was plumb deef en dumb, Huck, plumb deef en dumb—en I'd ben atreat'n her so!*

It's easy to become annoyed with this writing style, as almost every word needs to be examined to decipher its pronunciation and meaning. The effect of the the unusual spellings and contractions is to slow the reader down and to pull them out of the story. From our modern viewpoint, we would conclude that this style of writing is paying less attention to what's being said than to how it's being said.

It is clear that moderation and care is needed when writing historical dialogue. Careful research is needed and then judicious use of a small number of nonstandard spellings and contractions combined with the appropriate vocabulary. Diana Gabaldon produces believable Scottish brogue in her novel *Outlander*. She limits herself to a just a few 'Scottish' words: *aye* (yes), *nae* (no), *ye* (you), *dinnae* (didn't), *canna* (cannot), *'twas* (it was), *laird* (lord).

> *There was nae doubt, ye see, of Colum's courage, nor yet of his mind, but only of his body. 'Twas clear he'd never be able to lead his men into battle again. . . . So a suggestion was made that Colum be allowed to become laird, as he should in the ordinary way, and Dougal be made war chieftain, to lead the clan in time of battle.*

Diction, syntax and idiom are equally important for depicting accents in modern dialogue as well as representing historical dialogue. To avoid overusing nonstandard spellings and contractions, it can ben more effective to rely on diction, syntax, and idiom to convey the dialogue of a particular character.

Diction relates to word choice. Different historical periods (as well as different geographies or cultures) use different words to convey the same meaning, or the same word to convey a different meaning. In the UK *fish and chips* is a common take away while in North Americans this is much more likely to be *burger and fries*. Modern Jamaicans don't have a past tense for the word *come*. So if they say, "She come to my house yesterday," it's perfectly grammatically correct for them, not an indicator of class or education.

Syntax relates to word order. In German, Spanish, and French, adverbs sometimes follow verbs rather than precede them. In French and Spanish, adjectives typically follow the noun instead of preceding it, A native Spanish or French speaker might say, for *la casa blanca* or *la maison blanche*, "the house is white" rather than "the white house." Some Indian dialects end their sentences with verbs, so might say "That is not for her to be knowing." instead of saying "She doesn't know that" when expressing that thought in English.

Be aware of subtleties in speech patterns as well as word choice. For example, a British person would likely say "I've not seen the postman come round in days," rather than the more North American "I haven't seen the mail lady come by in days."

An idiom is an expression that is unique to a particular dialect or language. For example, in heaving rain, an English speaker might say "sheeting stair rods" or "It's raining cats and dogs"? The corresponding idiom in Spanish is *llueve a cántaros*, which translates to, "It's raining pitchers." So, if the writer uses this phrase for a Spanish character who is speaking English this misuse of idiom adds realism the dialogue.

Examples of how syntax and diction work in different dialects:

British: He comes home quite often. (Or he quite often comes home.)
German: He comes often home.
French: He comes often home.
North American English: He comes home a lot.
Jamaican: He come home for some time now.
Creole: He returns home often.
Certain types of African American dialects: He be coming home.
East Indian: Often it is home that he comes.

Tips

1. Write the dialogue in standard English first. Make sure you have the meaning correctly depicted in the dialogue and you are clear in your mind about any subtle nuances that the dialogue is intended to depict. Then convert it into the appropriate historical period, accent or geography.
2. If a character is speaking in a second language, then include the occasional word from their primary language. This will remind the reader of the character's background. Eg "Adios," Eduardo said, waving. "I see you *mañana*." Of course, these must be words that a reader will understand, usually from their context.]
3. Don't overdo things. If a character speaks with poor or incorrect grammar, this rapidly becomes tiring for the reader.
4. Read the dialogue out loud, or even better get someone else to read it to you. The dialogue should still retain a rhythm and consistency.
5. Be consistent in the way you depict the speech of a given character throughout the work.
6. Simulate the syntax of the time
7. Use vocabulary from the period
8. Use less favoured vocabulary from today ; = bedecked", or "brethren", or "girded", or "tarry

9. Prithee, mayhap, anon - don't work for me.
10. Less is often more.

Examples

"Very beautiful!" repeated Hugh and smiled. But it was a concerned and rueful smile. Such a creature, wilful, handsome, daring, let loose in a countryside waiting for winter and menaced by discord, might all too easily come to grief.

"Even sub-priors," said Cadfael mildly, stirring the bubbling cough linctus he was simmering over his brazier in the workshop, "have eyes. But with her youth, she would be vulnerable even if she were ugly. Well, for all we know they may be snug and safe in shelter this moment. A great pity this uncle of theirs is of the other persuasion and cannot get countenance to do his own hunting."

"And newly back from Jerusalem," mused Hugh, "no way to blame for what his faction did to Worcester. He'll be too recent in the service to be known to you, I suppose?"

"Another generation, lad. It's twenty-six years since I left the Holy Land." Cadfael lifted his pot from the brazier and stood it aside on the earth floor to cool gradually overnight. He straightened his back carefully. He was not so far from sixty, even it he did not look it by a dozen years.

"Everything will be changed there now, I doubt. The lustre soon tarnished. From which port did they say he sailed?"

Peters, Ellis. *The Virgin In The Ice* (Chronicles Of Brother Cadfael) . Head of Zeus. Kindle Edition.

"What of the roads?" he asked the messenger, who was stabling his own beast as Cadfael chose his. "You made good time here, and so must I back."

Peters, Ellis. The Virgin In The Ice (Chronicles Of Brother Cadfael) . Head of Zeus. Kindle Edition.

"She is very brave," he said judicially, giving his sister her due, "but very obstinate and self-willed."

Peters, Ellis. *The Virgin In The Ice* (Chronicles Of Brother Cadfael) . Head of Zeus. Kindle Edition.

"You think she sent him word to come and fetch her?" asked Hugh. "This was no abduction? She went willingly?"

"She went gaily!" Yves asserted indignantly. "I heard her laughing. Yes, she sent for him, and he came. And that was why she would go that way, for he must have a manor close by, and she knew she could whistle him to her. She will have a great dower," said the baron's heir solemnly, his round, childish cheeks flushing red with outrage. "And my sister would never endure to have her marriage made for her in the becoming way, if it went against her choice. I never knew a rule she would not break, shamelessly…"

Peters, Ellis. *The Virgin In The Ice* (Chronicles Of Brother Cadfael) . Head of Zeus. Kindle Edition.

'And you have a son,' the cardinal says. 'Or should I say, you have one son you give your name to. But I suspect there are some you don't know, running around on the banks of the Thames?'

'I hope not. I wasn't fifteen when I ran away.' It amuses Wolsey, that he doesn't know his age. The cardinal peers down through the layers of society, to a stratum well below his own, as the butcher's beef-fed son; to a place where his servant is born, on a day unknown, in deep obscurity. His father was no doubt drunk at his birth; his mother, understandably, was preoccupied. Kat has assigned him a date; he is grateful for it.

'Well, fifteen …' the cardinal says. 'But at fifteen I suppose you could do it? I know I could. Now I have a son, your boatman on the river has a son, your beggar on the street has a son, your would-be murderers in Yorkshire no doubt have sons who will be sworn to pursue you in the next generation, and you yourself, as we have agreed, have spawned a whole tribe of riverine brawlers – but the king, alone, has no son. Whose fault is that?'

'God's?'

'Nearer than God?' '

'The queen?'

'More responsible for everything than the queen?'

He can't help a broad smile.. 'Yourself, Your Grace.'

'Myself, My Grace. What am I going to do about it? I tell you what I might do. I might send Master Stephen to Rome to sound out the Curia. But then I need him here …'

Wolsey looks at his expression and laughs. Squabbling underlings! He knows quite well that, dissatisfied with their original parentage, they are fighting to be his favourite son. 'Whatever you think of Master Stephen, he is well grounded in canon law, and a very persuasive fellow, except when he tries to persuade you. I will tell you –' He breaks off; he leans forward, he puts his great lion's head in his hands, the head that would indeed have worn the papal tiara, if at the last election the right money had been paid out to the right people. 'I have begged him,' the cardinal says. 'Thomas, I sank to my knees and from that humble posture I tried to dissuade him. Majesty, I said, be guided by me. Nothing will ensue, if you wish to be rid of your wife, but a great deal of trouble and expense.'

'And he said …?'

'He held up a finger. In warning. "Never," he said, "call that dear lady my wife, until you can show me why she is, and how it can be so. Till then, call her my sister, my dear sister. Since she was quite certainly my brother's wife, before going through a form of marriage with me."'

You will never draw from Wolsey a word that is disloyal to the king. 'What it is,' he says, 'it's …' he hesitates over the word, 'it's, in my opinion … preposterous. Though my opinion, of course, does not go out of this room. Oh, don't doubt it, there were those at the time who raised their eyebrows over the dispensation. And year by year there were persons who would murmur in the king's ear; he didn't listen, though now I must believe that he heard. But you know the king was the most uxorious of men. Any doubts were quashed.' He places a hand, softly and firmly, down on his desk. 'They were quashed and quashed.'

But there is no doubt of what Henry wants now. An annulment. A declaration that his marriage never existed. 'For eighteen years,' the cardinal says, 'he has been under a mistake. He has told his confessor that he has eighteen years' worth of sin to expiate.'

He waits, for some gratifying small reaction. His servant simply looks back at him: taking it for granted that the seal of the confessional is broken at the cardinal's convenience.

'So if you send Master Stephen to Rome,' he says, 'it will give the king's whim, if I may –'

The cardinal nods: you may so term it.

'– an international airing?'

Master Stephen may go discreetly. As it were, for a private papal blessing.'

'You don't understand Rome.'

Wolsey can't contradict him. He has never felt the chill at the nape of the neck that makes you look over your shoulder when, passing from the Tiber's golden light, you move into some great bloc of shadow. By some fallen column, by some chaste ruin, the thieves of integrity wait, some bishop's whore, some nephew-of-a-nephew, some monied seducer with furred breath; he feels, sometimes, fortunate to have escaped that city with his soul intact.

'Put simply,' he says, 'the Pope's spies will guess what Stephen's about while he is still packing his vestments, and the cardinals and the secretaries will have time to fix their prices. If you must send him, give him a great deal of ready money. Those cardinals don't take promises; what they really like is a bag of gold to placate their bankers, because they're mostly run out of credit.' He shrugs. 'I know this.'

'I should send you,' the cardinal says, jolly. 'You could offer Pope Clement a loan.'

Why not? He knows the money markets; it could probably be arranged. If he were Clement, he would borrow heavily this year to hire in troops to ring his territories. It's probably too late; for the summer season's fighting, you need to be recruiting by Candlemas. He says, 'Will you not start the king's suit within your own jurisdiction? Make him take the first steps, then he will see if he really wants what he says he wants.'

'That is my intention. What I mean to do is to convene a small court here in London. We will approach him in a shocked fashion: King Harry, you appear to have lived all these years in an unlawful manner, with a woman not your wife. He hates – saving His Majesty – to appear in the wrong: which is where we must put him, very firmly. Possibly he will forget that the original scruples were his. Possibly he will shout at us and hasten in a fit of indignation back to the queen. If not, then I must have the dispensation revoked, here or in Rome, and if I succeed in parting him from Katherine, I shall marry him, smartly, to a French princess.'

No need to ask if the cardinal has any particular princess in mind. He has not one but two or three. He never lives in a single reality, but in a shifting, shadow-mesh of diplomatic possibilities. While he is doing his best to keep the king married to Queen Katherine and her Spanish-Imperial family, by begging Henry to forget his scruples, he will also plan for an alternative world, in which the king's scruples must be heeded, and the marriage to Katherine is void. Once that nullity is recognised – and the last eighteen years of sin and suffering wiped from the page – he will readjust the balance of Europe, allying England with France, forming a power bloc to oppose the young Emperor Charles, Katherine's nephew. And all outcomes are likely, all outcomes can be managed, even massaged into desirability: prayer and pressure, pressure and prayer, everything that comes to pass will pass by God's design, a design re-envisaged

and redrawn, with helpful emendations, by the cardinal. He used to say, 'The king will do such-and-such.' Then he began to say, 'We will do such-and-such.' Now he says, 'This is what I will do.'

'But what will happen to the queen?' he asks. 'If he casts her off, where will she go?'

'Convents can be comfortable.' 'Perhaps she will go home to Spain.'

'No, I think not. It is another country now. It is – what? – twenty-seven years since she landed in England.'

The cardinal sighs. 'I remember her, at her coming-in. Her ships, as you know, had been delayed by the weather, and she had been day upon day tossed in the Channel. The old king rode down the country, determined to meet her. She was then at Dogmersfield, at the Bishop of Bath's palace, and making slow progress towards London; it was November and, yes, it was raining. At his arriving, her household stood upon their Spanish manners: the princess must remain veiled, until her husband sees her on her wedding day. But you know the old king!'

He did not, of course; he was born on or about the date the old king, a renegade and a refugee all his life, fought his way to an unlikely throne. Wolsey talks as if he himself had witnessed everything, eye-witnessed it, and in a sense he has, for the recent past arranges itself only in the patterns acknowledged by his superior mind, and agreeable to his eye. He smiles.

'The old king, in his later years, the least thing could arouse his suspicion. He made some show of reining back to confer with his escort, and then he leapt – he was still a lean man – from the saddle, and told the Spanish to their faces, he would see her or else. My land and my laws, he said; we'll have no veils here. Why may I not see her, have I been cheated, is she deformed, is it that you are proposing to marry my son Arthur to a monster?'

Thomas thinks, he was being unnecessarily Welsh.

'Meanwhile her women had put the little creature into bed; or said they had, for they thought that in bed she would be safe against him. Not a bit. King Henry strode through the rooms, looking as if he had in mind to tear back the bedclothes. The women bundled her into some decency. He burst into the chamber. At the sight of her, he forgot his Latin. He stammered and backed out like a tongue-tied boy.'

The cardinal chuckled. 'And then when she first danced at court – our poor prince Arthur sat smiling on the dais, but the little girl could hardly sit still in her chair – no one knew the Spanish dances, so she took to the floor with one of her ladies. I will never forget that turn of her head, that moment when her beautiful red hair slid over one shoulder … There was no man who saw it who didn't imagine – though the dance was in fact very sedate … Ah dear. She was sixteen.' The cardinal looks into space and Thomas says, 'God forgive you?'

'God forgive us all. The old king was constantly taking his lust to confession. Prince Arthur died, then soon after the queen died, and when the old king found himself a widower, he thought he might marry Katherine himself. But then …' He lifts his princely shoulders. 'They couldn't agree over the dowry, you know. The old fox, Ferdinand, her father. He would fox you out of any payment due. But our present Majesty was a boy of ten when he danced at his brother's wedding, and, in my belief, it was there and then that he set his heart on the bride.'

They sit and think for a bit. It's sad, they both know it's sad. The old king freezing her out, keeping her in the kingdom and keeping her poor, unwilling to miss the part of the dowry he said was still owing, and equally unwilling to pay her widow's portion and let her go. But then it's interesting too, the extensive diplomatic contacts the

little girl picked up during those years, the expertise in playing off one interest against another. When Henry married her, he was eighteen, guileless. His father was no sooner dead than he claimed Katherine for his own. She was older than he was, and years of anxiety had sobered her and taken something from her looks. But the real woman was less vivid than the vision in his mind; he was greedy for what his older brother had owned. He felt again the little tremor of her hand, as she had rested it on his arm when he was a boy of ten. It was as if she had trusted him, as if – he told his intimates – she had recognised that she was never meant to be Arthur's wife, except in name; her body was reserved for him, the second son, upon whom she turned her beautiful blue-grey eyes, her compliant smile. She always loved me, the king would say. Seven years or so of diplomacy, if you can call it that, kept me from her side. But now I need fear no one. Rome has dispensed. The papers are in order. The alliances are set in place. I have married a virgin, since my poor brother did not touch her; I have married an alliance, her Spanish relatives; but, above all, I have married for love.

And now? Gone. Or as good as gone: half a lifetime waiting to be expunged, eased from the record.

'Ah, well,' the cardinal says. 'What will be the outcome? The king expects his own way, but she, she will be hard to move.'

There is another story about Katherine, a different story. Henry went to France to have a little war; he left Katherine as regent. Down came the Scots; they were well beaten, and at Flodden the head of their king cut off. It was Katherine, that pink-and-white angel, who proposed to send the head in a bag by the first crossing, to cheer up her husband in his camp. They dissuaded her; told her it was, as a gesture, un-English. She sent, instead, a letter. And with it, the surcoat in which the Scottish king had died, which was stiffened, black and crackling with his pumped-out blood.

The fire dies, an ashy log subsiding; the cardinal, wrapped in his dreams, rises from his chair and personally kicks it. He stands looking down, twisting the rings on his fingers, lost in thought. He shakes himself and says, 'Long day. Go home. Don't dream of Yorkshiremen.'

Thomas Cromwell is now a little over forty years old. He is a man of strong build, not tall. Various expressions are available to his face, and one is readable: an expression of stifled amusement. His hair is dark, heavy and waving, and his small eyes, which are of very strong sight, light up in conversation: so the Spanish ambassador will tell us, quite soon. It is said he knows by heart the entire New Testament in Latin, and so as a servant of the cardinal is apt – ready with a text if abbots flounder. His speech is low and rapid, his manner assured; he is at home in courtroom or waterfront, bishop's palace or inn yard. He can draft a contract, train a falcon, draw a map, stop a street fight, furnish a house and fix a jury. He will quote you a nice point in the old authors, from Plato to Plautus and back again. He knows new poetry, and can say it in Italian. He works all hours, first up and last to bed. He makes money and he spends it. He will take a bet on anything.

He rises to leave, says, 'If you did have a word with God and the sun came out, then the king could ride out with his gentlemen, and if he were not so fretted and confined then his spirits would rise, and he might not be thinking about Leviticus, and your life would be easier.'

'You only partly understand him. He enjoys theology, almost as much as he enjoys riding out.' He is at the door.
Wolsey says, 'By the way, the talk at court … His Grace the Duke of Norfolk is complaining that I have raised an evil spirit and directed it to follow him about. If anyone mentions it to you … just deny it.'

He stands in the doorway, smiling slowly. The cardinal smiles too, as if to say, I have saved the good wine till last. Don't I know how to make you happy? Then the cardinal drops his head over his papers. He is a man who, in England's service, scarcely needs to sleep; four hours will refresh him, and he will be up when Westminster's bells have rung in another wet, smoky, lightless April day.

'Good night,' he says. 'God bless you, Tom.'

Outside his people are waiting with lights to take him home. He has a house in Stepney but tonight he is going to his town house. A hand on his arm: Rafe Sadler, a slight young man with pale eyes.

'How was Yorkshire?' Rafe's smile flickers, the wind pulls the torch flame into a rainy blur.

'I haven't to speak of it; the cardinal fears it will give us bad dreams.' Rafe frowns. In all his twenty-one years he has never had bad dreams; sleeping securely under the Cromwell roof since he was seven, first at Fenchurch Street and now at the Austin Friars, he has grown up with a tidy mind, and his night-time worries are all rational ones: thieves, loose dogs, sudden holes in the road.

Mantel, Hilary. W*olf Hall:*(The Wolf Hall Trilogy, Book 1) (pp. 21-26). HarperCollins Publishers. Kindle Edition.

'Greetings, Father Prior,' said my horseman.

Something rose to a sitting posture in the bed, disturbing the greyhound, which leapt to the floor, and the something was an elderly, pink-cheeked monk, startled from his sleep.

'I left orders I was not to be disturbed,' he said.

My horseman shrugged. 'Not even for the Office?' he asked, and put out his hand to the dog, which crept beside him, wagging a bitten tail.

The sarcasm brought no reply.

The Prior dragged his coverings closer, humping his knees beneath him. 'I need rest,' he said, 'all the rest possible, to be in a fit state to receive the Bishop. You have heard the news?''

There are always rumours,' answered the horseman.

'This was not rumour. Sir John sent the message yesterday. The Bishop has already set out from Exeter and will be here on Monday, expecting hospitality and shelter for the night with us, after leaving Launceston.'

The horseman smiled. 'The Bishop times his visit well. Martinmas, and fresh meat killed for his dinner. He'll sleep with his belly full, you've no cause for worry.'

'No cause for worry?' The Prior's petulant voice touched a higher key. 'You think I can control my unruly mob? What kind of impression will they make upon that new broom of a Bishop, primed as he is to sweep the whole Diocese clean?'

Du Maurier, Daphne. *The House On The Strand* (Virago Modern Classics Book 125) (pp. 7-8). Little, Brown Book Group. Kindle Edition.

'They'll come to heel if you promise them reward for seemly behaviour. Keep in the good graces of Sir John Carminowe, that's all that matters.'

The Prior moved restlessly beneath his covers.

'Sir John is not easily fooled, and he has his own way to make, with a foot in every camp. Our patron he may be, but he won't stand by me if it doesn't suit his ends.'

The horseman picked up a bone from the rushes, and gave it to the dog. 'Sir Henry, as lord of the manor, will take precedence over Sir John on this occasion,' he said. 'He'll not disgrace you, garbed like a penitent. I warrant he is on his knees in the chapel now.'

The Prior was not amused. 'As the lord's steward you should show more respect for him,' he observed, then added thoughtfully, 'Henry de Champernoune is a more faithful man of God than I.'

The horseman laughed. 'The spirit is willing, Father Prior, but the flesh?' He fondled the greyhound's ear. 'Best not talk about the flesh before the Bishop's visit.' Then he straightened himself and walked towards the bed. 'The French ship is lying off Kylmerth. She'll be there for two more tides if you want to give me letters for her.'

The Prior thrust off his covers and scrambled from the bed. 'Why in the name of blessed Antony did you not say so at once?' he cried, and began to rummage amongst the litter of assorted papers on the bench beside him. He presented a sorry sight in his shift, with spindle legs mottled with varicose veins, and hammer-toed, singularly dirty feet. 'I can find nothing in this jumble,' he complained. 'Why are my papers never in order? Why is Brother Jean never here when I require him?'

He seized a bell from the bench and rang it, exclaiming in protest at the horseman, who was laughing again. Almost at once a monk entered: from his prompt response he must have been listening at the door. He was young and dark, and possessed a pair of remarkably brilliant eyes.

'At your service, Father,' he said in French, and before he crossed the room to the Prior's side exchanged a wink with the horseman.

'Come, then, don't dally,' fretted the Prior, turning back to the bench.

As the monk passed the horseman he murmured in his ear, 'I'll bring the letters later tonight, and instruct you further in the arts you wish to learn.'

The horseman bowed in mock acknowledgement and moved towards the door.

'Goodnight, Father Prior. Lose no sleep over the Bishop's visit.'

'Good-night, Roger, good-night. God be with you.'

Du Maurier, Daphne. *The House On The Strand* (Virago Modern Classics Book 125) (p. 9). Little, Brown Book Group. Kindle Edition.

Sources of different dialogue styles

- Penn Libraries has a helpful database dedicated to the purpose of researching speeches, transcripts, and sermons.
- Duke University the *American Speech journal* on JSTOR . This analyzes the development of the English language.
- JSTOR provides a whole range of academic resources.
- Old radio broadcasts provide a voice from the past, eg. Old Time Radio, RadioLovers, and Ohe Old Time Radio Network.
- Similarly old movies are available on YouTube eg free classics.
- Old postcards obtained from antique shops (or Ebay).
- Similarly, the Letter Repository is a digitized archive of letters to and from average people of the 18th through early 20th century.

My previous historical series, the Outlaw Chronicles, was set in the 12th and 13th centuries and my cast of knightly characters would have spoken Norman-French to each other, and the English ones would have used the language of Chaucer. Any written materials would have been in Latin or, much less frequently, medieval French. I don't speak any of those languages with any degree of proficiency so I couldn't do primary research, and when I came across a figure who said something interesting in a textbook, I knew that what he (or she) had said had been written down by a monk in Latin, probably years after the speech was made, then after another gulf of time, had been translated into modern English.

But I didn't have that problem with *Blood's Game*. I was able to read and understand and enjoy the actual words used by the historical people I was writing about. For example, *Blood's Game* is about, among other things, the attempt by Colonel Thomas Blood to steal the Crown Jewels from the Tower of London in 1671. The attempt failed and Blood was imprisoned in the Tower. And I was able to read a letter written by Blood to King Charles II, begging for mercy in which he claims that he was paid by officials of Charles's own government to undertake the robbery:

"May it please your majesty: may this tell and inform you that it was Sir Thomas Osborne and Sir Thomas Lyttleton, both your treasurers of your Navy, that set me to steal your crown, but he that feeds me with money was James Lyttelton esquire. 'Tis he that pays under the treasurers at your pay office. He is a very bold villainous fellow, a very rogue, for I and my companions have had many a £100 of your majesty's money to encourage us on this attempt."

I can actually hear Blood speaking in this letter – note the use of the now archaic double-verb structure "tell and inform", which only now exists in legal-speak such as "cease and desist"; and "very" as an adjective, rather than the more modern adverb, in "he is a very rogue".

But what also come through clear as daylight is the meaning of the letter: here is a man pleading for his life and desperately casting the blame elsewhere – what you might today call "throwing shade". He is also quite subtly threatening the King with a political scandal, and I have used that element of the letter to drive the book's plot.

When I was putting words into Thomas Blood's mouth, as every author of fiction must, I tried to keep in mind that actual words that he wrote or was recorded as saying. For example, when captured after the failed attempt on the Crown Jewels, Blood said: *"It was a gallant attempt, however unsuccessful! 'Twas for a crown!"*

He had a bombastic, self-congratulatory style of speech. He is commenting on his own actions, praising himself for his dashing style even after repeated failure. I found that he reminded me a little bit of Del Boy Trotter from the classic sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*. Del, who like Blood tries and tries and always seems to fail, repeats the phrase: *"This time next year, Rodney, we'll be millionaires."* And I tried to capture a flavour of that ill-founded perpetual optimism in Blood's favourite oft repeated expression: *"Keep the faith, my son, and we'll all come up smiling yet."*

A historical writer can never truly capture the authentic speech patterns of the day. The past *is* a different country, as the novelist L.P. Hartley wisely pointed out in *The Go-Between*. The really *do* do things differently there. And quite a lot of the time we wouldn't approve of what they do, believe or say.

Take attitudes to race, as the most glaring example, and use of the N-word. A hundred and fifty years ago, quite ordinary decent people frequently used the word to describe another group of people. Now, as we all know, it's utterly taboo, at least for white folks, and using it marks you out as a monstrous racist. Yet the late, and very great George MacDonald-Fraser used the N-word liberally in his brilliant *Flashman* books; the word was common during the

Victorian era and he was attempting honestly to replicate authentically the speech of the time. But GMF received a huge amount of abuse for using the term in his work, particularly in the latter part of his life, and there are still calls to burn his superb historical novels. Today I would not dare to use it, even if it might be exactly what a person of the time would have said.

Or take religion: in our largely secular 21st century, most of us find the idea of killing someone for your beliefs abhorrent. And one of the problems I had when I was writing the Outlaw Chronicles, set in the Middle Ages, was getting to grips with the Christian mindset that spawned the Crusades. The knights who went to the Holy Land believed they were doing God's work when they slaughtered local Muslims.

The truth is that we don't want absolute authenticity in our historical fiction – in either speech or actions. We prefer likeable characters, ones we can relate to. And in order to relate to them they have to share our values and think and speak similarly to us. So there is already a distortion at work when you, a 21st-century person, are creating a fictional historical person and putting words in their mouth, you are consciously, or sometimes unconsciously changing them to make them more like you.

Having said that, the art of writing good dialogue in historical fiction is to give the illusion of historical authenticity, while at the same time allowing the character to reveal qualities that the reader can get behind. Bigotry – whether racial or religious is a big no-no, unless that character is a baddie. But your people can't be too politically correct either. I aim for a certain amount of well-meaning parochiality. Or having the hero aware of the more unpleasant attitudes of the day but defying them.

You also don't want them to speak too much like a modern person, or someone from the recent past. It's not just a case of avoiding crass terms like "OK" or "Nice one, mate" or "Cool". I was recently put off reading a historical novel by the use of the phrase "upper-body strength" to describe the hero on the first page. It was so glaringly modern that I lost confidence in the book. One of my pet hates crops up frequently in the over-stuffed field of Roman historical fiction. It is the cliché having the centurion talking like a 1950's British army sergeant addressing a platoon of National Servicemen: *"Nah then, you 'orrible lot. I'll 'ave yer guts for garters."*

I was particularly fortunate when writing *Blood's Game* to come across a dictionary of slang for the period by someone calling themselves "B.E. Gent". The dictionary was first published in 1699 and, while it has its limitations, it is an attempt to capture the authentic idiom of the 17th-century London underworld. And it is full of absolute gems, many of which I have incorporated into Blood's Game.

A "dandyprat" is a little puny fellow; a "gage of fogus" is a pipe of tobacco; a "buffle-head" is an idiot; "farting-crackers" are breeches; an "arsworm" is a small man; "clammed" means hungry; "chink" is money; to "nip" is to steal, and so on.

But, essentially, writing successful period dialogue is a balancing act, you can't have too many sentences such as, *"Tip us a gage of fogus and I'll cant about how I nipped the chink out of the old arsworm's farting-crackers,"* without seriously irritating the readers. I mainly used these delicious slang terms as a kind of seasoning to give the book the flavour of the time. And, as a general rule of thumb, I tend to opt for simple language, and if two expressions present themselves, chose the one which is more old fashioned but still perfectly comprehensible to a modern reader. Whether I have succeeded or not, I will let the readers of *Blood's Game* judge for themselves.

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Time and Timing

The difference between the time used in a story and the time used in a plot; the tempo or pace of a narrative; the order in which events are disclosed; and the extent to which a writer can affect the time a reader takes to read a text. Note the difference in the two terms, 'story' and 'plot'. A story consists of all the events that happen. A plot is the arrangement of those events to form a narrative.

Writing can represent real time, or condensed or expanded time, or even duplicated time when describe two characters actions that overlap in time. Even no time if we have stopped for a piece of pure description.

Dialogue happens in real time, as it happens.

If you tantalise readers by withholding info, or use cliff hangers, this can encourage them to read further, and you control the duration of their reading sessions..

- Time moves forwards, at different speeds, creating variety
- time is allowed to move backwards briefly, creating interest
- time is edited out so that the action is more dramatic.
- Time, in other words, has been deployed so that we, as readers, are constantly kept on our mettle. A writer needs to be able to influence

To make sure that the reader does not make a conscious decision to set your writing aside out of either frustration or boredom. One of the ways in which to do this is to vary the tempo of what is written, so that the story moves between 'real time' and a more accelerated time. This means developing a piece so that, for instance, dialogue is not overly protracted, and so that both action and focus shift.

Altering sequence

All fiction and non-fiction could be said to experiment with time, using methods such as acceleration, deceleration, omission and pause. It is common enough to begin near the end of the time-span of a novel or film.

Flashback, flashforward, moving backwards in each act, moving back and forward etc

Readers and viewers are increasingly prepared for shifts in time: what is important is that there is a logic for the shifts. Formal experiment with time is only important if it is used to delay a revelation, especially by inviting readers and viewers to speculate about earlier events which have led to what we are presented with at the outset. Fiction, as with drama, is about revealing secrets.

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Rhetoric and Analogy

(from the A363 Blue Book)

Rhetoric

Aristotle says that the art of rhetoric is not simply that of persuasion but the detection of persuasive aspects of each matter (Aristotle, 1991, p70). A speaker has to make the most of the material available. It is about marking the possible use of words, clarity and purpose of meaning, and of having maximum impact.

Rhetoric speech features such devices as repetition (anaphora), rhythm, qualification, parenthesis, antithesis and tone (p209, BB). Also understatement.

 A good example of rhetoric speaking: Kennedy:

> *Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belabouring those problems which divide us. Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms, and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations. Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.*

Repetition is used to develop a cumulative drive: 'human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today'
my italics).

Antithesis : combining and contrasting opposing ideas to provide a symmetry, e.g.

> *'a new endeavour, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law'*

The rhythmical repetition in Kennedy's speech sometimes occurs when he develops an idea, as when the phrases have the same pattern: 'we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe ...' (para.4; my italics).

The qualification is achieved not only by the accretion of detail, but also by the clarification of one phrase in another: 'the bones hard and parting water, clean sharp strokes'. The antithesis is in the use of contrast – 'not bent', 'not drowning'.

Use repetition to control rhythm.

Parenthesis involves interrupting a sentence, to qualify what is happening or to create the effect of an aside.

Virginia Woolf, as in this example from To the Lighthouse, frequently deploys parenthesis to elaborate a line of thought:

They had rooms in the village, and so, walking in, walking out, parting late on door-mats, had said little things about the soup, about the children, about one thing and another which made them allies; so that when he stood beside her now in his judicial way (he was old enough to be her father too, a botanist, a widower, smelling of soap, very scrupulous and clean) she just stood there. He just stood there.

One of the many advantages of adding parenthesis is that it gives the writing a slightly conversational edge, because as talkers, we are naturally prone to digression. Using it will help your reader to feel just a little like a listener – and help the act of reading to involve the ear as well as the eye.

Variation and rhythm

Adichie also uses variation, in the lengths of her sentences and in the balance of interior monologue, explanation and dialogue. This kind of variation is important to you as a writer. A sequence of sentences of identical lengths, or with identical structures, will make the prose seem predictable and dull. As with all the techniques noted in this chapter, a little goes a long way. The aim is not to have you repeat and refine obsessively, or to count the words in every sentence to ensure that you balance longer and shorter sentences. But the rhythms do matter. Adichie subtly interrupts the pattern of her chapter with dialogue, just as she introduces some very short sentences. Sentences here, like 'He scrubbed the floors daily' or
'But he did not mind' or 'He froze', prevent the reader from drifting away. They re-energise the prose, because they are sudden, plain and sharp. Kennedy's speech does much the same thing. ('But let us begin' is the shortest sentence in the full speech, but there are others which contain over sixty words. Kennedy has constructed the piece so that the sentences are more often below the average sentence length rather than above it.)

Prose writers use many poetic techniques, as you have seen in the descriptions of cutting and using imagery in Chapter 11. The techniques also include assonance, alliteration and even rhyme. In the earlier extract from Harris's Jonestown, 'absurd' rhymes with 'conferred'; in the Cisneros extract, the phrase 'yellow smell' occurs – an internal rhyme. These echoes, although occasional in prose, are part of rhetorical technique. They make the prose melodious – pleasant to 'hear'. The word for this is 'euphony'.

The tone of a piece of writing is a key aspect of its style. It is a way of influencing the way your reader reads, or, as I am encouraging you to think, 'hears' the piece. Kennedy's speech is intended to be firm, judicious and weighty, but accessible. The accessibility comes from the fact that over 70 per cent of the words in the complete speech are monosyllables; the 'weight' comes from the use of formal, often slightly archaic, phrases.
The Adichie extract is much more expansive, and has a leisurely, generous rhythm, so that the tone is attractive and sympathetic to Ugwu.
However, it may suit you to make the tone of your writing more excitable, more fastidious, more subdued, more hurried, more lurid, more abrupt (and so on). You may wish to make the tone relatively calm, and allow the events to carry the force of the narrative.

Tone can be formal, informal, wry, excitable, intimate, understated, over the top, controlled, upbeat, downbeat, variable, etc

Use longer sentences, but ones containing frequent and irregular pauses; more variation of sentences; more flamboyant vocabulary; digressions and parentheses; denser clusters of

consonants; questions and exclamations. Questions have a tendency to increase the pace of a piece because of the rising inflections they imply. Exclamations are particularly hard to handle: if you want your reader to smile, or even to laugh out loud, and to cause these reactions through your use of style, then an exclamation mark is often the last thing you want. It is the literary equivalent of writing 'joke' in the margin.

Understatement can take many forms. You probably varied the sentences to a lesser degree in your second piece, and it is likely that the pauses within the sentences were more regular, making the pace steadier. If you look at the opening of V.S. Pritchett's 'The Fly in the Ointment' (Reading 3, p.296), you will see that the first paragraph moves at a steady pace, and has sentences of roughly equal length (after the brief, opening, nine-word sentence, they have twenty-six, thirty and thirty-seven words respectively). Not until the fifth paragraph do the se

'antimetabole' – the repetition of words in successive clauses, but in transposed grammatical order, as in the line most often quoted from Kennedy's speech ('Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country'). Rare: but not impossible. There is an example in the passage used as a reading for the next chapter, from Annie Proulx's story 'In the Pit': she writes of 'the place where land without water was worthless, and there was a lot of worthless land' (Reading 29, p.378).

Analogy

An analogy is any word or phrase that expresses a similarity between one object, event or quality, and another. We usually divide analogies into similes (in which the comparison is explicit) and metaphors (in which the comparison is implied). Armitage's use of 'prial' is a metaphor – he doesn't prefix the term with 'like' or 'as' to compare the credit cards with a prial, as a simile would. (Notice that a simile does not always need to start with 'like' or 'as' – it can, for instance, use a phrase such as 'the shape of', or 'the colour of'.) Sometimes a single, metaphorical word has been used so frequently that it is really no longer figurative – for example, in Armitage's poem the pickpocket is 'fishing' the cards out. This use of 'fishing' is now common – although it is also slang – which makes its proximity to 'prial' all the more striking.

In his poem 'Brassneck', Simon Armitage refers to a pickpocket 'fishing a prial of credit cards out of [the] britches' of a football fan (Armitage, 1992, p.5). The most unusual word in that line is the 250-year-old word 'prial', a corruption of 'pair royal', which means a set of three playing cards of the same denomination. What Armitage has done is to refresh an obscure word and, in the process, to give a line in his poem an unusual new flavour.

A good analogy is one that is fresh, arresting – and not too complicated. A simile such as 'roared like a lion', or 'laughed like a hyena', is too commonplace to have any effect. It's a cliché. A simile such as 'opening the door like a moon-faced stranger holding a briefcase containing suspicious sheaves of classified documents' – presumably indicating that the action is shifty – is over-developed and unwieldy. The word 'suspicious' will cancel out most of the point of the simile. The action of 'opening the door' will be lost in the process

Analogies can be created by the subtle use of a single word, a word in which there is sudden and suggestive force. In Fleur Adcock's poem 'Incident', she refers to 'the grovelling sea' (Adcock, 1991, p.6). The word 'grovelling' is a genuine surprise, and seems to imply not

only that the sea is low, perhaps at a low ebb, but is also creeping to the shore in a manner that suggests humiliation. The actual sound of the word – perhaps by sound-association with 'gravel' or 'growl' – also suggests a low-pitched, desultory motion. The analogical force of an individual word can be seen in prose as well as poetry.

'In the Pit'. Proulx also uses implicit analogy many times. The mother 'shuffled a deck' of envelopes; the sky is filled with 'raw, bunched clouds'

Use analogy in moderation if you want your reader to stay with you.

Sometimes it is possible to sustain more than one line of analogy – especially in poetry – so that there are, for instance, three or four threads interwoven. This is harder to manage, because there is a risk of the extended analogies becoming confused with one another.

Rhetorical devices

From Webster's Dictionary: https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/rhetorical-devices-list-examples

Device	Definition	Example
alliteration	The repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighbouring words or syllables	Wild and woolly, threatening throngs
anacoluthon	Syntactical inconsistency or incoherence within a sentence especially : a shift in an unfinished sentence from one syntactic construction to another	You really should have – well, what do you expect?
anadiplosis	Repetition of a prominent and usually the last word in one phrase or clause at the beginning of the next	Rely on his honour – honour such as his
anaphora	Repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses especially for rhetorical or poetic effect	we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground
antanaclasis	The repetition of a word within a phrase or sentence in which the second occurrence utilizes a different and sometimes contrary meaning from the first	
antiphrasis	The usually ironic or humorous use of words in senses opposite to the generally accepted meanings	this giant of 3 feet 4 inches
antonomasia	The use of a proper name to designate a member of a class (such as a Solomon for a wise ruler) OR the use of an epithet or title in place of a proper name (such as the Bard for Shakespeare	
apophasis	The raising of an issue by claiming not to mention it	we won't discuss his past crimes

aporia	An expression of real or pretended doubt or uncertainty especially for rhetorical effect	to be, or not to be: that is the question
cacophony	Harshness in the sound of words or phrases	
chiasmus	An inverted relationship between the syntactic elements of parallel phrases	Working hard, or hardly working?
dialogism	A disjunctive conclusion inferred from a single premise	gravitation may act without contact; therefore, either some force may act without contact or gravitation is not a force
dysphemism	The substitution of a disagreeable, offensive, or disparaging expression for an agreeable or inoffensive one	*greasy spoon* is a dysphemism for the word *diner*
epistrophe	Repetition of a word or expression at the end of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses especially for rhetorical or poetic effect	*of the people, by the people, for the people*
epizeuxis	Emphatic repetition [this definition is taken from the 1934 edition of Webster's Unabridged dictionary]	
hypallage	An interchange of two elements in a phrase or sentence from a more logical to a less logical relationship	*you are lost to joy for joy is lost to you*
hyperbaton	A transposition or inversion of idiomatic word order	*judge me by my size, do you?*
hyperbole	Extravagant exaggeration	*mile-high ice-cream cones*
Hypophora	The putting or answering of an objection or argument against the speaker's contention [this definition is taken from the 1934 edition of Webster's Unabridged dictionary]	
litotes	Understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary	*not a bad singer*
meiosis	The presentation of a thing with underemphasis especially in order to achieve a greater effect : UNDERSTATEMENT	
metaphor	A figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between the	*drowning in money*

metonym	A figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated	*crown as used in lands belonging to the crown*
onomatopoeia	The naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it	*Buzz*
oxymoron	A combination of contradictory or incongruous words	*Cruel*
pleonasm	The use of more words than those necessary to denote mere sense : REDUNDANCY	*I saw it with my own eyes*
Simile	A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by "like" or "as"	*cheeks like roses*
syllepsis	The use of a word in the same grammatical relation to two adjacent words in the context with one literal and the other metaphorical in sense	*she blew my nose and then she blew my mind*
synecdoche	A figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (such as fifty sail for fifty ships), the whole for a part (such as society for high society), the species for the genus (such as cutthroat for assassin), the genus for the species (such as a creature for a man), or the name of the material for the thing made (such as boards for stage)	
zeugma	The use of a word to modify or govern two or more words usually in such a manner that it applies to each in a different sense or makes sense with only one	*opened the door and her heart to the homeless boy*

Table 3: Rhetorical Devices

Dangling modifiers

(From Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangling_modifier)

A **dangling modifier**[1] is a type of ambiguous grammatical construct whereby a grammatical modifier could be misinterpreted as being associated with a word other than the one intended. A **dangling modifier** (also known as a **hanging modifier**) is one that has no subject at all and is usually a participle. It is also called illogical participle. For example, a writer may have meant to modify the subject, but word order used means that the modifier appears to modify an object instead. Such ambiguities can lead to unintentional humor, or, in formal contexts, difficulty in comprehension.

Take, for example, the sentence *Turning the corner, a handsome school building appeared.* The modifying clause *Turning the corner* is clearly supposed to describe the behavior of the narrator (or other observer), but grammatically it appears to apply either to nothing in particular, or to the "handsome school building".

Similarly, in the sentence *At the age of eight, my family finally bought a dog*, the modifier *At the age of eight* "dangles": it is not attached to the subject of the main clause, and could imply that it was the *family* that was eight years old when it bought the dog, or even that the dog was eight when it was bought, rather than the intended meaning of giving the narrator's age at the time the family "finally bought a dog".

Dangling-modifier clauses

As an adjunct, a modifier clause is normally at the beginning or the end of a sentence, and usually attached to the subject of the main clause, as in "Walking down the street (clause), the man (subject) saw the beautiful trees (object)." However, when the subject is missing or the clause attaches itself to another object in a sentence, the clause is seemingly "hanging" on nothing or on an entirely inappropriate noun. It thus "dangles", as in these sentences:

Walking down Main Street, the trees were beautiful. Reaching the station, the sun came out.

In the first sentence, the adjunct clause may at first appear to modify "the trees", the subject of the sentence. However, it actually modifies the speaker of the sentence, who is not explicitly mentioned.

In the second sentence, the adjunct may at first appear to modify "the sun", the subject of the sentence. Presumably, there is another, human subject who did reach the station and observed the sun coming out, but since this subject is not mentioned in the text, the intended meaning is obscured, and therefore this kind of sentence is incorrect in standard English.

Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* provides another kind of example, a misplaced modifier (another participle):

I saw the trailer peeking through the window.

Presumably, this means the speaker was peeking through the window, but the placement of the clause "peeking through the window" makes it sound as though the trailer were doing so. The sentence can be recast as, "Peeking through the window, I saw the trailer."

Similarly, in "*She left the room fuming*", it is conceivably the room, rather than "she", that was fuming, though it is unlikely that anybody besides a fumigator would interpret it this way.

Strunk and White describe as "ludicrous" another of their examples (an "unclear on the concept" stab at the ablative absolute – see note below): "*Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap.*" The author obviously meant the house was dilapidated, but the construction suggests that *he* (the speaker or writer, identified as "I") was dilapidated.

Bernstein offers another ludicrous example: "*Roaring down the track at seventy miles an hour, the stalled car was smashed by the train.*" The adjunct is meant to modify "train": it is the train

that is roaring down the track. But the subject of the main clause is "the stalled car". The writer is suggesting that the stalled car, which really isn't moving at all, is roaring down the track. The sentence could be rewritten more felicitously: "Roaring down the track at seventy miles an hour, the train smashed the stalled car." Or: "The stalled car was smashed by the train, roaring down the track at seventy miles an hour."

Follett provides yet another ludicrous example: "*Leaping to the saddle, his horse bolted*." But who leapt? Presumably the horseman – certainly not the horse, which was wearing the saddle. In this example, the noun or pronoun intended to be modified isn't even in the sentence. Unproblematic: "*Leaping to the saddle, he made his horse bolt forward*", or "*As he leapt into the saddle, his horse bolted*." (In the latter, the non-finite adjunct clause is replaced by a finite subordinate clause.)

These examples illustrate a writing principle that dangling participles violate. Follett states the principle: "A participle at the head of a sentence automatically affixes itself to the subject of the following verb – in effect a requirement that the writer either make his [grammatical] subject consistent with the participle or discard the participle for some other construction."[5] Strunk and White put it this way: "A participle phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject."

Dangling participles should not be confused with clauses in absolute constructions, which are considered grammatical. Because the participle phrase in an absolute construction is not semantically attached to any single element in the sentence, it is easily confused with a dangling participle.[7] The difference is that a participle phrase is intended to modify a particular noun or pronoun, but is instead erroneously attached to a different noun, whereas an absolute clause is not intended to modify any noun at all. An example of an absolute construction is:

The weather being beautiful, we plan to go to the beach today.

Non-participial modifier

Non-participial modifiers that dangle can also be troublesome:

After years of being lost under a pile of dust, Walter P. Stanley, III, left, found all the old records of the Bangor Lions Club.[8]

The above sentence, from a photo caption in a newspaper, suggests that it is the subject of the sentence, Walter Stanley, who was buried under a pile of dust, and not the records. It is the prepositional phrase "after years of being lost under a pile of dust" which dangles.

In the film *Mary Poppins*, Mr. Dawes Sr. dies of laughter after hearing the following joke:

"I know a man with a wooden leg called Smith." "What was the name of his other leg?"

In the case of this joke, the placement of the phrase "called Smith" implies that it is the leg that is named Smith, rather than the man.

Another famous example of this humorous effect is by Groucho Marx as Captain Jeffrey T. Spaulding in the 1930 film *Animal Crackers*:

One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know.[9]

Though under the most plausible interpretation of the first sentence, Captain Spaulding would have been wearing the pajamas, the line plays on the grammatical possibility that the elephant was instead.

Strunk and White offer this example: "*As a mother of five, and with another on the way, my ironing board is always up*."[10] Is the ironing board (grammatical subject) really the mother of five? Less ambiguous*: "As the mother of five, and with another on the way, I always keep my ironing board up."* Or: *"My ironing board is always up, because I am a mother of five, with another on the way."*

Modifiers reflecting the mood or attitude of the speaker

Participial modifiers can sometimes be intended to describe the attitude or mood of the speaker, even when the speaker is not part of the sentence. Some such modifiers are standard and are not considered dangling modifiers: *"Speaking of [topic]"*, and *"Trusting that this will put things into perspective"*, for example, are commonly used to transition from one topic to a related one or for adding a conclusion to a speech.

Usage of "hopefully**"**

Since about the 1960s, controversy has arisen over the proper usage of the adverb *hopefully*. Some grammarians object to constructions such as "Hopefully, the sun will be shining tomorrow." Their complaint is that the term "hopefully" ought to be understood as the manner in which the sun will shine. In order to modify the whole sentence to convey the attitude of the speaker, they say, the "hopefully" should be moved to the end: "the sun will be shining tomorrow, hopefully."

"Hopefully" used in this way is a disjunct (cf. "admittedly", "mercifully", "oddly"). Disjuncts (also called sentence adverbs) are useful in colloquial speech for the concision they permit.

No other word in English expresses that thought. In a single word we can say it is regrettable that (*regrettably*) or it is fortunate that (*fortunately*) or it is lucky that (*luckily*), and it would be comforting if there were such a word as *hopably* or, as suggested by Follett, *hopingly*, but there isn't. [...] In this instance nothing is to be lost – the word would not be destroyed in its primary meaning – and a useful, nay necessary term is to be gained.

What had been expressed in lengthy adverbial constructions, such as "it is regrettable that ..." or "it is fortunate that ...", had of course always been shortened to the adverbs "regrettably" or "fortunately". Bill Bryson says, "those writers who scrupulously avoid 'hopefully' in such constructions do not hesitate to use at least a dozen other words – 'apparently', 'presumably', 'happily', 'sadly', 'mercifully', 'thankfully', and so on – in precisely the same way."

Merriam-Webster gives a usage note on its entry for "hopefully"; the editors point out that the disjunct sense of the word dates to the early 18th century and has been in widespread use since at least the 1930s. Objection to this sense of the word, they state, became widespread only in the 1960s. The editors maintain that this usage is "entirely standard".

Yet the choice of "regrettably" above as a counterexample points out an additional problem. At the time that objection to "hopefully" became publicized, grammar book relentlessly pointed out the distinction between "regrettably" and "regretfully". The latter is not to be used as a sentence adverb, they state; it must refer to the subject of the sentence. The misuse of "regretfully" produces worse undesired results than "hopefully", possibly contributing to disdain for the latter. The counterpart *hopably* was never added to the language.

Sentence Syntax

Examples from literature

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it!

Dickens often wrote lengthy sentences with complex syntax, separated by multiple commas and/or semicolons. He also made effective use of repeated patterns (anaphora) – here there are three phrases starting with "that every".

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

People generally see what they look for, and hear what they listen for.

This is an effective use of repetition (anaphora). The repeated use of 'what they' emphasises the connection between the things two senses than people use when they look and listen for things. By making this a sentence a single sentence instead of two short, staccato lines Lee produces a more fluent result.

The Princess Bride by William Goldman

Sonny, true love is the greatest thing in the world, except for a nice MLT: mutton, lettuce and tomato sandwich, where the mutton is nice and lean and the tomato is ripe.

Although there is only a single sentence this is a relatively complex piece of prose. Goldman uses a colon to introduce a list. The list is followed by dependant clause. The everday sandwich is described in great detail while the real focus of the sentence is 'true love' which is only allocated two words but this actually adds emphasis to the idea that true love is the greatest thing in the world.

Moby-Dick by Herman Melville

It is the easiest thing in the world for a man to look as if he had a great secret in him.

Simple syntax can often reveal an **aphorism**.

Peter Pan by James Matthew Barrie

Forget them, Wendy. Forget them all. Come with me where you'll never, never have to worry about grown up things again.

Here a childlike tone, reflective of childhood innocence is combined with simple short sentences to evoke childhood. While the second "never" isn't necessary for the meaning of the sentence, it adds more emphasis and adds to the childlike voice of the character.

Animal Farm by George Orwell

The pigs begin living in the farmhouse, and rumour has it that they even sleep in beds, a violation of one of the Seven Commandments. But when Clover asks Muriel to read her the appropriate commandment, the two find that it now reads "No animal shall sleep in a bed with sheets." Squealer explains that Clover must have simply forgotten the last two words.

Here, syntax is being used to illustrate mounting corruption. The simple addition of two words to the commandments shows that the pigs are taking more and more as their power increases.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Wouldn't it be fun if all the castles in the air which we make could come true and we could live in them?

Here the reader feels more involved in the story because of sentiments are expressed in the form of a question. Although Jo is expressing what she thinks, phrasing it as a question gives it a more dreamlike, aspirational quality. We see an idealistic nature here.

Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy

Is it really possible to tell someone else what one feels?

Questions like this challenge readers to provide a suitable or adequate response, making them think, reflect, or analyse. This invitation evokes a feeling of inclusivity for the readers.

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

What light from yonder window breaks?

Shakespeare is a master of rhetoric. Instead of writing "What light is breaking from yonder window?" he puts the verb at the end of the sentence, increasing the impact of the sentence.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

What's the use you learning to do right, when it's troublesome to do right and it ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?

Mark Twain develop a unique character voice for Huckleberry Finn by using slang and nonstandard grammar in this example. This tells the reader about the character of Huckleberry Finn as well as his feelings of frustration.

Star Wars by George Lucas

When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not, hmm?

George Lucas uses inverted sentence structure in Yoda's dialogue, to emphasise the unusual alien wiseness of the character.

Star Wars by George Lucas

When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not, hmm?

Sentence Structure

Sentence structur*e* relates to the way that the elements of the sentence are collected together within that sentence. Varying the sentence structure helps to create rhythmic prose and keep the reader interested. Sentences that require variation often repeat subjects, lengths, or types.

Subject: A person, animal, place, thing, or concept that does an action. Determine the subject in a sentence by asking the question "Who or what?"

Verb: Expresses what the person, animal, place, thing, or concept does. Determine the verb in a sentence by asking the question "What was the action or what happened?"

Object: A person, animal, place, thing, or concept that receives the action. Determine the object in a sentence by asking the question "The subject did what?" or "To whom? For whom?"

Prepositional Phrase: A phrase that begins with a preposition (i.e., in, at for, behind, until, after, of, during) and modifies a word in the sentence. A prepositional phrase answers one of many questions. Here are a few examples: "Where? When? In what way?"

I	like	cake	for dinner.
(subject)	(verb)	(object)	(prepositional phrase)

I	like	cake	for dinner.
(subject)	(verb)	(object)	(prepositional phrase)

Predicate: a group of words that tells something about the subject. A predicate is a property that a subject has or is characterized by. A predicate is therefore an expression that can be *true of* something. Thus, the expression "is moving" is true of anything that is moving.

I	like	cake	for dinner.
(subject)	(verb)	(object)	(prepositional phrase)
	(----- predicate ----)		

The boy	voraciously	gobbled	the cake	for dinner.
(subject)	(adverb)	(verb)	(object)	(prepositional phrase)
	(--------- predicate -----------)			

Clause: a group of words that have a subject and a predicate.

The boy	voraciously	gobbled	the cake	for dinner.
(subject)	(adverb)	(verb)	(object)	(prepositional phrase)
	(--------- predicate -----------)			
(--------------------- clause ----------------)				

Sentence: One or more clauses. The sentence has the following properties:

- Begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.
- Contains a subject that is only given once.
- Contains a verb or a verb phrase.
- Follows Subject + Verb + Object word order.
- Must have a complete idea that stands alone. This is also called an independent clause.

```
   The boy   voraciously gobbled the cake         for dinner.
  (subject)    (adverb)   (verb)   (object)      (prepositional phrase)
               (--------- predicate -----------)
  (--------------------- clause ----------------)
  (-------------------------------------- sentence --------------------------)
```

Independent clause

It contains a subject and a verb and is a complete idea and can stand alone as a sentence.

```
    I          like        cake
 (subject)    (verb)     (object)
```

```
    I          very much   like    many    cakes
 (subject)                 (verb)          (object)
```

Dependent clause

A dependent clause is not a complete sentence. It must be attached to an independent clause to become complete. This is also known as a subordinate clause.

```
   Although I like cake,
   Whenever I was buying books…
```

(from https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar)

Simple Sentences

A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb, and it may also have an object and modifiers. It contains only one independent clause.

`subject` `verb`

`object` `prepositional phrase`

Here are a few examples:

`He` `spoke`.

John finished his cheese sandwich.
She wrote her shopping list by food type.

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence contains at least two independent clauses. The independent clauses can be combined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.

independent clause   coordinating conjunction

John finished his cheese sandwich, and cleared up the plates.
She wrote her shopping list by food type; then, she went down to the High Street.
Sam chopped all the firewood, but realised they would need to get some more logs.

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence contains at least one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Dependent clauses can refer to the subject (who, which) the sequence/time (since, while), or the causal elements (because, if) of the independent clause.

If a sentence begins with a dependent clause, note the comma after this clause. If, on the other hand, the sentence begins with an independent clause, there is not a comma separating the two clauses.

independent clause   dependent clause

Although John finished the last cheese sandwich, he did not do the washing up.

Note the comma in this sentence because it begins with a dependent clause

She wrote her shopping list by food type as she wanted to do the shopping efficiently.

Note that there is no comma in this sentence because it begins with an independent clause.

Compound-Complex Sentences

Sentence types can also be combined. A compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

independent clause   dependent clause   coordinating conjunction

John finished the last cheese sandwich, but he did not do the washing up even though he knew that Jane was coming round later.

Run-On Sentences

A *run-on sentence* occurs when two or more independent clauses are connected improperly.

I love to eat ice cream I would eat one every day if I could.

There are two complete sentences in the above example:

I love to eat ice cream.

I would eat one every day if I could.

The common splice form of run-on sentence occurs when two independent clauses are joined with just a comma.

John would only eat certain types of icecream, he needed to indicate his preference.

Again there are two complete sentences, but here they are separated by a comma.

John would only eat certain types of icecream.

He needed to indicate his preference.

Some comma splices occur when a writer attempts to use a transitional expression in the middle of a sentence.

John would only eat certain types of ice-cream, therefore , he needed to indicate his preference.

Here the two independent clauses are separated by a comma and a transitional expression (conjunctive adverb): therefore

To fix this type of comma splice, use a semicolon before the transitional expression and add a comma after it.

John would only eat certain types of ice-cream; therefore, he needed to indicate his preference.

Correcting Run-On Sentences

A run-on sentence can be fixed by connecting its independent clauses correctly, using one of the following methods:

1. Split the sentence into smaller sentences using a period.

   I love to eat ice cream. I would eat one every day if I could.

2. Insert a semicolon between the independent clauses. Thist establishes a close relationship between the two sentences.

   I love to eat ice cream. I would eat one every day if I could.

3. Use a comma, paired with a coordinating conjunction (e.g., "and," "but," or "or"), to correct the run-on sentence. This method emphasizes the relationship between the two clauses.

    I love to eat ice cream, and I would eat one every day if I could.

4. Use a subordinating conjunction to turn one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause. A subordinating conjunction (e.g., "because," "unless," and "although") connects two clauses to create a complex sentence. This cements the relationship between the two parts of the sentence and improve the flow of the text.

5. Because I love to eat ice cream, I would eat one every day if I could.

Sentence Fragments

A *sentence fragment* is a sequence of words that does not form a complete sentence. The missing element may be a subject (usually a noun) or a predicate (verb or verb phrase) and/or when the sentence does not express a complete idea. The following fragment is missing a subject:

> Has no knowledge of French or Italian.

The phrase above is a fragment since there is no subject and can be turned into a sentence by adding a suitable subject:

> The elephant has no knowledge of French or Italian.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join a subordinate clause to a main clause. This establishes a relationship between the two. The most common conjunctions are

- although
- as much as/as soon as/as long as
- as though
- because
- before
- how
- if
- in order to/in order that
- once
- since
- than
- that
- though
- unless
- until
- when/whenever
- where/wherever
- whether
- while

There are two ways to structure a sentence using a subordinating conjunction:

1. Main clause + subordinate clause

    o   I eat the ice-cream after unpacking the shopping.
    o   The pilot must pass the medical if she wants to continue flying.
    o   I will go on holiday on Monday whether or not you approve it.

2. Subordinate clause + comma + main clause

    o   After completing the checklist, the pilot advanced the throttles.
    o   If she wants to attend the dentist, the patient must register first.
    o   Whether or not you approve, I will go on holiday on Monday.

"That" is perhaps a special case in English. One important use of "that" is for embedding (inserting) a certain type of dependent clause called a noun clause into an independent clause. Frequently, such "that" clauses serve as the direct object of a reporting verb (such as found, reported, posited, argued, claimed, maintained, and hypothesized) to introduce a paraphrase, summary, or quotation.

Academic writers often choose to keep "that" when it introduces a noun clause otherwise reader may misread the subject of the dependent clause as being the object of the reporting verb.

*   For example, if readers see the sentence, "Johnson (2017) reported more research was necessary" a reader may think that "more research" is the thing Johnson reported rather than the fact that it was necessary to do more research. It is clearer to write: "Johnson (2017) reported that more research was necessary"
*   In spoken English, "that" may be dropped in such sentences since intonation patterns—rising and falling pitch—give the listener clues that may not be present in writing.

Parallel Construction Basics

Parallel grammatical form is used to present ideas that run in parallel. This means that different parts of the sentence are used for each idea, but these parts use the same grammatical structure. The two ideas are often contrasted by 'between' and 'and' For example:

> This essay contrasts the difference between the theatre in London, prior to 1960 and the theatre in London, post 1960.

Notice that the two ideas are described by phrases with identical syntax: *the theatre in London, prior to 1960* and *the theatre in London, post 1960*. It would be incorrect to write:

> This essay contrasts the difference between the *theatre in London, prior to1960* and *the theatre after 1960*.

comparisons	correct	incorrect
both, and	The films were enjoyable both **to watch** and **to discuss**.	The films were enjoyable both **to watch** and **for discussing**.
neither/nor, either/or	Neither **the responses to the questionnaire** nor **the responses to the survey** were answered.	Neither **the responses to the questionnaire** nor **what we asked on the survey** were answered.
not only, but also	It was surprising not only **that the house sold** but also that **it sold well over the asking price.**	It was surprising not only **that the house sold,** but also **it sold well over the asking price.**
Sentences with lists require particular attention to parallel construction.	This paper will address No Child Left Behind **benchmarks**, effective teaching **strategies**, and multimedia instructional **aids**. Note: the list has parallel elements (*benchmarks*, *strategies*, and *aids* are all plural nouns).	This paper will address **No Child Left Behind, how to teach effectively, and instructing with multimedia aids**.
	The students were **underprepared**, poorly **behaved**, and **disruptive**. Note: the list has parallel elements ("underprepared," "behaved," and "disruptive" are all adjectives).	The students were unprepared, poorly behaved, and disrupted the class.

Relative Clauses and Relative Pronouns

Relative Clause

This is a clause that generally modifies a noun or a noun phrase. It is often introduced by a relative pronoun (which, that, who, whom, whose). A relative clause, which can also be known as an adjective clause, connects ideas by using pronouns that relate to something previously mentioned and allows the writer to combine two independent clauses into one sentence. There are two types of relative clauses: restrictive and non-restrictive.:

- The textbook *that he read* was important for his exam preparation. (restrictive)
- The patients *who were treated* volunteered to be part of the study. (restrictive)
- The Open University, *which is entirely online*, has main administrative offices in Milton Keynes. (non-restrictive)

Relative Pronouns

Type	Referring to a human	Referring to something other than a human	Possessive
Restrictive	who, whom, that*	which, that**	whose
Nonrestrictive (with commas)	who, whom	which	whose

* Use "who" or "whom" instead of "that" when referring to a human.

** Although both "which" and "that are grammatically correct in restrictive clauses, "that" is preferred for restrictive clauses.

Restrictive Clauses

A restrictive clause, also sometimes known as an essential clause or phrase, restricts or defines the meaning of a noun or noun phrase and provides necessary information about the noun in the sentence. It is not separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

- The audience member **who arrived late** asks his friend what had happened.
- The data **that I gathered** may invoke positive social change.
- The author **whose novel I read yesterday** has been nominated for a prize.

When the relative pronoun functions as the object of the sentence, it can (and usually is) omitted from the relative clause.

Here are a few examples:

- The data ~~that~~ **I gathered** may invoke positive social change.
- The trousers ~~that~~ **I ordered** did not arrive on Wednesday.
- The musicians ~~who~~ **I hired** met me at the local pub.

Non-restrictive Clauses

A non-restrictive clause, also known as a non-essential clause or phrase, adds additional information to a sentence. It is usually a proper noun or a common noun that refers to a unique person, thing, or event. It uses commas to show that the information is additional. The commas almost act like parentheses within the sentence. If the information between the commas is omitted, readers will still understand the overall meaning of the sentence.

Original	Omitting the non-restrictive clause
I want to thank my sponsors, *John and Mary,* for all their financial support.	I want to thank my sponsors, John and Mary, for all their financial support.
The poem, *which I read to the audience last night,* was published in Granta.	The poem was published in Granta.
Mary lost her shoe, *which she had been searching for.*	Mary lost her shoe.

Although "that" is sometimes used in restrictive clauses, it is not allowed in non-restrictive clauses.

Correct	Incorrect
London, which is situated in on the river Thames, is the capital of the UK.	London, that is situated in on the river Thames, is the capital of the UK.
I had to recharge my phone, which I had charged last night.	I had to recharge my phone, that I had charged last night.

A relative pronoun cannot be deleted in a non-restrictive clause.

Correct	Incorrect
London, which is situated in on the river Thames, is the capital of the UK.	London, is situated in on the river Thames, is the capital of the UK
I had to recharge my phone, which I had charged last night.	I had to recharge my phone, I had charged last night.

Reduced Relative Clauses

In academic writing, relative clauses are often reduced for a more concise style. This also creates more sentence variety. When reducing a relative clause, it is necessary to delete the relative pronoun and either delete or change the verb.

- Gun control is a controversial issue ~~that is~~ about personal rights. ("be" + prepositional phrase)
- The steps ~~that were~~ followed were explained in the Methods section. (passive)
- Other researchers ~~who are~~ exploring the same topic have discovered similar solutions. (progressive verb tense)
- Participants ~~who were~~ available to meet in my office completed their interview there. ("be" + "-able" adjective)
- Some of the subjects lived in urban areas ~~that had~~ with high crime rates. ("have" as a main verb is replaced by "with")
- In this paper, I reviewed many research articles ~~that addressed~~ addressing the topic of gun control. (linking verbs or verbs describing facts can be changed to "–ing" clauses)
- The changes ~~that are to be implemented~~ with the new curriculum revisions are outlined in the handout. ("to" clauses)

Using modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that gives information about and thus modifies another word in the same sentence. For example, in the following sentence, the word "ale" is modified by the adjective "real":

> I'm going to the pub for a real ale.

A modifier can be an adjective, adverb or even a phrase. In the following sentence, the adverb quickly modifies the verb rode and tells us the way that the cyclist was riding.

> The cyclist **quickly** rode down the street.

.

The phrase "in the sea" is used as a modifier for the verb "swam" in the following example:

> He swam in the sea.

Modifiers are one way to introduce sentence variety.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is one which there is some uncertainty, modifying a word, we consider it a *misplaced modifier*. For example:

> Captain Cook discovered Australia **using the Beagle**.

It is unclear in this sentence if the modifier "using the Beagle" applies to Captain Cook or Australia. A reader might think that "Captain Cooke was using the Beagle" but they might equally well think that "Australia was using the Beagle".   The ambiguity can be removed by choosing a different placement for the modifier:

> **Using the Beagle**, Captain Cook discovered Australia.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is one that does not modify a specific word.

> **After consulting a selection of textbooks in this area**, knowledge in this area is sparse.

In this example, it is not clear who is consulting the selection of textbooks. In other words, there is no referent in the sentence. This sentence can be modified so that the "I" matches the modifier "after consulting a selection of textbooks".

> **After consulting a selection of textbooks, I** determined that the knowledge in this area is poor.

Alternatively, the modifier can be applied to the subject "research" as follows:

> **According to the selected textbooks, knowledge** in this area has is sparse.

Use of commas

Commas have a wide range of uses.

1. In a list use commas to separate the elements of the list (when there are three or more members of the list):

    The colours of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

2. Use commas to mark clauses that contain information that is nonessential to the sentence's meaning.

    Einstein, born In 1879, revolutionised modern physics.

3. Note that the sentence still makes sense even without the middle clause ("born In 1879"). Therefore, the clause is nonessential.

4. In a compound sentence, use a comma to separate the two independent that are connected by the coordinating conjunction.

    Schikaneder wrote the libretto, and Mozart wrote the score.

5. Use a comma after a dependent introductory clause, phrase, or word.

    Introductory clause:

    If you are using this sentence structure, place a comma after the dependent clause.

    Introductory phrase:

    Before starting to build my house, I must obtain planning permission.

    *Introductory word***:**

    Therefore, I baked three birthday cakes.
    However, only two of the triplets came to the party.

6. Use a comma to set off the year in exact dates.

    JFK was assassinated on 28 November, 1963.

7. Use commas to set off the elements of a citation.

    Some researchers have proposed a new theory of dark energy. (Smith, 2021, p. 17).

8. Use a comma when an independent clause introduces a quotation but is not seamlessly integrated into it.

    Nabakov emphasised the need for revision, " I have rewritten — often several times — every word I have ever published. My pencils outlast their erasers."

Use of semicolons

Semicolons are used to separate parts of sentences.

1. Use a semicolon when separating two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction.

   Bill likes to holiday in France; Joan preferred going to Spain.

2. Joining independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb (e.g., "however," "therefore," "consequently," "nevertheless," "furthermore," "moreover"). Use a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after it.

   Bill likes to holiday in France; however, Joan likes to go France.

3. Use a semicolon to separate elements in a series that already contains comma.

   Janine owns three multicolour chairs: one with green, white and red squares; one with blue, grey and black stripes; and one with white and black polka dots.

   There is some evidence in the literature that the moon is made of green cheese. (May et al., 2018; Einstein, 1948; Moore & Lintott, 2001).

Using sentence variety

If all the sentences in a piece of prose use the same structure, length, begin or end in the same way this will result in a dull, bland or boring read. This can happen if an author falls back on a default sentence style. For instance if every sentence begins with a with a character name (or pronoun), then an action:

> He walked down the street…
> She turned to meet him…
> He tried to turn away…

This type of prose rapidly becomes repetitive and tedious for the reader, and often results when hurrying to get the first draft down on paper. When used with care, repetition can add to the impact of a piece of prose, but only for short periods. When over used it can easily be annoying to a reader.

Ways of varying sentences

1. Vary the subject of your sentences - especially if you tend to start with a character name or pronoun.
2. Break up long sentences so that there is a mix of short and long sentences.
3. Use a mix of different sentence structures – for example, use a subordinate (dependent) clause before the subject.   For example: As John walked down the street, he glanced in the café window and saw Mary looking out at him.

Here is an example of a passage that lacks variety:

> John walked into the café, hoping to make amends. Mary was sitting at a table at the back, reading a book. He walked over to her table, feeling his mouth go dry. He was not sure what to say, realising he had not thought this through.
> "Hello," she said.
> He looked into her eyes, searching for some emotion.
> "Hello," he replied, thinking that something fundamental was missing. "Where's the baby?"

In this passage:

Each starts with a name or pronoun, then a verb
Each has a main clause followed by a subordinate clause.
Each subordinate clause begins with a present participle.
There's not a lot of variation in sentence length (9, 12, 11, 15, 3, 9, 9, 3 words).

> John walked into the café and immediately spotted Mary, sitting at a table at the back. She was reading a book. How could he make amends? As he walked over to her table, he felt his mouth go dry. It was only at that point he realised he had not thought this through and he was unsure of what to say.
> "Hello," she said, looking up.
> He looked back into her eyes. Was there any emotion there?

"Hello," he replied. His hands felt clammy as he realised that something fundamental was missing.
"Where's the baby?"

In this version, there's a much greater variety of sentence types and lengths (16, 5, 5, 7, 12, 22, 5, 6, 5, 3, 12, 3). The sentences have a variety of structures, simple, compound and complex. The sentence use different starts, and there are both statements and questions in the text.

Reference

June Casagrande *It was the Best of Sentences, it was the Worst of Sentences: A Writer's Guide to Crafting Killer Sentences*.

Ways of introducing sentence variety

1. **Mix sentence length**. Short sentences have immediate impact and add pace. Longer sentences are useful for description and communication complexities. Using different sentence lengths will affect the rhythm of the prose

2. **Mix dense sentences with simple sentences**. A compound-complex sentence, which has at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause will take more effect to digest than a simple sentence and is thus a dense sentence. Too many dense sentences in sequence can be tedious and hard to digest. A simple sentence that follows a dense sentence allows the reader to get their breath back. For instance, if you wrote a compound-complex sentence, like: "Frantic with worry, Charles searched the house, desperate to find some clue to explain Jane's disappearance." This long sentence can then be nicely counterpoised with a simple, shorter one, such as: "He found nothing."

3. **Avoid the passive voice when possible**. The passive voice distances the reader from the action. For example: "The victim was stabbed by Douglas" conveys all the required information but is not so direct and impactful as "Douglas stabbed the victim". The occasional use of the passive voice may be useful for sentence variety, but generally the active voice is better.

4. **Use a range of transition words**. Do not repeat the same transitional word in consecutive sentences. A transition word can be a coordinating conjunction ("and," "but," "for," etc.), a subordinating conjunction ("although," "because," etc.) or a conjunctive adverb ("however," "therefore," "move over," etc.).

5. **Mix the use of conjunctions with the use semicolons**. In a compound sentence, two independent clauses are joined together—typically with a coordinating conjunction. The conjunction with a semicolon after the first independent clause. Using both variations adds variety to your sentence patterns.

6. **In persuasive writing, start paragraphs with a short thesis statement**. A thesis statement is most effective when it is direct and declarative. Follow the thesis with more descriptive, explanatory sentences in the body of the paragraph.

7. **Use rhetorical questions**. Rhetorical questions are statements that are phrased as questions. They appear without a direct answer. For instance: "What would happen if the Black Plague returned? They can be used in both academic and creative writing. For the latter, characters can ask each other such a question, or even themselves. A narrator may also direct the question to the reader. They provide a means of interrupting the narrative and allowing a moment of reflection.

Short Sentences

In *To Kill A Mockingbir*d by Harper Lee, at the beginning of the novel, the narrator is a six-year-old girl. Lee uses short and simple sentences that gradually become more sophisticated and mature, reflecting the girl's own growing maturity throughout the book.

The benefits of short sentences

1. **Short sentences are more direct**. Too many words can distract readers obfuscate the purpose of the sentence.

2. **Short sentences improve clarity**. Short sentences are easily assimilated. If a reader has to slow down to read a complex sentence, or read it multiple times, then there is the risk the reader will be lost.

3. **Short sentences are more impactful**. Several short sentences in sequence will have a punchy impact, add pace and will encourage the reader to read on.

Tips for writing short sentences

1. **Start small**. The first sentence in a story should create intrigue and invite the audience to keep reading. Short sentences can create pace and impact and draw the readers in. For example:

   "They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and any other. Hiding places will be plentiful in the Convent but there is time and the day has just begun."

   Toni Morrison, *Paradise*

   "You better not **never** tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy." Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*`

   Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest **me** on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation.

   Herbert Melville, *Moby Dick.*

   On the other hand, many writers have written effective openings with extended sentences. For instance

2. Cut any extraneous words. Make sure every word contributes to the meaning of the sentence. Remove redundant words. For example: "In my opinion, I think" could simply be "I think," and "close proximity" could instead be just "close."

3. Break up long sentences into smaller ones. If the sentence is too long, examine how many independent clauses it contains. If a sentence involves polysyndeton—the repeated use of coordinating conjunctions to connect different items in a sentence— try replacing conjunctions with commas or semicolons. Or, simply break the thoughts out into two different sentences.

4. Use the active voice by putting the subject first and have it perform an action. The passive voice, when an action happens to a subject, is less involving and usually requires more words.

5. Remove unnecessary adverbs and modifiers. "I completely know what you mean" could become "I know what you mean." Words like "actually" or "totally," are often not needed.

6. Write one-word and two-word sentences. In certain literary scenarios, like when you're writing character dialogue, it's stylistically acceptable to be extremely brief and write sentences with one or two words.

7. Review your work – read it aloud.

Short responses in dialogue

Ernest Hemingway's, The Sun Also Rises, ends with the following words:

> "Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."
> Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.
> "Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

Speakers often shorten clauses that repeat what they have said earlier, or that repeat what someone else has said. These shortened clauses usually occur after particular verbs. Speakers often shorten "wh-" clauses, usually after they use the verbs wonder, know, or remember.   Rather than saying

> Fred didn't come to the pub on Wednesday.
> I wonder why he did not come to the pub?

it is simpler and more effective to say

> Fred didn't come to the pub on Wednesday.
> I wonder why?

There is no need to repeat the information in the first sentence. This would be somewhat tedious and tend to create excessively long conversations.

In the 2004 film Crash, actor Sandra Bullock says the following line:

> I'm angry all the time, and I don't know why… Carol, I don't know why!

Here Bullock says "I don't know why" instead of "I don't know why I am angry all the time." She uses a shortened "wh-" clause after the verb "know." It is common to shorten "wh-"clauses after a verb.

Similarly it is common to shorten "that-clauses", usually after they use verbs such as guess, say, think, and hope. The word "so" often takes the place of the "that-clause".

In the 1991 film The Man in the Moon, two characters say:

> "Maureen? Is it always gonna hurt this bad? Mama says it won't. I hope she's right."
> "I hope so."

Here, the second speaker says, "I hope so" instead of the full sentence, "I hope that she is right." In other words, "so" takes the place of an entire that-clause.

Returning to the Hemingway example, Jake could have said:

> "Isn't it pretty to think that we could have had such a good time together?"

This would have taken away some of the impact and elegance of the final line though and made it much harder for that final sentence to linger in the mind of the reader. The simplicity of

> "Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

is what makes the ending poignant and effective.

Long Sentences

Examples of long sentences

Vladimir Nabokov, "Lolita." 99 words

"My very photogenic mother died in a freak accident (picnic, lightning) when I was three, and, save for a pocket of warmth in the darkest past, nothing of her subsists within the hollows and dells of memory, over which, if you can still stand my style (I am writing under observation), the sun of my infancy had set: surely, you all know those redolent remnants of day suspended, with the midges, about some hedge in bloom or suddenly entered and traversed by the rambler, at the bottom of a hill, in the summer dusk; a furry warmth, golden midges."

Laurence Sterne, "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy." 107 words

"The French are certainly misunderstood: — but whether the fault is theirs, in not sufficiently explaining themselves, or speaking with that exact limitation and precision which one would expect on a point of such importance, and which, moreover, is so likely to be contested by us — or whether the fault may not be altogether on our side, in not understanding their language always so critically as to know "what they would be at" — I shall not decide; but 'tis evident to me, when they affirm, "That they who have seen Paris, have seen every thing," they must mean to speak of those who have seen it by day-light."

E.B. White, "Stuart Little." 107 words

"In the loveliest town of all, where the houses were white and high and the elms trees were green and higher than the houses, where the front yards were wide and pleasant and the back yards were bushy and worth finding out about, where the streets sloped down to the stream and the stream flowed quietly under the bridge, where the lawns ended in orchards and the orchards ended in fields and the fields ended in pastures and the pastures climbed the hill and disappeared over the top toward the wonderful wide sky, in this loveliest of all towns Stuart stopped to get a drink of sarsaparilla."

W.G. Sebald, "The Rings of Saturn." 107 words

"All I know is that I stood spellbound in his high-ceilinged studio room, with its north-facing windows in front of the heavy mahogany bureau at which Michael said he no longer worked because the room was so cold, even in midsummer; and that, while we talked of the difficulty of heating old houses, a strange feeling came upon me, as if it were not he who had abandoned that place of work but I, as if the spectacles cases, letters and writing materials that had evidently lain untouched for months in the soft north light had once been my spectacle cases, my letters and my writing materials."

Saul Bellow, "The Adventures of Augie March." 110 words

"But it was the figure you cut as an employee, on an employee's footing with the girls, in work clothes, and being of that tin-tough, creaking, jazzy bazaar of hardware, glassware, chocolate, chicken-feed, jewelry, drygoods, oilcloth, and song hits—that was the big thing; and even being the Atlases of it, under the floor, hearing how the floor bore up under the ambling weight of hundreds, with the fanning, breathing movie organ next door and the rumble descending from the trolleys on Chicago Avenue—the bloody-rinded Saturday gloom of wind-borne ash, and blackened forms of five-storey buildings rising up to a blind Northern dimness from the Christmas blaze of shops."

Margaret Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale." 111 words

"She's too young, it's too late, we come apart, my arms are held, and the edges go dark and nothing is left but a little window, a very little window, like the wrong end of a telescope, like the window on a Christmas card, an old one, night and ice outside, and within a candle, a shining tree, a family, I can hear the bells even, sleigh bells, from the radio, old music, but through this window I can see, small but very clear, I can see her, going away from me, through the trees which are already turning, red and yellow, holding out her arms to me, being carried away."

Virginia Woolf, "Mrs. Dalloway." 116 words

"It was not to them (not to Hugh, or Richard, or even to devoted Miss Brush) the liberator of the pent egotism, which is a strong martial woman, well nourished, well descended, of direct impulses, downright feelings, and little introspective power (broad and simple–why could not everyone be broad and simple? she asked) feels rise within her, once youth is past, and must eject upon some object–it may be Emigration, it may be Emancipation; but whatever it be, this object round which the essence of her soul is daily secreted, becomes inevitably prismatic, lustrous, half looking glass, half precious stone; now carefully hidden in case people should sneer at it; now proudly displayed."

William Faulkner, "That Evening Sun." 118 words

The streets are paved now, and the telephone and electric companies are cutting down more and more of the shade trees–the water oaks, the maples and locusts and elms–to make room for iron poles bearing clusters of bloated and ghostly and bloodless grapes, and we have a city laundry which makes the rounds on Monday morning, gathering the bundles of clothes into bright-colored, specially-made motor cars: the soiled wearing of a whole week now flees apparitionlike behind alert and irritable electric horns, with a long diminishing noise of rubber and asphalt like tearing silk, and even the Negro women who still take in white people's washing after the old custom, fetch and deliver it in automobiles.

Jane Austen, "Northanger Abbey." 119 words

"Her plan for the morning thus settled, she sat quietly down to her book after breakfast, resolving to remain in the same place and the same employment till the clock struck one; and from habitude very little incommoded by the remarks and ejaculations of Mrs. Allen, whose vacancy of mind and incapacity for thinking were such, that as she never talked a great deal, so she could never be entirely silent; and, therefore, while she sat at her work, if she lost her needle or broke her thread, if she heard a carriage in the street, or saw a speck upon her gown, she must observe it aloud, whether there were anyone at leisure to answer her or not."

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "Autumn of the Patriarch." 121 words

"She had said I'm tired of begging God to overthrow my son, because all this business of living in the presidential palace is like having the lights on all the time, sir, and she had said it with the same naturalness with which on one national holiday she had made her way through the guard of honour with a basket of empty bottles and reached the presidential limousine that was leading the parade of celebration in an uproar of ovations and martial music and storms of flowers and she shoved the basket through the window and shouted to her son that since you'll be passing right by take advantage and return these bottles to the store on the corner, poor mother."

Leo Tolstoy, "Anna Karenina." 123 Words

"It is true that Alexei Alexandrovich vaguely sensed the levity and erroneousness of this notion of his faith, and he knew that when, without any thought that his forgiveness was the effect of a higher power, he had given himself to his spontaneous feeling, he had experienced greater happiness than when he thought every minute, as he did now, that Christ lived in his

soul, and that by signing papers he was fulfilling His will, but it was necessary for him to think that way, it was so necessary for him in his humiliation to possess at least an invented loftiness from which he, despised by everyone, could despise others, that he clung to his imaginary salvation as if it were salvation indeed."

Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov." 125 words

"And this Fyodor Pavlovich began to exploit; that is, he fobbed him off with small sums, with short-term handouts, until, after four years, Mitya, having run out of patience, came to our town a second time to finish his affairs with his parent, when it suddenly turned out, to his great amazement, that he already had precisely nothing, that it was impossible even to get an accounting, that he had already received the whole value of his property in cash from Fyodor Pavlovich and might even be in debt to him, that in terms of such and such deals that he himself had freely entered into on such and such dates, he had no right to demand anything more, and so on and so forth."

F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Jazz Age." 127 words

"Sometimes, though, there is a ghostly rumble among the drums, an asthmatic whisper in the trombones that swings me back into the early twenties when we drank wood alcohol and every day in every way grew better and better, and there was a first abortive shortening of the skirts, and girls all looked alike in sweater dresses, and people you didn't want to know said 'Yes, we have no bananas', and it seemed only a question of a few years before the older people would step aside and let the world be run by those who saw things as they were and it all seems rosy and romantic to us who were young then, because we will never feel quite so intensely about our surroundings any more."

Tom Wolfe, "A Sunday Kind of Love." 128 words

"All round them, ten, scores, it seems like hundreds, of faces and bodies are perspiring, trooping and bellying up the stairs with arterio-sclerotic grimaces past a showcase full of such novel items as Joy Buzzers, Squirting Nickels, Finger Rats, Scary Tarantulas and spoons with realistic dead flies on them, past Fred's barbershop, which is just off the landing and has glossy photographs of young men with the kind of baroque haircuts one can get in there, and up onto 50th Street into a madhouse of traffic and shops with weird lingerie and gray hair-dyeing displays in the windows, signs for free teacup readings and a pool-playing match between the Playboy Bunnies and Downey's Showgirls, and then everybody pounds on toward the Time-Life Building, the Brill Building or NBC."

E.L. Doctorow, "Homer and Langely." 135 words

"The houses over to Central Park West went first, they got darker as if dissolving into the dark sky until I couldn't make them out, and then the trees began to lose their shape, and finally, this was toward the end of the season, maybe it was late February of that very cold winter, and all I could see were these phantom shapes of the white ice, that last light, went gray and then altogether black, and then all my sight was gone though I could hear clearly the scoot scut of the blades on ice, a very satisfying sound, a soft sound though full of intention, a deeper tone that you'd expect made by the skate blades, perhaps for having sounded the resonant basso of the water under the ice, scoot scut, scoot scut."

Victor Hugo, "Les Miserables." 136 words

"While the men made bullets and the women lint, while a large saucepan of melted brass and lead, destined to the bullet-mould smoked over a glowing brazier, while the sentinels watched, weapon in hand, on the barricade, while Enjolras, whom it was impossible to divert, kept an eye on the sentinels, Combeferre, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Bossuet, Joly, Bahorel, and some others, sought each other out and united as in the most peaceful of days of their conversations in their student life, and, in one corner of this wine-shop which had been converted into a casement, a couple of paces distant from the redoubt which they had built, with their carbines loaded and primed resting against the backs of their chairs, these fine young fellows, so close to a supreme hour, began to recite love verses."

Evelyn Waugh, "Scoop." 150 words

"The Francmason weighed anchor, swung about, and steamed into the ochre hills, through the straits and out into the open sea while Corker recounted the heroic legends of Fleet Street; he told of the classic scoops and hoaxes; of the confessions wrung from hysterical suspects; of the innuendo and intricate misrepresentations, the luscious, detailed inventions that composed contemporary history; of the positive, daring lies that got a chap a rise of screw; how Wenlock Jakes, highest paid journalist of the United States, scooped the world with an eye-witness story of the sinking of the Lusitania four hours before she was hit; how [Sir Jocelyn] Hitchcock, the English Jakes, straddling over his desk in London, had chronicled day by day the horrors of the Messina earthquake; how Corker himself, not three months back, had had the good fortune to encounter a knight's widow trapped by the foot between lift and landing."

John Updike, "Rabbit, Run." 163 words

"But then they were married (she felt awful about being pregnant before but Harry had been talking about marriage for a while and anyway laughed when she told him in early February about missing her period and said Great she was terribly frightened and he said Great and lifted her put his arms around under her bottom and lifted her like you would a child he could be so wonderful when you didn't expect it in a way it seemed important that you didn't expect it there was so much nice in him she couldn't explain to anybody she had been so frightened about being pregnant and he made her be proud) they were married after her missing her second period in March and she was still little clumsy dark-complected Janice Springer and her husband was a conceited lunk who wasn't good for anything in the world Daddy said and the feeling of being alone would melt a little with a little drink."

Henry James, "The Golden Bowl." 165 words

"She had got up with these last words; she stood there before him with that particular suggestion in her aspect to which even the long habit of their life together had not closed his sense, kept sharp, year after year, by the collation of types and signs, the comparison of fine object with fine object, of one degree of finish, of one form of the exquisite with another–the appearance of some slight, slim draped "antique" of Vatican or Capitoline halls, late and refined, rare as a note and immortal as a link, set in motion by the miraculous infusion of a modern impulse and yet, for all the sudden freedom of folds and footsteps forsaken after centuries by their pedestal, keeping still the quality, the perfect felicity, of the statue; the

blurred, absent eyes, the smoothed, elegant, nameless head, the impersonal flit of a creature lost in an alien age and passing as an image in worn relief round and round a precious vase."

Salman Rushdie, "The Satanic Verses." 165 words

"But at the time he had no doubt; what had taken him over was the will to live, unadulterated, irresistible, pure, and the first thing it did was to inform him that it wanted nothing to do with his pathetic personality, that half-reconstructed affair of mimicry and voices, it intended to bypass all that, and he found himself surrendering to it, yes, go on, as if he were a bystander in his own mind, in his own body, because it began in the very centre of his body and spread outwards, turning his blood to iron, changing his flesh to steel, except that it also felt like a fist that enveloped him from outside, holding him in a way that was both unbearably tight and intolerably gentle; until finally it had conquered him totally and could work his mouth, his fingers, whatever it chose, and once it was sure of its dominion it spread outward from his body and grabbed Gibreel Farishta by the balls."

Jane Austen, "Emma." 180 words

"The charming Augusta Hawkins, in addition to all the usual advantages of perfect beauty and merit, was in possession of an independent fortune, of so many thousands as would always be called ten; a point of some dignity, as well as some convenience: the story told well; he had not thrown himself away — he had gained a woman of ten thousand pounds, or thereabouts; and he had gained her with such delightful rapidity — the first hour of introduction had been so very soon followed by distinguishing notice; the history which he had to give Mrs. Cole of the rise and progress of the affair was so glorious — the steps so quick, from the accidental rencontre, to the dinner at Mr. Green's, and the party at Mrs. Brown's — smiles and blushes rising in importance — with consciousness and agitation richly scattered — the lady had been so easily impressed — so sweetly disposed — had in short, to use a most intelligible phrase, been so very ready to have him, that vanity and prudence were equally contented."

Marcel Proust, "Remembrance of Things Past." 192 words

"No doubt this astonishment is to some extent due to the fact that the other person on such occasions presents some new facet; but so great is the multiformity of each individual, so abundant the wealth of lines of face and body, so few of which leave any trace, once we are no longer in the presence of the other person, we depend on the arbitrary simplicity of our recollection, since the memory has selected some distinctive feature that had struck us, has isolated it, exaggerated it, making of a woman who has appeared to us tall a sketch in which her figure is elongated out of all proportion, or of a woman who has seemed to be pink-cheeked and golden-haired a pure "Harmony in Pink and Gold", and the moment this woman is once again standing before us, all the other forgotten qualities which balance that one remembered feature at once assail us, in their confused complexity, diminishing her height, paling her cheeks, and substituting for what we came exclusively to seek, other features which we remember having noticed the first time and fail to understand why we so little expected to find them again."

A.A. Milne, "Winnie-the-Pooh." 194 words

"In after-years he liked to think that he had been in Very Great Danger during the Terrible Flood, but the only danger he had really been in was in the last half-hour of his imprisonment, when Owl, who had just flown up, sat on a branch of his tree to comfort him, and told him a very long story about an aunt who had once laid a seagull's egg by mistake, and the story went on and on, rather like this sentence, until Piglet who was listening out of his window without much hope, went to sleep quietly and naturally, slipping slowly out of the window towards the water until he was only hanging on by his toes, at which moment luckily, a sudden loud squawk from Owl, which was really part of the story, being what his aunt said, woke the Piglet up and just gave him time to jerk himself back into safety and say, "How interesting, and did she?" when—well, you can imagine his joy when at last he saw the good ship, *The Brain of Pooh* (*Captain*, C. Robin; *1st Mate*, P. Bear) coming over the sea to rescue him."

Miguel de Cervantes, "Don Quixote." 200 words

"About this time, when some rain began to fall, Sancho proposed that they should shelter themselves in the fulling-mill, but Don Quixote had conceived such abhorrence for it, on account of what was past, that he would no means set foot within its wall; wherefore, turning to the right-hand, they chanced to fall in with a road different from that in which they had traveled the day before; they had not gone far, when the knight discovered a man riding with something on his head, that glittered like polished gold, and scarce had he descried this phenomenon, when turning to Sancho, "I find," said he, "that every proverb is strictly true; indeed, all of them are apophthegms dictated by experience herself; more especially, that which says, "shut one door, and another will soon open": this I mention, because, if last night, fortune shut against us the door we fought to enter, by deceiving us with the fulling-hammers; today another stands wide open, in proffering to use us, another greater and more certain adventure, by which, if I fail to enter, it shall be my own fault, and not imputed to my ignorance of fulling-mills, or the darkness of the night."

Cormac McCarthy, "All the Pretty Horses." 205 words

"That night he dreamt of horses on a high plain where the spring rains had brought up the grass and the wildflowers out of the ground and the flowers ran all blue and yellow far as the eye could see and in the dream he was among the horses running and in the dream he himself could run with the horses and they coursed the young mares and fillies over the plain where their rich bay and their chestnut colors shone in the sun and the young colts ran with their dams and trampled down the flowers in a haze of pollen that hung in the sun like powdered gold and they ran he and the horses out along the high mesas where the ground resounded under their running hooves and they flowed and changed and ran and their manes and tails blew off them like spume and there was nothing else at all in that high world and they moved all of them in a resonance that was like a music among them and they were none of them afraid horse nor colt nor mare and they ran in that resonance which is the world itself and which cannot be spoken but only praised."

Charles Dickens, "Barnaby Rudge." 216 words

"There he sat, watching his wife as she decorated the room with flowers for the greater honour of Dolly and Joseph Willet, who had gone out walking, and for whom the tea-kettle had been singing gaily on the hob full twenty minutes, chirping as never kettle chirped

before; for whom the best service of real undoubted china, patterned with divers round-faced mandarins holding up broad umbrellas, was now displayed in all its glory; to tempt whose appetites a clear, transparent, juicy ham, garnished with cool green lettuce-leaves and fragrant cucumber, reposed upon a shady table, covered with a snow-white cloth; for whose delight, preserves and jams, crisp cakes and other pastry, short to eat, with cunning twists, and cottage loaves, and rolls of bread both white and brown, were all set forth in rich profusion; in whose youth Mrs V. herself had grown quite young, and stood there in a gown of red and white: symmetrical in figure, buxom in bodice, ruddy in cheek and lip, faultless in ankle, laughing in face and mood, in all respects delicious to behold—there sat the locksmith among all and every these delights, the sun that shone upon them all: the centre of the system: the source of light, heat, life, and frank enjoyment in the bright household world.”

Jules Verne, “The Floating Island.” 286 words

“I have the honour to acquaint his Excellency the Governor of Floating Island, at this moment in a hundred and seven-seven degrees thirteen minutes east of the meridian of Greenwich, and in sixteen degrees fifty-four minutes south latitude, that during the night of the 31st of December and the 1st of January, the steamer *Glen*, of Glasgow, of three thousand five hundred tons, laden with wheat indigo, rice, and wine, a cargo of considerable value, was run into by Floating Island, belonging to the Floating Island Company, Limited, whose offices are at Madeleine Bay, Lower California, United States of America, although the steamer was showing the regulation lights, a white at the foremast, green at the starboard side, and red at the port side, and that having got clear after the collision she was met with the next morning thirty-five miles from the scene of the disaster, ready to sink on account of a gap in her port side, and that she did sink after fortunately putting her captain, his officers and crew on board the *Herald*, Her Britannic Majesty’s cruiser of the first-class under the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Edward Collison, who reports the fact to his Exellency Governor Cyrus Bikerstaff, requesting him to acknowledge the responsibility of the Floating Island Company, Limited, under the guarantee of the inhabitants of the said Floating Island, in favour of the owners of the said *Glen*, the value of which in hull, engines, and cargo amounts to the sum of twelve hundred thousand pounds sterling, that is six millions of dollars, which sum should be paid into the hands of the said Admiral Sir Edward Collinson, or in default he will forcibly proceed against the said Floating Island.”

Tolstoy, “War and Peace.” 307 words

“But Count Rastopchin, who now shamed those who were leaving, now evacuated government offices, now distributed good-for-nothing weapons among the drunken riffraff, now took up icons, now forbade Augustin to evacuate relics and icons, now confiscated all private carts, now transported the hot-air balloon constructed by Leppich on a hundred and thirty-six carts, now hinted that he would burn Moscow, now told how he had burned his own house and wrote a proclamation to the French in which he solemnly reproached them for destroying his orphanage; now he assumed the glory of having burned Moscow, now he renounced it, now he ordered the people to catch all the spies and bring them to him, now he reproached the people for it, now he banished all the French from Moscow, now he allowed Mme Aubert-Chalmet, the center of all the French population of all Moscow, to remain in the city and ordered the old and venerable postmaster general Klyucharev, who had done nothing particularly wrong, to be arrested and exiled; now he gathered the people on the Three Hills to fight the French, now, in order to be rid of those same people, he turned them loose to

murder a man and escaped through a back gate himself; now he said he would not survive the misfortune of Moscow, now he wrote French verses in an album about his part in the affair—this man did not understand the meaning of the event that was taking place, but only wanted to do something himself, to astonish someone or other, to accomplish something patriotically heroic, and, like a boy, frolicked over the majestic and inevitable event of the abandoning and burning of Moscow, and tried with his little hand now to encourage, now to stem the flow of the enormous current of people which carried him along with it."

Martin Luther King, "A Letter from Birmingham Jail." 310 words

"But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"–then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

Herman Melville, "Moby Dick." 467 words

"Though in many natural objects, whiteness refiningly enhances beauty, as if imparting some special virtue of its own, as in marbles, japonicas, and pearls; and though various nations have in some way recognized a certain royal preeminence in this hue; even the barbaric, grand old kings of Pegu placing the title "Lord of the White Elephants" above all their other magniloquent ascriptions of dominion; and the modern kings of Siam unfurling the same snow-white quadruped in the royal standard; and the Hanoverian flag bearing the one figure of a snow-white charger; and the great Austrian Empire, Caesarian, heir to overlording Rome, having for the imperial color the same imperial hue; and though this pre-eminence in it applies to the human race itself, giving the white man ideal mastership over every dusky tribe; and though, besides all this, whiteness has been even made significant of gladness, for among the Romans a white stone marked a joyful day; and though in other mortal sympathies and symbolizings, this same hue is made the emblem of many touching, noble things- the innocence of brides, the benignity of age; though among the Red Men of America the giving of the white belt of wampum was the deepest pledge of honor; though in many climes, whiteness typifies the majesty of Justice in the ermine of the Judge, and contributes to the

daily state of kings and queens drawn by milk-white steeds; though even in the higher mysteries of the most august religions it has been made the symbol of the divine spotlessness and power; by the Persian fire worshippers, the white forked flame being held the holiest on the altar; and in the Greek mythologies, Great Jove himself being made incarnate in a snow-white bull; and though to the noble Iroquois, the midwinter sacrifice of the sacred White Dog was by far the holiest festival of their theology, that spotless, faithful creature being held the purest envoy they could send to the Great Spirit with the annual tidings of their own fidelity; and though directly from the Latin word for white, all Christian priests derive the name of one part of their sacred vesture, the alb or tunic, worn beneath the cassock; and though among the holy pomps of the Romish faith, white is specially employed in the celebration of the Passion of our Lord; though in the Vision of St. John, white robes are given to the redeemed, and the four-and-twenty elders stand clothed in white before the great-white throne, and the Holy One that sitteth there white like wool; yet for all these accumulated associations, with whatever is sweet, and honorable, and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood."

Marcel Proust, "Remembrance of Things Past." 958 words

"Their honour precarious, their liberty provisional, lasting only until the discovery of their crime; their position unstable, like that of the poet who one day was feasted at every table, applauded in every theatre in London, and on the next was driven from every lodging, unable to find a pillow upon which to lay his head, turning the mill like Samson and saying like him: "The two sexes shall die, each in a place apart!"; excluded even, save on the days of general disaster when the majority rally round the victim as the Jews rallied round Dreyfus, from the sympathy–at times from the society–of their fellows, in whom they inspire only disgust at seeing themselves as they are, portrayed in a mirror which, ceasing to flatter them, accentuates every blemish that they have refused to observe in themselves, and makes them understand that what they have been calling their love (a thing to which, playing upon the word, they have by association annexed all that poetry, painting, music, chivalry, asceticism have contrived to add to love) springs not from an ideal of beauty which they have chosen but from an incurable malady; like the Jews again (save some who will associate only with others of their race and have always on their lips ritual words and consecrated pleasantries), shunning one another, seeking out those who are most directly their opposite, who do not desire their company, pardoning their rebuffs, moved to ecstasy by their condescension; but also brought into the company of their own kind by the ostracism that strikes them, the opprobrium under which they have fallen, having finally been invested, by a persecution similar to that of Israel, with the physical and moral characteristics of a race, sometimes beautiful, often hideous, finding (in spite of all the mockery with which he who, more closely blended with, better assimilated to the opposing race, is relatively, in appearance, the least inverted, heaps upon him who has remained more so) a relief in frequenting the society of their kind, and even some corroboration of their own life, so much so that, while steadfastly denying that they are a race (the name of which is the vilest of insults), those who succeed in concealing the fact that they belong to it they readily unmask, with a view less to injuring them, though they have no scruple about that, than to excusing themselves; and, going in search (as a doctor seeks cases of appendicitis) of cases of inversion in history, taking pleasure in recalling that Socrates was one of themselves, as the Israelites claim that Jesus was one of them, without reflecting that there were no abnormals when homosexuality was the norm, no anti-Christians before Christ, that the disgrace alone makes the crime because it has allowed to survive only those who remained obdurate to every warning, to every

example, to every punishment, by virtue of an innate disposition so peculiar that it is more repugnant to other men (even though it may be accompanied by exalted moral qualities) than certain other vices which exclude those qualities, such as theft, cruelty, breach of faith, vices better understood and so more readily excused by the generality of men; forming a freemasonry far more extensive, more powerful and less suspected than that of the Lodges, for it rests upon an identity of tastes, needs, habits, dangers, apprenticeship, knowledge, traffic, glossary, and one in which the members themselves, who intend not to know one another, recognise one another immediately by natural or conventional, involuntary or deliberate signs which indicate one of his congeners to the beggar in the street, in the great nobleman whose carriage door he is shutting, to the father in the suitor for his daughter's hand, to him who has sought healing, absolution, defence, in the doctor, the priest, the barrister to whom he has had recourse; all of them obliged to protect their own secret but having their part in a secret shared with the others, which the rest of humanity does not suspect and which means that to them the most wildly improbable tales of adventure seem true, for in this romantic, anachronistic life the ambassador is a bosom friend of the felon, the prince, with a certain independence of action with which his aristocratic breeding has furnished him, and which the trembling little cit would lack, on leaving the duchess's party goes off to confer in private with the hooligan; a reprobate part of the human whole, but an important part, suspected where it does not exist, flaunting itself, insolent and unpunished, where its existence is never guessed; numbering its adherents everywhere, among the people, in the army, in the church, in the prison, on the throne; living, in short, at least to a great extent, in a playful and perilous intimacy with the men of the other race, provoking them, playing with them by speaking of its vice as of something alien to it; a game that is rendered easy by the blindness or duplicity of the others, a game that may be kept up for years until the day of the scandal, on which these lion-tamers are devoured; until then, obliged to make a secret of their lives, to turn away their eyes from the things on which they would naturally fasten them, to fasten them upon those from which they would naturally turn away, to change the gender of many of the words in their vocabulary, a social constraint, slight in comparison with the inward constraint which their vice, or what is improperly so called, imposes upon them with regard not so much now to others as to themselves, and in such a way that to themselves it does not appear a vice."

Punctuation

- Sentence endings: period, question mark, exclamation point
- Comma, colon, and semicolon
- Dash and hyphen
- Brackets, braces, and parentheses
- Apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis

Period (.)

Also called a full stop. Used to mark the end of a declarative sentence.   Also used to end an abbreviation (eg Dr.)
.
Question Mark (?)

A question mark marks the end of a sentence that is a direct question. Typically, sentences that are questions begin with what, how, when, where, why, or who. When read out loud a question mark indicates a change of tone

Exclamation Point (!)

An exclamation point marks the end of a sentence that expresses an intense emotion.

Comma (,)

Commas are used to insert a pause into a sentence. The purpose of the pause can be for different reasons, such as to separate ideas, phrases, or even alter the structure of a sentence.

Commas have a few different uses. Commas are used for a direct address, such as:

Joe, it was nice to see you again.
They're also used to separate two complete sentences:

He went to the library, and then he went out for lunch.
Commas can also be used to list items in a sentence:

She went shopping and bought shoes, a dress, two shirts, and a pair of pants.
Commas are one of the most misused punctuation points, and its misuse often results in a comma splice. A comma splice is when you join two independent clauses with a comma instead of a conjunction. For example:

It's almost time for dinner, I'm not hungry.
Instead of using a comma, the sentence should read:
It's almost time for dinner and I'm not hungry.
Oxford commas are often debated within academics and the English language, and using one often comes down to preference. An Oxford comma is when a final comma is placed on the last item of a list. For example:

He likes to eat fruits, cake, vegetables, and pasta.

Colon (:)
A colon has three primary uses. One way to use it is when introducing something, such as a quote, an example, a series, or an explanation.
She took four classes last semester: history, biology, arts, and economics.
A colon can also be used to link two independent clauses if the second clause clarifies or completes the first one. For example:
- They didn't have time to waste: it was already late.
- Finally, a colon can also emphasize a subject in a sentence:
- I only hate one vegetable: brussel sprouts.

Semicolon (;)
Similar to a colon, a semicolon links two independent clauses. However, in this case, the clauses are more closely related than when you would use a colon. For example:
I have a meeting tomorrow morning; I can't go out tonight.
Both clauses are independent enough to be their own sentences, but instead of using a period, it's possible to use a semicolon to show both clauses are connected.
Another less common use for semicolons is within a list that uses commas. Have a look:
- Last summer we traveled to London, England; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; and Athens, Greece.

Dash (-)
There are two types of dashes that vary in size and use.
En dash: Typically shorter in length, the en dash is used to denote a range, such as between numbers or dates. For example:
- The company was operational from 1990-2000.
- He took the Chicago-New York train last night.
- Em dash: this dash is longer, and is sometimes used instead of other punctuation marks, like commas, colons, or parentheses. Here's an example:
- Her answer was clear — Yes!

Hyphen (-)

Not to be confused with a dash, a hyphen is used in compound words when two or more words are connected. Here are some examples of hyphenated words:
- Step-by-step
- Mother-in-law
- Ex-boyfriend

Brackets ([ ])
Brackets are used to clarify something or for technical terms or explanations. It can also be used to clarify a subject when quoting another person or text. For example:
- She [Mrs. Smith] agrees that cats are better than dogs.
- Adam said that "[summer] is my favorite time of year."

Braces ({ })

It's unlikely you'll need to use braces very often unless you're writing a mathematical or technical text. However, it's still good to know so you don't accidentally use them instead of brackets or parentheses. Braces are usually used in operations, for example:

- $6\{3x+[28+2]\}=xy$

Parentheses (( ))
Parentheses are used to supply further details or information or as an aside. Parentheses can often be replaced with commas and the sentence would retain its same meaning. Here's an example:

- Kate (who is Matt's wife) likes to go for walks.

Apostrophe (')
Apostrophes are meant to show that a letter or letters have been omitted and also to indicate the possessive or contractions. It can also be used to pluralize lowercase letters. Here are some examples:

- I've been working from home for 6 months and it's great.
- Rebecca's dog had surgery yesterday.
- All that's left to do is dot the i's and cross the t's.

Quotation Marks (")
Quotation marks are used to denote text, speech, or words spoken by someone else. It is also used to indicate dialogue.

- "I don't like this," said Mark.
- She told him that she "prefers not to think about that."
- Single quotation marks (' '), not to be confused with apostrophes, are often used for a quote within a quote.
- Jill told her mother "Jack ran up the hill and he said he was going to 'fetch a pail of water' before he fell."

Ellipsis (…)
An ellipsis is three periods used together to represent an omission of words or letters. They are often used to jump from one sentence or phrase to another while omitting unnecessary or obvious words. It's also used when quoting someone and unnecessary words are left out. Here are some examples:

- At midnight, she began to count down: "ten, nine, eight…" and then the ball dropped.
- When Martin Luther King said "I have a dream…" he was talking about civil rights and an end to racism.

Writing a scene

Planning your scene:

Who is in the scene
When. - spring, year - affects the weather and the setting
Where - setting. - comparing scenes shows if the scenes are repetitive etc
What - what happens
Why - why is the scene necessary
Wee - what makes it exciting/interesting to write ?
Wordcount

(from Cesca D. Major)

Writing a scene

Literary Devices

Device	Explanation	Example
Allegory	a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.	Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory of a spiritual journey. Animal Farm is an allegory for communism.
Alliteration	Sequence of words that start with the same sound. Consonance is a broader literary device identified by the repetition of consonant sounds at any point in a word (for example, coming home, hot foot). Alliteration is a special case of consonance where the repeated consonant sound is in the stressed syllable.	The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe has many examples of alliteration, including the following line: "And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain".
Allusion	Allusion is when an author makes an indirect reference to a figure, place, event, or idea originating from outside the text. Many allusions make reference to previous works of literature or art.	"Stop acting so smart—it's not like you're Einstein or something." The title of William Faulkner's novel The Sound and the Fury is an allusion to a line in Shakespeare's Macbeth—a futile speech made by an embittered man who has ruined his life. Alluding to that speech in the title helps Faulkner set the tone for his story of a family in ruins.
Anachronism	An anachronism occurs when there is an (intentional) error in the chronology or timeline of a text. This could be a character who appears in a different time period than when he actually lived, or a technology that appears before it was invented.	Act 2, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar: Brutus: "Peace! Count the clock." Cassius: "The clock has stricken three." The problem is that the Romans did not have mechanical clocks capable of striking the hours.

Device	Explanation	Example
Anadiplosis	Anadiplosis is a figure of speech in which a word or group of words located at the end of one clause or sentence is repeated at or near the beginning of the following clause or sentence.	Henry James: "Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task."
Analepsis	See Flashback	
Anaphora	A rhetorical device that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginnings of neighbouring clauses, thereby lending them emphasis. In contrast, an epistrophe (or epiphora) is repeating words at the clauses' ends.	Winston Churchill's speech: "**We shall fight** in France, **we shall fight** on the seas and oceans, **we shall fight** with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, **we shall** defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, **we shall fight on the beaches**, **we shall fight** on the landing grounds, **we shall fight** in the fields and in the streets…"
Anthropomorphism	An anthropomorphism occurs when something nonhuman, such as an animal, place, or inanimate object, behaves in a human-like way.	The cartoon characters Tom and Jerry.
Antithesis	A proposition that contrasts with or reverses some previously mentioned proposition, or when two opposites are introduced to-gether for contrasting effect.	I came not to bring **peace** but a **sword**. (St Matthew's Gospel, 10:34). Ask not what **your country** can do for **you** – ask what **you** can do for **your country**. – Inauguration of John F. Kennedy, 1961.
Aphorism	An aphorism is a brief saying or phrase that expresses an opinion or makes a statement of wisdom without the flowery language of a proverb. Aphorism comes from a Greek word meaning "definition." The term was first coined by Hippocrates in a work appropriately titled *Aphorisms*.	Actions speak louder than words. A bad penny always turns up.
Assonance	Assonance is a resemblance in the sounds of words/syllables either between their vowels (e.g., meat, bean) or between their consonants (e.g., keep,	William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 1": His t*e*nder h*ei*r might b*ea*r his m*e*mory (assonance)

Device	Explanation	Example
	cape). However, assonance between consonants is generally called consonance in American usage. The two types are often combined, as between the words six and switch, in which the vowels are identical, and the consonants are similar but not completely identical. If there is repetition of the same vowel or some similar vowels in literary work, especially in stressed syllables, this may be termed "vowel harmony" in poetry. A special case of assonance is rhyme, in which the endings of words (generally beginning with the vowel sound of the last stressed syllable) are identical—as in fog and dog or history and mystery.	*Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows:* The W*i*llow-Wr*e*n was tw*i*tter*i*ng h*i*s th*i*n l*i*ttle song, h*i*dd*e*n h*i*ms*el*f *i*n the dark s*el*v*e*dge of the r*i*verbank. The squ*ea*ky wh*ee*l gets the gr*ea*se. (consonance) The e*ar*ly b*ir*d catches the w*or*m. (consonance)
Asyndeton	A phrase in which one or more conjunctions are omitted from a series of related clauses. Its use can have the effect of speeding up the rhythm of a passage and making a single idea more memorable. Asyndeton may be contrasted with syndeton (syndetic coordination) and polysyndeton, which describe the use of one or multiple coordinating conjunctions, respectively. More generally, in grammar, an asyndetic coordination is a type of coordination in which no coordinating conjunction is present between the conjuncts.	Julius Caesar: "veni, vidi, vici" and its English translation "I came, I saw, I conquered". Winston Churchill again: ""We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island…"
Blank verse	**Blank verse** is poetry written with regular metrical but unrhymed lines, almost always in iambic pentameter.[1] It has been described as "probably the most common and influential form	

Device	Explanation	Example
	that English poetry has taken since the 16th century",[2] and Paul Fussell has estimated that "about three quarters of all English poetry is in blank verse".[3] The first known use of blank verse in the English language was by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in his translation of the Æneid (composed c. 1540; published posthumously, 1554–1557[4]). He may have been inspired by the Latin original as classical Latin verse did not use rhyme; or possibly he was inspired by Ancient Greek verse or the Italian verse form of versi sciolti, both of which also did not use rhyme. The play Arden of Faversham (around 1590 by an unknown author) is a notable example of end-stopped blank verse.	
Colloquialism	Informal language and slang usually used to add realism to dialogue. Forms of colloquialism include words, phrases, and contractions that are not real words (such as "gonna" and "ain't").	"Hey man, I ain't gonna go to work today."
Consonance	the recurrence of similar-sounding consonants in close proximity. Alliteration is a special case of consonance where the repeated consonant sound is at the stressed syllable, as in "few flocked to the fight" or "around the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran". Alliteration is usually distinguished from other types of consonance in poetic analysis and has different uses and effects.	coming home, hot foot (consonance) *h*umble *h*ouse, *p*otential *p*ower *p*lay (alliteration)
Diachopy		

Device	Explanation	Example
Ellipsis	The ellipsis ... is a series of three dots that indicates an intentional omission of a word, sentence, or whole section from a text without altering its original meaning. As a narrative device which omits portion of the sequence of events, allowing the reader to fill in the narrative gaps. This advances the story.	
Epigraph	An epigraph is a short statement that comes at the beginning of a literary text, but contains words belong to a different author. Can be in sentence, paragraph or poem form.	At the beginning of The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway quotes Gertrude Stein: "You are all a lost generation."
Epistrophe	Epistrophe is similar to anaphora, but in this case, the repeated word or phrase appears at the *end* of successive statements. Like anaphora, it is used to evoke an emotional response from the audience.	In Lyndon B. Johnson's speech, "The American Promise," he repeats the word "problem" in a use of epistrophe: "There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.
Epizeuxis	Epizeuxis is a word or phrase repeated in succession for effect. It's derived from the Greek word epizeugnumi, which means 'fastening together'.	Examples of epizeuxis in Abba song titles are the top three UK single Money, Money, Money and the album tracks Hey, Hey Helen and On and On and On.
Euphemism	A euphemism is when a phrase that is considered harsh, blunt, offensive is replaced by a milder or indirect word or expression.	"Graham Chapman of the parrot sketch is no more, he has ceased to be, bereft of life, he rests in peace, he has kicked the bucket, hopped the twig, bit the dust, snuffed it, breathed his last, and gone to meet the great Head of Light Entertainment in the sky." John Cleese at Graham Chapman's memorial service, 1989.
Flashback, analepsis	A literary device in narrative, in which a past event is narrated at a point later than its chronological place in a story.	In Billy Wilder's film noir Double Indemnity (1944), a flashback from the main character is used to provide a

Device	Explanation	Example
	This device provides information on the backstory of the characters, events, plot points in the narrative. It interrupts the narrative and depicts events that have already occurred, either before the present time or before the time at which the narration takes place. Also called analepsis. Internal analepsis is a flashback to an earlier point in the narrative; external analepsis is a flashback to a time before the narrative started. Though usually used to clarify plot or backstory, flashbacks can also act as an unreliable narrator.	confession to his fraudulent and criminal activities.
Flashforward	A flash-forward represents expected or imagined events in the future, interjected into the main plot, revealing important information to the story that has yet to be brought to light. It is the opposite of a flashback, or analepsis, which reveals past events.	
Foil	A character used to contrast a second, usually more prominent character in order to highlight certain qualities of the more prominent character.	In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Fortinbras is a foil for Hamlet in that he is unhesitating in action and war-like in nature; in contrast, Hamlet is thoughtful, analytical, hesitant and careful.
Foreshadowing	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.	"the leaves fell early that year" (foreshadowing death) in A Farewell to Arms. The pain in Harry Potter's scar. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet tells her nurse to find Romeo's name: "Go ask his name. If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding-bed." This foreshadows the danger of Romeo's name being Montague and of Juliet's death because of their marriage.

Device	Explanation	Example
Hyperbole	Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Used for emphasis. it is also sometimes known as auxesis it is a rhetorical device or figure of speech and is not meant to be taken literally.	I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
Imagery	Imagery, in any sort of writing, refers to descriptive language that engages the human senses. Imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language to improve the reader's experience through their senses. The imagery can be visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory (taste) or tactile.	from Charlotte's Web by E.B. White: "In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds, popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones and wooden sticks of lollipops." William Wordsworth's famous poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud": When all at once I saw a crowd, A host of golden Daffodils; Beside the Lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Act 1 Scene V: "O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear …"
Irony	Irony is when a statement is used to express an opposite meaning than the one literally expressed by it. There are three types of irony in literature:	• Verbal irony: One example of this type of irony can be found in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." In this short story, a man named Montresor

Device	Explanation	Example
	• Verbal irony: When someone says something but means the opposite (similar to sarcasm). • Situational irony: When something happens that's the opposite of what was expected or intended to happen. • Dramatic irony: When the audience is aware of the true intentions or outcomes, while the characters are not. As a result, certain actions and/or events take on different meanings for the audience than they do for the characters involved.	plans to get revenge on another man named Fortunato. As they toast, Montresor says, "And I, Fortunato—I drink to your long life." This statement is ironic because we the readers already know by this point that Montresor plans to kill Fortunato. Situational irony: A girl wakes up late for school and quickly rushes to get there. As soon as she arrives, though, she realizes that it's Saturday and there is no school. Dramatic irony: In William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Romeo commits suicide in order to be with Juliet; however, the audience (unlike poor Romeo) knows that Juliet is not actually dead—just asleep.
Juxtaposition	This is the positioning of two contrasting things in close proximity – with the intention of emphasising their differences.	"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country", and "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate", both by John F. Kennedy. All's fair in love and war.
Litotes	See understatement	I shan't be sorry for I shall be glad. (litotes)
Malapropism	A humorous or nonsensical misuse of word in place of a word with a similar sound.	"Will you dance the flamingo with me?" (flamenco) ""She's as headstrong as an allegory." (alligator). "Johnny is learning to play the baboon." (bassoon).
Metaphor/Simile	Used for emphasis or clarity. Metaphors are when ideas, actions, or objects are described in non-literal terms. It usually involves comparing two things that share	"What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." (metaphor) As American as apple pie (simile)

Device	Explanation	Example
	something in common but are unalike in all other respects. A simile is a type of metaphor in which an object, idea, character, action, etc., is compared to another thing using the words "as" or "like."	
Metonym	A metonym is when a related word or phrase is substituted for the actual thing to which it's referring. This device is usually used for poetic or rhetorical effect.	"The pen is mightier than the sword." This statement, which was coined by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839, contains two examples of metonymy: "the pen" refers to "the written word," and "the sword" refers to "military force/violence."
Meiosis	See understatement.	Calling the violence in Northern Ireland "The Troubles." (meiosis)
Mirroring	This is where one character's action, motivation, emotion etc is repeated or contrasted against by another for dramatic effect. Mirroring can also showing how the change in a character showing how the protagonist's life has changed and why she's better or worse Mirrors aren't just copies, but ideas and themes reflected in characters and situations around the protagonist. Sometimes they match the protagonist's emotions or choices, other times they reflect the opposite, but they deepen the story by allowing the protagonist (and reader) to "experience" other potential outcomes without derailing the story. Stakes become more real when we see them occur, and the right mirror can do a world of foreshadowing and raise the tension.	Types of mirrors are: *The Path Not Taken* – A second character represents the consequences the protagonist will face if she doesn't fix what's wrong in the novel. This might be a plot path, a character arc path, or a subplot. Whatever bad thing is facing the protagonist is also happening to someone else, and that struggle helps show the protagonist what their life would be like if they follow the same path in future. *The example* - A second character has already suffered all the consequences the protagonist fears. They are already enduring the protagonist's worst nightmare. *The Road to Salvation* - Conversely to the above, a second character might represent all or some of the benefits of the protagonist doing what's right and growing as a character. This second

Device	Explanation	Example
		character shows what the protagonist could achieve if they act correctly.
		The Conflicting Opinion - Quite often the antagonist mirrors the opposing view of the protagonist, but sometimes another character (often a sidekick or best friend) can take the other side. This character can show why the protagonist is fighting so hard and can even show the redeeming aspects of the other side.
		The Voices in Your Head - Different characters can offer perspectives that mirror the internal conflict the protagonist might be having. They can even help the protagonist keep it real and consider all sides of an argument.
Mood	Mood is the general feeling the writer wants the audience to have. The writer can achieve this through description, setting, dialogue, and word choice.	
Onomatopoeia	A word that represents a sound and actually resembles or imitates the sound it stands for. It is often used for dramatic, realistic, or poetic effect.	Buzz, boom, chirp, creak, sizzle, crack.
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.	Deafening silence, organized chaos, cruelly kind, insanely logical, etc.
Paradox	A paradox, also known as an antinomy, is a logically self-contradictory statement or a statement	"The following sentence is true. The preceding sentence is false." The grandfather paradox arises if a time-traveller were to kill his own grandfather before his mother or father had been

Device	Explanation	Example
		conceived, he would thereby prevent his own birth.
Pararhyme	**Pararhyme** is a half-rhyme in which there is vowel variation within the same consonant pattern.	"Strange Meeting" (1918) is a poem by Wilfred Owen, a war poet who used pararhyme in his writing. Here is a part of the poem that shows pararhyme: Too fast in thought or death to be **bestirred.** Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and **stared** With piteous recognition in fixed **eyes,** Lifting distressful hands, as if to **bless.** And by his smile, I knew that sullen **hall,** By his dead smile I knew we stood in **Hell.**
Pathetic Fallacy	The poetic convention whereby natural phenomena which cannot feel as humans do are described as if they could: thus rain-clouds may 'weep', or flowers may be 'joyful' in sympathy with the poet's (or imagined speaker's) mood. The pathetic fallacy normally involves the use of some metaphor which falls short of full-scale personification in its treatment of the natural world.	
Personification	The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. It is used to help the reader create a clearer mental picture of the scene or object being described. This is unlike anthropomorphism where non-human figures become human-like characters, with	Lightning danced across the sky. The wind screeched in the night. The car complained as the key was roughly turned in its ignition. Dave heard the last helping of trifle calling his name.

Device	Explanation	Example
	personification, the object/figure is simply described as being human-like.)	
Prolepsis	Procatalepsis, also called prolepsis or prebuttal, is a figure of speech in which the speaker raises an objection to their own argument and then immediately answers it. By doing so, they hope to strengthen their argument by dealing with possible counter arguments before their audience can raise them. Prolepsis in a more literary context, anticipating action, a flash forward, see Foreshadowing.	
Repetition	Repetition is when a word or phrase is written multiple times, usually for the purpose of emphasis. It is often used in poetry (for purposes of rhythm as well).	Hey! I'm walking here! I'm walking here!" (Midnight Cowboy) "You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? Then who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well, I'm the only one here." (Taxi Driver) "You don't understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I could've been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am." (On the Waterfront) "Bond. James Bond." (James Bond films)
Satire	Vices, follies, abuses and shortcomings are held up to ridicule. Usually meant to be humorous, satire is often used to more seriously draw attention to or criticise wider issues in society.	Joseph Heller ruthlessly satirized the failures of the mid-20th century American military and political establishment, most famously in his novel Catch-22.
Soliloquy	A type of monologue that's often used in dramas, a	In Romeo and Juliet, Juliet's speech on the balcony that

Device	Explanation	Example
	soliloquy is when a character speaks aloud to himself (and to the audience), thereby revealing his inner thoughts and feelings.	begins with, "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" is a soliloquy, as she is speaking aloud to herself (remember that she doesn't realize Romeo's there listening!).
Symbolism	Symbolism refers to the use of an object, figure, event, situation, or other idea in a written work to represent something else—typically a broader message or deeper meaning that differs from its literal meaning. The use of an object or action to mean something more than its literal meaning. A character can also be equated with an object throughout a work, another form of symbolism.	In F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel The Great Gatsby, the green light that sits across from Gatsby's mansion symbolizes Gatsby's hopes and dreams. For example, in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, one of the principal characters, Caddy, falls and stains her white dress when she's a child. The stained dress symbolizes (and foreshadows) her later loss of purity. In Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding,* an aunt is repeatedly seen carrying an empty bag, which symbolizes her childlessness.
Synecdoche	a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa.	England lost by six wickets (here 'England' means 'the English cricket team'). "check out my new wheels," "wheels" is an example of synecdoche, used to refer to a "car." A part of a car, in this example, represents the whole of the car
Tone	While mood is what the audience is supposed to feel, tone is the writer or narrator's attitude towards a subject. A good writer will always want the audience to feel the mood they're trying to evoke, but the audience may not always agree with the narrator's tone, especially if the narrator is an	In an essay disdaining Americans and some of the sites they visit as tourists, Rudyard Kipling begins with the line, "Today I am in the Yellowstone Park, and I wish I were dead." If you enjoy Yellowstone and/or national parks, you may not agree with the author's tone in this piece.

Device	Explanation	Example
	unsympathetic character or has viewpoints that differ from those of the reader.	
Understatement	Ironic understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary In rhetoric, **meiosis** is a euphemistic figure of speech that intentionally understates something or implies that it is lesser in significance or size than it really is. **Meiosis** is the opposite of auxesis and is often compared to **litotes**. The term is derived from the Greek μειόω ("to make smaller", "to diminish").	I shan't be sorry for I shall be glad. (litotes) Calling the violence in Northern Ireland "The Troubles." (meiosis) After all four engines of British Airways Flight 9 failed due to ingestion of volcanic ash, the captain of the flight made the following announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. We have a small problem. All four engines have stopped. We are doing our damnedest to get them going again. I trust you are not in too much distress." (understatement)
Unreliable narrator	An unreliable narrator is a narrator whose credibility is compromised. While unreliable narrators are almost by definition first-person narrators, arguments have been made for the existence of unreliable second- and third-person narrators, especially within the context of film and television, and sometimes also in literature. Sometimes the narrator's unreliability is made immediately evident. For instance, a story may open with the narrator making a plainly false or delusional claim or admitting to being severely mentally ill, or the story itself may have a frame in which the narrator appears as a character, with clues to the character's unreliability. A more dramatic use of the	Ken Kesey's two most famous novels feature unreliable narrators. "Chief" Bromden in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest has schizophrenia, and his telling of the events often includes things such as people growing or shrinking, walls oozing with slime, or the orderlies kidnapping and "curing" Santa Claus.

Device	Explanation	Example
	device delays the revelation until near the story's end. In some cases, the reader discovers that in the foregoing narrative, the narrator had concealed or greatly misrepresented vital pieces of information. Such a twist ending forces readers to reconsider their point of view and experience of the story. In some cases, the narrator's unreliability is never fully revealed but only hinted at, leaving readers to wonder how much the narrator should be trusted and how the story should be interpreted.	

Table 4: Types of Literary Device

And as if that is not enough, there are even more comprehensive lists of literary devices at: https://literarydevices.net/ and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_narrative_techniques.

Morning pages

[The Guardian: Morning Pages](#)

[Julia Cameron: Morning Pages](#)

[Morning Pages Changed my Life](#)

[The Case Against Morning Pages](#)

Considerations for analysing novels and short stories

Things to look for and comment on when critiquing:

- memorable characters that evoke an emotional response from the reader
- a sense of place and an intriguing and involving setting
- an interesting plot, driven by the character's nature and desire as well as by external events
- elements of conflict and resolution, either between the characters themselves or between the characters and their environment - though I guess there are lots of work with only vestigial plots
- momentum - a sense of building up of tension resulting in a climax, followed by a resolution
- a strong opening and a good title
- fresh language - sensory descriptions, effective similes
- correct syntax and grammar, (though colloquially written prose is also okay)
- an appropriate use of variation in sentence length and complexity to meet the needs of the story. Short sentences to build moment. Long sentences for internal reflection?
- an appropriate use of simplicity or complexity of vocabulary to meet the needs of the characters
- a sense of authenticity
- a theme or themes. (i.e., the underlying idea(s) of the piece)
- a satisfying end, possibly including a surprising twist
- a sense of integrity and consistency between the characters, setting, themes and plot.
- common errors - overworked prose, over-use of adverbs or adjectives, too much telling and not enough showing or vice versa, overtelling instead of trusting the reader to understand, head hopping
- effective use of POV. Are there multiple point of views? Are they needed?   Do they work?
- effective use of tense
- does the tone of the piece suit the subject – humour, drama, pathos
- has the author a unique voice?
- a well-controlled structure - Is the timeline linear or non-linear – single or multi-stranded? Are the scenes in the best order, are the protagonists properly and effectively introduced and managed?
- if literary devices such as flash forward, flashback, foreshadowing etc are they well used?
- can material be cut without loss? This could be single words, phrases, sentences or larger sections.

When analysing a novel or short story, the following elements should be considered: the context, setting, characters, plot, literary devices, and themes. This note will look at these in turn (after that a list of specific questions to ask is given in Critical reading checklist on page 269.)

What was the *Context* the novel was written in? Did this affect the choices the writer made when writing the novel. E.g., Tolkien fought in the Battle of the Somme during World War 1 where some of his closest friends were killed – this may well have affected his sentiments about war and how he wrote about conflicts in his work as in the great war fought by a group of friends in the Lord of the Rings. In The Left Hand of Darkness, Le Guin was writing in a

social environment of increasing feminism and sexual freedom and political concerns about the Vietnam and Cold Ward and this would have affected the way she handled those themes in that book.

What *Setting* did the author use? And why was that choice made? In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for example, the setting is Italy, although Shakespeare was writing in England. He set his play elsewhere, in part, so he could make social commentary about England without incurring the wrath of English rulers.

- What aspects make up the setting? E.g., Geography, weather, time of day, social conditions?

- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?

- In which time period is the story set – is this relevant or could it be set in any time period - present, the past, or the future? Does the time period affect the language,
Wikipedia) shows some common plot devices.

Plot

- What are the most important events?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move back and forth?
- Are there turning points, a climax and/or an anti-climax?
- Is the plot believable?

Table 1 lists a range of plot devices.

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the novel. Conflict may be internal or external. Internally a character may be in conflict with his or her own values, morality, beliefs, religions, conscience, emotions or thoughts.

Externally they may be in conflict with: God, other characters, society, the law of the land, their employer, their friends (and enemies), their children, nature, technology, a belief system, the government, the supernatural, or even their own destiny.
How would you describe the main conflict?
- Is it internal where the character suffers inwardly?
- is it external caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds himself/herself in?

Are *Chapters* and *Sections* used? Why? Or if not, why not?

Why did the author select the particular set of *Characters* used in the novel? What are the characteristics of each character? Why did the author choose these characteristics? What is the character's role in the story – are they a protagonist or an antagonist? Are they a primary or secondary character? How convincing is the portrayal of each character? Which characters do we like or trust and which do we not? Are the characters moral or amoral? Are they flawed (and the more interesting for being flawed?). For example, in Harry Potter, Dumbledore is a threat to Cornelius Fudge because of his power and influence. In being

frightened and resentful of Dumbledore, Fudge shows himself to be a weak man who blames others for his mistakes—Rowling's comment on government.

Characterization deals with how the characters are described.

- through dialogue?
- by the way they speak.
- physical appearance? thoughts and feelings?
- interaction – the way they act towards other characters?
- Are they static characters who do not change?
- Do they develop by the end of the story?
- What type of characters are they?
- What qualities stand out?
- Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Points of View - The *narrator* is the person telling the story. Whoever is telling a story will influence the reader's understanding of what happens so we must ask who is telling the story?

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story? Are there multiple narrators?
- Is the narrator the main character?
- Does the author speak through one of the characters?
- Is the story written in the first person "I" point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person "he/she" point of view?
- Is the story written in an "all-knowing" 3rd person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places? Is he/she reliable or not?
- Contradictions: there may be a contradiction in what a character says or what he/she does. Or there may be a contradiction between ideas at the sentence level or in an action

Table 2: List of narrative perspectives lists the possible narrative perspectives in more detail.

Various *Literary devices* help convey meaning or create a mood. Look for these in a story to identify key points and their contribution to the author's overall meaning. These could include Allusions, Foreshadowing, Irony, Symbolism etc – see below.

What *Themes* are used? Common themes are love, sex, war, compassion, friendship, authority, coming of age, human rights, feminism, racism, education, human nature, good vs evil, religion, love, family problems, faith, alienation, anger, social structure, the meaning or non-meaning of life, the individual vs the collective, death. What is the author saying in each thematic area? For example, T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* deals with the theme of authority, among others. Other Arthurian writers associate King Arthur's greatness with military glory and valorous deeds. White is different in that he presents Arthur as a political innovator and implies that king is not great because of an aptitude for war, but because of his ability to balance government strength and social justice.

Which *Styles* does the author use? This will be determined by imagery, tone and feeling. Examples are ironic, humorous, cold, dramatic.

- Is the text full of figurative language?

- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors, similes?
  An example of a metaphor is when someone says, "My love, you *are* a rose".
  An example of a simile is "My darling, you are *like* a rose."
- What images are used?

Critical reading checklist

1. What is the structure of the piece?   What forms are used: focalisation (different points of view), anachrony (flashback/flashforward0, do things happen in a linear order, or does the story move backwards and forwards across a timeline in a non-linear fashion. What is the mix between showing and telling? Is it appropriate for this type of piece?[1] The narrator may speak as a particular character or may be the "invisible narrator" or even the "all-knowing narrator" who speaks from above in the form of commenting on the action or the characters. Is the selection of narrator appropriate? Does the piece have a satisfying order and rhythm to its structure?

2. What is the form of the piece? The four major literary forms: prose, fiction prose, poetry, and drama. These can be broken down into a huge subset of genres.
   A genre is a specific style or category of writing. Forms and genres join with content to create the meaning of a piece of writing. A list of genres is given in Appendix 2 – Genres on page 386.

3. does categorising the piece into a particular genre tell us very much – I'm not convinced this is very helpful question.

4. At its core, every story has five elements: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. How well is the story paced? How well is each individual scene paced? Does the story start at the right place, does it draw the reader in, does it move towards and reach a satisfactory conclusion? Does it end at the right place?

5. What is the emotional temperature of this piece? Is it suited to the themes and material presented?

6. Does the author have an underlying didactic social or political agenda? Is this hidden or overt? Does it help or hinder the overall effect of the narrative?

7. What type of plot is being used? Is it a simple linear narrative or something more complex?

8. Who are the narrators? Are they reliable or unreliable? What level of ambiguity is present in the different narrator viewpoints? What is the author trying to

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[1] If the narrator tells the story by presenting the actions (and sometimes thoughts) of the characters directly to the readers or audience, this is diegetic. Diegetic elements are part of the fictional world ("part of the story"), as opposed to non-diegetic elements which are stylistic elements of how the narrator tells the story. Mimesis on the other hand *shows*, rather than *tells*, by means of directly describing the action in the story and asking the reader to deduce the underlying implications (e.g., the emotions or intent of the characters).

achieve with their selected narrators – is this the best selection? What are the facts (if any) that the story is based on? Is there an element of life writing in the piece? Is it authentic?

9. Which Points of View are being used in the piece – if there are multiple POV, are the changes between POVs handled effectively? (The changes could be seamless, or they could be disjointed and disturbing depending on what effect the author was trying to achieve). If there is ambiguity between the POVs presented, does this add tension and interest to the story, or does it distract or upset the reader?

10. What happens at the surface narrative layer? What is happening between the characters under the surface? Does each character have the same view of events in the piece - or do they have differing views and how does this affect what the reader thinks?

11. Why did you think the author write the piece?

12. Is the piece aimed at being commercially successful - was the author's intention - or do they have some other objective in mind?

13. What is the sentence style - does it vary? In what way? Does the author use punctuation innovatively? How do the paragraph sizes vary? Does the layout of the text on the page vary? Do any of these considerations help or hinder the pace of the work and the impression it leaves on the reader?

14. Is the syntax of the piece appropriate? Does the pattern of grammar or the formation of sentences or phrases, grammatical arrangement? (It may be best to read the piece out loud). Does the author choose to use unusual sentence structure, perhaps a one-word sentence or putting the verb before the subject? Are sentences used without a main verb and are they affective? Are too many adverbs used in place of showing action/characterisation by other means? How does the syntax change the tone of the book? Is the syntax used in the dialogue of each character appropriate to that character's personality and background?

15. How appropriate is the vocabulary used? What is the expected readership of the piece – does the vocabulary suit the readership? Does the vocabulary suit the themes and material presented in the piece? Are colloquialisms used – are they authentic to the characters and settings? If the characters have regional accents is this successfully portrayed in the text?

16. Are the semantics of the words used appropriate? E.g., If the piece describes a person as "threadbare" that might seem odd because that word usually means frayed and a person isn't often frayed. But it can also mean worn out and a person might have that quality so it could be appropriate to use it for a character in the correct context.

17. Can you discern patterns, leitmotivs or running themes throughout the piece? Are there patterns in characters, mood or word choice? Are there connections between objects, characters, themes, moods between one part of the piece and other parts

and, if so, does this successfully enhance the piece?

18. How well does the piece use effective imagery? Are similes and metaphors used appropriately? Is the piece overwritten with too much literary language? Or is to dull and sparse? Does the prose paint clear, vivid pictures in your mind as you read it? If the imagery is drawn from speculations on the part of the viewer, is this an authentic view?

19. Look for foreshadowing, irony, humour and other literary devices used to move the story along. A list of literary devices is given below in Table 4: Types of Literary Device. Whichever devices are used – are they used effectively and successfully?

20. Is a successful balance achieved between the way we are told directly about the characters thoughts and motivations (externalisation) and what we can deduce about their thoughts and motivations (internalisation?) ?

21. Has the author found a unique voice? What are the characteristics of this voice?

22. What consideration have you given to pace and rhythm? . How have you ensured that your readers maintain their interest? . What sources of tension are there in what you have written? . What research have you done into your piece of writing? . What kinds of cutting and editing have you undertaken?

23. From whose point of view is your narrative told? Could you tell it better from another point of view? . Have you got the right balance of showing and telling? In general, the most important actions and moments should be shown, rather than told. . Does your dialogue sound natural? . Have you involved the reader with your characters? . Have you used conflict or contrast to give the narrative tension? . Is there momentum in your writing?

24. clarity, pace, fluency and rhythm.

25. Are the characters sufficiently complex? . Are the characters different enough from each other? . Does the main character grow or change? . Is the plot interesting? Is a good story being told? . Does the story move forward? Does the tension increase? . Are any parts of the plot superfluous? Are any necessary parts missing? . Does the point of view seem right for the story (first person, third person, and so on)? . Is the point of view consistent throughout the story? . Is there too much or too little description? . Do the descriptions utilise the senses? Are they specific? . Are adjectives or adverbs overused? Are the nouns and verbs strong enough? . Are any metaphors or similes used? Do they work? . Is there too much dialogue or not enough? . Does the dialogue sound natural? . Does the dialogue reflect the characters? .

26. Is the dialogue too obvious – with characters always saying exactly what they mean, or simply used for exposition? . Is the story grounded enough in place? In time? . Does the setting enhance the mood or atmosphere of the story? . Are there

sections that should be cut or moved through more quickly? . Are there parts that should be slowed down? . Are there too many flashbacks? . Does the narrator's voice sound natural or contrived?

27. Is the voice consistent throughout the story? . Are the sentences and paragraphs too long or too short? Are they varied and rhythmic?

28. Is the writing too wordy or too spare? . Are there any style choices that could distract the reader from the story? Does there seem to be a point to the story? . Is the theme too heavy-handed? Is the theme dramatized or enacted by the plot?

A list of literary devices to look out for is shown in Table 4 on page 264.

The TMA3 checklist:

TITLE: Is it effective, does it give a flavour or what is to come? Does it intrigue? Is it doing it's job or giving too much away?

VIEWPOINT: Is this consistent? Has the author chosen an appropriate point of view for telling their story? What is the viewpoint – i.e. first person, third person limited, multiple viewpoints etc.?

CHARACTERISATION: Are the characters believable? Do you care what is happening to them?

BEGINNING: Does the opening immediately engage the reader's interest? Are we quickly taken into a scene? Any suggestions? What about style, originality & hooks? How well do these work?

Opening paragraph – strong enough? Is there a different beginning?

BALANCE OF SHOW AND TELL: Is there too much showing/ exposition in either the descriptive narrative and/ or dialogue? Do you feel that the balance is about right? Would you have liked more i.e. were you confused? Or, did you feel that you would have liked to work out more yourself and that the author told you too much about the character their motivation(s) and what was going to happen next.

DIALOGUE: Is this believable? Does it fit the character in terms of background/ education/ ethnicity/ social class/ gender? Does the dialogue move the story along? What is the purpose of the dialogue? Is the dialogue showing rather than telling us what we want to know?

STYLE, ORIGINALITY & HOOKS: How original was the opening hook? Was there a hook at all? Does the author have a unique and original voice? What is the style of the piece and style of writing? How about pace?

LANGUAGE: This includes consideration of clarity and precision. Perhaps use of metaphor, rhetorical devices or use of imagery might contribute to this. Is it sprinkled with too many adjectives and/ or adverbs?

VOICE: Does the author have a clear and unique voice? What might help that? How about the characters? Do they too have a distinct voice? How has the author achieved this? Has it been successful or not?

STRUCTURE: Effective organisation of the writing. Look at elements of showing and telling and the balance of these. Consider the development of the arc of a plot in fiction. Does it start right in the middle of the action? Are we taken quickly into the scene? Is there enough dramatic action whether internal or external? Are there too many characters? Is it clear whose story it is? Is there a clear climax or epiphany? Does it finish quickly enough or does the author give too much away? For poetry, is the author successful in the deployment of a particular form, for example, a sonnet or a 'good' pattern in free verse.

IDEAS: Content and theme of the writing, imaginative or ambitious use of form or subversion of it to effectively convey these. Did the opening of the story make you want to read on? Was the story idea enough to carry you, the reader, through to the end, or did it leave you thinking – So what?

ENDING: Was the ending satisfying – it can be an unhappy ending and still be satisfying. Did the author tie up too many loose ends? Would you have preferred to guess for yourself what might well happen to the character afterwards? Were you surprised by the ending or was it all too obvious?

PRESENTATION: Punctuation, spelling and grammar, layout of text correctly, appropriate use of quotation marks. Remember that on occasion - an author may intend to use non-standard English and so the work should be assessed carefully regarding this, for example, whether it is sustained throughout the piece. Generally, though, pay attention to presentation and layout. Does it meet the requirements of the course and is it of a standard which could, for example, be sent out to a competition. Is it competent and professional?

Writing a Novel Opening

(from Lesley Glaister, Arvon at Home Masterclass: How to Start a Novel, online, 29 April 2021).

While it is often said that the first paragraph on the first page is a critical factor that determines whether or not a reader will buy or read a book this is only partly true. Readers will often buy books because they have been recommended by friends, or because they have an attractive cover, or on the basis of how the reader reacts when the flick through the book reading random pages as well as looking at the first few sentences.

The first few sentences are critical though to an agent since they are unlikely to read further if the opening of the book does not interest them. They usually have so much material to review, that they will decide quickly based on a short first impression. go further. The first few sentences therefore need to win the trust of the agent (and the reader) – trust in the sense that the reader will believe the author is going to take good care of them.

The beginning of the novel is a threshold, across which we need to draw the reader, inviting them in. How do we get the reader over this threshold? The author must provide some (or all!) of the following.

- Hooks - gives the reader the need to read on - raise questions in the readers mind to make them keep reading - in fact, this should occur on each page, or every few pages.
- Authority/Trust - the prose should have the ring of authority that the reader will trust, so that the reader is willing to spend time with the author and will believe that the author will entertain them
- Style - if the reader does not like the style, then they won't carry on. So write in the best style you can - clear, elegant (maybe), colloquial, conspiratorial etc - this must be attractive to the reader.
- Voice
- Character - the chars must be interesting, the reader must care about what happens to the chars (they can be repellent or unlikeable, but they can still evoke sympathy in the reader
- Situation – plunge the reader into the action
- Orientation - the reader needs to know where they are – they need to feel comfortable that they know what is going on (although there may be many things that they do not know yet, they need to feel grounded in the place, genre of the novel.
- Image/physical/sensory perception - involves the reader at an emotional level

Examples

Writing a Novel Opening

Extract 1.

This is where we were going to have spent the honeymoon,'
Eva Trout said, suddenly, pointing across the water. She had
pulled up the car on a grass track running along the edge of a
small lake. She switched off the engine – evidently, they were
to gaze at the castle for some time.

Elizabeth Bowen: Eva Trout

Here we start with a line of dialogue. We are in the middle of scene. Questions are set in the reader's mind - did they spend the honeymoon there? If not, why not? Is she speaking to her husband or some else?

Extract 2.

Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that
they meant to murder him. With his inky fingers and his bitten
nails, his manner cynical and nervous, anybody could tell he
didn't belong –belong to the early summer sun, the cool
Whitsun wind off the sea, the holiday crowd.

Graham Greene: Brighton Rock

Here we have an immediate statement of the conflict that will drive the novel forward.

Extract 3.

London light in the scuffed, keyed windows of a Piccadilly-line
train from Heathrow. London light on the open spaces it
hurries past, on the passing spokes of perpendicular suburban
streets, on playing fields seen through a perimeter line of
faint-shadowed trees. The train stops in outlying stations.
Then it enters the howl of the tunnel and there is no more
London light until he finds it later on the hotels and the plane
trees of Russell Square.

David Szaley: Spring

Sense of light and movement. A depiction of scene….
Reader will ask : why the emphasis on London light? Has he come from Heathrow?

See Hardy's Return of the Native - long description of Egdon Heath before you get to the
man that is actually returning… like in the cinema starting with a wide, long shot and then
gradually focussing into the character eventually….

- Dialogue is your friend.   It can advance the plot. It tells you about the
  relationship of the characters, their emotions, intent, motivations etc. if
  the reader watches the dialogue and knows better then it can add
  irony.

Extract 4.

My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood. I am eighteen years old, and I live with my sister Constance. I have often thought that with any luck at all I could have been born a werewolf, because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length, but I have had to be content with what I had. I dislike washing myself, and dogs, and noise. I like my sister Constance, and Richard Plantagenet, and *Amanita phalloides*, the death-cap mushroom. Everyone else in my family is dead.

Shirley Jackson: I Have Always lived in the Castle

1st person - so here the author is speaking directly to us.   An arresting introduction - given the eccentric info provided.   Here we are not eavesdropping we are being told. Other examples are:

'Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously.' David Copperfield, Charles Dickens (1850).

'If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.'   J D Saslinger, The Catcher in the Rye (1951)

Some novel openings start with a premise – a statement of a theory, and the novel then proceeds to investigate that premise.

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." - Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice (1813).

The past is a foreign country they do things differently there – L. P. Hartley, The Go-between (1953)

"Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina (1878).

This technique is less often used today.

From J.P. Flintoff "The Art of Hooking a Reader", Arvon Masterclass May 2021 (https://www.flintoff.org/arvonmasterclass2021):

Two methods to hook a reader:

- Anticipation
- Raise questions in the mind of the reader

Poor openings

> Prince Charles paid tribute to his father last night highlighting his "remarkable, devoted service to the Queen" as details of the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral plans emerged, including Prince Philip's special request that his coffin be borne on a Land Rover.
>
> Speaking at Highgrove, the Prince
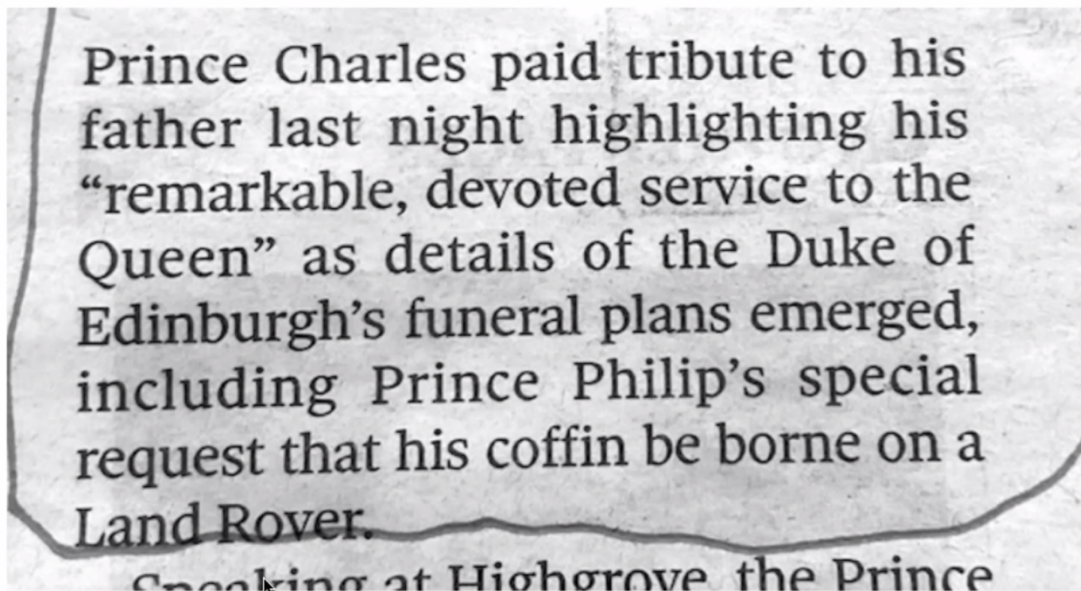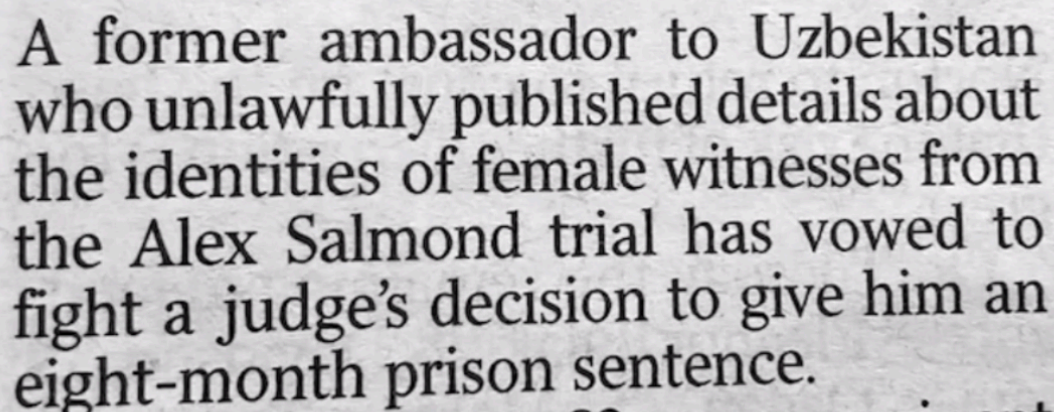
Needs unpacking, breaking up.

> Boris Johnson's government is resist-
> ing growing calls to hold a special cri-
> sis summit with Dublin to address
> rising tensions in Northern Ireland –
> amid growing international anxiety
> about a return to sectarian violence.
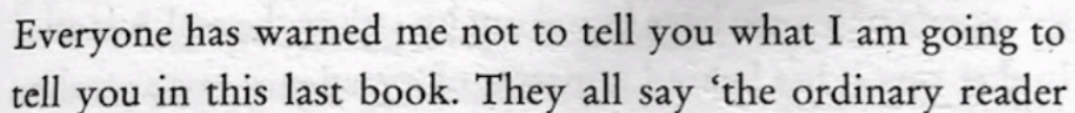
Here the writer is trying too hard, the prose is too abstract and too long

> A former ambassador to Uzbekistan
> who unlawfully published details about
> the identities of female witnesses from
> the Alex Salmond trial has vowed to
> fight a judge's decision to give him an
> eight-month prison sentence.

It is best to read stuff out loud, to assess how easily the reader will be able to digest it.

Better openings

> Everyone has warned me not to tell you what I am going to
> tell you in this last book. They all say 'the ordinary reader

This author has broken the fourth wall and is thus taking a risk. He creates anticipation. Surprisingly this is CS Lewis writing about a general intro to Christianity – lbut in a rather colloquial style.

> YOU DON'T OFTEN meet someone who has lost a million pounds. Even more rarely, someone who will mention

Engages directly by using 'you' - speaking directly.   (Julian Barnes).   Intrigues.

Consider people's expectations.   If you don't meet their expectations they may not read on. If this is in New Yorker, then people expect certain things, which would be rather different to what you might expect in True Love magazine.

> ON A DULL and edgily damp Saturday afternoon in mid-March, that time of year when the presumptuous prunus blossom is about to be snubbed by winter's last revengeful frost, a world-famous, Oscar-winning actress rang my doorbell and introduced herself. She was miked up, and there was a TV

Here there is initially dullness - so we wonder why we are being told this - why is the author being boring - and then there is the suprise hook at the end…

So, starting with dull is okay if acts as a foil to subsequent excitement. E.g.

> I WAS ONCE WAITING for a plane at Heathrow, sitting in one of those bland pieces of space designed to turn the anxious into docile, processable units. Opposite me, an equally

This is a tease - Julian Barnes - being deliberately dull so the reader wonders why they are being told this…

Sentence length. Don't write all short sentences. `don't write all long sentences. Mix them up. Write with rhythm.

Overturn the reader's expectations - but not too often!   Be consistent in your own world. Meet the reader's expectations as well as raise questions in the read. Write what you want to write. But write not just for yourself, but your readers too, in the expectation that you can't please everyone. Think of your own target reader when you write - the target reader will change with time….

Flintoff - ideal readers for Sunday times. - Aunt Peggy bright, intelligent, but not well educated and his daughter, who was 8 or 9, intelligent but not educated. They were not his actual

reader, but his ideal reader. So he writes for that idealised readership. Writing as if it is addressed to someone, helps your focus; this is why love poetry is often written to someone specific.

Think about - what is the main question that a reader would ask about the piece of writing you have just done. Before that, who is that ideal reader - your neighbour? Boris Johnson - what will they want to know?   Write what you like, write what you want and then apply the ideal reader filter.   Don't write deliberately for the ideal reader as this will not be want you want to write. If the writer does not enjoy the process of writing, then this will be clear to the reader and be off putting….

Soap opera - will have several hooks - so a new hook is put in before the old one is revealed. Anticipation is there on going, but also anticipation is satisfied periodically.   So the continual process of hooking and revealing is needed in a longer piece.

Collect figures of speech. Eg metaphor, simile

> His hands twitched like suffocating fish - Updike
> Cuba had been taken out of the oven and Vietnam put on to simmer.

Antithesis

> a king may make a nobleman but not a gentleman.
> It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees

Use hyperbole to ramp up the intensisty - or ramp down with understatement

> He did have his good points, he did pick up his toe nails clippings

 Litotes is a form of understatement, more specifically meiosis, and is always deliberate with the intention of emphasis. ... In speech, it may also depend on intonation and emphasis; for example, the phrase "not bad" can be intonated differently so as to mean either "mediocre" or "excellent".

Use of figures of speech make you sound competent. - ie writing beautifully (ie well) is another way to hook the reader.

Use a noun as a verb or vice versa. — eg. Cupboarding the meat.

If you appear to be making up your mind in front of the reader that can be enticing. Eg

> I have my own ideas about who will be forgotten, and who will not - we will see, or in fact we will not.

The hero is a man/woman in a hole trying to get out. Your job is too keep them in that hole or ensure they are in a different hole when they get out of the first one.

An analysis of the opening of To Kill a Mockingbird

(from: https://www.aoifesnotes.com/junior-cycle/Paper-Two/docs/studied-fiction/To%20Kill%20A%20Mockingbird%20-%20Analysis%20of%20Story%20Opening.pdf)

A good opening intrigues the reader with questions, introduces characters that the reader will find engaging and interesting, describes a setting that the reader can visualise and be drawn in by, engages the reader by dropping them in the middle of the action and uses dialogue to engage the reader and create drama.

> 'When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow'… 'When enough years had passed by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading up to his accident'… 'I maintain that the Ewels started it al'… He said it began the summer Dil came to us, when Dil first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out'.   *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee.

Questions: We wonder how Jem broke his arm. He 'got his arm broken' which means someone else did it. Why did it take a long time before Scout and Jem could talk about the events leading up to the incident? Were they traumatic? Scout mentions the Ewells 'starting it all'. We wonder who the Ewells are and what 'it all' refers to. Who is Dill? Who is Boo Radley, and why would he need to be enticed to come out of his house? Straight away, we are intrigued and want to know the answers to these questions.

Character: The stories of Simon Finch and Scout's father, Atticus, make us feel involved in the characters' lives. Scout does not provide us with a dry history of her family. For example, we learn that Simon Finch's 'piety was exceeded only by his stinginess', that he 'made a pile practising medicine' and that he 'would have regarded with impotent fury the disturbance between the North and South'. Immediately, we feel we know the man and have an insight into the Finch family.

Similarly, we learn that Atticus is 'Maycomb County born and bred' and a generous man who 'invested his earnings in his brother's education' for the first years of his working life. All of these details help us to feel connected to Scout and her family. We understand their history and their values. These are basically decent, upright people who have lived in Maycomb county for generations. Simon Finch was concerned with money far more than was his descendent Atticus, however. Atticus is a selfless man who turns Simon Finch's trademark piety and stinginess into kindness and an ability to save money to help others. Atticus is not interested in becoming rich; he works hard so he can help his brother through college. This is an interesting insight into the man who will play an important role in 'To Kill A Mockingbird'.

Setting: Maycomb is described as 'a tired old town'. It is a quiet backwater in which there is 'no hurry' for there is 'nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with'. We can easily visualise the setting for the story, based on Scout's description. Maycomb seems an unlikely setting for a dramatic storyline. However, we sense that the calm and quiet of the town is likely to be shattered soon. Scout's mention of an incident which led to her brother's arm being broken and her loaded comment that the Ewells 'started it all' provide a contrast between the sleepy setting and the drama to come. This adds tension to the opening of the novel.

Books and references

The elements of eloquence. Mark Forsyth

https://www.psbooks.co.uk/Elements-of-Eloquence?gclid=CjwKCAjwn-POEBhA0EiwA609ReXNfIPjOZfbyYsP_U3g0wL4XcLAng4oAyHm2dY2oNUrn-pZkPHoOe9hoC0DAQAvD_BwE

Steven Pinker's The Language Instinct (1995)

https://www.flintoff.org/arvonmasterclass2021

Radio Scripts

Notes from a tutorial on Radio Scripts - Oliver Emmanuel - Arvon

Oliver Emmanuel: When the pips stop, Drink, Everything, A history of paper etc

Does the opening make you want to keep listening - does it create a sense of interest, intrigue, wanting to know what happens next? Also sets the tone of the piece so the listen knows what to expect next.

An opening should start with a bold image and a big problem

E.g. a women wakes up as a tree
An alcoholic makes his estranged daughter breakfast

Bold image = visual, striking
Problem = something human rather than high drama

Narration: should you have a narrator, what is its value?: It set's tone and character. Sets up story and theme. Introduces scene(s). Adds intimacy. Should not be used as a prop to tell the story rather than show it. Too much narration can slow everything down.

The narration should add something new to what we already know, is it clear who the narrator is (it that is important?). Is the narration a close up view or is it a fly on the wall?

Key to good radio writing - a compelling character and simple story…

Character - E.M. Forster.   Rounded and flat - rounded have an inner life etc, flat stay the same

Characters - are defined by their desires - the obstacles in the way, the actions that they take

Setting is active - the characters are influenced by the setting, the setting acts on the characters, changing their actions….

Recommended max number of chars in a radio play = 6.
Usually there is a single central character.   So 4 or 5 chars per scene.   Larger numbers possible but only if they are spread across scenes.

Radio is music - radio is sound as much as story - character is how they speak as much as what they say. Consider accent, rhythm, pace.

There are many things you can do on radio that you can't do on film etc, as the play is in the listener's imagination…

10 things you need to know about writing radio drama

The opening of your play needs to capture the audience's attention and let them know the nature and tone of the play. BOLD IMAGE/BIG PROBLEM.

Character is story.

You can't have one without the other.

Setting is ACTIVE.

Radio can be set anywhere

Radio is a visual medium.

Simple story, complex characters.

Narration:

- Establishes tone and character.
- Sets up story and theme.
- Adds intimacy.

The key to good narration is character. You have the opportunity to let us into the story in a deeper way.

What can you see?

What is the bold image that captures our attention?

What is the big problem that the dialogue has set up for us?

There are things you can do on radio that you can't do in any other medium.

Workshop & notes by Oliver Emanuel.

Radio is music

POV tells the audience WHO and WHAT is important

Writing scripts

NAWG scriptwriting workshop: Pike offers arrow-sharp tips

By Vincent Johnson

On 27th March NAWG held a highly engaging and informative 2-hour virtual scriptwriting workshop led by Ian Pike, comedy, drama and animation writer, attended by 10 NAWG members, with a wide range of writing experience.

Covering the same breadth as a whole creative- writing course module, in this very short interactive session, Pike conveyed the essential components of scriptwriting: loglines; story-mapping; audience wants; characters; pace; target medium; action; dialogue; authenticity of the writer's voice, and subtext.

"If you can't sum up your story in one line there's a problem," says Ian Pike, as he opens our NAWG two-hour script-writing tour de force. This logline describes the spine of the story upon which everything hangs, and hooks the audience. Good examples can be found in Netflix movie descriptions. We all know that a story has a beginning, middle and end, and if told well these have usually well-balanced proportions. The story usually implies what the protagonist(s) want(s), and then throws in obstacles to draw out a captivating yarn, even jeopardising the main characters that slowly reveals what the story is REALLY about (jealousy, unrequited love and so forth). In so doing, a well-told story should also take the protagonist(s) on a transformational journey.

With this in mind Pike advises script-writers to prepare, prepare, and prepare...to plan their stories upfront, and avoid the temptation to just spill ink on the page...... There are many approaches to planning, both electronic and hard copy, but his tried-and-tested method is to map the story on an A3 sheet as a storyboard, with a column each for beginning, middle and end. This way the writer can look down and see where problems are right at the start, and easily move things around. Once the storyboard is complete, one can then convert to scene breakdown. A rule of thumb is that for a 30 minute three-act script there may be around 12 scenes per act.

Pike also advises against starting to write until you know where you will end up, and also to pay most attention at the 1st square on your storyboard at the beginning. Audience and script-readers need to be tantalised, and slow beginnings can tease the reader in. Pike used clips from episode-beginnings in the

TV series' Lost (post-plane-crash scene) and Breaking Bad - (swimming pool scene) to illustrate intrigue or high octane captivation and suspense, and also introducing scenes used to tie things together much later in the plot.

Another tip is to have in mind what your audience is likely to want (e.g. in romcom they want the couple to eventually unite). However for much of the story the audience mustn't get what it wants (delayed gratification).... he used the bath scene in Fatal Attraction as a near-end example). Also Pike offers "coming in late and getting out

quickly", as an effective approach in story-building, where characters are revealed through what they are doing.

An additional element is ensuring the story stays true to its characters....Writers must know their characters intimately. Their names already imply a great deal (we did an exercise where Pike asked us what 'Seb', or 'Zach' were like as characters). So many influences bear on the character, like demography, regionality, family background, role-models, behaviour, religion, hobbies, ideologies, libido....where backstory and character biography are critical, and where the first meeting with key characters vitally important. Pike demonstrated this with a clip from the first meeting with protagonist Villanelle in the BBC series Killing Eve. Characters can exist in several tribes; for example, the protagonist might be the youngest of five children and at the same time leader in his/her school tribe, where the writer must map the network of characters' relations.

Story beats can be written into scripts as structural elements that mark an intentional shift in tone, and control their characters' emotions. This is what gives the story its varying pace and dramatic pauses that so engage the audience. This also includes avoiding abrupt endings (e.g. they lived happily ever after), and pacing either towards an eventual resolution or perhaps more tantalisingly towards an open question.

The whole nature of the story must also be geared towards its target medium for radio, stage, or screen. Pike urges us to, "get our hands dirty," advising us to write from our own experience of what we know, or what we have well-researched to ensure authenticity. Also to breaking rules may deliver a novel experience to the audience (he used the example of Zeller's film, the Father (starring Hopkins, Coleman et al), which uses out-of-time flashbacks and different interpretations of the same event).

Scriptwriters must also handle the story action through masterful stage directions... where such action constitutes a huge percentage of script. "If purely functional the script will lose readers," says Pike, using the example of the filmscript for Diehard 3. In discussing dialogue in scriptwriting, Pike cited Charlie Brooker in the BBC film review series Screenwipe: "I'd rather be confused for 20 minutes than bored for five..." where on-the-nose dialogue reveals too much... and where we want to be shown, not told. Pike suggests writing a line of dialogue then removing words from both ends to prune away maybe 80% to make it much stronger.

Finally Pike turns to the power of subtext, using the example of asking 'how are you?' which nearly always prompts the reply, 'I'm fine', when in fact one is rarely 'fine', and this is where the subtext lies...in what the characters are not saying. It is said

that there is no such thing as dialogue, only constantly interrupted monologue...because when some character asks, How are you'? they are usually mostly interested in being able to speak themselves and are thinking 'when can I get a word in?' Subtext allows us to know what each of the characters is thinking to know what the other characters are thinking... He cited Russell T Davies' script for 'It's a Sin' as providing a good example of subtext, and David Mitchell's 'Sweet Sorrow' as an example of good dialogue.

In the final discussion Pike encouraged workshop participants to have faith in ourselves, and give ourselves artistic licence. In mentioning screen adaptations, he reminded us to ask again what the audience wants. He also mentioned his fertile

professional relationship with his writing partner, who provides valuable feedback, as a pitching pilot, and as an influence for discipline and effective time- management. As Pike works with children we were also curious to know how he manages dialogue for different age groups, and he mentioned knowing the characteristics of the group, who leads, who follows etc.

I would be glad to 'cut my quills' in a longer workshop. NAWG gratefully acknowledges Pike's fluent, seemingly effortless input based on 25 years of craft and graft.

Website References: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_Eve

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ The_Father_(2020_film)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Die_Hard_with_a_Vengeance

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Brooker %27s_Screenwipe

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It %27s_a_Sin_(TV_series)

Poetry

Types of Poetry

Blank verse

Blank verse is poetry written with a precise meter—almost always iambic pentameter—that does not rhyme. Learn more about blank verse here.

Rhymed poetry

In contrast to blank verse, rhymed poems rhyme by definition, although their scheme varies. Learn more about rhymed poetry here.

Free verse

Free verse poetry is poetry that lacks a consistent rhyme scheme, metrical pattern, or musical form. Learn more about free verse here.

Epics

An epic poem is a lengthy, narrative work of poetry. These long poems typically detail extraordinary feats and adventures of characters from a distant past. Learn more about epics here.

Narrative poetry

Similar to an epic, a narrative poem tells a story. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" exemplify this form. Learn more about narrative poetry here.

Haiku

A haiku is a three-line poetic form originating in Japan. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven syllables, and the third line again has five syllables. Learn more about haikus here.

Tanka

Tanka poetry refers to a Japanese 31-syllable poem, traditionally written as a single, unbroken line. The word "tanka" translates to "short song."

A Tanka consist of five units (often treated as separate lines when romanized or translated) usually with the following pattern of *on* (often treated as, roughly, the number of syllables per unit or line):

> 5-7-5-7-7.

The 5-7-5 is called the *kami-no-ku* (上の句, "upper phrase"), and the 7-7 is called the *shimo-no-ku* (下の句, "lower phrase").

東海の *Tōkai no* 小島の磯の *kojima no iso no* 白砂に *shirasuna ni* われ泣きぬれて *ware naki nurete* 蟹とたわむる *kani to tawamuru*	On the white sand Of the beach of a small island In the Eastern Sea. I, my face streaked with tears, Am playing with a crab —Ishikawa Takuboku

See here for some examples.

Pastoral poetry

A pastoral poem is one that concerns the natural world, rural life, and landscapes. These poems have persevered from Ancient Greece (in the poetry of Hesiod) to Ancient Rome (Virgil) to the present day (Gary Snyder). Learn more about pastoral poetry here.

Sonnet

A sonnet is a 14-line poem, typically (but not exclusively) concerning the topic of love. Sonnets contain internal rhymes within their 14 lines; the exact rhyme scheme depends on the style of a sonnet.

From https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/sonnet:

The *Petrarchan sonnet*, perfected by the Italian poet Petrarch, divides the 14 lines into two sections: an eight-line stanza (octave) rhyming ABBAABBA, and a six-line stanza (sestet) rhyming CDCDCD or CDECDE. John Milton's **"When I Consider How my Light Is Spent"** and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's **"How Do I Love Thee"** employ this form. The *Italian sonnet* is an English variation on the traditional Petrarchan version. The octave's rhyme scheme is preserved, but the sestet rhymes CDDCEE. See Thomas Wyatt's **"Whoso List to Hunt, I Know Where Is an Hind"** and John Donne's **"If Poisonous Minerals, and If That Tree."** Wyatt and Surrey developed the *English (or Shakespearean) sonnet*, which condenses the 14 lines into one stanza of three **quatrains** and a concluding couplet, with a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCDEFEFGG (though poets have frequently varied this scheme; see Wilfred Owen's **"Anthem for Doomed Youth"**). George Herbert's **"Love (II),"** Claude McKay's **"America,"** and Molly Peacock's **"Altruism"** are English sonnets.

These three types have given rise to many variations, including:

-The *caudate sonnet*, which adds codas or tails to the 14-line poem. See Gerard Manley Hopkins's "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire."

-The *curtal sonnet*, a shortened version devised by Gerard Manley Hopkins that maintains the proportions of the Italian form, substituting two six-stress tercets for two quatrains in the octave (rhyming ABC ABC), and four and a half lines for the sestet (rhyming DEBDE), also six-stress except for the final three-stress line. See his poem "Pied Beauty."

-The *sonnet redoublé*, also known as a *crown of sonnets*, is composed of 15 sonnets that are linked by the repetition of the final line of one sonnet as the initial line of the ne xt, and the final line of that sonnet as the initial line of the previous; the last sonnet consists of all the repeated lines of the previous 14 sonnets, in the same order in which they appeared. Marilyn Nelson's *A Wreath for Emmett Till* is a contemporary example.

-A *sonnet sequence* is a group of sonnets sharing the same subject matter and sometimes a dramatic situation and persona. See George Meredith's *Modern Love* sequence, Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Rupert Brooke's *1914* sequence, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese.*

-The Spenserian sonnet is a 14-line poem developed by Edmund Spenser in his *Amoretti*, that

varies the English form by interlocking the three quatrains (ABAB BCBC CDCD EE).

-The *stretched sonnet* is extended to 16 or more lines, such as those in George Meredith's sequence *Modern Love.*

-A *submerged sonnet* is tucked into a longer poetic work; see lines 235-48 of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land."

Browse more sonnets. You can also read the educational essays "Learning the Sonnet" and "The Sonnet as a Silver Marrow Spoon."

See also: https://www.superprof.com/blog/different-types-of-sonnets/

Spenserian: **ABAB, BCBC, CDCD, EE**.
Shakespearian: **ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG.**
Petrarchan: **ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG**

All have a volta after the eighth line.

Elegies

An elegy is a poem that reflects upon death or loss. Traditionally, it contains themes of mourning, loss, and reflection. However, it can also explore themes of redemption and consolation. Learn more about elegies here.

Ode

Much like an elegy, an ode is a tribute to its subject, although the subject need not be dead—or even sentient, as in John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Learn more about odes here.

Limerick

A limerick is a five-line poem that consists of a single stanza, an AABBA rhyme scheme, and whose subject is a short, pithy tale or description. Learn more about limericks here.

Lyric poetry

Lyric poetry refers to the broad category of poetry that concerns feelings and emotion. This distinguishes it from two other poetic categories: epic and dramatic. Learn more about lyric poetry here.

Ballad

A ballad (or ballade) is a form of narrative verse that can be either poetic or musical. It typically follows a pattern of rhymed quatrains. From John Keats to Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Bob Dylan, it represents a melodious form of $_{1\Omega}$

Soliloquy

A soliloquy is a monologue in which a character speaks to him or herself, expressing inner thoughts that an audience might not otherwise know. Soliloquies are not definitionally poems, although they often can be—most famously in the plays of William Shakespeare. Learn more about soliloquies here.

Villanelle

A nineteen-line poem consisting of five tercets and a quatrain, with a highly specified internal rhyme scheme. Originally a variation on a pastoral, the villanelle has evolved to describe obsessions and other intense subject matters, as exemplified by Dylan Thomas, author of villanelles like "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." The rhyming scheme is:

A_1BA_2 ABA_1 ABA_2 ABA_1 ABA_2 ABA_1A_2

Stanzas: The villanelle has five tercets (three-line stanzas) followed by one quatrain (four-line stanza).

Rhyme scheme: The villanelle has only two rhymes that repeat throughout the poem. Each of the tercets follows the rhyme scheme ABA, while the quatrain follows the pattern ABAA. Refrain: Villanelles have two refrains, or lines of verse that repeat throughout the poem. The first and third lines of the first tercet alternate as the last lines of the remaining tercets. In the last stanza, a quatrain, these two lines appear again as the final two lines of the poem.

Pantoum

A poetic form originating in Malay where poets write quatrains (4-line stanzas) with an *abab* rhyme scheme and repeat lines 2 and 4 in the previous stanza as lines 1 and 3 in the next stanza. Poets differ on how to treat the final quatrain: Some poets repeat lines 1 and 3 of the original quatrain as lines 2 and 4 in the final quatrain; other poets invert lines 1 and 3 so that the beginning line of the poem is also the final line of the poem.

Sestina

A complex French verse form, usually unrhymed, consisting of six stanzas of six lines each and a three-line envoy. The end words of the first stanza are repeated in a different order as end words in each of the subsequent five stanzas; the closing envoy contains all six words, two per line, placed in the middle and at the end of the three lines. The patterns of word repetition are as follows, with each number representing the final word of a line, and each row of numbers representing a stanza:

1 2 3 4 5 6
6 1 5 2 4 3
3 6 4 1 2 5
5 3 2 6 1 4
4 5 1 3 6 2
2 4 6 5 3 1
(6 2) (1 4) (5 3)

Terza rima

Terza rima is **a verse form composed of iambic tercets (three-line groupings)**. The rhyme scheme for this form of poetry is "aba bcb cdc, etc." The second line of each tercet sets the rhyme for the following tercet, and thus supplying the verse with a common thread, a way to link the stanzas.

An example:

A section from Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" with a couplet ending:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,	A
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead	B
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,	A
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,	B
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,	C
Who chariotest to their dark wintery bed	B
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,	C
Each like a corpse within its grave, until	D
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow	C
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill	D
Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)	E
With living hues and odours plain and hill:	D
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;	E
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!	E

Examples of Pantoums

The lyrics to the song **"I Am Going to Like It Here," from the musical "Flower Drum Song" by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II,** is a familiar and most straightforward example. Notice how the second and fourth lines of the first stanza are repeated in the first and third lines of the second stanza, where the context is expanded. Then the form is continued throughout, for a pleasing effect of rhyme and rhythm.

I am Going to Like it Here by Rodgers and Hammerstein

"I'm going to like it here.
There is something about the place,
An encouraging atmosphere,
Like a smile on a friendly face.

There is something about the place,
So caressing and warm it is.
Like a smile on a friendly face,
Like a port in a storm it is.

So caressing and warm it is.
All the people are so sincere.
Like a port in a storm it is.
I am going to like here.

All the people are so sincere.
There's especially one I like.
I am going to like here.
It's the father's first son I like.

There's especially one I like.
There is something about his face.
It's the father's first son I like.
He's the reason I love the place.

There is something about his face.
I would follow him anywhere.
If he goes to another place,
I am going to like it there."

Pantoum of the Great Depression by Donald Justice

Our lives avoided tragedy
Simply by going on and on,
Without end and with little apparent meaning.
Oh, there were storms and small catastrophes.

Simply by going on and on
We managed. No need for the heroic.
Oh, there were storms and small catastrophes.
I don't remember all the particulars.

We managed. No need for the heroic.
There were the usual celebrations, the usual sorrows.
I don't remember all the particulars.
Across the fence, the neighbors were our chorus.

There were the usual celebrations, the usual sorrows.
Thank god no one said anything in verse.
The neighbors were our only chorus,
And if we suffered we kept quiet about it.

At no time did anyone say anything in verse.
It was the ordinary pities and fears consumed us,
And if we suffered we kept quiet about it.
No audience would ever know our story.

It was the ordinary pities and fears consumed us.
We gathered on porches; the moon rose; we were poor.

What audience would ever know our story?
Beyond our windows shone the actual world.

We gathered on porches; the moon rose; we were poor.
And time went by, drawn by slow horses.
Somewhere beyond our windows shone the world.
The Great Depression had entered our souls like fog.

And time went by, drawn by slow horses.
We did not ourselves know what the end was.
The Great Depression had entered our souls like fog.
We had our flaws, perhaps a few private virtues.

But we did not ourselves know what the end was.
People like us simply go on.
We have our flaws, perhaps a few private virtues,
But it is by blind chance only that we escape tragedy.

And there is no plot in that; it is devoid of poetry.

Examples of Villanelles

From James Joyce's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"

Are you not weary of ardent ways,
Lure of the fallen seraphim?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze
And you have had your will of him.
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

Above the flame the smoke of praise
Goes up from ocean rim to rim.
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Our broken cries and mournful lays
Rise in one eucharistic hymn.
Are you not weary of ardent ways?

While sacrificing hands upraise
The chalice flowing to the brim,
Tell no more of enchanted days.

And still you hold our longing gaze
With languorous look and lavish limb!
Are you not weary of ardent ways?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

"When I Saw You Last, Rose" by Austin Dobson

When I saw you last, Rose,
You were only so high;-
How fast the time goes!

Like a bud ere it blows,
You just peeped at the sky,
When I saw you last, Rose!

Now your petals unclose,
Now your May-time is nigh;-
How fast the time goes!

And a life,-how it grows!
You were scarcely so shy
When I saw you last, Rose!

In your bosom it shows
There's a guest on the sly;
How fast the time goes!

Is it Cupid? Who knows!

Yet you used not to sigh,
When I saw you last, Rose;-
How fast the time goes!

"If I Could Tell You" by W.H.Auden

Time will say nothing but I told you so,
Time only knows the price we have to pay;
If I could tell you I would let you know.

If we should weep when clowns put on their show,
If we should stumble when musicians play,
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

There are no fortunes to be told, although,
Because I love you more than I can say,
If I could tell you I would let you know.

The winds must come from somewhere when they blow,
There must be reasons why the leaves decay;
Time will say nothing but I told you so.

Perhaps the roses really want to grow,
The vision seriously intends to stay;
If I could tell you I would let you know.

Suppose all the lions get up and go,
And all the brooks and soldiers run away;
Will Time say nothing but I told you so?
If I could tell you I would let you know.

Examples of Sestinas

Elizabeth Bishop's "A Miracle for Breakfast" was published in 1972.

At six o'clock we were waiting for coffee,
waiting for coffee and the charitable crumb
that was going to be served from a certain balcony
--like kings of old, or like a miracle.
It was still dark. One foot of the sun
steadied itself on a long ripple in the river.

The first ferry of the day had just crossed the river.
It was so cold we hoped that the coffee
would be very hot, seeing that the sun
was not going to warm us; and that the crumb
would be a loaf each, buttered, by a miracle.
At seven a man stepped out on the balcony.

He stood for a minute alone on the balcony
looking over our heads toward the river.
A servant handed him the makings of a miracle,
consisting of one lone cup of coffee
and one roll, which he proceeded to crumb,
his head, so to speak, in the clouds--along with the sun.

Was the man crazy? What under the sun
was he trying to do, up there on his balcony!
Each man received one rather hard crumb,
which some flicked scornfully into the river,
and, in a cup, one drop of the coffee.
Some of us stood around, waiting for the miracle.

I can tell what I saw next; it was not a miracle.
A beautiful villa stood in the sun
and from its doors came the smell of hot coffee.
In front, a baroque white plaster balcony
added by birds, who nest along the river,
--I saw it with one eye close to the crumb--

and galleries and marble chambers. My crumb
my mansion, made for me by a miracle,
through ages, by insects, birds, and the river
working the stone. Every day, in the sun,
at breakfast time I sit on my balcony
with my feet up, and drink gallons of coffee.

We licked up the crumb and swallowed the coffee.
A window across the river caught the sun
as if the miracle were working, on the wrong balcony.

"Sestina" by Dante Alighieri

I have come, alas, to the great circle of shadow,
to the short day and to the whitening hills,
when the colour is all lost from the grass,
though my desire will not lose its green,
so rooted is it in this hardest stone,
that speaks and feels as though it were a woman.

And likewise this heaven-born woman
stays frozen, like the snow in shadow,
and is unmoved, or moved like a stone,
by the sweet season that warms all the hills,
and makes them alter from pure white to green,
so as to clothe them with the flowers and grass.

When her head wears a crown of grass
she draws the mind from any other woman,
because she blends her gold hair with the green
so well that Amor lingers in their shadow,
he who fastens me in these low hills,
more certainly than lime fastens stone.

Her beauty has more virtue than rare stone.
The wound she gives cannot be healed with grass,
since I have travelled, through the plains and hills,
to find my release from such a woman,
yet from her light had never a shadow
thrown on me, by hill, wall, or leaves' green.

I have seen her walk all dressed in green,
so formed she would have sparked love in a stone,
that love I bear for her very shadow,
so that I wished her, in those fields of grass,
as much in love as ever yet was woman,
closed around by all the highest hills.

The rivers will flow upwards to the hills
before this wood, that is so soft and green,
takes fire, as might ever lovely woman,
for me, who would choose to sleep on stone,
all my life, and go eating grass,
only to gaze at where her clothes cast shadow.

Whenever the hills cast blackest shadow,
with her sweet green, the lovely woman
hides it, as a man hides stone in grass.

Prose Poetry

Prose poetry merges lyrical and metric elements of traditional poetry with idiomatic elements of prose, such as standard punctuation and the lack of line breaks. Superficially, a prose poem simply looks like one or more paragraphs of normal prose but on closer examination it will be found to contain features that are also found in poems such as regular or irregular meter, repetition, alliteration, simile, sensory choice of language and even rhyme. The first prose poems may have been written by Matsuo Bashō, a preeminent poet in the Japanese Edo period (seventeenth-century Japan) combined prose elements with those of traditional haiku to in a poetic variation known as haibun.

French poets were the first to use prose poetry. Gaspard de la Nuit by Aloysius Bertrand was published in 1842. Stéphane Mallarmé, Charles Baudelaire (author of Le Spleen de Paris), and Arthur Rimbaud (author of Illuminations) followed on later in the 19th century. These poets together wanted to rebel against the predominance of the Alexandrine metered line and the typical content that followed it. Rejecting the metered form, they wrote in a block of text that resembled prose but behaved like poetry.

English language poets also produced prose poetry in the 19th century, including the Irishman Oscar Wilde and American poets like Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe.

In the Modernist era, prose poetry fell somewhat out of favour, particularly in Anglophone culture. T.S. Eliot was a vocal critic of the form, although others such as Gertrude Stein, continued to support the form in French culture.

Prose poetry enjoyed a revival in the mid 20th century in the United States, particularly in the the coffeehouses of New York and San Francisco with such poets as William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Charles Simic, and Robert Bly brought.

Poetic Terms and Devices

Term	Explanation
enjambment	the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.
caesura	the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.
ekphrasis, or ecphrasis	comes from the Greek for the description of a work of art produced as a rhetorical exercise, often used in the adjectival form ekphrastic. It is a vivid, often dramatic, verbal description of a visual work of art, either real or imagined.

Rhymes

From Rosaleen Croghan:

The following terms occur frequently in discussions of poetry and critical writing, but not with absolute consistency. It may be tempting, simply because the terms are listed here, to get overly scrupulous about fine distinctions between, for example, "identical" and "rich" rhyme, or "broken" as opposed to "linked" rhyme--but these are distinctions that rarely find practical sanction in critical usage and are often much more useful for the writer.

Nonetheless, it may be useful to consider the various terms that do appear in the literature. Even more, it may be useful to gather and describe a range of rhymes available in the English language.

English is often said to be poor in rhyme, as opposed to, for example, the Romance languages, but this glossary and definition of terms will point to a rich variety of choices. This list is adapted from Poetic Designs, by Stephen Adams (Broadview Press, 1997), and Manual of English Meters, by Joseph Malof (Bloomington: Indiana U Press, 1970).

Rhymes defined by nature of similarity

perfect rhyme, full rhyme, true rhyme	These terms refer to the immediately recognizable norm.	true/blue mountain/fountain

imperfect rhyme, slant rhyme, half rhyme, approximate rhyme, near rhyme, off rhyme, oblique rhyme	These are all general terms referring to rhymes that are close but not exact.	lap/shape glorious/nefarious
eye rhyme	This refers to rhymes based on similarity of spelling rather than sound. Often these are highly conventional and reflect historical changes in pronunciation.	love/move/prove why/envy
identical rhyme	A word rhymes with itself, as in Emily Dickinson's "Because I Could not Stop for Death".	We paused before a house that seemed A Swelling of the Ground-- The Roof was scarcely visible-- The Cornice--in the Ground.
rich rhyme (from French rime riche)	A word rhymes with its homonym.	blue/blew guessed/guest.
assonant rhyme	Rhyming with similar vowels, different consonants.	dip/limp man/prank.
consonant rhyme	Rhyming with similar consonants, different vowels.	limp/lump bit/bet.
macaronic rhyme	Macaronic verse uses more than one language, as in medieval lyrics with Latin refrains. Macaronic rhyme is also bilingual.	glory/pro patria mori sure/kreatur queasy/civilisé

Rhymes defined by relation to stress pattern

one-syllable rhyme, masculine rhyme	The norm, in which rhyme occurs on the final stressed syllables.	One, two, Buckle my shoe
extra-syllable rhyme, triple rhyme, multiple rhyme, extended rhyme, feminine rhyme	These all refer to rhyming double or triple or multiple extra-syllable ending.	dying/flying, generate/venerate, salubrious/lugubrious
light rhyme	Rhyming of a stressed syllable with a secondary stress.	frog/dialog live/prohibitive

wrenched rhyme	Rhyming of a stressed syllable with an unstressed syllable. This often occurs in ballads and folk poetry, often on conventional words like lady/a bee	Lady/a bee

Rhymes defined by position

By Position in the Line

end rhyme, terminal rhyme	All rhymes occur at line ends--the standard procedure.	
initial rhyme, head rhyme	Alliteration or other rhymes at the beginning of a line.	
internal rhyme	Rhyme that occurs within a line or passage, whether randomly (as below, on "flow" and "grow") or in some kind of pattern.	A heavenly paradise is that place, Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow. These cherries grow, which none may buy Till "Cherry Ripe!" themselves do cry.
leonine rhyme, medial rhyme	Rhyme that occurs at the caesura and line end within a single line--like a rhymed couplet printed as a single line.	bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers
caesural rhyme, interlaced rhyme	Rhymes that occur at the caesura and line end within a pair of lines-- like an abab quatrain printed as two lines.	Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the fee of the dove; But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love. Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harp-string of gold, A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?
	Or the following unusual example, an In Memoriam stanza (abba) printed.	Upon the mat she lies and leers and on the tawny throat of her Flutters the soft and silky fur or ripples to her pointed ears. Come forth, my lovely seneschal! so somnolent, so statuesque! Come forth you exquisite grotesque! half woman and half animal! `

By Position in the Stanza or Verse Paragraph

crossed rhyme, alternating rhyme, interlocking rhyme	Rhyming in an abab pattern.
intermittent rhyme	Rhyming every other line, as in the standard ballad quatrain: xaxa
envelope rhyme, inserted rhyme	Rhyming abba (as in the In Memoriam stanza)
irregular rhyme	Rhyming that follows no fixed pattern (as in the pseudopindaric or irregular ode).
sporadic rhyme, occasional rhyme	Rhyming that occurs unpredictably in a poem with mostly unrhymed lines.
thorn line	A line left without rhyme in a generally rhymed passage. (There are ten thorn lines among the 193 lines in Milton's irregularly rhymed Lycidas.)

Rhyme across word boundaries

broken rhyme	Rhyme using more than one word.	But-oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual, ` Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?
	Or rhyme in which one word is broken over the line end.	I caught this morning morning's minion, king- Dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing….
linked rhyme	Rhyme that depends on completing the rhyme sound by enjambment over the line end.	But what black Boreas wrecked her? He Came equipped, deadly-electric,
apocopated rhyme	Rhyming a line end with a penultimate syllable.	A poem should be wordless As the flight of birds.

Word types

Type	Definition	Example
synonym	two or more words or expressions of the same language that have the same or nearly the same meaning in some or all senses	bad has synonyms: poor, substandard, inferior, second-rate etc, adverse, nasty, grim, distressing

Type	Definition	Example
antonym	a word of opposite meaning	good and bad hot and cold
contranym	a word having two meanings that contradict one another. A contranym is a word with a homonym (another word with the same spelling but different meaning) that is also an antonym (a word with the opposite meaning). It can also be a word with a homograph that it is also an antonym.	sanction, oversight, buckle, dust, stone, resign, fast, off, weather
homograph	one of two or more words spelled alike but different in meaning or derivation or pronunciation.	The *bow* of a ship and a *bow* and arrow.

Entering A Poetry Competition

from Mslexia:

Does entering a writing competition ever feel like buying a lottery ticket? It shouldn't! In our many years of running prestigious awards, we've noticed clear patterns amongst the poets who place consistently highly, and now we're going to share those patterns with you.
Ahead of our 2021 Women's Poetry Competition deadline on 6 December, editorial director Debbie Taylor offers ten top tips for writing a prize-winning poem – inspired by her time chairing the National Poetry Competition.

1. Choose a tantalising title
Your title should excite an image and be memorable. To do either it has to be concrete. If you're stuck, try the following formula: pronoun/article (the, a, his, her, etc.) + adjective (e.g. blue, wet, hungry, happy) + noun (choose something concrete, e.g. house, hat, dog, priest).
2. Choose unusual subject matter
A surprising idea or unfamiliar image may be enough to get your poem onto the shortlist. Poems set in the past or the future, in a foreign country, or from an unusual point of view, all excite the reader's curiosity.
3. Start with a hook
Plunge straight in with a phrase to grab your reader's attention and make them want to read on. This assumes that a poem should have a narrative structure. It should! The action or argument in your poem needs to move forwards. Cut to the chase: try excising that first slow stanza.
4. It must make a point
The criticism 'What's the point of this poem?' came up so often during the judging process that I started abbreviating it to 'WTP?' in my notes. Your reader needs to understand why your poem was written. You don't have to carry a placard, but you do have to expand the reader's understanding in some way.

5. Minimise description

There's a reason why the haiku (that quintessential descriptive poetic form) is only 17 syllables long: description can be boring and static. Try using verbs instead of adverbs and adjectives to convey the effect you're after: 'whip' instead of 'wave quickly', for example. You'll quicken the pace without cluttering the poem.

6. Expunge every cliché

Stock phrases add no meaning and waste precious space. Test every word for predictability. Focus especially on adjective-noun combinations and see if they can be replaced by something less obvious. 'Bright sun' and 'gloomy clouds' have no place in any poem.

7. Outlaw abstract words

Keep your poem concrete. Make it speak to the senses. Poems gain much of their resonance by generating images that appeal to the unconscious. Abstract terms like 'loss' and 'nostalgia' may make sense to the conscious mind but they leave the unconscious cold.

8. Make it clear

Several shortlisted poems fell at the last hurdle because of a confusing double negative or mind-boggling sentence structure. Ambiguous or clumsy syntax are obstacles that slow down your reader and prevent them appreciating the imagery and ideas in the poem.

9. Avoid obscure references

A competition poem can be complex and oblique, but it must be understandable to a reasonably literate reader. Obscure cultural references, without explanation or context, prevent the reader from entering the poem's world. Certain personal details and anecdotes can have a similarly alienating effect.

10. End with a punch

A comment made about many of the shortlisted poems was 'It just tails off'. Because a poem is a kind of narrative, it need to build towards a satisfying resolution or conclusion. This is especially important in a stand-alone competition poem, where there are no other poems to provide context.

Planning your Novel

(from Adam Hamby)

GETTING STARTED

So you want to write a book? Are you sure? It's a lot of work and the odds of it being published are slim. Even if you go the independent publishing route, there's little chance of more than a handful of people reading it.

Writing a book is an illogical pursuit. It is time-consuming, anti-social and often thankless. Even if you do get published and manage to build a career, be prepared for the inevitable disappointments, bad reviews and challenges of being an author in the 21ˢᵗ Century.

If you want to make money, there are more lucrative ways to accrue wealth. If you want to be famous...well, here's a newsflash: you can count the number of genuinely famous authors on two hands.

I'm a rock climber, so this book is going to be littered with climbing metaphors. Climbing makes no sense to non-climbers.

'Why do you want to climb K2?'
The stock answer is, 'Because it's there.'

But a more accurate answer would be, 'Climbing brings me to life. Despite the pain, suffering and torment, something inside compels me to give everything I've got attempting to reach the summit.'

If you can say the same thing about writing, read on. If not, put this book down and have a serious think about what you're doing. The mountain tests mind, body and soul. Writing tests the mind and soul, and the sedentary nature of the job can test the body in all the wrong ways. It is not for the faint hearted, and let's be honest, with 8 million books available on Amazon, it's not like the world is going to run short of reading material any time soon.

YOUR MISSION IS...

Still here? OK, but don't say I didn't warn you.
As a prospective author, those 8 million books should daunt you. Their existence begs the

question, 'What do you have to say that hasn't already been said?'

Some publishers have a very different outlook. They will look at the psychological thrillers selling by the bucket-load and say we need more books like that. This creates demand for genre authors, but it is difficult to become a genre author, because competition is fierce and the conventions of any given genre are well-established, and therefore well and widely known. And even if you can become a genre author, building your career is challenging because no matter what genre you

write in, there will always be a handful of market leaders, the so-called brand authors who dominate your chosen space.

'I'll become an author who writes outside genre.'

Yay! You're a literary fiction author and your book will sell a dozen copies. I'm being facetious of course. As challenging as it is, genre provides the safety net of an established market. Writing outside genre means your book has to stand or fall on its own merit, and most fall. Sorry to be harsh, but if you've come here for cheerleading, I'm happy to disappoint. Go into a situation knowing what to expect and there's less chance of being disheartened or depressed by the outcome.

If you still want to write. Yes, I am actively trying to discourage you, because it is a hard path. But if you still want to write, spend some time developing your concept. Before you even think about character, story, plot or any of the fun stuff, examine the idea of the idea itself. Even if you are planning on becoming a genre author, the following exercise is useful because it should help set you apart from others who write to a widely known formula.

Many aspiring authors stumble into writing a book. They get intrigued by a character or a story and settle into writing a 80,000-120,000 word book, spending months or years of their lives on a project they don't properly understand and haven't tested. Writing often starts as a hobby, and because it's leisure time, people don't tend to ascribe a monetary value to the hours they spend on a book. If you're writing purely for pleasure, carry on, but if you're writing to be published, why haven't you interrogated the idea properly before you started work? Why haven't you weighed twenty or thirty ideas against each other and found the best? Most people wouldn't buy the first house they saw. So why devote irrevocable months or years on the first idea to catch your mind's eye? Unless you've found the philosopher's stone, the source of ambrosia or have invented a time machine, wasted time is wasted life. You're never getting it back.

The first thing I'd advise every writer to do is articulate in one or two sentences what it is they want to say. This isn't a tagline or a synopsis. It's a mission statement. For my Scott Pearce series, which started with Black 13, my mission statement was.

I want to terrify people by showing them how modern espionage really works.

This statement informs everything that follows. Your mission statement is you identifying which mountain you're going to climb. It helps you understand whether you have anything new to say. If your mission statement is:

I want to write a great detective story.

I'd advise you to think again. Michael Connelly, Ian Rankin, James Patterson, Val McDermid, and so on and so forth. Many great detective stories have been written, often by veteran writers with years of experience, and (in general) experience does improve a writer's skill. So this mission statement would pit you against the world's best and demand you scale that high mountain with less experience and equipment than them. I'm not saying it's impossible, but it's certainly one of the higher mountains to climb.

If your mission statement is:

I want to write a great detective story that upends the genre.

You may be on the right path. You'd better make sure you know the genre sufficiently well to be certain you're upending it. Seven Death of Evelyn Hardcastle is a wonderful example of novel that upended a genre. By confounding expectations, Stuart Turton created his own mountain and became the first to summit it. Doing this is very difficult, but depending on your personality type and the way your mind works, it might be easier than going up one of the well-trodden high peaks.

So, write your mission statement. Figure out which mountain you're trying to climb. More than two sentences and you don't have a mission statement, you have an argument. If you're struggling to come up with a mission statement, you may not have hit upon the right idea yet, or you might be finding it difficult to get used to the form. If you're struggling with the former, keep mining for ideas. If you're finding the latter hard, practice by coming up with the mission statement for existing books or films. For example:

I want people to question the nature of reality. (The Matrix)
I want to tell the most extensive magical epic of all time. (Lord of the Rings) Answer the following questions:
What is your book's mission statement?

What do you want your book to accomplish? (How do you want people to react when they read it)

CONCEPT

So, you've decided which mountain you're going to climb.

I want to write the definitive detective novel.
I want to show people why it's better to be themselves than it is to pretend to be someone else. I want to challenge people's trust in memory.

If your mission statement tells you which peak you're heading for, your concept tells you how you're going to get there. Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer built extremely successful Hollywood careers by popularising the high concept movie. High concept doesn't mean complex, tricky or cutting-edge, it means an idea that can be summarised in a single sentence.

A wise-cracking Detroit cop goes on a fish out of water journey in Beverly Hills to solve the murder of an old friend.

This single sentence identifies setting, character, point of view, complication and conflict. It is a powerful distillation of the full work and tells people so much about what to expect. More importantly, it directs the writer. I have a sudden urge to explore the Sushi bars of Beverly Hills. Is the exploration related to the murder investigation? No? Does it highlight the fish out of water quality of the character? Yes? Is there a way you can highlight the fish out of water quality while progressing the murder investigation? Yes? Then ditch the Sushi bar detour and do that instead.

A strong concept tells you how you're going to climb the mountain. It will also provide you with a focus for your story, and ensures you are efficient in your plotting. It keeps you on point as you wrestle with 80,000 to 120,000 words.

A group of international characters situated throughout history, who are all connected through time, struggle to overcome ruthless adversaries who are out to destroy them.

That is a single sentence summary of David Mitchell's sprawling epic Cloud Atlas. The ensemble cast of characters makes it difficult to be as directed or specific as Beverly Hills Cop, but one still gets setting, character, points of view, complication and conflict.

An intelligent, rebellious woman of marrying age navigates the social hazards of Regency England while sparring with a damaged man she thinks conceited, arrogant and rude.

Pride and Prejudice. Setting, character, point of view, complication and conflict. The route up the mountain.

Your concept is not your logline, which is a marketing tool designed to pique the interest and often conceals some key element of character or story. Your concept is your book concentrated down to its essence. It is the thing you can always refer back to, the map that will guide you up the mountain.

Express your concept in a single sentence that includes setting, character, point of view, complication and conflict.

When you've got something you're happy with, take a look at your mission statement. Are your mission statement and concept connected? Do they support each other? If you execute your concept well, will it help you achieve the mission you've set yourself?

If the answer is no, start again. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. At this stage, you're just sketching out your ideas, and like an artist working in pencil, you can erase things that aren't working and change the composition to create a better picture. Time spent on this part of the creative process saves a great deal of head and heartache later on. Get the sketch right before you start working in oil paint.

Mission, concept, logline, story, character and plot are interconnected elements and it is normal to go through an iterative process refining them all as the book develops. You may find you've set yourself the wrong concept, or got the wrong mission statement. Why does this matter? If

your mission statement is I want to write a genre defining love story and your concept is A wisecracking Detroit cop goes on a fish out of water journey in Beverly Hills to solve the murder of an old friend, the chances are you're going to get confused as you write. What you want to say and what you're actually saying will be in constant conflict.

I want to write a genre defining love story fits with An intelligent, rebellious woman of marrying age navigates the social hazards of Regency England while sparring with a damaged man she thinks conceited, arrogant and rude.

The author mission fits with the concept, the content of the tale. Intention and creation are aligned. If you start out with these two elements in conflict, you increase the chances of confused, unclear book, and a painful writing process.

When you're happy with your mission statement and concept, you'll have an idea what you're trying to say and how you're going to say it. You'll have a basic idea of setting, who your main character is and the struggle they face.

Editing

From Jacq Molloy

- Language
  - Cut your adverbs and make your verbs stronger.
  - Rework any clichés.
  - Eliminate filler words and phrases, such as "currently", "that", and "in order to."
  - Cut repetitious words and/or phrases (unless intentional)
  - Divide long, hard-to-read sentences into two or more shorter sentences.
  - Determine and weed out any words, actions, or punctuation that you personally overuse as filler, such as characters smiling or taking deep breaths, ellipses in the middle or end of dialogue, exclamation points, etc.
- Story/Plot
  - Does the action start soon enough? Or is there too much exposition and scene-setting?
  - Is the back story told elegantly and well, and appropriately (i..e not too much, but all that is needed)?
  - Is the pacing good? Does the story move forward consistently? But also, are there enough slower bits to give the reader a rest?
  - Does the story have a good story arc: beginning, middle, end?
  - Does enough happen to keep the reader engaged?
- Character Development
  - Are the characters well developed? A good exercise is to put each characters' dialogue and description in a different colour and read it on its own. How does the character come across?
  - Is the main character empathetic? Is s/he proactive enough? Is s/he likeable (s/he doesn't have to be likeable, but it helps. Make sure that if you want him/her to be likeable, s/he is; have the character unlikeable only if that's your plan).
  - Is the POV clearly defined. No head-hopping unless you're deliberately doing that and in control of it. If it will confuse the reader – it isn't working!
  - Cut unnecessary chit-chat from dialogue; limit conversations to substance that moves your story forward.
  - Limit distinctive dialogue quirks or movements to a single character; don't give "signature" details to more than one person unless there's a reason (child emulating a parent or older sibling, etc.).
  - Does the protagonist have a well-defined internal goal which will lead to the character arc? (This doesn't have to be flagged; it can be subtle. But it must be there.)
  - Does the protagonist have a smooth, satisfying and well-defined character arc? Can you spot the moments when that character growth happens?

Typical errors:

- Prose
  - not enough story – too thin.
  - no clear focus – what do you want to say to your reader?

- too much story – chunks of exposition.
- not enough visuals/too much dialogue.
- undeveloped characters.
- too internal (especially with first person narrators and memoir).
- structure out of kilter (e.g., too much introduction, so rushed ending).
- head-hopping – multiple povs jumping from one to another in a short space.
- clichéd/over-familiar subjects or characters.
- Life writing
  - Lack of fictionalisation (that is, using the same techniques we use in fiction – plot, tension and suspense, characterisation, etc.)
  - Too personal – how can you make it resonate with readers?
  - Too factual and these facts dominate the piece so it becomes essay like
  - Ask whether there is a transformational element to your narrative – is the main character different by the end due to what they experienced for example
  - Is it driven by character and situation?
  - Do you have a well developed theme?
- Novel
  - Overdeveloped introduction – trying to get all the backstory in at the beginning.
  - Starting with a prologue rather than the first chapter. This isn't allowed for the EMA
  - No sense this is an idea weighty enough for a long work
  - Too many POVs introduced in the opening chapter (s)
  - The opening chapters aren't dynamic enough – think about starting in media res for example
  - Same issues as short fiction.
- Poetry
  - No development through the sequence of subject/theme etc
  - Familiar/clichéd subjects that doesn't bring anything fresh to the topic
  - No clear focus, for the individual poems and/or the whole sequence (as above).
  - The tyranny of end rhyme (so every other element goes out of the window: all energy goes into the rhyme) and regular metre (archaic inversions, strangled lexis).
  - Not enough compression of language – too prose-y or too compressed – no variation in line length for example when there needs to be
  - Flat/clichéd/over-rich imagery.
  - Forgetting to make full use of elements such as enjambment/internal rhyme/unusual words/imagery/phrasing
  - Overlooking the impact of punctuation
  - Being too abstract with subject/language etc
- Script
  - Details Included that are suitable for prose but not for a script – ex: writing that a character thinks about what he will have for dinner – how would a viewer be privy to their thoughts? We aren't – so show this via dialogue for example
  - Too much concentration on technical details – camera angles, shots, etc.
  - Over-directing – remember you aren't the auteur here – you are the writer so don't direct

- Too much dialogue, not enough use of visuals/sound effects/action to build atmosphere etc
- Clichéd/over-familiar subjects or characters. And yes we do occasionally write the "familiar" characters – the archetypes/stock characters – But – we need to bring something fresh to it
- Not making full use of the techniques associated with Radio/Film/Stage – watch/listen/read in the genre you're writing in
- Same issues as short fiction.

Editing your Novel

From Rachael Kerr – 'Editing Fiction', Arvon at Home course, 20 May 2021.

Editing your own work is intrinsically difficult as you cannot look at the work with fresh eyes. Hence it is very difficult for the author to take an independent perspective of their own work. **Margaret Atwood** says, this is hard, 'because you've been backstage, you've seen how the rabbits were smuggled into the hat.'

D.H.Lawrence. 3 versions of Lady Chatterley.   Would write a complete draft. Set is aside and then write a brand new draft. Did not therefore incrementally edit a single draft.

T.S.Eliot - Wasteland - dedicated to Ezra Pound who was the editor and chopped it to pieces!

Raymond Carver - famous for pared down style, but this was largely due to his editor Nish - so perhaps too much intervention there.

Structural editing - narrative voice, tense, character and dialogue, point of view, internal monologue, narrative logic and pace, how to get to the heart of your story, and the all-important art of cutting.
Copyediting - spelling, writing, verification of factual information.

Writing and Editing are two different processes.

Once you have a first draft – how can the author approach it with fresh eyes?

- Put the novel to one side for a while. Come back to it. How does it look now?
- 'Leave a decent space of time between writing something and editing it', says **Zadie Smith**. 'Try to read your own work as a stranger would read it, or better still, an enemy.'
- It can be useful to have one or more first readers. People you trust to tell you the truth. Beta readers - when they say something is wrong, they are usually correct, when they tell you how to fix a problem they are usually wrong.
- Please note, this may not always be your life partner, or indeed your writing group. You may respect them as writers, but chances are they are no better at editing than you are and are caught up in their own issues.
- **Neil Gaiman** advises 'Put it aside. Read it pretending you've never read it before. Show it to friends whose opinions you respect and who like the kind of thing this is.

Remember, when people tell you something's wrong and doesn't work for them, they
are almost always right. When they tell you what is wrong and how to fix it, they are
almost always wrong!'

- Read your work aloud. Prose rhythms are too complex to be checked by thought,
they must be read out. **Diana Athill** who should know a thing or two, advises: 'Read
it aloud to yourself because that's the only way to be sure the rhythms of the sen-
tences are OK. Prose rhythms are too complex to be *thought* out, they can only be got
right by ear.'
- This is often particularly true of dialogue.
- **Elmore Leonard** advice on self-editing is the pithiest and best: **'If it sounds like
writing, I rewrite it.'**

Common problems

Narrative Voice

First drafts usually have two much authorial intervention between the characters and the
reader.   This usually mean excessive use of description or adverbs. Focus on showing not
telling. Elmore Leonard (has a simplicity and directness in his work) - says. 'Don't say 'he
gasped he cried, etc this is the author sticking his nose in - just use he said - the way in which
he said it should be evident in the dialogue itself. If you overload dialogue with extra instruc-
tions or information to the reader then the reader can feel heckled or lectured. If there is ex-
pository material while the character is making coffee this can bog the reader down and turn
them off. Eg it is unlikely the reader needs to know the exact details of how they make cof-
fee (unless of course your character is OCD and that needs to be shown to the reader in the
story). Details of the character need to be revealing and relevant.

- Whose voice is this? Who is telling the reader this? Am I showing or telling?
- Adverbs – Elmore Leonard calls them a mortal sin. Richard Ford needed to have hun-
dreds of them edited out of his early drafts. Use sparingly!
- 'he said' – Elmore Leonard believes that any other word – gasped, grumbled, cau-
tioned, lied, is just the author 'sticking his nose in' – Rather extreme, but worth bear-
ing in mind. Ask yourself 'Am I sticking my nose in here?"
- Am I indulging in a writer-to-reader lecture here? Or am I moving my character
around in the world in a believable way that advances the story?
- Detail and proportion – how much does a reader have to know about washing up/mak-
ing a cup of coffee/getting on a train? Or does this detail provide an important insight
into my character? Is this detail significant or irrelevant to the development of my
character or the story?

Character and Dialogue

Characters. Don't have a favourite character - and overwrite that character. When looking
at dialogue - ask do they sound like themselves? Does their dialogue reflect the specific na-
ture of the character or do all the characters sound the same?

- Is this character here to perform a narrative function, or are they 'real' people?

- When they engage in conversation, do they sound like themselves, or am I just making them say things to convey expository information?
- Are they speaking in full, grammatically correct sentences? No-one actually talks like that.

Dealing with accents or geographical or class variations in speech.   Less is more usually. Avoid being stereotypical when writing a character that lives in Somerset or a character that is a 12th Century Benedictine monk.   For the latter, if they spoke truly authentically, then they would speak in old English or Norman and would be hugely difficult to understand. Is it better to write in normal English and then at a later stage turn that English into accented dialogue/

If you are writing in an accent that is not your own - then you must be very careful.   Write the dialogue first so you then know what the characters are trying to say - and then convert the dialogue into its geographical or historical context. Don't overdo the accent either.   In some cases it may be more appropriate to write in an idiom (eg rhythm, phraseology, vocabulary) than an accent to realistically convey that accent.

Point of View

A common problem is to be seeing a scene from too many points of view. Avoid head hopping. Ask yourself whose viewpoint is the most important in a single scene - are you staying in that viewpoint?

- In this scene, whose PoV is the most important?
- Am I in too many people's heads in the same scene?

Internal Monologue

This is often particularly difficult in a first draft to get the expression of a character's unexpressed thoughts right. Internal monologue.   D.H. Lawrence able to express the emotions of his characters, even if the character would not explicitly think that particular emotion. The author can describe the character's experiences in a way that the character could not describe to themselves. Danger area; do not overload the char's internal thoughts with expository information or action.   Beware of characters over thinking things.   Ask yourself: would the character really think this? Are we overloading the character with material they would not think or could not possibly think?

- Would my character really think this?
- Or am I just shoving in expository material to get information across?
- Am I overloading this character's ability to perceive or understand their own emotions/motivations etc?

Narrative Logic and Pace

In a first draft, this often goes awry. You've been concentrating on getting your story down and on rereading, you discover that you've made some narrative leaps that don't make sense or simply don't work. Narrative writing and pace. Avoid authorial throat clearing. Pay attention to the timeline. Do not have a char pregnant for 18 months (Roddy Doyle). Watch out for anachronism, eg using an iPhone in the 1990s. Does the action unfold in a logical

sequence? First drafts often have discontinuities or illogical leaps in time.⌞SEP⌟Is the action unfolding too fast or too slow? Are things over described?⌞SEP⌟

- Is my timeline logical?
- Can these things have happened in the order and in the length of time I've made them happen? (Remember Roddy Doyle finding his character had been pregnant for 18 months, or my writer whose character was using a smartphone in 2004, three years before the first one was launched)
- Is there a problem with the logic of *how* the action unfolds? Check for narrative leaps that might leave your reader confused.
- Is the action unfolding too fast in some sections and too slowly in others? Am I rushing my readers or leaving them idling while I fiddle with describing a lovely sunset?

Cut, Cut, Cut

This is often the hardest thing of all, but it is essential to prune your roses. only by cutting every unessential words do you leave the essential words… first drafts invariable need to be cut - if they do not they are probably not very good and do not have enough in them. Jeannette Waterston - don't hold onto bad work - if it was bad went into the draft it will be bad when it comes out.

- **Diana Athill** says: 'CUT. Only by having no inessential words can every essential word be made to count… You don't always have to go so far as to murder your darlings, those turns of phrase or images of which you felt extra proud when they appeared on the page but go back and look at them with a **very beady eye.** Almost always it turns out that they'd be better dead. (Not every twinge of satisfaction is suspect – it's the ones which amount to a sort of smug glee you must watch out for.)'
- **Esther Freud** says: 'Cut until you can cut no more. What is left often springs to life… Trust your reader. Not everything needs to be explained – if you really know something and breathe life into it, they'll know it too.'
- **Sarah Waters** says: 'Cut like crazy. I've often got to chapter two and thought "THIS is where the novel should start"'
- **Don't know what to cut and what not to cut?** Ask yourself: Do I need this simile? Is this metaphor really necessary? Do I need this detail? (Detail and proportion again) Why is this chapter so much longer than the others?

Be Brave

It takes courage to discard your own work. But honing and polishing is all about making your work better**.**

- **Jeanette Winterson** gives some characteristically tough advice: 'Don't hold on to poor work. If it was bad when it went into the drawer, it will be just as bad when it comes out.'
- Adopt **Helen Dunmore**'s mantra: 'Reread, rewrite. Reread, rewrite. If it still doesn't work, throw it away.

And remember, **Roddy Doyle** says it's OK to **change your mind**: 'Good ideas are often murdered by better ones. I was working on a novel called *The Partitions*. Then I decided to call it *The Commitments*.'

And finally…

Always remember this is YOUR BOOK. Not anyone else's. It's good to take advice from people you trust, to listen to the professionals, even to pay for freelance editorial help if you want to, but beware…

- Playwright **David Hare** says: 'Never take any advice from anyone with no investment in the outcome.'
- **A L Kennedy**'s feisty advice is to: 'Defend your work. Organisations and institutions and individuals will often think they know best about your work – especially if they are paying you. When you genuinely believe their decisions will damage your work – walk away.'

Expect to pay 1000-1500 pounds for a structural edit of an 80,000 word novel. Rachel Kerr recommended using Jericho Writers. The editor needs to the see the whole book.

Researching

From: Jericho Writers: https://community.jerichowriters.com/page/view-post?id=326

I want to talk research. In this case, my research had to do with two well-studied historical periods, but really any kind of fiction might call for research. If you're writing a psychological thriller where one character works in an advertising office, you need to know how advertising offices work. If there's a bit of ocean-sailing adventure, you need to be able to tell port from starboard. Even if your work is totally speculative – full of androids working uranium mines on prison planets – you need to know something about uranium and the technology behind those androids and have a working model of the gravity / atmosphere / geology of your planet.

To do that research, you'll naturally hit Wikipedia and you'll pick up some books.

In my case, I learned a lot about the very interesting politics of Germany's post-war occupation. The Western allies took very different approaches to the management of their sectors. The Soviets had, from the start, no intention of anything other than a complete takeover of theirs.

I like my history and I gobbled up plenty of textbooks and learned loads. But there's a huge difference between regular history and the stuff that's of interest to a novelist. So yes, you need to know the broader political history of a time. (Or a bit of formal geology, if you're researching uranium mines. Or a bit of marketing theory if you're researching ad agencies.) But ultimately you are in search of *detail*.

So take my characters in 1946 Berlin. I knew a lot about the politics. I knew a lot about reconstruction of the city. The teams of women chipping mortar off fallen bricks so the things could be reused. I had some curious little family details. (My wife's grandparents were German/Poles who ended up in Munich at the end of the war and lived in a refugee camp for years.)

But none of that answered my questions. What did characters eat? What did they cook on? What occupation-bureaucracy did they have to deal with? With paper money almost worthless, what did they barter with?

The best answers to those questions didn't come from formal history books, but from ordinary diaries and memoirs. It didn't even matter if those memoirs were badly written. They just needed to be chatty, discursive, full of detail.

Those details are the ones to pounce on.

Same thing with uranium mines. It's all very well to read things in Wikipedia like this: "*In conventional mining, ores are processed by grinding the ore materials to a uniform particle size and then treating the ore to extract the uranium by chemical leaching.*"

Good. You need to know that. But that doesn't get us close to the felt experience of *being* a uranium miner. Uranium is radioactive. Humans need sheltering from the exposure. Opencast uranium mining is therefore mostly done by miners operating inside sealed cabs in order to prevent them breathing in radioactive dust.

But what happens when the sun shines on one of those cabs? Do they get hot? Are they air-conditioned? Does the driver even have the ability to open a window? What are the washdown procedures after work? What happens if you have a mechanical breakdown and have to leave the cab?

Answering those questions will get your fictional miner ever closer to a believable character with a believable set of experiences.

And you're not just looking for details. You're hunting for words. With uranium, it's words like *yellowcake, roll-front deposits, Geiger counter, shear zone, gamma ray spectrometer,*

heap leach, contamination, haul truck, primary crusher, and so on. With a vocabulary like that, you can already feel the credibility of the story beginning to build.

Another trick: have your characters toss those words off as though they're ordinary, not needing more explanation. It doesn't really matter whether your reader completely understands the nature of yellowcake or knows how a primary crusher operates. If your characters use those terms with the fluency of the very familiar, your entire setting gains in authority. You'll actually get more colour and credibility that way than if you burrow into a detailed description of the crusher. (Unless it matters of course. If you're about to drop an aggressive robot into a primary crusher, then yes please, tell us about it.)

And accuracy?

Well, look, I'm an imagination-first kind of guy. If I'm considering whether or not to read a novel, the recommendation that "it's very accurate on the topic of post-war Berlin / modern ad agencies / uranium mining," is likely to make my heart sink. In the end, I think Imagination needs to dominate poor old Fact, the plain Jane of that sisterly pairing.

But the more you know, the more your imagination can leap. Very often, you'll find yourself holding back from a sentence you might want to write because you don't quite know the factual detail needed to support it. So accumulate the facts, then leave them behind. Or, if the facts are wonderful, place them front and centre. I once wrote a book about the 1920s/30s oil industry. There were two or three major oil strikes described in that book and they were all closely based on the actual facts of what happened.

And often fact just trumps anything that you might have dreamed up. A tiny example: in my research for the oil book, I read about a driller who fell out of the derrick onto the roof of the pumping shed and from there to the ground. He broke multiple bones but, while he was waiting for medical help, he said to his co-workers, 'Well, ain't you going to find a cigarette for this broken-assed son-of-a-bitch?'

That's such beautiful colour, you can't help but want to use it.

Submitting manuscripts

How to make your submissions stand out

Ian Drury (agent) and Jo Fletcher (publisher) - Winchester Writers Weekend 2021

Brit publishing industry is 5th biggest in the world, 6 billion dollars/pounds a year

100k books a year plus traditionally published, 1 million self published.   The number of books published is growing but the market is flat… ie the number of readers is not growing significantly
Audio market however is growing. (Which is not generally directly accessible to self published authors)

The pandemic has made it easier for best sellers and harder for debut authors

You have to work hard, for a long term, in general to get commercial success Eg Ellie Griffiths, hard working author, great books. Only after 10 years managed to hit top 10 best seller list.

When submitting a manuscript he trick is to find a way of avoiding giving the agent a reason to reject you, since the agent is trying to work their way through a big stack and subconsciously want to get onto the next in the queue. So covering letter, blurb, synopsis, manuscript all have to be as perfect as possible.

The agent wants something new and novel but also must be identify how the agent can sell it, so there must be an identifiable market for your work. This is why the blurb is so important as it shows that you the author have understood what market place you are aiming for. For commercial success, look at the best seller lists, and choose to write for something that is of the moment but bear in mind things go in cycles so you miss the wave. Don't clone other people's work - eg no agent will accept another Tolkien. For even small success these rules still apply.
Consider that your book needs to be sold in different technologies, eg printed, audiobook, so write it accordingly.

The covering Letter should include

- Title
- Brief description
- Genre
- Your past experience (but only pertinent stuff) and if your background, but only if is relevant, eg if you are writing SF and you are an astrophysicist.

• 150 word blurb that would be on the book back page. (The first 40 words is on Amazon, then click more). (Tells agent/pub that the author knows what the book is for, and how to sell it)

• Send the whole script in Word, times new Roman, double spaced, indented paragraphs with a tab - do not place blank lines between paragraphs, except to indicate passage of time (and then you should use * * *)

• (dyslexic authors can san serif which is easier to read if you are dyslexic but you must note that in the letter)

• The synopsis needs to be complete, but only include the main characters, should avoid subplots, mustn't leave open questions, unlike the blurb it is not a teaser.

If you self published on amazon, then agents are generally not interested in that book, unless you have 500 5 star reviews… unless it could be popular in audio or in translation.

The synopsis needs to be complete, minimal chars, avoid subplots, don't leave open questions, this is not a teaser

Manuscripts must be in word etc. Check your spelling yourself don't rely on word. Get the punctuation right.   Don't trust the Word spelling checker - the following text is okay according to Word:

The Joyce of a Spell Chequer

Eye have my own spell chequer
It came with my Pea Sea
It plainly marques for my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

For a middle list author, who is established and who has already sold well with previous novels, the 2 year sales forecast might be

1300 hardbacks. 16%. Royalty   1340 pounds

1700 trade return. 5% royalty (most paperback books don't get returned)   41 pounds

3000 paperbacks.   10-13%. Royalty 1000 pounds

12000 ebooks   royalty 5000 pounds

Audiobooks.   2000 copies.   Royalty 1200 pounds

This means the author would get less than a 10k pound advance

To translate a book costs 75 pounds per 1000 words or so, so that is why 160k word books are frowned on by publishers…

Agents will spot authors who don't read, and reject them. Read lots of genres, eg romance teaches you great characterisation, crime teaches you great plotting etc. even if you are a sf writer…

For Scfi

Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America www.sfwa.org
SFWA Bulletin Professional journal: www.sfwa.org/bulletin
Writer Beware Anti-scam site: www.sfwa.org/beware
Yog's Law: www.sff.net/people/yog
Asimov's guidelines: www.asimovs.com/info/guidelines.shtml
Analog's guidelines: www.analogsf.com/information/submissions.shtml
F&SF's guidelines: www.sfsite.com/fsf/glines.htm
Realms of Fantasy's guidelines: www.rofmagazine.com/pages/guidelines
Locus SF/F Newsletter: www.locusmag.com
Clarion West Writers Workshop (Seattle) www.clarionwest.org
Clarion (San Diego) http://clarion.ucsd.edu/
SFF Net Discussions, writer newsgroups: www.sff.net
Association of Authors' Representatives www.aar-online.org
Basement Full of Books www.sff.net/bfob
"Pitfalls of SF/F" www.vondanmcintyre.com/pitfalls.html

How to write a blurb

What is a blurb?

A blurb is a short description of a book that is written for promotional purposes. It will appear as the Book Description section of online bookstores such as Amazon, inside back cover of a hardback or on the back cover of a paperback. Typically, it would be about 150-200 words.

What should be in a blurb?

A blurb should do five things:

1. Indicate the genre and theme of the book
2. Introduce the main character(s)
3. Set the stage for the main conflict
4. Describe what is at stake
5. Tell the reader why this book is for them, personally.

The blurb should entice the reader to want to read further and buy the book. It should make the book's genre clear (fantasy, rom com etc) so that the reader's expectations are correctly set. The blurb should introduce the protagonist in a way that creates intrigue without going great detail. It should describe the central point of conflict, but it must not explain how this will be resolved as the objective is to intrigue the reader. If the author has a past record of successful publication it should mention this as this will help the reader trust the author that the book will be something that they will enjoy. Finally, the blurb should describe the book's unique selling point, something that the reader will hopefully find personally attractive.

Do:

Indicate the genre and central theme
Introduce your protagonist and the jeopardy that they will experience
Introduce the intrigue around the main conflict
Keep it short. Less is more.
Reference your book-writing or professional status, if it relates to your book
Indicate what is unique about this book, within the genre
Write in the third position

Don't:

Give away any spoilers, no matter how tempted you are
Summarise the plot – just entice the reader with fragments
Describe all the minor characters – just concentrate on one or two
Give a summary of the first chapter
Open with "In a world," or any other overused phrase
Give everything away
Say how amazing your book is
Compare yourself to other writers or your book to other books

Writing blurbs for Amazon

Amazon only displays the first few lines of your product description. The first line is the most critical. If you can refer to some level of success associated with the series, e.g. "The fifth book in the million selling series…" or use a reviewer's endorsement, e.g., "John Doe does it again, with his latest thriller. New York Review". In any case, make sure the first sentence includes a snappy, irresistible hook. Examine other books in the same genre and see how they go about capturing a reader's attention.

Since readers will search for books using keywords that are familiar to them, make sure that the blurb contains the common keywords for the genre. E.g., for an action thriller you might include murder, assassin, police, MI5, killing, victim, body etc. Don't overdo this though – a title like "The killing mystery: an enthralling action mystery with an amazing twist" is probably both a bit simplistic and also over the top. Try your keywords on Amazon and confirm that they bring up books that fall into the genre that your book is in.

Examples:

Fifty Shades of Grey, E L James

When literature student Anastasia Steele goes to interview young entrepreneur Christian Grey, she encounters a man who is beautiful, brilliant, and intimidating. The unworldly, innocent Ana is startled to realize she wants this man and, despite his enigmatic reserve, finds she is desperate to get close to him. Unable to resist Ana's quiet beauty, wit, and independent spirit, Grey admits he wants her, too—but on his own terms.

Shocked yet thrilled by Grey's singular erotic tastes, Ana hesitates. For all the trappings of success—his multinational businesses, his vast wealth, his loving family—Grey is a man tormented by demons and consumed by the need to control. When the couple embarks on a daring, passionately physical affair, Ana discovers Christian Grey's secrets and explores her own dark desires.

Main character: Anastasia Steele
Primary conflict: Will Anastasia succumb to temptation and how will her experiences change here
Stakes: Ana's loss of innocence
Genre keywords: Desires, passionately, affair
USP: extensive exploration of sexual attraction.

Killing Floor, Lee Child

Ex-military policeman Jack Reacher is a drifter. He's just passing through Margrave, Georgia, and in less than an hour, he's arrested for murder. Not much of a welcome. All Reacher knows is that he didn't kill anybody. At least not here. Not lately. But he doesn't stand a chance of convincing anyone. Not in Margrave, Georgia. Not a chance in hell.

Main character: Jack Reacher, former MP, drifter

Primary conflict: Charged with a crime he didn't commit. Will he prove his innocence in this small, isolated town?
Stakes: In Georgia? Lethal injection
Genre keywords: Murder, kill, arrested, not a chance in hell.
USP: Reacher's rejection of a conventional lifestyle.

Outlander, Diana Gabon

Scottish Highlands, 1945. Claire Randall, a former British combat nurse, is just back from the war and reunited with her husband on a second honeymoon when she walks through a standing stone in one of the ancient circles that dot the British Isles. Suddenly she is a Sassenach—an "outlander"—in a Scotland torn by war and raiding clans in the year of Our Lord . . . 1743.

Claire is catapulted into the intrigues of a world that threatens her life and may shatter her heart. Marooned amid danger, passion, and violence, Claire learns her only chance of safety lies in Jamie Fraser, a gallant young Scots warrior. What begins in compulsion becomes urgent need, and Claire finds herself torn between two very different men, in two irreconcilable lives.

Main character: Claire Randall, a former Combat nurse, recently reunited with husband
Primary conflict: Trapped in the past, she must rely on a man who could tempt her away from her marriage oaths.
Stakes: Survival and fidelity
Genre keywords: Passion, compulsion, torn between, shatter her heart
USP: a mix of historical fiction, fantasy, and romance

Lincoln in the Bardo, George Saunders

The American Civil War rages while President Lincoln's beloved eleven-year-old son lies gravely ill. In a matter of days, Willie dies and is laid to rest in a Georgetown cemetery. Newspapers report that a grief-stricken Lincoln returns to the crypt several times alone to hold his boy's body.

From this seed of historical truth, George Saunders spins an unforgettable story of familial love and loss that breaks free of realism, entering a thrilling, supernatural domain both hilarious and terrifying. Willie Lincoln finds himself trapped in a transitional realm—called, in Tibetan tradition, the bardo—and as ghosts mingle, squabble, gripe and commiserate, and stony tendrils creep towards the boy, a monumental struggle erupts over young Willie's soul.

Unfolding over a single night, Lincoln in the Bardo is written with George Saunders' inimitable humour, pathos, and grace. Here he invents an exhilarating new form and is confirmed as one of the most important and influential writers of his generation. Deploying a theatrical, kaleidoscopic panoply of voices—living and dead, historical and fictional—Lincoln in the Bardo poses a timeless question: how do we live and love when we know that everything we hold dear must end?

Here the blurb tells a story in its own right. The hook is in the question at the end.

Twilight, Stephen Myers

About three things I was absolutely positive.
First, Edward was a vampire.
Second, there was a part of him—and I didn't know how dominant that part might be—that thirsted for my blood.
Third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him.

This blurb not only plays with the readers' minds, but also includes the main selling point of the book—the love story of a vampire.

How to compile a pitch package for submission to an agent

What does a pitch package contain?

- A letter to the agent – this contains an elevator pitch, some details about the author and why the author is sending this work to the agent. It should be very short, less than a page.
- A synopsis of the novel – which again should be commendably short.
- The first three chapters of your novel.

When should a writer approach an agent?

Fiction: agents are want to see completed work, that hads been revised to the point where it is the best you can make it without the help from an agent and/or publisher. They do not want to see first drafts, or incomplete work. In general you will only send them the first three chapters though, as part of your initial pitch. The work has to be complete though, because if an agent likes the initial pitch, they don't want to hear: 'It will take me another three years to complete it'.

Non-fiction, agents want to see a project proposal. This would include an overview of the project, a list of the chapters with a summary of the content of each and at least one complete chapter to give a sense of what the final book will be like.

What are agents looking for in a writer?

- Authenticity – why are you so well placed to tell this particular story?
- Uniqueness of voice – do not pitch yourself as a clone of an existing writer, but show how you are new and unique
- Intricacy of plotting – a good story – every page should add to the telling of the story.

Preparing the package

1 **Format your work correctly**. Check the website of the agent that you are submitting to – if they have specific requirements then follow these scrupulously.   Otherwise, use Times New Roman 12 point, 1.5 or double spacing, paragraphs indented (rather than with spaces between them), dialogue properly formatted etc. Number your pages and put your name on them. Don't put a copyright notice on the material.
2 **Use a title page on your manuscript.**   Include a great title, your name and contact details and a word count.
3 **Write a great first page.**   You need a great page to draw the agent in – otherwise this may be the only page they read.   This page should introduce a character, tells us where and when you're the story is happening, and tell us what genre we are in. Something intriguing is needs to get the story going.
4 **Tighten up the early chapters**. Most agencies ask for the first 3 chapters or about 3000 words (check the agent's website to find out their specific requirements). Make this opening as strong as possible. Ensure the first chapter really sets out your store and asks the key question which drives your story. Most scenes/sequences shouldn't be longer than about 1000-1500 words – so if your opening scene has two characters talking to each other for the full 3000 words, chances are it should be trimmed. Move

your plot forward from the off and show us your characters as they enter the action. It's a good idea to read your work aloud to yourself to make sure it's flowing well.

5   **Rigorously check spelling and grammar.** Errors in syntax, spelling etc simply make you look unprofessional and uncaring.

6   **Write a one page synopsis.** Use the novel title as the header and follow this the crucial one or two lines which ask the key question that the story is based upon. Then set out your whole story in brief and in a readable way. Don't include too much detail and don't mention lots of character names. If you have a twist at the end, you may or may not include this – some agents want this, others do not. It may be best to hint at the twist without fully revealing it.

7   Write the pitch letter. Keep it short, no more three or four paragraphs and definitely less than a page in length.

The pitch letter

The pitch letter tells the agent:

- What the book is about
- Why it needs to be written – what the reader will get from it
- Where it sits in the marketplace
- A little about yourself and why you are qualified to write this particular book.

Consider what the does the agent want to hear, what do they want to know and how do they want to hear it. Tailor the letter to the particular agent by finding out enough about them so that you can say why you've chosen to send your novel to them specifically. Say just enough about your novel to make them want to read it – this should include a one or two-line pitch, the genre and a very brief introduction to the story and protagonist. If there are obvious books to compare your work to then do so, but remember the agent is looking for something new, not a clone of an existing author, Include a little about yourself to give the agent a sense of who you are, and also include mention of significant writing competitions you may have won abs creative writing courses you've taken. Explain why you were a particularly suitable person to author this particular book. Avoid repeating your synopsis in the pitch letter. Present yourself and your work in a positive light, but be modest, moderate and professional.

The agent wants to feel they will want to invest in you. So, if you are working on a second book, say that, so that the agent knows you have the stamina to work hard at writing. Show that you are *passionate* about the business of writing.

Example content
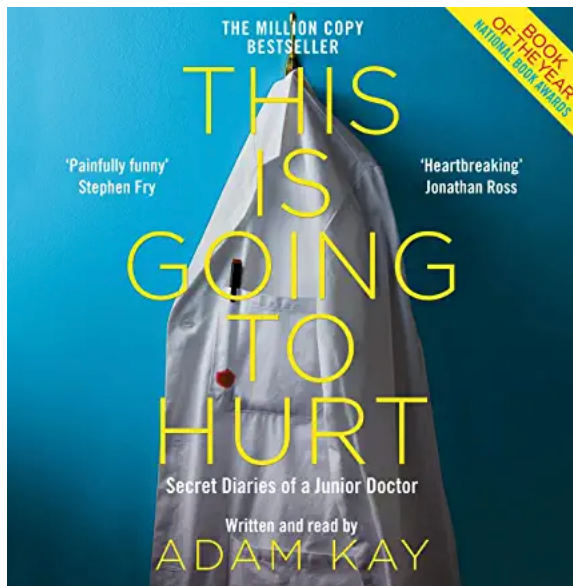
What is this book about?

Junior doctor and stand-up comic, Adam Kay's diaries provide a no-holds-barred account of his time on the NHS frontline. Hilarious, horrifying and heart-breaking, this is everything you wanted to know – and more than a few things you didn't – about life on and off the hospital ward

Why does it need to be written?

An insider's view of one of the most beloved British institutions, the NHS. We should all realise the intense pressure our system and the people in it are under. You will never look at the NHS in the same way again.

Why are you the best person to write it?

Adam Kay was an NHS junior doctor for six years before he couldn't take any more. Since leaving the NHS he has become a stand-up comic and film and TV writer.

Preparing the pitch letter

1. **Select a suitable agent**. Different agents handle different genres and different types of books. Research thoroughly on literary agency websites and online. Read interviews with individuals and checking their social media profiles. Look for agents who have published books that are similar to yours.
2. **Tailor your query letter to each agent**. Mention one or two books they have published that are similar to yours so to show you have done your research into that agent.
3. **Always write to a person and use their first name.** Don't write to 'Dear Mr John Smith' or 'Dear Sir' or 'The Submissions Department' etc.
4. **Keep the pitch-letter short. It should be no more than three brief paragraphs:**
    4.a The first paragraph pitches the novel. This should start with a one or two line pitch or elevator summary. Mention the genre.
    4.b The second paragraph tells the agent a little about you

4.c The third paragraph tells the agent why you are pitching to them specifically

5   Put the word count on the title page of the manuscript, not in the pitch letter.

6   **Kick off your letter by pitching your novel.** State what is at the heart of the novel and make the unique selling point clear. Indicate what drives your novel and hooks in the reader. Don't try to cover your whole plot – your synopsis will be doing that job. You're just looking to whet the agent's appetite. Include the title of your novel (perhaps even as the heading for the letter). You should also give the genre of your novel if you know

7   **Talk about why you're addressing this particular agent.** Agents like to feel you're writing to them for a reason. Find out something to say which is specific to them: If you've read or heard something they've said about writing or the kind of novels they'd like to represent – or perhaps if you've met them – you could mention this. If there's a reason you think you'd fit well on their list, say what it is.

8   **Provide comparison novels.**   If possible compare your work to a couple of books which are current and commercially successful – and ideally which are represented by this particular agent. If you can't find such books then simply mention one or two of the relevant agent's clients whose work you particularly admire. By doing this you are trying to show that you understand where your work will fit into in the marketplace and that you have selected an agent that specialises in that area.

9   **Tell the agent a little about yourself.** Onky include information that shows why you are the right person to write your particular book. If you are a doctor writing a medical drama – say that. Mention any creative writing courses you've taken which are prestigious and with selective entry. Mention awards and writing competitions you've won if they are not too obscure. Mention your published work but do not include self-published books unless they've sold well into the thousands. Provide a link to your web site if appropriate. Keep it short though – and only present relevant material that shows you in a positive light with respect to your work.

10 **Be neutral.** Don't brag but also don't put yourself down. Read over your letter when you've finished writing it to make sure that everything you say is positive – don't say anything negative at all.

11 **Be focused.** Talk about just one novel. If the agent calls you in for a meeting, that's the time to talk about other projects, future work etc.

12 **Be professional - do put time, thought and care into your pitch letter.** Be polite. Don't be slapdash, and check your grammar and spelling. You need to be professional in order to be taken seriously by a professional.

13 **Avoid 'polite padding'.** No need to thank them for their time. Make every word count.

14 **Don't ask for a meeting or request editorial help,** Just present the novel and then allow the agent to come forward with their idea of what should happen next

The elevator pitch

According to C.D. Major the elevator pitch should contain:

- What genre is the piece intended for?
- Who is the central char?
- What do they want?
- What conflict is in their way?
- What is at stake (i.e. what might the central character lose)?

e.g.

An emotional drama about a stressed working mum and literary agent who is tuck rerunning the day her lovely husband dies, desperately trying to save him.

(from https://jerichowriters.com/the-elevator-pitch/)

The pitch should be Short, Unique, Striking, Fresh, and Compelling.

Examples

Twilight
A teen romance between an ordinary girl and a boy who is actually a vampire.
[15 words]

The Da Vinci Code
A professor of symbology unlocks codes buried in ancient works of art as he hunts for the Holy Grail.
[19 words]

Gone Girl
A wife (Amy) goes missing, and her husband is suspected of murder. But the sweet diary-writing Amy of the first half of the book is revealed to be a very different woman in the second half . . .
[36 words]

Just how well can you ever know the person you love? This is the question that Nick Dunne must ask himself on the morning of his fifth wedding anniversary, when his wife Amy suddenly disappears.
[35 words]

The Martian
Astronaut, stranded on Mars, has to figure out how to survive.
[11 words]

Brokeback Mountain
A love story between two male cowboys
[7 words]

Harry Potter series
Orphan boy goes to school for wizards
[7 words]

Alex Rider series
Young James Bond
[3 words]

You are not seeking to explain your book in the elevator pitch. The only answer you are seeking to elicit is, "Hey, that sounds interesting. Tell me more."
.

Great pitches combine a tiny bit of what the book is (eg: in *Twilight*'s case, that's a teen romance), with a sense of why the book will be great to read (eg: "ooh, a girl and a werewolf: that sounds dark and sexy . . . and scary . . . and sexy . . .").

There is no single right approach. The *Harry Potter* elevator pitch focused on *setting* – a school for wizard. The *Gone Girl* one relied on its twist - real Amy is different from diary-Amy!. *The Martian* one relied on a setup / premise -Astronaut stranded on Mars: how does he survive?

The elevator pitch can take different forms. For example:

The Da Vince code

An intriguing race against time
This book will change everything you knew about the son of God

Another approach is to indicate time, place and to indicate the problem faced by the protagonists.

The Sound of Music

Singing Austrian family are aided by Nuns to escape the Nazis

Here the reader will naturally ask – 'did they escape succesfully'.

The elevator pitch may also simply tease the reader, as in

Alien

In space no one can hear you scream.

This tells you the genre (SF), and suggests a high tension story, but does not say anything about plot or characters, teasing the reader into wanting to know more.

Preparing the elevator pitch

1   Keep it short.
2   Say what happens, who does it happen to and explain why the reader would care.
3   Imply the genre and setting if you can
4   Remove everything from your elevator *except* the part that most interests the reader and makes them say 'tell me more'.
5   Keep your pitch short. Under 20 words is good. Under 10 words is excellent.

The synopsis

The synopsis is a short overview of your novel describing the plot, main characters and their motivations. Mentioning the themes of the novel is okay, but the synopsis should focus on what happens and why rather than be an abstract discussion literary devices. Not all agents will read the synopsis, but nevertheless it is a highly useful exercise in checking that the

novel you wrote is actually the novel you thought you wrote.   The synopsis must be short, less than one page and ideally 500-600 words.

Preparing the synopsis

1   **Put your title at the top**, even if it's still just a working title.

2   **State what genre you're writing in:** eg, romance, science fiction, fantasy, crime thriller, psychological suspense … If you're not writing in a clear genre or you're not sure what your genre is, just skip this. If you're writing for children, you should indicate the age group you're writing for

3   What you *definitely* need at or near the top of the synopsis is **your pitch line**. This is usually the key question, dilemma or driving force of the novel – or the *heart* of the novel, to put it another way. And if you know you have a grenat hook or a high concept, that should be your pitch line. Writers understandably get very worked up trying to get their pitch lines right – but remember that you're in any case going on to say more about your story all the way down the page – it's not all about this one line.

4   **The synopsis of your novel should then go on to cover your plot in its broad strokes:** Set out your story in the *simplest* terms. Don't try to include everything: we don't need all of the intricate twists, turns and subplots – just the major plot points so an agent can see what your novel *is* and where its headed. Write in the 3rd person.

5   Get **your protagonist's name** in early on (if you have one clear protagonist) and the main character's motivations. It's good to show whose story this is.

6   **But don't put in *too* many character names**. We don't need your full cast list – in fact we don't need many names at all or your page will be cluttered with them. This can make your synopsis confusing and difficult to understand.

7   **Give us the when and the where:** we need to know the primary setting for the novel and the time period in which it takes place (particularly if it's historical fiction. We tend to assume a default of 'now'). Again, though, don't include *lots* of place names and dates – keep it simple.

8   I'm often asked **whether to include the ending of the novel** in the synopsis. The honest (though annoying) answer is, it's up to you. Some agents would say they need to see the ending because it's such an important part of the story – they're annoyed if it's not there. But others say they don't like any big twist in the tale to be given away because they still feel they like to approach the novel as a reader. You can't rewrite your synopsis for each and every agent (that would be too much), so you'll just have to decide what feels right for you and your novel.

9   **The best synopses convey the tone of the novel as well as the plot:** If you can find a way to bring the feel, atmosphere or voice of the novel into the synopsis, it will really bring it to life. It's not essential and not worth fretting over if you can't see a way to do it, but it just adds that little extra zing.

10   **Don't heap praise on your own novel:** The synopsis is not the place to say you're going to be a huge international bestseller, or even to comment that the novel is gripping or funny or moving, etc. Leave it to others to make judgments about its top-ten-bestselling or award-winning potential.

11   **Don't cram as much as possible on to the page**: One page is a good, readable, concise length. Aim to be succinct – and don't attempt to wedge in more words than really fit onto a page by making your font, spacing or margins tiny. That just makes the synopsis difficult-to-read, which is the opposite of what you want to achieve.

12 **Don't include chapter breakdowns** or mini-summaries of the content of individual bits of your book. This isn't your working plan – the agent or publisher doesn't need to see all that stuff.

13 **Go for story rather than 'themes':** Tell us what drives your novel but don't give a list of themes or imagery with the idea that this will make it seem more deep and meaningful. It's only worth mentioning themes if your book explores a big issue or if it's *majorly* concerned with – for instance – grief, as the driving force of the story.

14 **Don't talk about unreliable narrators:** People often make an issue of their first-person narrators being unreliable. I think this is a hangover from university English degrees. Essentially *any* and *every* first-person narrator is unreliable, so it's not worth highlighting.

15 **Unusual narrative structures:** It's possible that your novel really is impossible to summarise in the way I'm advising here – because it's so experimental, its cast of characters is enormous and without any sort of centrality; its plot is so unconventional as barely to exist. If your novel is really *so* extraordinary and unconventional, then you actually won't be able to produce a 'normal' synopsis for it. If that's the case, see if you can write a page that gives an idea of what you're trying to do in the novel, and which talks passionately about your novelistic endeavour. Or perhaps try a page from the perspective of a specific character to entice the agent and draw them in – even if it's not actually an overview of the story in a conventional sense. However, if you read back over it and discover it sounds like an academic exercise or just very pretentious and unreadable, don't send it out with your work – just send your pitch letter and the opening of the novel itself. I should say though – most novels *can* be synopsised, so don't leap on this final point!

16 **Show that you are passionate about the art of writing, not just looking at dollar signs.**

The best place to find a full list of literary agents in the UK is the Writers' & Artists' Yearbook. Read about a day-in-the-life of a Literary Agent in How To Get Published.

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Self Publishing

Some authors do go through companies that provide some services. This might require a large initial amount of money.

Many more authors organise it all themselves and become the publisher as well as the author. You can pay legit people to design a cover, edit, format into files your books. You then upload the books to whatever retail distributors you want (eg: Amazon, B&N, Apple, Google, Kobo etc).

You don't necessarily have to pay for each of the tasks though, some can be done yourself. In my research most people recommend to spend any money you have for self-publishing on the cover and editing.

Formatting can be done for free on at least these sites: "Reedsy" & "Draft2Digital". There is software you can buy for it to "Vellum" (Mac only though), "Atticus" (Mac & PC).

There's lots of good free resources available: The Creative Penn podcast - Joanna Penn's website has a free doc called "The Indie Author Blueprint". The FB group & YouTube channel **20BooksTo50K®** has lots of posts and resources to read through. YouTube channels "Self-publishing with Dale", "Author Level Up", "M.K. Williams" all have tons of info.

Dealing with Writers Block

From OUSA….

2021 Summer Activity Week 4 Overcoming Writer's Block 28th June to 4th July

Overcoming Writer's Block

Writing about a writer's block is better than not writing at all.
–Charles Bukowski

It happens to every writer. It's inevitable. Your prose has turned to mush, you don't have a creative bone left in your body, and you want to throw in the towel.

Writer's block. Every writer struggles with it. But what you *do* with it is what really matters. Before we talk about solutions, though, let's talk about the problem.

Common causes of writer's block

The reasons for your block may vary, but some common ones include:

- **Timing:** It's simply not the right time to write. Your ideas may need to stew a little longer before writing them down.
- **Fear:** Many writers struggle with being afraid, with putting their ideas (and themselves) out there for everyone to see and critique. Fear is a major reason some writers never become writers.
- **Perfectionism:** You want everything to be *just right* before you ever put pen to paper or touch a keyboard. You try to get it perfect in your head and never do, so you never begin. To help you through this, we created Don't Hit Publish. It's a free tool that tells you if your blog post is good enough to publish and also give you tips on how to improve it.

So how do we vanquish this enemy?

It's a tough question to answer, and I'm afraid I don't have a great solution. I've wrestled with writer's block on many occasions, and each victory looked different.

That's the thing about writing: it's an art, not a science. And you'll have to approach it as such. There is no formulaic fix, no "7 Steps to Becoming a Better Writer Now."

Except one. But you already know what it is: Start hacking away. Begin trying stuff. Sometimes, the quirkier, the *better*. The trick is find something that works for you.

Creative solutions to writer's block

Here are a few ideas to help you work through your creative constipation:

- Go for a walk.
- Eliminate distractions (I use [Ommwriter](#) to focus on just writing).
- Do something to get your blood flowing. (I like running.)
- Play. (My personal preference is LEGOS.)
- Change your environment.
- Read a book.
- [Freewrite](#).
- Listen to music (try classical or jazz to mix it up).
- Brew some coffee (my personal favorite).
- Create a routine. Many famous writers have [daily routines](#) to summon the Muse.
- Spend time with someone who makes you feel good.
- Call an old friend.
- Brainstorm ideas in bullet points.
- Read some [inspiring quotes](#) to get you started.

The possibilities are endless, but movement is critical. You need to generate momentum to get out of your funk.

Once you start heading in a direction, it's easier to pick up speed. And before you know it, your block will be a distant memory and you'll be doing what you once thought impossible. You'll be *writing*.

How to *not* overcome writer's block

And just for fun, here are some anti-solutions to this problem:

- You do not overcome writer's block by refusing to write until you feel "[inspired](#)."
- You do not overcome writer's block by wallowing in self-pity.
- You do not overcome writer's block by [procrastinating](#) or making [excuses](#).
- You do not overcome writer's block by watching TV.
- You do not overcome writer's block by reading articles on how to overcome writer's block. (Kinda shot myself in the foot there, huh?)

The fail-proof solution

If you're *still* not satisfied, you have one last resort, an ace up your sleeve. The silver bullet solution. The fail-proof way to overcome writer's block is one you already know. In fact, you've been avoiding it this whole time, because it's precisely what you *don't* want to hear.

You overcome writer's block by *writing*.

([Tweet](#))

Start somewhere, anywhere. Write a few lines. *Say anything.* And see what happens. Don't think about it too much or make any fancy announcements. Just *write*. It doesn't need to be eloquent or presentable; it just needs to be written..

Write for the joy of writing. Because you can't *not* do it. Don't try to say or produce anything; just get some words on paper, now. No excuses or justifications.

You *can* write. Don't make it harder than it has to be. Just type a few words. They don't have to be good (*all* first drafts suck). It just has to be written. Then you have something to work it. You can tweak from there.

If you do this, you'll get past the hump. I promise. The difference between professional writers and amateurs is this: Both encounter blocks, but one pushes through while the other gets paralyzed.

You *can* do this. Just write.

Read here how some famous writers' overcame their blocks: [How famous writers overcame writers block.](#)

Authors on Writing

John Steinbeck's six writing tips

1. Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish.

   Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page each day, it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.

2. Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper.

   Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.

3. Forget your generalised audience.

   In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theater, it doesn't exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person – a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.

4. If you scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it – bypass it and go on

   When you have finished the whole you can still come back to it, and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn't belong there.

5. Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest.

   It will usually be found that it is out of drawing

6. If you are using dialogue – say it aloud as you write it.

   Only then will it have the sound of speech.

Hilary Mantel

Looking back at those early years, here's what Hilary wishes some wise and kindly older lady novelist had told her at that time:

'Don't try to edit while you are writing. Your first draft is all about energy and unleashing your power. Respect the process of creation and give it space. It's like planting a seed. You have to water it and watch it emerge and grow before you can prune it into shape.

'There isn't any failed writing. There is only writing that is on the way to being successful – because you're learning all the time. It follows that that nothing you write is ever wasted, and that to become good, and better than good, you need to write a lot.

'Suspect the judgment of others. What people coming from a different critical context might describe as slowness or failure you need to reframe as patience and a learning process.

'Harness the power of intuition to free up your story. Many of us learn to write in an academic style, building a logical argument, picking over every line. This can inhibit a novelist. Aim at perfection – but in your final draft.

'Rules that are valid in the rest of your life are not always valid for your writing. "Try, try and try again" does not always work for the creative process. Sheer bloody persistence won't necessarily get you where you want to be.

'Trust that your work will find its natural form – because it will. Our education system fosters habits of mind that knock out the habit of trust in what we create. You need to rediscover that trust.

'If you are a great reader then you can become a great writer. If you read many novels, and many different kinds of novel, the principles of novel writing will be encoded deep inside you. That's what I mean by trust. If you are a reader, then you know subconsciously how to tell a story.

'Be protective of your work and resist the temptation to show it to anyone before you are satisfied with it yourself. When you do show it, make sure it's to someone who is qualified to make a judgment. People who love you, or who feel threatened by you, will not provide you with the feedback you need.

'Seek support from the right people. Try to get a professional opinion from someone who doesn't know you. But always try to balance their feedback with what you know and trust to be true of your work.

'Have the courage to try something new. If the world doesn't seem to want your work, then be adaptable and flexible, but don't compromise your vision or sell yourself short. Timing counts, and your time may come.'

The reasons authors write

Author	Reason for writing	Reference
George Orwell	1 *Sheer egoism*. To be talked about, to be remembered after death, to get your own back on grown-ups in childhood, etc. 2 *Aesthetic enthusiasm*. To take pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story, 3 *Historical impulse*. The desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity, 4 *Political purposes. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.*	(Orwell 1946)
Anthony Burgess	*Books like John Buchan's Thirty-nine Steps (1915), Graham Greene's Travels with My Aunt (1969), Dashiell Hammett's Maltese Falcon (1930), and Raymond Chandler's Big Sleep (1939) are distinguished pieces of writing that, while diverting and enthralling, keep a hold on the realities of human character. Ultimately, all good fiction is entertainment, and, if it instructs or enlightens, it does so best through enchanting the reader.*	(Burgess, 1999)
Isabelle Allende	I just need to tell a story. It's an obsession. Each story is a seed inside of me that starts to grow and grow, like a tumor, and I have to deal with it sooner or later. Why a particular story? I don't know when I begin. That I learn much later…	(Hodin, 2013)
David Baldacci	If writing were illegal, I'd be in prison. I can't not write. It's a compulsion.	(Hodin, 2013)
Sue Grafton	I write because it's all I know how to do. Writing is my anchor and my purpose. My life is informed by writing, whether the work is going well, or I'm stuck in the hell of writer's block	(Hodin, 2013)
William Faulkner	Really, the writer doesn't want success… He knows he has a short span of life, that the day will come when he must pass through the wall of oblivion, and he wants to leave a scratch on that wall — Kilroy was here — that somebody a hundred or a thousand years later will see.	(Hodin, 2013)
Neil Gaiman	The best thing about writing fiction is that moment where the story catches fire and comes to life on the page, and suddenly it all makes sense and you know what it's about and why you're doing it and what these people are saying and doing, and you get to feel like both the creator and the audience. Everything is suddenly both obvious and surprising… and it's magic and wonderful and strange.	(Hodin, 2013)
Steven King	To me, the greatest pleasure of writing is not what it's about, but the inner music that words make.	(Hodin, 2013)

The reasons authors write

Author	Reason for writing	Reference
W.H. Auden	I think what Dr. Johnson said about writing is true of all the arts: "The aim of writing is to enable readers a little better to enjoy life or a little better to endure it." The other thing that the arts can do is that they are the chief method of communicating with the dead. After all, Homer is dead, his society completely gone, and yet one can appreciate it. Without communication with the dead, a fully human life is not possible.	(Hodin, 2013)
Stanley Fish	If you've found something you really like to do – say write beautiful sentences – not because of the possible benefits to the world of doing it, but because doing it brings you the satisfaction and sense of completeness nothing else can, then do it at the highest level of performance you are capable of, and leave the world and its problems to others.	(Fish, 2007)
Milan Kundera	The novel is a meditation on existence as seen through the medium of imaginary characters.	(Kundera, 1988)

Table 5: Authors reason for writing

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Crime Writing

Mari's notes

Follow-up notes from Mari
Hello everyone,

It was a pleasure getting to know you all this week. As promised, here's a quick recap on my workshops, including the examples I promised to forward on, and extras that might interest you.

Research:

Writing IS research – it's all encompassing and involves just about every decision you will make, including decisions on narrative POV. It's not just about the book you're writing but the industry you're joining and what will be expected of you, no matter who you're targeting. It begins with your introductory letter. You can find out what you should include online or in the writers' and artists' yearbook you can buy or borrow from a library. (Included in the reading list below)

An agent will expect you to know about the agency you're submitting to. He/she may ask, why us? It's good to research the writers they represent, maybe whose books you admire, or mention the person who recommended/speaks highly of them. Same goes for a publisher or Television Producer – they will spot the homework shy. Everyone you meet – professional or otherwise - is a rich source of material you will one day use in your writing.

You all sound like you read widely – which is great. Those who don't read don't survive. But do unpick the novels that have fired your jets. Take note of what makes them stand out/how they're structured. Study the writers whose pages you can't turn fast enough. Don't chase trends – they will be out of date by the time your book comes out.

When you start off, it's just you and your book, but it's worth considering how you'll publish when it's finished: traditional or KDP. I know people who've done both. As I said, self-publishing wasn't around when I finished my debut. Some people do it very successfully, others fizzle out, selling very few copies. My view is, I'm not a sales exec, marketing genius, cover designer or editor. I'm a writer and I need the engine of a publisher behind me.

As with all writing, set your book aside for a few weeks and revisit. I guarantee you'll want to change it. Perhaps in the meantime, you can write a good synopsis. Plenty of advice about this online and I'm including a book recommendation below.

If you're lucky enough to meet and strike up a conversation with an agent, editor or TV producer, the first thing you may be asked is, what's your book/story about? Your one-line premise is a good start. You seemed to really enjoy putting one together. Polish it, practice saying it, until you're pitch perfect.

Crime Writing

The example I gave you: A reminder of the Jason Bourne one has all of these: A highly trained spy wakes up with amnesia and must determine his true identity before he's killed by government assassins.

As with any task, it's worth breaking it down into manageable chunks.

This has four elements …

- A protagonist (not his/her name – your version of them (e.g., rogue detective, mad psychiatrist, duped private eye – or the example I gave you, A HIGHLY TRAINED SPY.
- Conflict (what happens/what action he/she takes to resolve it) HE WAKES UP WITH AMNESIA AND MUST DETERMINE HIS TRUE IDENTITY.
- Antagonist: GOVERNMENT ASSASSINS
- To gain or avoid what? DEATH.

I loved the ones you came up with during the course.

Book titles: Research this to see if yours has been used before and explore alternatives, especially if you're intending to self-publish. If going the traditional route, you need to accept that an editor may wish to change them.

If writing a series, unless you're limiting it to six or eight books, you don't need to know your story arc in my opinion. I kind of know where I'm heading, but if a series is more successful that you though it might be initially, you don't want to overreach and then find that you've killed off someone who would have kept the series alive. Even writers as huge as Rankin have made decisions to end a series, only to bring Rebus back due to public demand.

Setting: A Stroogle (A stroll around google) isn't good enough. Personal visits pick up the key elements that make it real. I carry out scene visits – day and night. Places look and feel very different in the dark. Use photography as a reminder. Sights, smells and sounds are equally important when describing locations. Remember, time of day/night is crucial in crime fiction because of what witnesses can or cannot see.

Research generally: Library is a great source of historical material. TV/Press: what's current in the news is as important. Internet/Social media – many writers shout out for specialist help. Agatha Christie had none. In crime fiction, take note of advances in forensic science/terminology. Readers hate it if you get it wrong and will be vocal about it. No need to overdo research – you'll end up with too much and will be tempted to use it.

Character Bios: for the leads that will carry your script IS ESSENTIAL whether your protagonist is police/Private Eye/Amateur sleuth/or alien from outer space. Same goes for your antagonist who needs to be equally cunning. You want a fair fight, right?

I'm sure Adam's covered some of this with you but go beyond the obvious physical descriptions, family, job, social status, religion etc. Concentrate on backstory, including childhood. This will get you in touch with who they really are. Be honest about their faults – we all have them.

What we're after here is what makes them tick, what drives them, what makes them act/ re-act the way they do. Pretend you've been their shrink for years. Focus on their emotional core. Your characters must appear real and three-dimensional – as if you know them and they exist outside of crime fiction.

It's useful to describe a character from another's POV.
Writing what you know? You can sometimes know too much. Readers wil get that you know it. It doesn't all have to be on the page. Good research is invisible. No info dumps please – readers hate them. Cut anything superfluous.

Shining a light on a social issue? Then you need to know it inside out. Nothing beats talking to the experts.

I gave you a few examples of my own research … below are some we didn't get to during the workshop:

With my third book Deadly Deceit) I merged four things
- My love of football (Oh, you noticed?)
- The action opens on the eve of a World Cup game with the eyes of the world on the TV)
- A conversation with an octogenarian about WWII
- An RTA (road traffic accident).
- It also involved fire investigation which I researched online.

With my fourth, it was prisons and geology – sand this time. In researching this, I found that the Time Team production crew had carried out a real archaeological dig on Bamburgh beach – and that years before there had been two deaths where I was about to bury the bones of two victims. Honestly, you couldn't make it up. The more you dig (no pun intended) the more you find. (Susan, Jan – Time Team is a TV series that was broadcast on Channel 4 over here, a history series where archeologists are on the hunt for buried treasure.)

In one of my books (The Insider) it was stab wounds, tool markings and knife ID I was inter-ested in. Prof Sarah Hainsworth (now OBE) – the person responsible for identified how Rich-ard III died in battle. His bones were found in a Leicester car park in 2012. This was a body that had been lost for over 500 years. We met in Mexico. That drinks party I told you about that led me there also provided me with a friendship with Sarah I now treasure.

Networking can lead to things you never dreamed possible.

_____

STRUCTURE: the more you write, the more natural this will become to manage.

Plotting your novel - methods: I plan everything out as I was taught to do by screenwriters. Methods include:
- A card system (useful because you can move scenes/chapters around)

- A simple list of sequential story beats
- An elongated synopsis (or treatment if it's for TV).
- I know someone who used a roll of lining paper he taped right around his office, with colour-coordinated plotlines. You can take it too far!

The good news is no one sticks faithfully to an outline. There's always an 'ooh!' moment where I deviate, but I need a destination before I begin . . .

Whatever method you use, this is the bare bones of the story. The meat goes on as you write. What you're after is . . .

- Story progression.
- An active protagonist, one that makes things happen, not one that things happen to.
- A mystery to solve - doesn't have to be murder/can be anything.
- An antagonist that is equal in every way.
- Write nothing that doesn't move your story along.

Our contract with readers is to keep them entertained, to draw them into our fictional worlds from page one and keep them on the edge of their seats until the end. That world should be vividly described and unpredictable. If that sounds like a big ask, it is, but don't let that overwhelm you . . . we're all writing the same story but we each have a unique voice. It's not what we say, it's how we say it.

The structure of dialogue:

- Every line needs to push the story along
- Give information
- Delineate character
- Have a subtext
- Set up or pay off a funny line.
- It needs to turn behaviour
- Or set up the conditions for change, positive or negative.
- Nothing else should be there.

Dialogue has to work very hard. It must convey pace, conflict, tension and emotion as the plot develops. Note: If you put a pawn on the chessboard it must move. Your characters must be DOING SOMETHING.

Police dialogue is always clipped: In an emergency it has to be. Same goes if an SIO is giving instructions to a team of murder detectives. Cops talk in shorthand, even if they're ticking someone off. They don't take the diplomatic route. They say it like it is and to hell with feelings. It could save a life. Find yourself a cop to talk to. If you don't know one, perhaps your friends do.

Basic Storyline that worked for me when I started out:

Tricky first 4K words . . . is where we introduce the lead characters, set up and vividly describe our WORLD. It's very important not to crowd the start of the book with TOO MANY CHARACTERS. They need to leap off the page, make hearts jump and intrigue us, so draw

them well and allow your readers to get to know them through how they act and what they say, not in exposition. Explanations and long descriptions are a turn off for many readers. They like to make up their own minds what characters look and sound like.

By 12K I've set the scene, the tone and hopefully well and truly hooked my readers.

By 30K – I've finished the set up on a twist, an event that will change the narrative direction. Act 1 complete. I edit as I go, so for me it's important to pause here and read through, checking that there's nothing I missed, nothing in there that should be cut. If there's anything there that hasn't positively or negatively moved my story forward, it must hit the bin at this point.

30K to 60K words is development with escalating complications. So, we have our first act. Now we move to the muddle in the middle when we all get lost, when we all feel like binning what we thought was a great idea and now think is pants. Don't worry . . . every writer feels like this with every book. This is the point when you really need to pay attention to holding the conflict, otherwise your reader may put the book down and never pick it up again. Crack on building the story, increase the risk, putting obstacles in the way of your lead character, throwing in more and more jeopardy . . . Now we're talking! Act 2 complete. Again, read through . . .

60K to 70K – things improve slightly for my investigators. They think they are about to succeed but . . .

80K, I throw in a real crisis – suddenly all is lost, but my protagonist carries on (as you do) with renewed determination.

90K is the do or die moment, a twist that blindsides both protagonist and readers.

96K The climax is resolved - four thousand left to round off with meaningful resolution.

100K – You're done . . .

It's not an accident that I have described 60K – 100K in less detail. This is where the pace really picks up and you're racing to the end. Hoorah, you made it. Time for a big gin!

_____

My toolbox: things I have to have with me before I begin to write.

Series Bible: I'm writing more three series. At the end of every book, I update this and print it out before I begin again. It helps to know of promotions, change of car, change of status, a death in the family, that sort of thing.)

Short Character biographies: This allows me to drip-feed their backstories as I continued through the series.

Sunrise/sunset times: When you're writing crime fiction, it's important to know what a witness can or cannot see at various times of the day. Was it *really* possible to see the glint of the knife from across a dark street, or ID an offender when the lights were out?

NB: Writing a police procedural? I know the phonetic alphabet by heart. If you don't, grab that too. It'll save you looking it up.

The New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors. I couldn't write without this small, inexpensive book. It's pure gold!

Style Sheet: from my copyeditor. This lists the house style: includes references to directional, geographical, numerical, dates and times, signs etc. Also lists past spelling and punctuation errors.

Research notes and photographs.

Documents I create on the way through each book to help me with structure. There are four of them.

Let's take a look at my examples . . .

- **A character list -** You can include brief description here – it acts as a reminder. NOTE: If a character is grossly overweight in chapter one, he can't run like a whippet in chapter 40! The trick is not to have character names that all start with the same letter or sound very similar – readers will get lost. Without a character list, I guarantee you'll be changing names in the editing process. Watch out for names that are interchangeable as a first/last name.

- **Timeline -** Without this you will struggle. I did, something that I found out when my copyeditor got involved. It isn't easy to keep a timeline in your head when you're concentrating hard to get your story down in your unique voice. Add in other essential elements, like pace, character, plot and theme, and suddenly there are so many balls in the air you're going cross-eyed.

  It's so easy to let the timeline slip and lose your way. It is crucial to know exactly where you are in the story at all times. This useful tool enables me, at a glance, to see where I'm going - and more importantly where I've been - on any given day. It shows me how many days have elapsed since the murder investigation began.

  I can't tell you how often I utilise this document, mostly when I've revisited a scene, or gone back to seed information I might have left out on the first run through. Take care of the timeline and your manuscript will hang together seamlessly. Ignore it at your peril.

Example of a timeline for the first 6 chapters of Without A Trace – the book I read from:

1. Day 1 – 0100 hrs. Saturday October 18, 2014. Hospital corridor. Kate and Hank stunned by news that Jo (a colleague's) plane is missing. Was she on it?
2. Kate at the Casualty Bureau (London) with no authority to be there. She's driven through the night and blagged her way in. (She called on Tom (Jo's son) at 1.45 a.m. before she left Northumberland.

3. Flashback: Kate remembering calling on James in Sheffield at 3.30 (Jo's other son). It was painful. DS Blue, CB Manager approaching. They rub each other up the wrong way. He's suspicious of her motives.
4. Kate calls her guv'nor for help. He hangs up, orders her back to base. Kate speaks to the last person to see Jo before she left on holiday. They talk but Kate is no further forward.
5. Kate and Hank leave the CB and head to Heathrow. She's calling to hospital to check on her father. He's hanging on, still in intensive care.
6. Heathrow, Terminal 5. 11.30 a.m. Word from Lisa. Jo's phone was switched off at Heathrow and hasn't been switched on again. Kate asks for proof of boarding. She's taking a hell of a risk. She discovers that Jo passed through security and was at the boarding gate. There were some no shows, a bit of a hold up. Why? Adriano Esposito is who they need to talk. Jo spoke to an identified man at the airport. Kate wants him traced and doesn't care how she does it.

- **A Raised Action Sheet -** This document contains a list of jobs raised in the course of an enquiry by the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) in this case Kate Daniels. In short, it's about who's doing what? See below …

Pathologist – post-mortem report.
CSI Actions: O'Brien – DNA, fingerprints and footprints. Examination of indentations on a writing pad and ballpoint pens found at the scene (only one with blue ink - significant). Tyre tracks at the crime scene. All items lifted from the scene.
Actions delegated by Kate to detectives the MIT:
Jo, Hank & Kate: analyse note they suspect is crucial to the investigation.
Brown: to find a local cop who'll spend time with the people on whose land the body was found.
Carmichael: Shotgun licence/Yellow Pages advert.
Brown: The Bull public house/and the three men the landowner may have told.
Maxwell: ANPR liaison/CCTV in nearby towns/villages.

- **Set up/Pay off sheet –** This is crucial, otherwise, you will end up with loose ends. Readers don't like wondering what happened to a part of the narrative that wasn't paid off. If you don't take care, you'll forget something you've set up or you'll have to go back and find it which will stop the flow of your writing. Similar to Raised Action sheet but for stuff a witness may reveal or character backstory – personal issues.

  The example I gave on the course was Kate and Hank with a potential hostile witness in his office. He won't comply. When they leave, he calls and tips someone off, warns them that police are asking questions. Hank sees him through the window.

  This sets up a question we need to pay off: Who's he talking to? Whoever it is he's spooked. **How do we pay this off?** Do we reinterview this man? Do we find him later

in the book? If not, why not? These questions must be answered. In the example I used, the man died. The action died with him, but the reader is left satisfied. No loose ends.

And lastly: I never begin a book without taking the **sunset/sunrise times** off the internet for the time period of a novel, because I need a permanent reminder of what time of day it is. A witness can't see properly if it's dusk or dawn. They could be leading my protagonist up a blind alley.

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READING LIST:

Stephen King: *On Writing* (2012) New book out now! Guaranteed to give you confidence – the book many writers recommend.

Carole Blake: *From Pitch to Publication* (1999) Sadly, Carole died before she managed to finish a new edition, but a worthy read that will inform you about the industry.

Nicola Morgan: *Write a Great Synopsis* (2012)

Professor Sue Black: All That Remains (2018) on Death, Mortality, and Solving Crimes

Practical Homicide Investigation (2006) Note: This one comes with a warning: American and not for those with a weak stomach. It has real crime scene images that will distress you. (Hefty cover price, £75!)

The New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors. I couldn't write without this small, inexpensive book. It's pure gold!

Writers' and Artists' Yearbook you can buy or borrow from a library – updated every year, industry info, tips on approaching agents, which agents are looking for what. Also, a directory of agents etc.

I hope this list and the practical tips I've shared help you.

I can't wait to see your books in print!

Good luck.
Mari

Writers' groups

(from a talk by Judith Heneghan, Writers' Circles, Writers' Weekend, 2021)

What is a writers' group for?

- Provide a supportive space - a non-judgement environment. Give praise and help each other find solutions - provide sympathy when things are not working in the piece
- Provide inspiration
- Help the members of the group keep learning - sharing knowledge or skills between members
- Provide a framework and deadlines - help avoid procrastination
- Provide validation of other's work
- Provide constructive criticism in a fair and supportive manner - provide an objective eye

Recommendations for running the group

- Only submit work that is a WIP (it is much harder to receive constructive criticism if you think the work is already perfect).
- Feedback should never be a comment on the talent of the writer - it is an opinion on the work in front of you.
- Provide a big picture summary (but not a lengthy synopsis) if you are submitting a chapter fragment or a chapter from the middle of the work)
- If the piece is not your favourite genre or a genre that you are familiar with, still try and comment objectively and as capably as you can.
- Submit up to 1000 words for a weekly session
- Leave plenty of time to annotate/critique other's works. Make the annotations as clear and compact as possible.
- What is read in the group and said in the group should stay in the group.

Giving criticism

- Look for something positive to say.   Start with something positive even if you have a critical point to make.
- Don't just say you liked it, or you enjoyed etc - say why - give underlying reasons.
- If something is not working in a piece and you are not sure why it is okay to say that (though obviously it is better to say what you think is wrong if you think you can put your finger on the problem). It might be a case of saying 'I'm confused here.' 'I lost interest here.' 'I found this a bit forced.' Offer suggestions, as in 'have you tried...?' but remember it is not your job to re-write.
- Don't impose your own plot, characters, style etc on the work you are reviewing - ie don't rewrite the piece yourself - simply suggest what might be changed and maybe offer alternatives.
- Part of your job, when giving feedback, is to let the writer know what you feel/understand/visualise when you read the piece. What intrigues you? Where does your attention

wane? This helps the writer understand whether, or not they are succeeding in what they are trying to do.
- Things to consider when commenting on a piece:
- Are you given enough information to 'picture' the scene? Are similes/metaphors helpful or are they too florid/distracting?
- What do you learn from the dialogue? Does it sound natural and does it sing along, or is it slowing the pace? Can you follow who is speaking? Do the speech 'tags' feel clunky?
- What do you learn about characters? Do they interest you?
- Is the writing clear? Is there anything that could be cut?
- Do sentences have a good rhythm and flow? Are there any sections that need to speed up, or slow down?
- Is something being 'told' that might be 'shown' instead? There's nothing wrong with telling the reader 'She hated to be late', for example, and indeed it might be exactly right for the piece. But what if this was 'shown' as in 'She checked her watch again, then quickened her pace, breaking into an awkward trot.' Or similar. Showing in this way makes for a more immersive read. The reader's imagination is working with the writing to create meaning.
- What makes you want to read on, if anything? How does it make you feel?]
- Phrases such as 'have you considered...?' or 'it might be strengthened further by....' can be helpful.
- The question mark is wonderfully softening and accommodating – you might find it easier to frame your annotations as a question, eg: 'Did you mean this?' 'Why is he saying that?' 'I think you might have said this already?'
- It may help to focus your constructive criticism on one macro aspect and one micro aspect.
- **Micro**: individual words, punctuation, a simile, a verb choice, grammar, the opening sentence. Mention presentation issues such as typos and punctuation where necessary, but don't focus on these issues above all else.
- **Macro**: the aspects that run through the whole piece, eg: a character and how they develop, plot, setting, structure, voice, mood, point of view, choice of tense, pace and narrative momentum.
- Finally, respect the writer's vision and ownership of their work – never seek to impose your solution.

Receiving criticism

- Don't apologise or preference your work with 'this is really bad, or unfinished etc'. Don't attempt to 'explain' your work before you read. You will skew first impressions, and you need fresh eyes. If it is crucial that the reader understands something that has already happened in a previous chapter, provide a very short explanation to put the piece in context.
- Don't interrupt the speakers during the critique - the person making the critique is entitled to express their opinion - comment on their comments only at the end
- Allow time to digest feedback after the session
- You don't have to act on the criticisms or suggestions - it is your work, so use what you want and discard the rest. Retain only what is useful to you.
- Consider the group as a safe space to test how you would feel if the piece was actually published.

- Don't attempt to 'explain' your work before you read. You will skew first impressions, and you need fresh eyes. If it is crucial that the reader understands something that has already happened in a previous chapter, write no more than TWO sentences in the comments box when you upload your file.
- Don't interrupt others' discussion of your work. It can be tempting, if you feel someone has misunderstood a key passage, or the answer to their question lies in the preceding chapter, or the one that follows. The person making the critique is entitled to express their opinion, and if they haven't understood something, this may signify that there is a problem in the text – a passage you might want to revisit and reassess. Of course, as a group you may feel that the writer *should* be brought into the discussion at a particular point – perhaps once everyone has had their initial say. This is something else for you to decide. The writer may also have questions they want to ask the rest of the group at the end.

Housekeeping basics for online meetings

- Nominate one person as the **Room Host**. This person will administer the Zoom (or whatever) session, let people into the meeting and manage the technical aspects of the meeting.
- Nominate one person to be the **Facilitator** for the session. The facilitator's job is to keep an eye on the time, move things along, remind everyone of any agreed etiquette and check that everyone has been given the opportunity to speak.
- Select a duration - 60/90/120 minutes? Don't allow the session to run for more than two hours. Schedule a comfort break half-way through.
- Publish the dates you will meet in plenty of time. Provide the link to the meeting room in the invitations so that everyone knows what is in plenty of time.
- Decide if each member read their piece aloud, in whole or in part? This can take up precious time (1000 words will take around 10 minutes), but it can also be useful in that the writer gets to practise this skill. It'll come in handy for public readings, once you are published! It also acts as a refresher for everyone, and it may help to highlight issues of interpretation and emphasis. A compromise might be to read the first page only – a taster. However, if you are writing picture books or poetry, it is best to read the whole thing out loud.
- Decide how long each piece be 'up for discussion'? 15-20 minutes? Will people speak in strict rotation, or will you try the free-form approach, with everyone chipping in? Be prepared to check on how this is working after a couple of sessions. Does everyone feel heard or is there a better way to help everyone to speak comfortably, as they wish?
- Think too about having cameras on – no one should feel pressured to show their face, but it does help with participation and engagement.
- Screen share a 'clean' script for discussion on the day, rather than someone's annotated version. You can refer to your own notes, but a clean version on screen makes it easier for each speaker to say what they think, without being influenced or deterred by the comments of someone else.
- The speaker alone uses their cursor to navigate the document while they are speaking – in effect, they 'hold the floor' until it is someone else's turn.
- It may help to turn your camera and microphone off when someone is reading to stop audio feedback and save bandwidth.

Online Resources

From the OU – resources available after completing your studies

Help and Support Access to resources after study

For undergraduate or taught postgraduate students, access to Library resources begins one month prior to your module start date. You have access to the library for the duration of your module and up to 3 months after the module end date. Once you are fully registered on your next module, your library access continues.

Once your studies are complete you can use Publicly available resources to support your on-going professional development.

Open Access

Scholarly material is increasingly being made available through Open Access schemes. The OU's repository Open Research Online (ORO) contains details of works published by OU staff. Much of the material is freely available, but in many cases you need to email the author to request papers (via the ORO website).

There are other Open Access repositories, such as

Open DOAR which holds links to many other Open Access resources
SHERPA
CORE
Jisc Open Access
EThOS provides free access to the full text of many UK doctoral research theses

You can install plugins for your browser that will connect you to the full text of articles, if they are available on Open Access, such as
Unpaywall
Open Access Button

Google Scholar

For general internet searching for academic resources use Google Scholar. You may not get the full text of articles this way, but it will be a way of discovering reliable academic references and sources to follow up.

The British Library

As a member of the public you can access the British Library's collections in St Pancras, London or Boston Spa, Yorkshire. Registration is required to use this service and there is more information about this on the British Library's website:
Register at British Library St Pancras, London

Register at British Library Boston Spa, Yorkshire

The British Library also provide Help for Researchers on their website. This includes a service for purchasing electronic copies of journal articles.

University libraries

Some university libraries allow members of the public to borrow books for a fee. Some also allow non-borrowing access, without paying a fee. Contact your local university library to find out what level of service is provided.

Public libraries

You may be able to order books and journal articles via inter-library loan from your local public library. There will be a cost for this service. In addition, public libraries are increasingly providing online access to academic databases. Many UK Public Libraries now have access to the Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford Dictionaries, Oxford Reference, and the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Check with your local public library to see if they are available near you.

Publisher websites

Some publishers have websites and blogs where content is made freely available. For instance the Cambridge Journals blog makes journal articles available for a limited time directly after publication.

Cambridge Journals
Science Direct database open access
JSTOR for individuals and researchers

University and academic blogs

Academics and universities are increasingly using blogs to publicise their work and discuss issues of importance to them. This is another way of keeping up to date with current research. You can search for these depending on what your particular topic of interest is. This is also a good way of finding out about conferences and events that relate to research topics relevant to you.

For example:

The London School of Economics blog
Oxford Science blog
Oxford Arts blog
Postdoc free access program
Elsevier offers unlimited complimentary access to all journals and books on ScienceDirect for ost-doctoral scholars who have recently received their PhDs and currently do not have a

research position. This program allows those who qualify to have access to scientific journals and books in their field for up to 6 months.

Ongoing access to your OU module website and study materials

You'll have read-only access to your module website for three years after you have finished studying the module. Check your StudentHome page to see if a link to the module is available. Select the Study link and then the name of the module. When the page opens there'll be a link to the website near the top of the page if read only access is available.
A selection of study materials are available online for free.

OpenLearn
iTunes U
The OU Learn channel on YouTube
The Open University's Digital Archive

The OU library also has a reference only collection of current and archived print and audio-visual OU study materials.

Interesting Statistics

What's New?

Our team of editors updates the contents of each Yearbook annually, ensuring that you have access the most up-to-date publishing industry contacts.

If you purchase a **W&A Listings subscription** today, your annual subscription will include:

- 362 literary agencies

- 1,345 book and audio publishers

- 792 magazines and newspapers

- 300 awards, prizes and festivals

- 356 societies and associations

- 130 self-publishing providers

- 85 creative writing courses

PLUS, picture agencies and libraries, literary agents from European and non-English speaking countries and much, much more.

How to make your submissions stand out

Ian Drury (agent) and Jo Fletcher (publisher)

Brit publishing industry is 5th biggest in the world, 6 billion dollars/pounds a year

100k books a year plus traditionally published, 1 million self published.   The number of books published is growing but the market is flat… ie the number of readers is not growing significantly Audio market however is growing. (Which is not generally directly accessible to self published authors)

The pandemic has made it easier for best sellers and harder for debut authors

You have to work hard, for a long term, in general to get commercial success Eg Ellie Griffiths, hard working author, great books. Only after 10 years managed to hit top 10 best seller list.

For a middle list author, who is established and who has already sold well with previous novels, the 2 year sales forecast might be

1300 hardbacks. 16%. Royalty   1340 pounds
1700 trade return. 5% royalty (most paperback books don't get returned)   41 pounds
3000 paperbacks.   10-13%. Royalty 1000 pounds
12000 ebooks   royalty 5000 pounds
Audiobooks.   2000 copies.   Royalty 1200 pounds

This means the author would get less than a 10k pound advance

To translate a book costs 75 pounds per 1000 words or so, so that is why 160k word books are frowned on by publishers… if you. translate into German the word count goes up by 20%

Useful websites

Online sources of film, stage and radio scripts

A database of scripts: https://scripts-onscreen.com/movie-script-index/
Scribd - access to books/scripts etc: https://www.scribd.com/
More scripts: https: //gointothestory.blcklst.com/script-download-links-9313356d361c
BBC Writers' Room scripts: https://www.bbc.co.uk/writersroom/scripts
Script Writers and Co: http://scriptwritersandco.com/
Top 101 Scripts: https://www.simplyscripts.com/wga_top_101_scripts.html
London Screenwriters Festival courses: https://londonswf365.com/
London Screenwriters Festival https://lsfconnect.com/

Online sources of short stories

http://www.short-stories.co.uk/
http://www.theshortstory.org.uk/

Lists of 'best' ….

100 'best' books: 100 books that influenced the World.
100 'best' poems: https://discoverpoetry.com/poems/100-most-famous-poems/

Creative Writing Schools

A creative writing school led by literary agents: https://www.curtisbrowncreative.co.uk/
Jericho writers: https://jerichowriters.com/
Open University Poets: https://oupoets.org.uk/
Arvon: https: https://www.arvon.org/
Now Novel: https://www.nownovel.com/home/index
Unbound – crowd funding your novel: https://unbound.com/
Whitefox – self publishing: https://www.wearewhitefox.com/
Litopia – writers group: https://litopia.com/

Literary Reviews

Times Literary Supplement: https://www.the-tls.co.uk/
The Literary Review: https://literaryreview.co.uk/
The Literary Hub: https://lithub.com/
The Manchester Review: http://www.themanchesterreview.co.uk/

Revision and Editing

Self-editing explained: How to edit a book yourself

13 great writers on the art of revision: here
20 great writers on the art of revision: here
Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading: https://www.ciep.uk/
Liminal Development Editing:
https://www.liminalpages.com/courses/developmental-editing-fiction-theory

Agents and Publishers

The Literary Agency: https://literaryconsultancy.co.uk/
The Bookseller: https://www.thebookseller.com/

Editors

http://www.thebookanalyst.co.uk/pricing/

Jobs

Freelance Writing Jobs: https://www.sianmeadeswilliams.com/freelance-writing-jobs

Self-Publishing

Lulu – online book creation and self-publishing: https://www.lulu.com/

Places for submissions

A list of places to submit: https://publishedtodeath.blogspot.com/p/calls-for-submissions.html
A list of places that pay: https://publishedtodeath.blogspot.com/p/paying-markets.html

Tutorial and Blogs

Lumen Learning: An introduction to literature:
https://courses.lumenlearning.com/introliterature/
Reference Material Mirroring – An Easy Way to Deepen Your Novel
How to analyze a novel
Analyzing Novels and Short Stories
A list of narrative techniques
Emma Darwin - This itch of writing
Louise Harmby – Fiction Editor and Proofreader
J P Flintoff - https://flintoff.org/
Stroppy Author's guide to publishing
An Awfully Big Blog Adventure
Annie Dillard, The Writers Life: here
The Writing Coach
Goldfish
The History Girls
Beattie's Book Blog
Vulpes Libris

Tales from the Reading Room
Dove Grey Reader
Open a Bookshop, what could possibly go wrong?
ReadySteadyBook Blog
https://www.liminalpages.com/writing-advice-myth-eliminating-to-be-verbs

Associations and Societies

Scottish Book Trust: https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/
Writers Online: https://www.writers-online.co.uk/
National Association of Writers Groups: https://www.nawg.co.uk/
The National Centre for Writing: https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/
Writers and Artists: https://www.writersandartists.co.uk/
Writers in Conversation: https://writersinconversation.wordpress.com/
The Writing School: https://www.thewritingschool.co.uk/tours
Hampshire Writers' Society: https://hampshirewriterssociety.co.uk/
The Historical Novel Society
Historical Writers' Association
National Association of Writers' Groups
Association of Writers and Writers Programs: https://www.awpwriter.org/
The Romantic Novelists' Association
The Society of Authors: https://www.societyofauthors.org/
Writers' Guild of Great Britain: https://writersguild.org.uk
The London Library
Words for the Wild: https://wordsforthewild.co.uk/
Alliance of Independent Authors https://www.allianceindependentauthors.org/
Alliance of Independent Authors Resource Directory: https://www.flipsnack.com/OrnaRoss/alli-partner-directory-april-2021-member-download.html
Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America: https://www.sfwa.org

Poetry

Templar Poetry: https://templarpoetry.com/
The Poetry Archive: https://poetryarchive.org/
The Poetry Foundation: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/
Iamb poets: https://www.iambapoet.com/
The Poetry Society: https://poetrysociety.org.uk/
The Winchester Poetry Festival: https://www.winchesterpoetryfestival.org/
Scottish Poetry Library: https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/
The Poetry School: https://poetryschool.com/

Prizes and Competitions

The Womens' Prize for Fiction: https://womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/

Reference Books

Writer and Artists Yearbook: here
Agent finder: https://querytracker.net/

Magazines and Reviews (places to publish)

Magazine – The Writers Forum: https://www.selectmagazines.co.uk/category/writers-forum/
Magazine – Writing Magazine: https://www.magazine.co.uk/magazines/writing-magazine
Fiction: https://www.fictioninc.com/
Granta: https://granta.com/
Myslexia: https://mslexia.co.uk/
Makarelle: https://makarelle.com/
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine: https://www.alfredhitchcockmysterymagazine.com/
Asimov's Science Fiction: https://www.asimovs.com/
The Stinging Fly: https://stingingfly.org/
The New Yorker: https://www.newyorker.com/
The Paris Review: https://www.theparisreview.org/
Albedo One: http://www.albedo1.com/
New England Review: https://www.nereview.com/
Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine: https://www.elleryqueenmysterymagazine.com/
The Sun: https://www.thesunmagazine.org/
Ninth Letter: http://www.ninthletter.com/
Fantasy and Science Fiction: https://www.sfsite.com/

Crime Writing

The Capital Crime Book Club: https://www.capitalcrime.org/
The Crime Writers' Association: https://thecwa.co.uk/
Mystery Writers' Association of America: https://mysterywriters.org/
American Crime Writers' Association: https://www.acwl.org/
Crime Readers' Association: https://thecra.co.uk/

Miscellaneous

Writers in Conversation (Southampton University):
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL6LkmQcxsPD9BORRkKenGg/featured

Twine: An open-source tool: for telling interactive, non-linear stories: https://twinery.org/

Writing communities

Scribophile – a writers' community and workshop: (beware, dubious reputation)
https://www.scribophile.com/
Honest Writing Reviews: https://honestwritingreviews.wpcomstaging.com/
Wattpad - a social storytelling platform

Reading **Groups**

Foxes Retreat: https://www.foxesretreat.com/online-writing-group

Resources

National Centre For Writing: https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/free-resources/

Podcasts

The Writing Life: https://nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk/ncw-podcast/

Science Fiction Magazines

Amazing Stories	1926		United States	Experimenter Publishing Company	American science fiction magazine	Printed
Analog Science Fiction and Fact	1930		United States	Crosstown Publications	American science fiction and popular science magazine	Printed
Apex Magazine	2005		United States	Apex Book Company	American horror and science fiction magazine.	Online
Asimov's Science Fiction	1977		United States	Penny Publications, LLC	American magazine which publishes science fiction and fantasy and perpetuates the name of Isaac Asimov.	Printed
Clarkesworld Magazine	2006		United States	Wyrm Publishing	American magazine which publishes science fiction.	Online
Galaktika	1972	1995-2004	Hungary	Metropolis Media	Printed sci-fi and fantasy magazine with mainstream influence in Hungarian literature; despite the relatively small language market, at its peak was one of the top-selling SF magazines worldwide.	Printed
Galaxy Science Fiction	1951	1980-1995	United States	H.P. Gold and World Editions	Printed sci-fi and fantasy magazine,available on PDF in Internet Archive	Printed (online when available on PDF)
Interzone	1982		United Kingdom	TTA Press	Britain's longest running science fiction and fantasy magazine.	Printed
Lightspeed	2010		United States	John Joseph Adams	Online fantasy and science fiction magazine.	Online
Locus	1968		United States	Locus	A news and review magazine of the science fiction, fantasy and horror publishing fields.	Printed
Mithila Review	2015		India	Salik Shah	Online magazine of science fiction, fantasy, art, poetry, reviews and interviews.	Online
Science Fantasy	1950	1967	United Kingdom	Science Fantasy		Printed
SciFi4Ever	2014		United Kingdom	SciFi4Ever.com	Online magazine about all things sci-fi related (film, TV, video games, literature, models, board	Online

					games, cosplay, conventions...)	
SciFiNow	2007		United Kingdom	Imagine Publishing	Magazine about all areas of sci-fi (film, TV, literature) also writing about fantasy and horror.	Printed
Sci Phi Journal	2014		Belgium	Sci Phi Journal	Quarterly journal dedicated to speculative fiction addressing philosophy, theology and related fields, with a particular focus on fictional non-fiction.	Online
SFX	1995		United Kingdom	Future plc	Magazine covering topics in the genres of popular science fiction, fantasy and horror.	Printed
Strange Horizons	2000		United States	Strange Horizons	Online magazine of science fiction, science fact, fantasy, opinion, art and reviews.	Online
The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction	1949		United States	Fantasy & Science Fiction	The original publisher of various science fiction and fantasy classics like Stephen King's Dark Tower and many others.	Printed
Tor.com	2008		United States	Tor Books	Online magazine covering science fiction, fantasy, the universe and related subjects. Also publishes original short science fiction.	Online
Kalpabiswa	2016		India	Kalpabiswa Collective	Online magazine covering science fiction, fantasy, horror related subjects.	Online

Poetry Magazines

From The Poetry Shed: https://abegailmorley.wordpress.com/anthologies-and-magazine/

A

Acumen: *"deserves to be read for its first-hand experience of poetry. The work it does is the opposite of academic and therefore valuable."*

Agenda: *"one of the best known and most highly respected poetry journals in the world, having been founded in 1959 by Ezra Pound and William Cookson."*

Ambit: Ambit is a 96-page quarterly literary and art magazine. It is created in London, published in the UK, and read internationally.

Artemis: Poems submitted by women poets of any age. Each issue has a different judge selecting work. Also see Second Light.

Atrium: Atrium is a poetry webzine based in Worcestershire, UK. We aim to publish a quality new poem twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Auroras and Blossoms: a family-friendly platform. We feature art that is positive and uplifting, no matter the topic.

B

Bare Fiction: offer a platform for new creative writing across poetry, fiction and plays to encourage writers who are testing their boundaries to stretch themselves creatively.

The Blue Nib: Established in 2016 by Dave Kavanagh as a platform for both established and emerging writers. The focus was on poetry, publishing the work of new and already established poets.

Brittle Star: A magazine for new and emerging writers.

Butcher's Dog: Butcher's Dog is a new biannual poetry magazine, founded in the North East of England by seven poets who each won a Northern Promise Award from New Writing North in 2010 and/or 2011.

C

Cake: publishes poetry, short fiction, comment/essay-style pieces, reviews and artwork from both new and established literary and creative talent.

Cardiff Review: Founded in 2015 by four graduate students of Cardiff University's MA in Creative Writing.

Carillon Magazine: Founded in 2001 Carillon is a neat, perfect bound magazine with poetry, stories and articles.

Coast to Coast to Coast: a stitched journal designed to be both a small piece of art work and a regular poetry publication. Each issue will contain the work of a maximum of twenty poets and each will be unique and produced as limited edition.

Cyphers: Founded in 1975. Editor: Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, with assistance from Léan Ní Chuilleanáin and Natasha Cuddington

D

The Dark Horse: is an international literary magazine committed to British, Irish and American poetry, and is published from Scotland.

The Dawntreader: a themed quarterly 52 page perfect bound literary publication with an international readership. Mainly poems but some prose on myth, legend, nature, environment.

Dream Catcher: an international arts journal, which offers contemporary readers a terrific mix of poetry, prose, artwork and reviews.

E

Erbacce: They accept poetry submissions that are radical either in form or content.

Exiled Writers Ink!: a magazine reflecting exciting, different voices in a new cultural environment. Literature, discussion, commentary.

Eye Flash Poetry Journal: Eye Flash Poetry has been dedicated to showcasing and supporting emerging voices in contemporary poetry from across the world and has grown in popularity ever since.

F

The Fenland Reed Poetry Journal: bi-annual poetry magazine founded in Fenland.

Finished Creatures Magazine: is a new platform for emerging and experienced poets: an independent, no profit, printed magazine, carefully produced with an eye for detail and originality. Here you will find poets engaging with the realities of the Anthropocene.

The French Literary Review: A twice-yearly (April & October) international literary magazine of poetry and prose.

The Frogmore Papers: founded in 1983, since when The Frogmore Papers, its bi-annual magazine, has published hundreds of new, neglected and established writers. Edited by Jeremy Page.

G

Granta: is a literary magazine founded in 1889. Read the best new fiction, poetry, photography, and essays by famous authors, Nobel winners and new voices

Gutter: is an award-winning, high quality, printed journal for fiction and poetry from writers born or living in Scotland.

H

The High Window: is a quarterly review of poetry which, for its first twelve issues was co-edited by David Cooke and Anthony Costello.

The Honest Ulsterman: The magazine was created by the late poet James Simmons in May 1968.

I

Idler: Poetry, essays, shorts.

Ink, Sweat and Tears: a poetry and prose webzine edited by Helen Ivory.

Iota: Each issue is published with over one hundred pages of excellent new work, reviews and interviews in a superbly designed and produced paperback format.

Into the Void: is an award-winning print and online literary magazine and small press publisher dedicated to providing a platform for world-class fiction, flash, creative nonfiction, poetry, and visual art

The Interpreter's House: "is dedicated to the best in poetry and short stories".

J

The Journal: '*…interesting and experimental while avoiding the obscure and unnecessarily difficult. Add to the excellent selection of poetry, some interesting and insightful reviews and The Journal is a must for anyone who loves poetry …*" Juliet Wilson

L

The Lake: is dedicated to publishing all forms of poetry by new and established poets, highlighting the best of contemporary poetry and reviewing the best of the new books.

Lighthouse Literary Journal: a new journal published quarterly to give space and support to new talent. They look to publish the best short fiction and poetry emerging from the UK writing scene.

Litmus Publishing: a press exploring the interaction between poetry and science. Each magazine will explore a different theme and feature poetry, visual art and essays.

Littoral Magazine: Unity in Diversity: Nature, the Environment and Spirituality. The spirituality aspect of the magazine is to be both inclusive and eclectic.

London Grip: independent online venue, a cultural omnibus providing intelligent reviews of current shows and events, well-argued articles on the widest range of topics, an exhibition space for cross-media arts and an in-house poetry magazine with its own editor.

The London Magazine: it is a home for the best writing, and an indispensable feature on the British literary landscape.

The Long Poem Magazine: publishes long poems and sequences twice a year, in May and October.

M

Magma: The poetry magazine with a different editor every issue.

Makarelle: Independent literary and creative arts magazine Founded in 2021 by Dini Armstrong, Jane Langan, and Ruth Loten. Prose, poetry, articles.

The Manchester Review: the best of international writing, publishing both well-known, established writers and new, relatively unknown poets and prose-writers.

Marble Poetry: Created in 2018. It's aims are simple, to publish good new

poems and is edited by Aisling Tempany. She is a graduate of Cardiff University, and a postgraduate of Swansea University.

Modern Poetry in Translation: The magazine is currently edited by poet and translator Clare Pollard, suceeding Sasha Dugdale in November 2017.

The Moth: Founded in June 2010, *The Moth is a quarterly arts & literature magazine featuring poetry, short fiction and art by established and up-and-coming writers and artists from Ireland and abroad.*

Mslexia: For women who write.

N

A New Ulster: Ireland's newest literary and arts ezine, magazine – a gateway for local talent and global writers and artists.

New Welsh Review: Founded in 1988 as the successor to The Welsh Review (1939-1948), Dock Leaves and The Anglo-Welsh Review (1949-1987), New Welsh Review is Wales's foremost literary magazine in English.

The North: '*Redressing the balance of English poetry' – Poetry Review.*

O

Obsessed with Pipework: *"*is quarterly magazine of new highwire poetry to surprise and delight". Edited by Charles Johnson. Contact details: haroldthing@icloud.com or charles.johnson72@aol.co.uk and through the website obsessedwithpipeworkblog@wordpress.com

The Ofi Press Literary Magazine (Mexico) The Ofi Press prints eclectic poetry, fiction, articles, interviews and translations from all over the world.

Orbis: 84 pages of news, reviews, views, letters, features, prose and quite a lot of poetry.

P

POETICA REVIEW: exists to promote the work of new and older poets alike, the less fortunate, the dispossessed, those without a voice, but encourage the artistic talents of all, not just a privileged minority. All are welcome to submit.

Poetry Birmingham Literary Journal: A quarterly journal of poetry, reviews and poetics, ensconced in design inspired by the city of Birmingham and art that graces the walls and archives of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

The Poetry Bus: PB is open to ALL. The only ticket you need is to have a poem that says something interesting and says it well.

Poetry Kit Magazine: an online annual added to throughout the year.

Poetry London: "a leading international poetry magazine where contemporary poets share pages with exciting new names."

Poetry News: The newspaper of The Poetry Society

Poetry Review: is the Poetry Society's internationally acclaimed quarterly poetry magazine, published in March, June, September and December and sent to every full member of the Poetry Society.

Poetry Salzburg: English poetry published at the University of Salzburg.

Poetry Scotland: a broadsheet magazine, edited and published by Sally Evans in Callander.

Poetry Wales: a quarterly magazine with an international reputation for excellent poems, features and reviews from Wales and beyond.

Popshot: "Popshot is a beautifully illustrated magazine that publishes short stories, flash fiction and poetry from the literary new blood."

Prole: Prole aims to challenge, engage and entertain but never exclude. We want to reconnect readers with writers.

Pulp Poetry: This journal was created by embracing the ethos of pulp magazines – by providing the general population with quality and accessible writing which hits like a sucker punch.

R

Rattle: A US-based magazine. *Rattle*'s mission is to promote the practice of poetry. *Rattle* publishes about 150 poems each year, and all of them come from unsolicited submissions.

Reach Poetry: a long-established and successful monthly subscriber publication from Indigo Dreams Publishing. £50 prize-money from readers' votes each issue.

The Reader: "The Reader is one of the best things to thump through the letter box. . . . Full of pithy, passionate and precise things."- Seamus Heaney

Reliquiae is a literary journal that interleaves ecologically aware writing from the past and present, ranging from the ethnological to the philosophical, the lyrical to the visionary. As of 2019 it is published biannually.

The Rialto: independent poetry magazine and award-winning poetry publisher.

Riggwelter: a journal of creative arts founded by Jonathan Kinsman in 2017. It releases an issue once a month.

S

Saravasti: A 52 page, perfect bound quarterly publication from Indigo Dreams Publishing.

Shearsman: Issues appear in print in April and October of each year.

Skylight 47 "is, possibly, the best poetry paper in the West."

The Selkie: was founded in Spring 2018 with the strong belief that 'representation' should stand as its core value.

Shooter is a literary magazine featuring entertaining, well crafted stories and poetry from up-and-coming writers, showcasing original artwork on the cover of each issue.

Smoke was established in 1974, and has kept to the simple format of sharp insightful poems and strong black and white graphics, with an international subscription list, and submissions from all over the world.

Snakeskin: Online magazine edited by George Simmers.

South: SOUTH is published twice yearly. It features previously unpublished poems written in English.

South Bank Poetry Magazine showcases the best new writing, submitted by novice and published poets from across the globe. We work to publish exciting, contemporary poetry from all over the world.

Spelt Magazine: a self-sustaining magazine full of excellent poetry and creative non-fiction, interviews, reviews, articles and writing prompts, but we need your help.

Stand: *Stand was founded in 1952 with Jon Silkin's £5.00 received after being made redundant.*

Stinging Fly: was established in 1997 to seek out, publish and promote the very best new Irish and international writing.

Strix: shortlisted for the highly prestigious Saboteur Awards 2018 prize for Best Magazine.

T

Tears in the Fence:an independent literary journal established in November 1984.

The Times Literary Supplement: *"The leading international forum for literary culture."*

Trouvaille Review: "is a non-profit online journal that publishes the poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction writing of writers and poets across the globe. For absolutely free, you may send us your work, and if selected, we will publish your works on this website. We strive to let the contributors know our decision within 24 hours."

U

Under the Radar: It is a lively mix of the best up-and-coming and established poets and writers, as well as reviews and articles. Under the Radar is a place for readers and writers alike to make new discoveries.

V

Vaine Magazine: a quarterly magazine bringing together emerging artists and writers from all over the world in one place in order to showcase their talents.

Books about writing

- Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953)
- Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* 2nd edition (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1997)
- Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977)
- James Scott Bell, *Revision and Self Editing*
- Bird by Bird: *Some Instructions on Writing and Life*
- Carole Blake, *From Pitch to Publication: Everything you need to know to get your novel published*
- Ray Bradbury, *Zen in the Art of Writing: Releasing the Creative Genius Within You*
- Peter Brooks, *Reading For The Plot* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1992 Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1961)
- Jessica Brody, *Save the Cat!* Writes a Novel: The Last Book On Novel Writing You'll Ever Need: The Last Book On Novel Writing That You'll Ever Need
- David Dowling, *Mrs Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness* (Boston: Twayne, 1991)
- Mark Edmundsen, *Why Write?: A Master Class on the Art of Writing and Why it Matters*
- David Edgar, *How Plays Work* (Nick Hern Books)
- James Fenton, *An Introduction to English Poetry*
- James Fenton, How to Read a *Book*
- James Fenton, *How Plays Work* (Nick Hern Books)
- Stanley Fish*, How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One*
- Joseph Flora, Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction (Boston: Twayne, 1989)
- Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (London: Routledge, 2008)
- Dewey Ganzel, 'What the Letter Said: Fact and Inference in The Good Soldier', *Journal of Modern Literature*: 11.2 (1984 July), pp. 277-290.
- Glen Garrod The Psychology of the "Sopranos": Love, Death, Desire and Betrayal in America's Favorite Gangster Family
- Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1980)
- Steven James, *Story Trumps Structure*
- Stephen Jeffreys, *Playwriting: Structure, Character, How and What to Write*
- Maira Kalman, *The Elements of Style Illustrated*
- Bruce Kaplan, *Editing Made Easy*
- Stephen King, *A Memoir of the Craft*
- Stephen King, *On Writing*
- Anne Lammot, *Bird by Bird*
- Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*
- Lodge, David *The Art of Fiction* (London: Vintage, 2011).
- Mullan, J.,*How Novels Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

- Nicola Morgan, Write a Great Synopsis – an Expert Guide

- O'Connor, Flannery, *The Nature and Aim of Fiction* (Mystery & Manners: Occasional Prose, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969)
- James Phelan, *Living To Tell About It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2004)

- Larry W. Phillips *(ed), Ernest Hemingway on Writing*
- H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008)
- Steven Pressfield, *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*
- Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983)
- Nicholas Royle, *The Art of the Novel*, 1st edn. (Cromer: Salt, 2015).
- Robert Scholes ed. *Approaches to the Novel* (Scranton: Chandler, 1966)
- Paul Smith, *New Essays on Hemingway's Short Fiction* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998)
- Blake Snyder, *Save the Cat!*: The Only Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need
- Will Storr, *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human, and How To Tell Them Better*
- William Strunk Jr, EB White, *Elements of Style*, 2nd edition
- Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (London: Vintage, 2003)
- Vogler, C., *The Writers Journey* (Studio City, CA, Michael Wise Productions, 1998)
- Wood, James, *How Fiction Works* (London: Vintage, 2009)
- Writer's Toolkit of Grammar, Vocabulary and Literary Terms, Bloomsbury Press, 2021

- Writers' & Artists' Guide to How to Write, Bloomsbury, 2021
- Writers' & Artists' Guide to How to Hook an Agent, Bloomsbury, 2020
- Writers' & Artists' Guide to Self-Publishing, Bloomsbury, 2020
- Writers' & Artists' Guide to Writing for Children and YA, Bloomsbury, 2019
- Writers' & Artists' Guide to Getting Published, Bloomsbury, 2019

- Crime and Thriller Writing, Michelle Spring, Larry R King, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013
- Writing Children's Fiction, Linda Newberry, Yvonne Coppard, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013
- Writing Historical Fiction, Celia Brayfield, Duncan Sprott, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013
- Writing Short Stories, Courttia Newland, Tania Hershman, Bloomsbury, 2014
- Writing for TV and Radio, Sue Teddern, Nick Warburton, Bloomsbury, 2015
- Literary Non-fiction, A Writers' and Artists' Companion, Sally Cline, Midge Gillies, Bloomsbury, 2015
  Novel Writing, Romesh Gunesekera, A.L. Kennedy, Bloomsbury, 2015
- Play Writing, Fraser Grace, Clare Bayley, Bloomsbury, 2015
  Life Writing, Sally Cline, Carole Angier, Bloomsbury, 201

- The Science of Writing Characters, Using Psychology to Create Compelling Fictional Characters, Kira-Anne Pelican, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020

Writing Tools

Living Writer: https://livingwriter.com/

Scrivener: https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener/overview

Storyist: https://www.storyist.com/

Final draft: https://finaldraft.com/

LivingWriter is suitable for writing books and other documents but not scripts. Scrivener is suitable for writing books and screenplays, but has a less modern (and perhaps less intuitive) interface. FinalDraft is suitable for writing screenplays. Storyist is a less expensive but less feature dense option than FinalDraft.

Microsoft Word

General purpose word processor application rather than specific book, poetry or script writing software.

Googledocs: for sharing documents (and for backup!)

A Plain Text Editor	Ginger Software	Reedsy Book Editor
AeonTimeline	Google Docs	Rev
After the Deadline	Grammarly	Scribens
Airstory	Hemingway	Scribus
AutoCrit	IA Writer	Scrivener
Ayo	Ilys	Shaxpir
Bibisco	LanguageTool	Slick Write
Blurt	LibreOffice Writer	SmartEdit
BookCraft	LivingWriter	Squibler
ByWord	MasterWriter	StoryIst
Campfire	Mellel	The Novel Factory
Day One	Microsoft Word	Ulysses
Drafts	Milanote	Vellum
Dragon NaturallySpeaking	Novel Factory	WhiteSmoke
Dropbox Paper	NovelCreator	WordRake
Dynalist	Novlr	Write! Pro
Evernote	Ommwriter	WriteItNow
FastPencil	Open Office	WriteMonkey
Final Draft	Pages	Writer
FocusWriter	PlotDot	yWriter
Freedom	ProWritingAid	Zoho Writer
Freemind	Publisher Rocket	

Appendix 1 – Favourite Quotes

Miscellaneous

Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth.   Albert Camus
The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself. Albert Camus
At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman. Albert Camus
Do not wait for the last judgment. It comes every day. Albert Camus

"To survive, you must tell stories."
— *Umberto Eco*

"I get a lot of letters from people. They say, "I want to be a writer. What should I do?"
I tell them to stop writing to me and get on with it."
— *Ruth Rendell*

https://www.nownovel.com/blog/88-quotes-to-help-you-finish-your-novel/

Where do ideas come from?

Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen. – John Steinbeck

I don't believe that a writer 'gets' (takes into the head) an 'idea' (some sort of mental object) 'from' somewhere, and then turns it into words, and writes them on paper. At least in my experience, it doesn't work that way. The stuff has to be transformed into oneself, it has to be composted, before it can grow into a story. – Ursula le Guin

If you start with a bang, you won't end with a whimper. – T.S. Eliot

To write fiction, one needs a whole series of inspirations about people in an actual environment, and then a whole lot of work on the basis of those inspirations. – Aldous Huxley

A man who is not born with the novel-writing gift has a troublesome time of it when he tries to build a novel. I know this from experience. He has no clear idea of his story; in fact he has no story. He merely has some people in his mind, and an incident or two, also a locality, and he trusts he can plunge those people into those incidents with interesting results. – Mark Twain

When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.' I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. – George Orwell

There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed. – Ernest Hemingway

If a story is in you, it has to come out. – William Faulkner

Borges said there are only four stories to tell: a love story between two people, a love story between three people, the struggle for power and the voyage. All of us writers rewrite these same stories ad infinitum. – Paulo Coelho

Books choose their authors; the act of creation is not entirely a rational and conscious one. – Salman Rushdie

My standard answer is 'I don't know where they come from, but I know where they come to, they come to my desk.' If I'm not there, they go away again, so you've got to sit and think. – Philip Pullman
Planning the first draft

First, find out what your hero wants, then just follow him! – Ray Bradbury

Outlines are the last resource of bad fiction writers who wish to God they were writing masters' theses. – Stephen King

Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. – Zora Neale Hurston

The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamoring to become visible. – Vladimir Nabokov

You don't actually have to write anything until you've thought it out. This is an enormous relief, and you can sit there searching for the point at which the story becomes a toboggan and starts to slide. – Marie de Nervaud

The scariest moment is always just before you start. – Stephen King

The best time for planning a book is while you're doing the dishes. – Agatha Christie

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. – Benjamin Franklin

It's such a confidence trick, writing a novel. The main person you have to trick into confidence is yourself. This is hard to do alone. – Zadie Smith

I'm a relatively disciplined writer who composes the whole book before beginning to execute and write it. Of course, you can't hold – you cannot imagine a whole novel before you write it; there are limits to human memory and imagination. Lots of things come to your mind as you write a book, but again, I make a plan, chapter, know the plot. – Orhan Pamuk

A goal without a plan is just a wish. – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

On writing the first draft

Get it down. Take chances. It may be bad, but it's the only way you can do anything really good. – William Faulkner

Close the door. Write with no one looking over your shoulder. Don't try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It's the one and only thing you have to offer. – Barbara Kingsolver

We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down. – Kurt Vonnegut

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it; Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt. – Silvia Plath

The first draft of anything is shit. – Ernest Hemingway

Quantity produces quality. If you only write a few things, you're doomed. – Ray Bradbury

For me, writing is exploration; and most of the time, I'm surprised where the journey takes me. – Jack Dann

My aim is to put down what I see and what I feel in the best and simplest way I can tell it. – Ernest Hemingway

My task, which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see. – Joseph Conrad

You can't wait for [inspiration]. You have to go after it with a club. – Jack London

On revising

Books aren't written, they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it … – Michael Crichton

A small daily task, if it be really daily, will beat the labours of a spasmodic Hercules. – Anthony Trollope

The most beautiful things are those that madness prompts and reason writes. – Andre Gide

A good book isn't written, it's rewritten. – Phyllis A. Whitney

When your story is ready for rewrite, cut it to the bone. Get rid of every ounce of excess fat. This is going to hurt; revising a story down to the bare essentials is always a little like murdering children, but it must be done. – Stephen King

Write. Rewrite. When not writing or rewriting, read. I know of no shortcuts. – Larry L. King

If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it. Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. I can't allow what we learned in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative. – Elmore Leonard

It ain't whatcha write, it's the way atcha write it. – Jack Kerouac

You never have to change anything you got up in the middle of the night to write. – Saul Bellow

Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass. – Anton Chekhov

A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: 1. What am I trying to say? 2. What words will express it? 3. What image or idiom will make it clearer? 4. Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? – George Orwel

On editing

Here is a lesson in creative writing. First rule: Do not use semicolons. All they do is show you've been to college. – Kurt Vonnegut

Cut out all these exclamation points. An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke… – F. Scott Fitzgerald

It is perfectly okay to write garbage–as long as you edit brilliantly. – C.J. Cherry

Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly. – Franz Kafka

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is … the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning. – Mark Twain

What I had to face, the very bitter lesson that everyone who wants to write has got to learn, was that a thing may in itself be the finest piece of writing one has ever done, and yet have absolutely no place in the manuscript one hopes to publish. – Thomas Wolfe

In writing, you must kill all your darlings. – William Faulkner

A successful book is not made of what is in it, but what is left out of it. – Mark Twain

The things that the novel does not say are necessarily more numerous than those it does say and only a special halo around what is written can give the illusion that you are reading also what is not written. – Italo Calvino

Put down everything that comes into your head and then you're a writer. But an author is one who can judge his own stuff's worth, without pity, and destroy most of it. – Colette

Only a mediocre person is always at his best. – W. Somerset Maugham

On completion

You always get more respect when you don't have a happy ending. – Julia Quinn

The first sentence can't be written until the final sentence is written. – Joyce Carol Oates

No one says a novel has to be one thing. It can be anything it wants to be, a vaudeville show, the six o'clock news, the mumblings of wild men saddled by demons. – Ishmael Reed

When I complete a novel I set it aside, and begin work on short stories, and eventually another long work. When I complete that novel I return to the earlier novel and rewrite much of it. In the meantime the second novel lies in a desk drawer. – Joyce Carol Oates

I work very deliberately, with a plan. But sometimes I come to a point that I planned as the end and it needs softening. Ending a novel is almost like putting a child to sleep – it can't be done abruptly. – Colm Toibin

There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story. – Frank Herbert

As much as I like it when a book I'm writing speeds along, the downside can be that an author becomes too eager to finish and rushes the end. The end is even more important than the first page, and rushing can damage it. – David Morrell

Most authors liken the struggle of writing to something mighty and macho, like wrestling a bear. Writing a book is nothing like that. It is a small, slow crawl to the finish line. Honestly, I have moments when I don't even care if anyone reads this book. I just want to finish it. – Amy Poehler

At the end of Slaughterhouse-Five … I had a shutting-off feeling … that I had done what I was supposed to do and everything was OK." – Kurt Vonnegut

I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be. – Douglas Adams

Writing the last page of the first draft is the most enjoyable moment in writing. It's one of the most enjoyable moments in life, period. – Nicholas Sparks

On publishers' rejections

This manuscript of yours that has just come back from another editor is a precious package. Don't consider it rejected. Consider that you've addressed it 'to the editor who can appreciate my work' and it has simply come back stamped 'Not at this address'. Just keep looking for the right address. – Barbara Kingsolver

Better to write for yourself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self. – Cyril Connolly

Any man who keeps working is not a failure. He may not be a great writer, but if he applies the old-fashioned virtues of hard, constant labor, he'll eventually make some kind of career for himself as writer. – Ray Bradbury

You must keep sending work out; you must never let a manuscript do nothing but eat its head off in a drawer. You send that work out again and again, while you're working on another one. If you have talent, you will receive some measure of success – but only if you persist. – Isaac Asimov

If you show someone something you've written, you give them a sharpened stake, lie down in your coffin, and say, 'When you're ready'. – David Mitchell

Don't listen to people who tell you that very few people get published and you won't be one of them. Don't listen to your friend who says you are better that Tolkien and don't have to try any more. Keep writing, keep faith in the idea that you have unique stories to tell, and tell them. – Robin Hobb

You are never stronger…than when you land on the other side of despair. – Zadie Smith

Why do I talk about the benefits of failure? Simply because failure meant a stripping away of the inessential. I stopped pretending to myself that I was anything other than what I was, and began to direct all my energy into finishing the only work that mattered to me. – J.K. Rowling

I finished my first book seventy-six years ago. I offered it to every publisher on the English-speaking earth I had ever heard of. Their refusals were unanimous: and it did not get into print until, fifty years later; publishers would publish anything that had my name on it. – George Bernard Shaw

I love my rejection slips. They show me I try. – Sylvia Plath

You should never be ashamed to admit you have been wrong. It only proves you are wiser today than yesterday. – Jonathan Swift

On being published

A writer should say to himself, not 'How can I get more money?' but 'How can I reach more readers without lowering standards? – Brian Aldiss

Writing is like sex. First you do it for love, then you do it for your friends, and then you do it for money. – Virginia Woolf

Publishing a book is like stuffing a note into a bottle and hurling it into the sea. Some bottles drown, some come safe to land, where the notes are read and then possibly cherished, or else misinterpreted, or else understood all too well by those who hate the message. You never know who your readers might be. – Margaret Atwood

A person who publishes a book willfully appears before the populace with his pants down. If it is a good book nothing can hurt him. If it is a bad book nothing can help him. – Edna St. Vincent Millay

An author who gives a manager or publisher any rights in his work except those immediately and specifically required for its publication or performance is for business purposes an imbecile. – George Bernard Shaw

I have rewritten — often several times — every word I have ever published. My pencils outlast their erasers. – Vladimir Nabokov

If you don't put 99 percent of yourself into the writing, there will be no publishing career. There's the writer and there's the author. The author—you don't ever think about the author. Just think about the writer. So my advice would be, find a way to not care—easier said than done. Accept that the world may never notice this thing you worked so hard at. And instead, do it for it, find a job, find a way of living that gives you an hour or two or three a day to do it, and then work your ass off sending out, trying to get out there, but do not put the pressure on the work to do something for you. – Andre Dubus III

Publishing is a very mysterious business. It is hard to predict what kind of sale or reception a book will have, and advertising seems to do very little good. – Thomas Wolfe

The publishing world is very timid. Readers are much braver. – Kiran Desai

In matters of truth the fact that you don't want to publish something is, nine times out of ten, a proof that you ought to publish it. – G.K Chesterton

I publish my own books, so there isn't a certain editor I owe the book to at a publishing house. – Dave Eggers

Appendix 2 – Genres

The prevailing genres of literary composition in Ancient Greece were all written and constructed to explore cultural, moral, or ethical questions; they were ultimately defined as the genres of epic, tragedy, and comedy.

Today the list is a little longer (and could be even longer still):

- Fiction

- Poetry

- Drama

- Life writing

- Children's fiction

- Young adult fiction

- Romance

- Thriller

- Action

- Docudrama

- Kitchen sink

- Monologue

- Social

- Political

- Narrative

- Recollections

- Diary

- Journal

- Recollections

- Memoir

- Travelogue

- Norse legend

- Folk story

- Epistle (letter)

- Crime

- Fantasy

- Horror

- Biography

- Autobiography

- Journalism

- Experimental

- Historical

- Speculative

- Science fiction

- Dystopian

- Utopian

- Buddy movie

- Road movie

- Libretto

- Lyrics

- Performance poetry

- Script – tv, film, radio, mixed media

- Podcast

- etc

Crime sub genres

(taken from the web)…..

While crime fiction is a genre itself within general fiction, it is often further divided into sub-genres, based on the setting, style of writing, characters and events that traditionally take place.

- Puzzle or "Locked Room" Mysteries – traditionally, this involves the murder victim being discovered in a room with no obvious means of escape for the murderer, although it has expanded to include any murder where there is no apparent way of committing the crime. It usually incorporates devices such as 'red herrings' (misdirection) and illusion, so that readers are confounded by a murderer who seemed to escape from an impossible situation – while the very simple solution has been presented at the beginning of the story and has been overlooked. Such stories were first introduced with Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and has continued their popularity, even appearing in TV shows such as the "Jonathan Creek" mystery series.

- Cosy Mysteries / Classic Whodunnit – this is the classic style of mystery writing, as epitomised by Agatha Christie's "Murder at the Vicarage", where a group of people, usually isolated in a country house, hotel or village, become suspects in a neat murder. It was particularly popular in England during the 1920's and 1930's and usually featured a clever civilian-turned-detective who relied on observation, a keen understanding of human nature and a good ear for interpreting gossip to solve the mystery.
- Hard-boiled Crime Fiction – this is characterised by its unsentimental portrayal of crime, violence and sex and is America's greatest contribution to the crime genre. Written in a specific literary style pioneered by writers like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, these stories usually feature a tough male detective as the central character who defied convention and whose "lone ranger" style helps him to think outside the box and solve the crimes.
- Legal Thrillers – this relatively new sub-genre involves crusading lawyers that become involved in their own cases, usually in trying to prove a client's innocence, and putting their personal relationships and lives at danger in the process. The legal framework and system of justice plays a large role in these stories and in many cases, the story also involves substantial courtroom drama. The most famous author in this sub-genre is probably John Grisham.
- Spy Novels – also known as the political thriller or spy thriller, these stories were born just before WWI, when the world's first modern intelligence agencies were being formed and has met with great popular success since then. As their content is largely based on political intrigue, interest waned after the end of the Cold War but with new terrorism threats appearing daily, this genre is experiencing resurgence.
- Psychological Suspense Novels – another sub-genre that has gained great popularity and success recently, these books focus not only on the crime but also on the back story of the murderers, victims and other people touched by the crime. It is popularised by authors such as Ruth Rendell, Minette Walters and Nicci French and derives a lot of its success from readers' curiosity about the characters: what is it that make a person commit a crime or react in a certain way to a crime? They often feature everyday people caught up in unexpected situations, rather than professional detectives and investigators.
- Police Procedurals – unlike most mystery stories which follow the activities of one detective or amateur sleuth, police procedurals usually follow the lives of a group of police officers (often inspector and sergeant partnerships) and will frequently involve solving multiple crimes simultaneously. They also often reveal the identity of the villain early on in the story, unlike traditional mysteries which leave the identity until the climax of the story. In recent times, these stories have extended to include related professions, such as forensic pathologists and criminal profilers, as very successful additions to the genre, by authors like Patricia Cornwall, Kathy Reichs and Val McDermid.

Appendix 3 – Sentences and Word Types

A sentence is a group of words that conveys a complete idea and has full meaning within itself. The 'word types' used, and the order in which these words are put, alter the meaning of the sentence.

There are eight word types: noun, adverb, pronoun, verb, adjective, preposition, determiner and conjunction.

Word Types

Word type	Definition
Noun	A word that identifies an object, person, animal, place or idea.
Verb	A word that identifies an action or a state. All sentences must have a verb.
Pronoun	A word that stands in place of a noun. These can also show possession.
Adverb	A word that modifies a verb. Adverbs can come before or after verbs. They can also be used before an adjective to modify it. Adverbs can also modify a whole sentence. Adverbs tell us the manner, place, time, or degree of the word/sentence they modify.
Adjective	A word that describes a noun. They come before the noun, or after the verb 'to be'.
Preposition	A word that describes the relationship between a noun and another word/phrase in the sentence.
Determiner	A word that comes before a noun/noun phrase and shows whether the noun is specific or general. It can also tell us the quantity of a noun.
Conjunction	A word that connects words, phrases or sentences.

Types of determiners					
Articles	Possessives	Demonstratives	Numerals	Ordinals	Quantifiers
-a - an - the	- my - your - his - her - whose - its - our - their - whose	- this - that - these - those	- one - two - three - four	- first - second - third - next - last	- many - few - some - every - much - alotof - any - less

Types of adverb						
Frequency	Manner	Time	Place	Degree	Evaluation	Conjunctive
- always - sometimes - usually	- slowly - badly - carefully	- now - yesterday - soon	- off - above - abroad	- hardly - very -absolutely	- apparently - clearly	- besides -furthermore - hence

- often - never - generally	- cheerfully - elegantly	- tonight - today - later - already - last month - then	- far - outside - behind - in - downstairs - back	- just - deeply - too - quite	- fairly - frankly - fortunately - honestly - hopefully	- namely - now - accordingly -initially - primarily

Determiner Adverb Adjective Noun Verb Noun Determiner

'The incandescently happy lecturer will give diplomas to the graduands tomorrow .

Preposition Noun Adverb

The Parts of a Sentence

Subject

Sentences usually begin with a **subject**. This is the **person or thing** which **performs** the **verb**.

The students rewrote their sentences.

*Note that instructions do not have a subject. E.g. **Rewrite** that sentence.

Verb

All sentences **must** have a **verb**. This is the **action** or the **state** in the sentence.

The students rewrote their sentences.

A complete sentence must have...

- A complete verb (an action or state)⌋
- At least 1 independent clause⌋
- A complete idea⌋

The simple sentence

A simple sentence is a sentence that has only 1 independent clause. Simple sentences usually begin with a subject. This is the person or thing which performs the verb. E.g. The students rewrote their sentences.

John wants a new bicycle.

*Note that instructions do not have a subject. E.g. Rewrite that sentence.

What is a topic sentence?

A topic sentence often goes at the start of a paragraph. It indicates to the reader what your paragraph will contain, and gives your writing structure. An effective topic sentence contains two things:

Main Topic
Point of view

The compound sentence

A compound sentence is formed when we link 2 or more independent clauses (simple sentences) together with a coordinating conjunction (e.g. `for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

For example:

The students improved their writing skills, and the lecturers were satisfied with the improvement in essay quality.

The complex sentence

A complex sentence is an independent clause joined to a dependent clause using a subordinating conjunction.

For example:

The students improved their writing skills, which was the reason for attending the course. Although the study yielded significant results, problems with the methodology undermine the reliability of the research.

Subordinating conjunctions:

Although
As
Because
Which
Since

Even
Though
If
When
Whenever
Where
While

Complex sentences are very useful for adding background information, and putting points into context.

Subordinating conjunctions give context to the sentence. For example:

Comparison: than, whether, whereas

Time: after, as soon as, until

Concession: though, although, even though Reason: because, since, as, so that

E.g. Since the Cuban missile crisis happened, relations between the USA and Cuba have been poor.

'Since' gives us the context of time.

Verb tenses

(from Grammarly and https://www.ef.co.uk/english-resources/english-grammar)

Verbs come in three tenses: past, present, and future. The past is used to describe things that have already happened (e.g., *earlier in the day, yesterday, last week, three years ago*). The present tense is used to describe things that are happening right now, or things that are continuous. The future tense describes things that have yet to happen (e.g., *later, tomorrow, next week, next year, three years from now*).

The following table illustrates the proper use of verb tenses:

Simple Present	Simple Past	Simple Future
I *read* nearly every day.	Last night, I *read* an entire novel.	I *will read* as much as I can this year.
Present Continuous	**Past Continuous**	**Future Continuous**
I *am reading* Shakespeare at the moment.	I *was reading* Edgar Allan Poe last night.	I *will be reading* Nathaniel Hawthorne soon.
Present Perfect	**Past Perfect**	**Future Perfect**
I *have read* so many books I can't keep count.	I *had read* at least 100 books by the time I was twelve.	I *will have read* at least 500 books by the end of the year.
Present Perfect Continuous	**Past Perfect Continuous**	**Future Perfect Continuous**

I *have been reading* since I was four years old.	I *had been reading* for at least a year before my sister learned to read.	I *will have been reading* for at least two hours before dinner tonight.

Tense	Usage
Simple present	The simple present tense is one of several forms of present tense in English. It is used to describe **habits, unchanging situations, general truths, and fixed arrangements**. The simple present tense is simple to form. Just use the base form of the verb: (I take, you take, we take, they take) The 3rd person singular takes an -s at the end. (he takes, she takes). **The simple present is not used to express actions happening now.**
Present continuous	When someone uses the present continuous, they are thinking about something that is *unfinished or incomplete* The present continuous is used: • to describe an action that is going on at this moment: ***You are using*** *the Internet.* ***You are studying*** *English grammar.* • to describe an action that is going on during this period of time or a trend: ***Are you still working*** *for the same company? More and more people* ***are becoming*** *vegetarian.* • to describe an action or event in the future, which has already been planned or prepared: ***We're going*** *on holiday tomorrow.* ***I'm meeting*** *my boyfriend tonight.* ***Are they visiting*** *you next winter?* • to describe a temporary event or situation: *He usually plays the drums, but* ***he's playing*** *bass guitar tonight. The weather forecast was good, but* ***it's raining*** *at the moment.* • with "always, forever, constantly", to describe and emphasise a continuing series of repeated actions: *Harry and Sally* ***are always arguing****!* ***You're constantly complaining*** *about your mother-in-law!* **BE CAREFUL!** Some verbs are not usually used in the continuous form

Present perfect	
	The Present Perfect is used to describe • An action or situation that started in the past and continues in the present. *I **have lived** in Bristol since 1984* (= and I still do.) • An action performed during a period that has not yet finished. *She **has been** to the cinema twice this week* (= and the week isn't over yet.) • A repeated action in an unspecified period between the past and now. *We **have visited** Portugal several times.* • An action that was completed in the very recent past, expressed by 'just'. *I **have just finished** my work.* • An action when the time is not important. *He **has read** 'War and Peace'.* (= the result of his reading is important) **Note:** When we want to give or ask details about when, where, who, we use the simple past. Read more about **choosing between the present perfect and the simple past tenses**.
Present perfect continuous	The present perfect continuous is used to refer to an **unspecified time** between 'before now' and 'now'. The speaker is thinking about something that started but perhaps did not finish in that period of time. He/she is interested in the **process as well as the result,** and this process may still be going on, or may have just finished. *Actions that started in the past and continue in the present* She **has been waiting** for you all day (= and she's still waiting now). **I've been working** on this report since eight o'clock this morning (= and I still haven't finished it).

	They have been travelling since last October (= and they're not home yet). *Actions that have just finished, but we are interested in the results* **She has been cooking** since last night (= and the food on the table looks delicious). **It's been raining** (= and the streets are still wet). **Someone's been eating** my chips (= half of them have gone).
Simple past	The simple past tense, sometimes called the preterite, is used to talk about a **completed action** in a time **before now**. The simple past is the basic form of past tense in English. The time of the action can be in the recent past or the distant past and action duration is not important. Examples • John Cabot **sailed** to America in 1498. • My father **died** last year. • He **lived** in Fiji in 1976. • We **crossed** the Channel yesterday. You always use the simple past when you say **when** something happened, so it is associated with certain past time expressions • **frequency**: *often, sometimes, always* I sometimes **walked** home at lunchtime. I often **brought** my lunch to school. • **a definite point in time**: *last week, when I was a child, yesterday, six weeks ago* We **saw** a good film *last week*. *Yesterday*, I **arrived** in Geneva. She **finished** her work at *seven o'clock* I **went** to the theatre *last night* • **an indefinite point in time**: *the other day, ages ago, a long time ago* People **lived** in caves a *long time ago*.

	She **played** the piano *when she was a child*. **Note:** the word *ago* is a useful way of expressing the distance into the past. It is placed **after** the period of time: *a week ago, three years ago, a minute ago.*
Past continuous	The past continuous describes actions or events in a time **before now**, which began in the past and were **still going on** when another event occurred. **It is used:** • Often, to describe the background in a story written in the past tense, e.g. "The sun **was shining** and the birds **were singing** as the elephant came out of the jungle. The other animals **were relaxing** in the shade of the trees, but the elephant moved very quickly. She **was looking** for her baby, and she didn't notice the hunter who **was watching** her through his binoculars. When the shot rang out, she **was running** towards the river..." • to describe an unfinished action that was interrupted by another event or action, e.g. "I **was having** a beautiful dream when the alarm clock rang." • to express a change of mind: e.g. "I **was going** to spend the day at the beach but I've decided to get my homework done instead." • with *'wonder'*, to make a very polite request: e.g. "I **was wondering** if you could baby-sit for me tonight." **Examples** • They were waiting for the bus when the accident happened. • Caroline was skiing when she broke her leg. • When we arrived he was having a bath. • When the fire started I was watching television.

	Note: with verbs not normally used in the continuous form, the simple past is used.
Past perfect	The past perfect refers to a time **earlier than before now**. It is used to make it clear that **one event happened before another** in the past. It does not matter which event is mentioned first - the tense makes it clear which one happened first.

In these examples, Event A is the event that happened first and Event B is the second or more recent event:

Event A	Event B
John **had gone** out	when I arrived in the office.

Event A	Event B
I **had saved** my document	before the computer crashed.

Event B	Event A
When they arrived	we **had already started** cooking.

Event B	Event A

	He was very tired	because he **hadn't slept** well.
Past perfect continuous	**Functions of the past perfect continuous** The past perfect continuous corresponds to the present perfect continuous, but with reference to a time earlier than 'before now'. As with the present perfect continuous, we are more interested in the **process**. **Examples** • **Had you been waiting** long before the taxi arrived? • **We had been trying** to open the door for five minutes when Jane found her key. • **It had been raining** hard for several hours and the streets were very wet. • Her friends **had been thinking** of calling the police when she walked in. This form is also used in **reported speech**. It is the equivalent of the past continuous and the present perfect continuous in direct speech: • Jane said, "I have been gardening all afternoon." = Jane said **she had been gardening** all afternoon. • When the police questioned him, John said, "I was working late in the office that night." = When the police questioned him, John told them **he had been working** late in the office that night.	
Simple future	The simple future refers to a time later than now, and expresses facts or certainty. In this case there is no 'attitude'. **The simple future is used:** • To predict a future event: It **will rain** tomorrow.	

| | With I or We, to express a spontaneous decision:
I'll pay for the tickets by credit card.
To express willingness:
I'll do the washing-up.
He'll carry your bag for you.
In the negative form, to express unwillingness:
The baby **won't eat** his soup.
I **won't leave** until I've seen the manager!
With I in the interrogative form using "shall", to make an offer:
Shall I open the window?
With we in the interrogative form using "shall", to make a suggestion:
Shall we go to the cinema tonight?
With I in the interrogative form using "shall", to ask for advice or instructions:
What **shall I tell** the boss about this money?
With you, to give orders:
You **will do** exactly as I say.
With you in the interrogative form, to give an invitation:
Will you come to the dance with me?
Will you marry me?
Note: In modern English **will** is preferred to **shall**. Shall is mainly used with **I** and **we** to make an offer or suggestion, or to ask for advice (see examples above). With the other persons (you, he, she, they) shall is only used in literary or poetic situations, e.g. *"With rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, She **shall have** music wherever she goes."* |
| Future continuous | The future continuous refers to an unfinished action or event that will be in progress at a time later than now. The future continuous is used for quite a few different purposes.

The future continuous can be used to project ourselves into the future. |

	Examples
	• This time next week **I will be sun-bathing** in Bali. • By Christmas **I will be skiing** like a pro. • Just think, next Monday **you will be working** in your new job. The future continuous can be used for predicting or guessing about future events.
	Examples
	• **He'll be coming** to the meeting, I expect. • I guess **you'll be feeling** thirsty after working in the sun. • **You'll be missing** the sunshine once you're back in England. In the interrogative form, the future continuous can be used to ask politely for information about the future.
	Examples
	• **Will you be bringing** your friend to the pub tonight? • **Will Jim be coming** with us? • **Will she be going** to the party tonight? • **Will I be sleeping** in this room? The future continuous can be used to refer to continuous events that we expect to happen in the future.
	Examples
	• I'll be seeing Jim at the conference next week. • When he is in Australia **he will be staying** with friends. • **I'll be eating** with Jane this evening so I can tell her. When combined with *still*, the future continuous refers to events that are already happening now and that we expect to continue some time into the future.
	Examples

	- In an hour **I'll still be ironing** my clothes. - Tomorrow **he'll still be suffering** from his cold. - Next year **will she still be wearing** a size six? **Won't stock prices still be falling** in the morning? - Unfortunately, **sea levels will still be rising** in 20 years.
Future perfect	The future perfect tense refers to a completed action in the future. When we use this tense we are projecting ourselves forward into the future and looking back at an action that will be completed some time later than now. It is most often used with a time expression. Examples **I will have been** here for six months on June 23rd. - By the time you read this **I will have left**. **You will have finished** your report by this time next week. **Won't they have arrived** by 5:00? **Will you have eaten** when I pick you up?
Future perfect continuous	Like the future perfect simple, this form is used to project ourselves forward in time and to look back. It refers to events or actions that are currently unfinished but will be finished at some future time. It is most often used with a time expression. Examples **I will have been waiting** here for three hours by six o'clock. - By 2001 **I will have been living** in London for sixteen years. - When I finish this course, **I will have been learning** English for twenty years. - Next year **I will have been working** here for four years.

	• When I come at 6:00, **will you have been practicing** long?

Participles

(from https://www.thesaurus.com/e/grammar/whats-a-participle/)

Participles are words derived from verbs that can function as adjectives or as parts of verb to create verb tenses.

Put simply, that means a participle will look like a verb (*running*) but may have a different role in the sentence: *the running water*. That participle is describing the water and performing the function of an adjective.

The two main types of participles are the *present participle* and the *past participle*.

Past participle

For regular verbs, adding -ed to the base form creates the past participle. For example, the past participle of cook is cooked.

Past participles formed from irregular verbs may have endings like *-en*, *-t*, *-d*, and *-n*. Examples include *swollen*, *burnt*, *hoped,* and *broken*. Some past participles remain the same as the base forms of irregular verbs, like *set* and *cut*.

Past participles can also function as adjectives that modify nouns. For example:

- In the sentence, "She placed the **cut** flowers in the vase," the past participle *cut* modifies the noun *flowers*.

Past participles can also combine with the verb *to be* to create the *passive forms* of verbs. For example:

- In the sentence, "He **was taken** to the store by his daughter," the verb form *was taken* includes the past participle *taken* and *was*, which is the past tense of the verb *to be*.

Present participle

Adding -ing to the base form of a verb creates the present participle. For example, eat is the base form of the verb to eat. The present participle of eat is eating. Present participles always end in -ing.

Other examples of present participles include *swimming*, *laughing*, and *playing*.

The present participle can function as an adjective and modify nouns in sentences. For example:

- In the sentence, "The **winning** athlete gets a trophy," the present participle *winning* describes the noun *athlete*.

Present participles appear in *progressive* (or *continuous*) verb tenses, which show when a verb or action was/is in the process of happening. For example:

- A sentence in the **present progressive** tense is: "She is **sitting** now."
- A sentence in **past progressive** tense is: "She was **sitting** there 10 minutes ago."
- A sentence in **future progressive** tense is: "She will be **sitting** at her desk in an hour."

All three of these sentences indicate when *she* was/is/will be in the process of *sitting*.

Perfect participle

Combining the word having with the past participle of a word creates the perfect participle. Perfect participles demonstrate that an action was completed in the past. Examples of perfect participles include having watched, having arrived, and having slept.

This isn't so much a third participle as it is a structure that combines a present participle (*having*) and a past participle. For example:

- In the sentence, "**Having finished** the report, she put away all her books and took a much-needed nap," the words *having finished* is the perfect participle.
- By combining *having* and *relied* you can construct the following sentence: "The young man, **having relied** on his grandfather's advice all his life, felt utterly lost after his death."

Participle phrases

Participial phrases are participles combined with other words that act as adjectives within sentences. Usually, participial phrases modify the subjects of sentences, but sometimes they modify other nouns. For example:

- In the sentence, "**Wearing his new suit**, Bill went to work," the participial phrase *wearing his new suit* acts like an adjective to describe the subject of the sentence, *Bill*.

Within a sentence, participial phrases should be close to the nouns that they modify to avoid confusion. For example:

- In the sentence, "**Leaving the store**, he hailed a taxi," it's clear that the phrase *leaving the store* modifies the subject *he*.

Dangling participles

Participle phrases that don't clearly have a noun to modify are known as dangling modifiers. For instance:

- In the sentence, "**Leaving the store**, the traffic was heavy," it seems as if the traffic is leaving the store, but this is impossible.

Summary of participles

Participles are words formed from verbs:

- *Present participles* always end in *-ing* and function as adjectives. They help form progressive verb tenses.
- *Past participles* end in *-ed*, or other past tense irregular verb endings, and function as adjectives. They also combine with the verb *to be* to create passive verb forms.
- *Perfect participles* combine *having* with a past participle.
- *Participial phrases* modify the subjects of sentences.

Moods

(from https://www.nownovel.com/blog/writing-tenses-past-present-future/)

In addition to simple and perfect tenses, there are different 'moods' that show verbs as hypothetical or possible actions. In addition to the indicative mood ('she runs to the store') there is also the subjunctive mood ('If she runs to the store') and the potential mood ('she may run to the store').

The different moods are useful because they can show possibilities and scenarios that might have happened, or might still happen, under different circumstances. Here are examples for correct uses for each of the tenses (in active voice):

Indicative mood

Present tense: She runs to the store…
Past tense: She ran to the store…
Future tense: She will run to the store…
Present perfect tense: She has run to the store…
Past perfect tense: She had run to the store…
Future perfect tense: She will have run to the store…

Subjunctive mood

Present tense: If she runs to the store…
Past tense: If she ran to the store…
Future tense: If she should run to the store…
Present perfect tense: If she has run to the store…
Past perfect tense: If she had run to the store…
Future perfect tense: If she should have run to the store….

Think of this mood as setting up a possibility. For example: 'If she runs to the store, she better be quick because we're leaving in 5.'

Potential mood

The potential mood helps us show shadowy, more hypothetical, uncertain scenarios:

Present tense: She may run to the store.
Present perfect tense: She may have run to the store.
Past perfect: She might have run to the store.

In each of these examples, the action is a possibility and the mood (using the various forms of 'may') shows this. These verb moods in conjunction with tense are useful. They help us describe situations in which a narrator or character does not have full knowledge of events, or is wondering how events might pan out.

Controlling tense shifts

(from
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/verb_tenses/verb_tense_consistency.html#:~:text=Generally%2C%20writers%20maintain%20one%20tense,verb%20tenses%20consistently%20and%20clearly.)

General guideline: Establish a primary tense for the main discourse, and use occasional shifts to other tenses to indicate changes in time frame.

Hints:

- Rely on past tense to narrate events and to refer to an author or an author's ideas as historical entities (biographical information about a historical figure or narration of developments in an author's ideas over time).
- Use present tense to state facts, to refer to perpetual or habitual actions, and to discuss your own ideas or those expressed by an author in a particular work. Also use present tense to describe action in a literary work, movie, or other fictional narrative. Occasionally, for dramatic effect, you may wish to narrate an event in present tense as though it were happening now. If you do, use present tense consistently throughout the narrative, making shifts only where appropriate.
- Future action may be expressed in a variety of ways, including the use of *will, shall, is going to, are about to, tomorrow* and other adverbs of time, and a wide range of contextual cues.

Using other tenses in conjunction with simple tenses

It is not always easy (or especially helpful) to try to distinguish perfect and/or progressive tenses from simple ones in isolation, for example, the difference between simple past progressive ("She was eating an apple") and present perfect progressive ("She has been eating an apple"). Distinguishing these sentences in isolation is possible, but the differences between them make clear sense only in the context of other sentences since the time-distinctions

suggested by different tenses are relative to the time frame implied by the verb tenses in surrounding sentences or clauses.

Example 1: Simple past narration with perfect and progressive elements

On the day in question...

> By the time Tom noticed the doorbell, it had already rung three times. As usual, he had been listening to loud music on his stereo. He turned the stereo down and stood up to answer the door. An old man was standing on the steps. The man began to speak slowly, asking for directions.

In this example, the progressive verbs *had been listening* and *was standing* suggest action underway at the time some other action took place. The stereo-listening was underway when the doorbell rang. The standing on the steps was underway when the door was opened. The past perfect progressive verb *had been listening* suggests action that began in the time frame prior to the main narrative time frame and that was still underway as another action began. If the primary narration is in the present tense, then the present progressive or present perfect progressive is used to indicate action that is or has been underway as some other action begins. This narrative style might be used to describe a scene from a novel, movie, or play, since action in fictional narratives is conventionally treated as always present. For example, we refer to the scene in *Hamlet* in which the prince first *speaks* (present) to the ghost of his dead father or the final scene in Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, which *takes place* (present) the day after Mookie *has smashed* (present perfect) the pizzeria window. If the example narrative above were a scene in a play, movie, or novel, it might appear as follows.

Example 2: Simple present narration with perfect and progressive elements

In this scene...

> By the time Tom notices the doorbell, it has already rung three times. As usual, he has been listening to loud music on his stereo. He turns the stereo down and stands up to answer the door. An old man is standing on the steps. The man begins to speak slowly, asking for directions.

In this example as in the first one, the progressive verbs *has been listening* and *is standing* indicate action underway as some other action takes place. The present perfect progressive verb *has been listening* suggests action that began in the time frame prior to the main narrative time frame and that is still underway as another action begins. The remaining tense relationships parallel those in the first example.

In all of these cases, the progressive or *-ing* part of the verb merely indicates ongoing action, that is, action underway as another action occurs. The general comments about tense relationships apply to simple and perfect tenses, regardless of whether there is a progressive element involved.

It is possible to imagine a narrative based on a future time frame as well, for example, the predictions of a psychic or futurist. If the example narrative above were spoken by a psychic, it might appear as follows.

Example 3: Simple future narration with perfect and progressive elements

Sometime in the future...

> By the time Tom notices the doorbell, it will have already rung three times. As usual, he will have been listening to loud music on his stereo. He will turn the stereo down and will stand up to answer the door. An old man will be standing on the steps. The man will begin to speak slowly, asking for directions.

In this example as in the first two, the progressive verbs *will have been listening* and *will be standing* indicate ongoing action. The future perfect progressive verb *will have been listening* suggests action that will begin in the time frame prior to the main narrative time frame and that will still be underway when another action begins. The verb *notices* here is in present-tense form, but the rest of the sentence and the full context of the narrative cue us to understand that it refers to future time. The remaining tense relationships parallel those in the first two examples.

General guidelines for use of perfect tenses

In general the use of perfect tenses is determined by their relationship to the tense of the primary narration. If the primary narration is in simple past, then action initiated before the time frame of the primary narration is described in past perfect. If the primary narration is in simple present, then action initiated before the time frame of the primary narration is described in present perfect. If the primary narration is in simple future, then action initiated before the time frame of the primary narration is described in future perfect.

Past primary narration corresponds to **Past Perfect** (*had* + past participle) for earlier time frames
Present primary narration corresponds to **Present Perfect** (*has* or *have* + past participle) for earlier time frames
Future primary narration corresponds to **Future Perfect** (*will have* + past participle) for earlier time frames

The present perfect is also used to narrate action that began in real life in the past but is not completed, that is, may continue or may be repeated in the present or future. For example: "I *have run* in four marathons" (implication: "so far... I may run in others"). This usage is distinct from the simple past, which is used for action that was completed in the past without possible continuation or repetition in the present or future. For example: "Before injuring my leg, I *ran* in four marathons" (implication: "My injury prevents me from running in any more marathons").

Time-orienting words and phrases like *before, after, by the time*, and others—when used to relate two or more actions in time—can be good indicators of the need for a perfect-tense verb in a sentence.

- By the time the senator *finished* (past) his speech, the audience *had lost* (past perfect) interest.
- By the time the senator *finishes* (present: habitual action) his speech, the audience *has lost* (present perfect) interest.
- By the time the senator *finishes* (present: suggesting future time) his speech, the audience *will have lost* (future perfect) interest.

- After everyone *had finished* (past perfect) the main course, *we offered* (past) our guests dessert.
- After everyone *has finished* (present perfect) the main course, *we offer* (present: habitual action) our guests dessert.
- After everyone has *finished* (present perfect) the main course, we *will offer* (future: specific one-time action) our guests dessert.
- Long before the sun *rose* (past), the birds *had arrived* (past perfect) at the feeder.
- Long before the sun *rises* (present: habitual action), the birds *have arrived* (present perfect) at the feeder.
- Long before the sun *rises* (present: suggesting future time), the birds *will have arrived* (future perfect) at the feeder.

Sample paragraphs

The main tense in this first sample is past. Tense shifts are inappropriate and are indicated in **bold**.

> The gravel crunched and spattered beneath the wheels of the bus as it swung into the station. Outside the window, shadowy figures peered at the bus through the darkness. Somewhere in the crowd, two, maybe three, people were waiting for me: a woman, her son, and possibly her husband. I could not prevent my imagination from churning out a picture of them, the town, and the place I **will** soon call home. Hesitating a moment, I **rise** from my seat, these images flashing through my mind.
> (adapted from a narrative)

Inappropriate shifts from past to present, such as those that appear in the above paragraph, are sometimes hard to resist. The writer becomes drawn into the narrative and begins to relive the event as an ongoing experience. The inconsistency should be avoided, however. In the sample, *will* should be *would*, and *rise* should be *rose*.

The main tense in this second sample is present. Tense shifts—all appropriate—are indicated in bold.

> A dragonfly rests on a branch overhanging a small stream this July morning. It is newly emerged from brown nymphal skin. As a nymph, it **crept** over the rocks of the stream bottom, feeding first on protozoa and mites, then, as it **grew** larger, on the young of other aquatic insects. Now an adult, it **will feed** on flying insects and eventually **will mate**. The mature dragonfly is completely transformed from the drab creature that once **blended** with underwater sticks and leaves. Its head, thorax, and abdomen glitter; its wings are iridescent in the sunlight.
> (adapted from an article in the magazine *Wilderness*)

This writer uses the present tense to describe the appearance of a dragonfly on a particular July morning. However, both past and future tenses are called for when she refers to its previous actions and to its predictable activity in the future.

Examples in Literature

John Updike, in his *Paris Review* interview, said, of his decision to set *Rabbit, Run* in the present tense, *Rabbit, Run* was subtitled originally, "A Movie." The present tense was in part

meant to be an equivalent of the cinematic mode of narration. The opening bit of the boys playing basketball was visualized to be taking place under the titles and credits. This doesn't mean, though, that I really wanted to write for the movies. It meant I wanted to make a movie. I could come closer by writing it in my own book than by attempting to get through to Hollywood.

(from https://www.louiseharnbyproofreader.com/blog/tenses-in-fiction-writing-present-past-past-perfect-and-habitual-past)

With second-person viewpoints, the present tense is intensely voyeuristic, invasive even. Here's an excerpt from Iain Banks's *Complicity* (p. 60). This is a transgressor narrative with a difference – the narrator is anonymous, at least until later in the novel:

> You stand up, reach forward and take the neatly folded handkerchief out of the breast pocket of his jacket, flick it open and wipe the blade of the Marttiini on it until the knife is clean. The knife comes from Finland; that's why the name has such a strange spelling. It hasn't occurred to you before, but its nationality seems appropriate now and even funny in a grim sort of way; it's Finnish and you've used it to finish Mr Persimmon.

Here's an excerpt from T. M. Logan's *29 Seconds* (p. 73). We're given a past-tense narrative with a third-person limited viewpoint (Sarah's):

> At the last moment, just as Sarah thought he was going to tear open her door and attack her, he turned and bent down to his injured friend.

Here's an excerpt from *The Wife Between Us* (p. 57) by Greer Hendricks and Sarah Pekkanen. This chapter's primary narrative tense is past (see underlined verb):

> She <u>stood</u> there for a moment, taking in the white Christmas lights Samantha **had wound** through the slats of her bed's headboard, and the fuzzy green-and-blue rug the two of them **had found** rolled up by the curb of a posh apartment building on Fifth Avenue. "Is someone actually throwing this out?" Samantha **had asked**.

When we're told that 'She stood', that's the novel's *now*. But when the narrator recalls events that happened further back in time (bold) – Samantha's decorating her bed, and the two women's procuring a rug – these need to be anchored in the past-perfect tense: had, had been.

When authors fail to anchor past events in a novel whose now is already set in the past tense, the reader will be confused.

This excerpt from *The Templar's Garden* by Catherine Clover illustrates the usage. The narrative is set in third-person past but the viewpoint character is recalling regular journeys taken earlier in her life:

> Sometimes Père Charles **would** accompany me and **we would** explore the countryside around Brill or the wooded depths of Bernwood Forest. But lately the bookkeeping necessary for managing the Boarstall estate kept him occupied, and I was often unaccompanied on my frequent rides.

And in *Time To Win* (p. 62), Harry Brett uses the simple past and past progressive for the most part, but then Frank, the viewpoint character, recalls something he'd done habitually in former times:

> Tatty <u>was talking</u> to Simon. Frank <u>couldn't hear</u> what they were saying. He <u>looked</u> down the road, towards the harbour and the dead end, the industrial buildings laid low by the unexpected weight of late summer sun, and somewhere over to his left the top of Nelson's Monument, clear of cloud for once. He **used to enjoy** driving down South Denes Road and curving back round onto South Beach Parade, accelerating past the old Pleasure Beach and into a different era.

Like the past perfect, the habitual past acts as an anchor, so that readers don't mix up the reminiscence of a routine event with the novel's now.

To see that confusion in action, replace 'used to enjoy' with the simple past: 'enjoyed'. It reads as if Frank is enjoying driving down South Denes Road right now.

If you don't want to use the habitual past, then an alternative anchor is necessary. Here I've added an anchoring clause and changed the tense to past perfect (he'd, or he had):

- Back in the day, he'd enjoyed driving down [...]

Present Tense Novels

Here are a several notable examples of present tense novels:

Bleak House **by Charles Dickens**

While present tense was frequently used as an aside from the author to the reader before this, Charles Dickens' novel *The Bleak House*, first published in serial form in 1852, is the first novel written mostly in it. The story is narrated in third-person present tense, but it also includes sections narrated by one of the main characters in the past tense.

Rabbit, Run **by John Updike**

Rabbit, Run was John Updike's second novel. Now a classic of American literature, it surprised readers with its use of present tense. Updike said he used it intentionally because it was the perfect fit for his jumpy, unstable protagonist. .

Ulysses **by James Joyce**

James Joyce, the great Irish novelist, has a reputation for literary experimentation, and his novel *Ulysses* was one of the first to be written entirely in present tense. *Ulysses* was first published serially in 1918.

All Quiet on the Western Front **by Erich Maria Remarque**

This 1929 novel about World War I uses present tense to give a heightened visualization of the horrors of war.

Fight Club *by Chuck Palahniuk*

"This is your life and it's ending one moment at a time."
Like several of Chuck's novels, *Fight Club*, published in 1999, is written in present tense.

Bright Lights, Big City by Jay McInerney

Bright Lights, Big City is notable both for being written in present tense *and* second-person.

Other Notable Novels

- *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr
- *Bird Box: A Novel* by Josh Malerman (I'm reading this right now, and it's great!)
- *The White Queen* by Philippa Gregory (the basis for the BBC TV Series)
- *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood
- *Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger
-

Getting tense about tense

(from https://theconversation.com/getting-tense-about-tense-in-fiction-67369)

Writers, over the last decade, have been waxing lyrical about the rise of the present tense in English fiction. But this morning I read something entirely new – for me, at least. I read a manuscript written almost uniformly in the continuous tense and I found myself getting – the pun is irresistible – tense. Rather than the much-vaunted vivifying effects attributed to present tense narration, this piece of formal trickery hinted at a qualitatively different thing – the potential flattening effect of mono-tense fiction.

Historically, English language fiction, for the most part, has been written in an unobtrusive past simple tense, sometimes called the narrative tense. Odes to the past simple do not exist in writer's style or "how to" manuals, because, when it comes to fiction, at least, past simple is relatively invisible and it's every other tense that stands out.

Of course, the danger is that the past simple fits the reader like a comfortable old shoe. In your average past tense narrative, everything already exists, so the argument goes, in a tidy and predetermined sequence. It provides a stable point of reference from which the reader looks safely back on the story.

For this reason, present tense narration is billed as the roar of late modernity. It is the tense of real time technologies, soundbites and satellite relays. It signals an inability to find a stable place from which to speak in a

Jay McInerney, Bright Lights, Big City (1984). Vintage

Jay McInerney's 1980s extravaganza <u>Bright Light, Big City</u> is often said to have entrenched the present tense craze among the fashionable affectations of the instant gratification generation – but this is perhaps because it calls attention to its present tense by shouting it out in the second person ("You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning").

Raymond Carver produced work in the present tense back in the psychedelic seventies ("I am sitting over coffee and cigarettes at my friend Rita's and I am telling her about it."), as did Malcolm Bradbury. Margaret Atwood produced <u>Surfacing</u>, followed by <u>Cat's Eye</u> and <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u>.

More recently, present tense is a feature in DBC Pierre's <u>Vernon God Little</u> and Ian McEwan's <u>Saturday</u>. It is mobilised to brilliant effect in JM Coetzee's <u>Disgrace</u>, creating an edgy sort of atmosphere in which anything is possible ("He goes straight through to the bedroom, which is pleasant smelling and softly lit, and undresses"). In <u>Wolf Hall</u>, Hillary Mantel uses it to pull the distant past over the threshold of the present, creating the present tense as the new tense du jour for the historical novel ("He turns his head sideways, his hair rests on his own vomit, the dog barks").

In fact, it's perfectly possible to find a surprising amount of present tense in the nineteenth century novel, including works by Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens (where it is used to create a sense that, as Inspector Bucket puts it in <u>Bleak House,</u> "You don't know what I'm going to say and do, five minutes from this present time … ").

It's tempting to spot a steady diffusion of the present tense marking the era from the industrial revolution to the information age, and to equate this with a sense of the world speeding up. (Or alternatively, to equate the death of the author's distant God-like omniscience with the rise of democracy.)

But there's another way to see it, too. Any individual past-tense novel may well contain every one of the English language's twelve tenses. In comparison, a present tense novel tends to contain only two or three.

Take Virginia Woolf, for example:

> Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges. Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning – fresh as if issed to children on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air.
> Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (1964). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt P

Here Woolf uses past simple to frame the sentence, followed by future tense for the reported speech. The next sentence is in the past perfect ("For Lucy had her work cut out for her.") followed by the future tense ("The doors would be taken off their hinges.") An internal dialogue bursts into life with two short exclamatory sentences ("What a lark! What a plunge!") before returning once again to past perfect. Indeed, as Mrs Dalloway runs on, the tenses constantly shift, conjuring up a flux of emotions.

By way of contrast, the ubiquity of the continuous past tense (typified by the use of the word "was") in the manuscript I read this morning makes the reader feel as if you are a long way off from the action, as you are no longer talking about specific actions or events, but generalised or ongoing actions, such as actions that occur everyday. It lacks specificity. The continuous tense is always begging to be interrupted.

For garden-variety writing, the rule probably holds true: "Jesus wept" is stronger than "Jesus was weeping", while the passive form, "the weeping was done by Jesus", is a little ridiculous. The other problem is that sentences (like my three preceding clauses) also get longer and less economical as you need to add in additonal words, very often verbs and gerunds that aren't really doing much.

Gertrude Stein had a particular fascination with the continuous present tense, and the continuous past is a feature in quite a few of William Faulkner's long recursive sentences, which can yank together half a dozen different temporal zones. But this kind of recursion, like subordination, creates complexity, and requires formidable skill. At risk of sounding like a pipe-smoking, tweed-wearing literary Luddite, mono and duo-tense novels can begin to feel a little thin.

Voices

The car was driven quickly down the street. (passive voice)
Melissa drove the car quickly down the street. (active voice)

Appendix 4 - The thirty-six dramatic situations by George Polti

(from Adam Hamby)

In 1868, Georges Polti conducted an extensive survey of literature and declared there were no more than 36 dramatic situations. According to Polti, these 36 are the only possible routes to human drama. No matter the tale, for it to be dramatic, it must invariably involve one of these situations. Drama stems from conflict and Polti's survey is essentially a survey of the various sources of conflict.

01. SUPPLICATION

(The dynamic elements technically necessary are: a Persecutor; a Suppliant; and a Power in authority, whose decision is doubtful)

A.
(1) Fugitives Imploring the Powerful for Help Against Their Enemies
(2) Assistance Implored for the Performance of a Pious Duty Which Has Been Forbidden
(3) Appeals for a Refuge in Which to Die

B.
(1) Hospitality Besought by the Shipwrecked
(2) Charity Entreated by Those Cast Off by Their Own People, Whom They Have Disgraced
(3) Expiation: The Seeking of Pardon, Healing or Deliverance
(4) The Surrender of a Corpse, or of a Relic, Solicited

C.
(1) Supplication of the Powerful for Those Dear to the Suppliant (2) Supplication to a Relative in Behalf of Another Relative
(3) Supplication to a Mother's Lover, in Her Behalf

02. DELIVERANCE

(Elements: an Unfortunate, a Threatener, a Rescuer)

A.
(1) Appearance of a Rescuer to the Condemned

B.
(1) A Parent Replaced Upon a Throne by His Children
(2) Rescue by Friends, or by Strangers Grateful for Benefits Or Hospitality

03. CRIME Pursued by Vengeance

(Elements: an Avenger and a Criminal)

A.
(1) The Avenging of a Slain Parent or Ancestor

(2) The Avenging of a Slain Child or Descendant
(3) Vengeance for a Child Dishonored
(4) The Avenging of a Slain Wife or Husband
(5) Vengeance for the Dishonor, or Attempted Dishonoring, of a Wife (6) Vengeance for a Mistress Slain
(7) Vengeance for a Slain or Injured Friend

(8) Vengeance for a Sister Seduced B.

(1) Vengeance for Intentional Injury or Spoliation
(2) Vengeance for Having Been Despoiled During Absence (3) Revenge for an Attempted Slaying
(4) Revenge for a False Accusation
(5) Vengeance for Violation
(6) Vengeance for Having Been Robbed of One's Own
(7) Revenge Upon a Whole Sex for a Deception by One

C.
(1) Professional Pursuit of Criminals

04. VENGEANCE Taken For Kindred Upon Kindred

(Elements: Avenging Kinsman; Guilty Kinsman; Remembrance of the Victim, a Relative of Both)

A.
(1) A Father's Death Avenged Upon a Mother

(2) A Mother's Death Avenged Upon a Father B.

(1) A Brother's Death Avenged Upon a Son C.

(1) A Father's Death Avenged Upon a Husband D.

(1) A Husband's Death Avenged Upon a Father

05. PURSUIT

(Elements: Punishment and Fugitive)

A.
(1) Fugitives from Justice Pursued for Brigandage, Political Offenses, Etc.

B.
(1) Pursued for a Fault of Love

C.
(1) A Hero Struggling Against a Power

D.
(1) A Pseudo-Madman Struggling Against an Iago-Like Alienist

06. DISASTER

(Elements: a Vanquished Power; a Victorious Enemy or a Messenger) A.

(1) Defeat Suffered
(2) A Fatherland Destroyed (3) The Fall of Humanity (4) A Natural Catastrophe

B.
(1) A Monarch Overthrown

C.
(1) Ingratitude Suffered
(2) The Suffering of Unjust Punishment or Enmity (3) An Outrage Suffered

D.
(1) Abandonment by a Lover or a Husband (2) Children Lost by Their Parents

07. FALLING PREY To Cruelty Or Misfortune

(Elements: an Unfortunate; a Master or a Misfortune) A.

(1) The Innocent Made the Victim of Ambitious Intrigue B.

(1) The Innocent Despoiled by Those Who Should Protect C.

(1) The Powerful Dispossessed and Wretched
(2) A Favorite or an Intimate Finds Himself Forgotten

D.
(1) The Unfortunate Robbed of Their Only Hope

08. REVOLT

(Elements: Tyrant and Conspirator) A.

(1) A Conspiracy Chiefly of One Individual

(2) A Conspiracy of Several B.

(1) Revolt of One Individual, Who Influences and Involves Others (2) A Revolt of Many

09. DARING Enterprise

(Elements: a Bold Leader; an Object; an Adversary)

A.
(1) Preparations For War

B.
(1) War

(2) A Combat C.

(1) Carrying Off a Desired Person or Object (2) Recapture of a Desired Object

D.
(1) Adventurous Expeditions
(2) Adventure Undertaken for the Purpose of Obtaining a Beloved Woman

10. ABDUCTION

(Elements: the Abductor; the Abducted; the Guardian)

A.
(1) Abduction of an Unwilling Woman

B.
(1) Abduction of a Consenting Woman

C.
(1) Recapture of the Woman Without the Slaying of the Abductor (2) The Same Case, with the Slaying of the Ravisher

D.
(1) Rescue of a Captive Friend
(2) Of a Child
(3) Of a Soul in Captivity to Error

11. THE ENIGMA

(Elements: Interrogator, Seeker and Problem)

A.
(1) Search for a Person Who Must Be Found on Pain of Death

B.
(1) A Riddle To Be Solved on Pain of Death

(2) The Same Case, in Which the Riddle is Proposed by the Coveted Woman C.

(1) Temptations Offered With the Object of Discovering His Name (2) Temptations Offered With the Object of Ascertaining the Sex (3) Tests for the Purpose of Ascertaining the Mental Condition

12. OBTAINING

(Elements: a Solicitor and an Adversary Who is Refusing, or an Arbitrator and Opposing Parties)

A.
(1) Efforts to Obtain an Object by Ruse or Force

B.
(1) Endeavor by Means of Persuasive Eloquence Alone

C.
(1) Eloquence With an Arbitrator

13. ENMITY Of Kinsmen

(Elements: a Malevolent Kinsman; a Hatred or Reciprocally Hating Kinsman)

A.
(1) Hatred of Brothers -- One Brother Hated by Several (2) Reciprocal Hatred
(3) Hatred Between Relatives for Reasons of Self-Interest

B.
(1) Hatred of Father and Son -- Of the Son for the Father (2) Mutual Hatred
(3) Hatred of Daughter for Father

C.
(1) Hatred of Grandfather for Grandson

D.
(1) Hatred of Father-in-law for Son-in-law

E.
(1) Hatred of Mother-in-law for Daughter-in-law

F.
(1) Infanticide

14. RIVALRY Of Kinsmen

(Elements: the Preferred Kinsman; the Rejected Kinsman; the Object) A.

(1) Malicious Rivalry of a Brother
(2) Malicious Rivalry of Two Brothers

(3) Rivalry of Two Brothers, With Adultery on the Part of One

(4) Rivalry of Sisters B.

(1) Rivalry of Father and Son, for an Unmarried Woman
(2) Rivalry of Father and Son, for a Married Woman
(3) Case Similar to the Two Foregoing, But in Which the Object is Already the Wife of the Father
(4) Rivalry of Mother and Daughter

C.
(1) Rivalry of Cousins

D.
(1) Rivalry of Friends

15. MURDEROUS Adultery

(Elements: Two Adulterers; a Betrayed Husband or Wife)

A.
(1) The Slaying of a Husband by, or for, a Paramour

(2) The Slaying of a Trusting Lover B.

(1) Slaying of a Wife for a Paramour, and in Self-Interest

16. MADNESS

(Elements: Madman and Victim)

A.
(1) Kinsmen Slain in Madness
(2) Lover Slain in Madness
(3) Slaying or Injuring of a Person not Hated

B.
(1) Disgrace Brought Upon Oneself Through Madness

C.
(1) Loss of Loved Ones Brought About by Madness

D.
(1) Madness Brought on by Fear of Hereditary Insanity

17. FATAL Imprudence

(Elements: The Imprudent; the Victim or the Object Lost) A.

(1) Imprudence the Cause of One's Own Misfortune (2) Imprudence the Cause of One's Own Dishonor

B.
(1) Curiosity the Cause of One's Own Misfortune

(2) Loss of the Possession of a Loved One, Through Curiosity C.

(1) Curiosity the Cause of Death or Misfortune to Others (2) Imprudence the Cause of a Relative's Death
(3) Imprudence the Cause of a Lover's Death
(4) Credulity the Cause of Kinsmen's Deaths

18. INVOLUNTARY Crimes Of Love

(Elements: the Lover, the Beloved; the Revealer) A.

(1) Discovery that One Has Married One's Mother (2) Discovery that One Has Had a Sister as Mistress

B.
(1) Discovery that One Has Married One's Sister
(2) The Same Case, in Which the Crime Has Been Villainously Planned by a Third Person
(3) Being Upon the Point of Taking a Sister, Unknowingly, as Mistress

C.
(1) Being Upon the Point of Violating, Unknowingly, a Daughter

D.
(1) Being Upon the Point of Committing an Adultery Unknowingly (2) Adultery Committed Unknowingly

19. SLAYING of a Kinsman Unrecognized

(Elements: the Slayer, the Unrecognized Victim) A.

(1) Being Upon the Point of Slaying a Daughter Unknowingly, by Command of a Divinity or an Oracle
(2) Through Political Necessity
(3) Through a Rivalry in Love

(4) Through Hatred of the Lover of the Unrecognized Daughter B.

(1) Being Upon the Point of Killing a Son Unknowingly
(2) The Same Case, Strengthened by Machiavellian Instigations

C.
(1) Being Upon the Point of Slaying a Brother Unknowingly

D.
(1) Slaying of a Mother Unrecognized

E.
(1) A Father Slain Unknowingly, Through Machiavellian Advice

F.
(1) A Grandfather Slain Unknowingly, in Vengeance and Through Instigation

G.
(1) Involuntary Killing of a Loved Woman
(2) Being Upon the Point of Killing a Lover Unrecognized (3) Failure to Rescue an Unrecognized Son

20. SELF-Sacrificing For An Ideal

(Elements: the Hero; the Ideal; the 'Creditor' or the Person or Thing Sacrificed) A.

(1) Sacrifice of Life for the Sake of One's Word (2) Life Sacrifice for the Success of One's People
(3) Life Sacrificed in Filial Piety
(4) Life Sacrificed for the Sake of One's Faith

B.
(1) Both Love and Life Sacrificed for One's Faith, or a Cause

(2) Love Sacrificed to the Interests of State

C.
(1) Sacrifice of Well-Being to Duty

D.
(1) The Ideal of 'Honor' Sacrificed to the Ideal of 'Faith'

21. SELF-Sacrifice For Kindred

(Elements: the Hero; the Kinsman; the 'Creditor' or the Person or Thing Sacrificed) A.

(1) Life Sacrificed for that of a Relative or a Loved One
(2) Life Sacrificed for the Happiness of a Relative or a Loved One

B.
(1) Ambition Sacrificed for the Happiness of a Parent

(2) Ambition Sacrificed for the Life of a Parent C.

(1) Love Sacrificed for the Sake of a Parent's Life
(2) For the Happiness of One's Child
(3) The Same Sacrifice as 2, But Caused by Unjust Laws

D.
(1) Life and Honor Sacrificed for the Life of a Parent or Loved One (2) Modesty Sacrificed for the Life of a Relative or a Loved One

22. ALL Sacrificed For A Passion

(Elements: the Lover, the Object of the Fatal Passion; the Person or Thing Sacrificed) A.

(1) Religious Vows of Chastity Broken for a Passion (2) Respect for a Priest Destroyed
(3) A Future Ruined by Passion
(4) Power Ruined by Passion

(5) Ruin of Mind, Health, and Life

(6) Ruin of Fortunes, Lives, and Honors B.

(1) Temptations Destroying the Sense of Duty, of Piety, etc.

C.
(1) Destruction of Honor, Fortune, and Life by Erotic Vice (2) The Same Effect Produced by Any Other Vice

23. NECESSITY Of Sacrificing Love Ones

(Elements: the Hero; the Beloved Victim; the Necessity for the Sacrifice)

A.
(1) Necessity for Sacrificing a Daughter in the Public Interest
(2) Duty of Sacrificing Her in Fulfillment of a Vow to God
(3) Duty of Sacrificing Benefactors or Loved Ones to One's Faith

B.
(1) Duty of Sacrificing One's Child, Unknown to Others, Under the Pressure of Necessity
(2) Duty of Sacrificing, Under the Same Circumstances, One's Father or Husband (3) Duty of Sacrificing a Son-in-law for the Public Good
(4) Duty of Contending with a Brother-in-Law for the Public Good

(5) Duty of Contending with a Friend

24. RIVALRY Of Superior And Inferior

(Elements: the Superior Rival; the Inferior Rival; the Object) A.

(1) Masculine Rivalries; of a Mortal and an Immortal (2) Of a Magician and an Ordinary Man
(3) Of Conqueror and Conquered
(4) Of a King and a Noble

(5) Of a Powerful Person and an Upstart
(6) Of Rich and Poor
(7) Of an Honored Man and a Suspected One
(8) Rivalry of Two Who are Almost Equal
(9) Of the Two Successive Husbands of a Divorcee

B.
(1) Feminine Rivalries; Of a Sorceress and an Ordinary Woman
(2) Of Victor and Prisoner
(3) Of Queen and Subject
(4) Of Lady and Servant
(5) Rivalry Between Memory or an Ideal (That of a Superior Woman) and a Vassal of Her Own

C.
(1) Double Rivalry (A loves B, who loves C, who loves D)

25. ADULTERY

(Elements: a Deceived Husband or Wife; Two Adulterers)

A.
(1) A Mistress Betrayed, For a Young Woman

(2) For a Young Wife B.

(1) A Wife Betrayed, For a Slave Who Does Not Love in Return (2) For Debauchery
(3) For a Married Woman
(4) With the Intention of Bigamy

(5) For a Young Girl, who Does Not Love in Return
(6) A Wife Envied by a Young Girl Who is in Love With Her Husband (7) By a Courtesan

C.
(1) An Antagonistic Husband Sacrificed for a Congenial Lover (2) A Husband, Believed to be Lost, Forgotten for a Rival
(3) A Commonplace Husband Sacrificed for a Sympathetic Lover (4) A Good Husband Betrayed for an Inferior Rival
(5) For a Grotesque Rival
(6) For a Commonplace Rival, By a Perverse Wife
(7) For a Rival Less Handsome, But Useful

D.
(1) Vengeance of a Deceived Husband
(2) Jealousy Sacrificed for the Sake of a Cause (3) Husband Persecuted by a Rejected Rival

26. CRIMES Of Love

(Elements: The Lover, the Beloved) A.

(1) A Mother in Love with Her Son
(2) A Daughter in Love with her Father (3) Violation of a Daughter by a Father

B.
(1) A Woman Enamored of Her Stepson
(2) A Woman and Her Stepson Enamored of Each Other
(3) A Woman Being the Mistress, at the Same Time, of a Father and Son, Both of Whom Accept the Situation

C.
(1) A Man Becomes the Lover of his Sister-in-Law

(2) A Brother and Sister in Love with Each Other D.

(1) A Man Enamored of Another Man, Who Yields E.

(1) A Woman Enamored of a Beast

27. DISCOVERY Of The Dishonor Of A Loved One

(Elements: the Discoverer; the Guilty One)

A.
(1) Discovery of a Mother's Shame

(2) Discovery of a Father's Shame
(3) Discovery of a Daughter's Dishonor

B.
(1) Discovery of Dishonor in the Family of One's Fiancee
(2) Discovery than One's Wife Has Been Violated Before Marriage, Or Since the Marriage
(3) That She Has Previously Committed a Fault
(4) Discovery that One's Wife Has Formerly Been a Prostitute
(5) Discovery that One's Mistress, Formerly a Prostitute, Has Returned to Her Old Life (6) Discovery that One's Lover is a Scoundrel, or that One's Mistress is a Woman of Bad Character
(7) The Same Discovery Concerning One's Wife

C.
(1) Duty of Punishing a Son Who is a Traitor to Country
(2) Duty of Punishing a Son Condemned Under a Law Which the Father Has Made (3) Duty of Punishing One's Mother to Avenge One's Father

28. OBSTACLES To Love

(Elements: Two Lovers, an Obstacle) A.

(1) Marriage Prevented by Inequality of Rank

(2) Inequality of Fortune an Impediment to Marriage B.

(1) Marriage Prevented by Enemies and Contingent Obstacles C.

(1) Marriage Forbidden on Account of the Young Woman's Previous Betrothal to

Another D.

(1) A Free Union Impeded by the Opposition of Relatives E.

(1) By the Incompatibility of Temper of the Lovers

29. AN ENEMY Loved

(Elements: The Beloved Enemy; the Lover; the Hater)

A.
(1) The Loved One Hated by Kinsmen of the Lover
(2) The Lover Pursued by the Brothers of His Beloved
(3) The Lover Hated by the Family of His Beloved
(4) The Beloved is an Enemy of the Party of the Woman Who Loves Him

B.
(1) The Beloved is the Slayer of a Kinsman of the Woman Who Loves Him

30. AMBITION

(Elements: an Ambitious Person; a Thing Coveted; an Adversary)

A.
(1) Ambition Watched and Guarded Against by a Kinsman, or By a Person Under

Obligation B.

(1) Rebellious Ambition C.

(1) Ambition and Covetousness Heaping Crime Upon Crime

31. CONFLICT With A God

(Elements: a Mortal, an Immortal)

A.
(1) Struggle Against a Deity

(2) Strife with the Believers in a God B.

(1) Controversy with a Deity
(2) Punishment for Contempt of a God (3) Punishment for Pride Before a God

32. MISTAKEN Jealousy

(Elements: the Jealous One; the Object of Whose Possession He is Jealous; the Supposed Accomplice; the Cause or the Author of the Mistake)

A.
(1) The Mistake Originates in the Suspicious Mind of the Jealous One (2) Mistaken Jealousy Aroused by Fatal Chance
(3) Mistaken Jealousy of a Love Which is Purely Platonic
(4) Baseless Jealousy Aroused by Malicious Rumors

B.
(1) Jealousy Suggested by a Traitor Who is Moved by Hatred, or Self-Interest

C.

(1) Reciprocal Jealousy Suggested to Husband and Wife by a Rival

33. ERRONEOUS Judgment

(Elements: The Mistaken One; the Victim of the Mistake; the Cause or Author of the Mistake; the Guilty Person)

A.
(1) False Suspicion Where Faith is Necessary
(2) False Suspicion of a Mistress
(3) False Suspicion Aroused by a Misunderstood Attitude of a Loved One

B.
(1) False Suspicions Drawn Upon Oneself to Save a Friend

(2) They Fall Upon the Innocent
(3) The Same Case as 2, but in Which the Innocent had a Guilty Intention, or Believes Himself Guilty
(4) A Witness to the Crime, in the Interest of a Loved One, Lets Accusation Fall Upon the Innocent

C.
(1) The Accusation is Allowed to Fall Upon an Enemy (2) The Error is Provoked by an Enemy

D.
(1) False Suspicion Thrown by the Real Culprit Upon One of His Enemies
(2) Thrown by the Real Culprit Upon the Second Victim Against Whom He Has Plotted From the Beginning

34. REMORSE

(Elements: the Culprit; the Victim or the Sin; the Interrogator) A.

(1) Remorse for an Unknown Crime (2) Remorse for a Parricide
(3) Remorse for an Assassination

B.
(1) Remorse for a Fault of Love (2) Remorse for an Adultery

35. RECOVERY Of A Lost One

(The Seeker; the One Found) A.

(1) A Child Stolen B.

(1) Unjust Imprisonment C.

(1) A Child Searches to Discover His Father

36. LOSS Of Loved Ones

(A Kinsman Slain; a Kinsman Spectator; an Executioner)

A.
(1) Witnessing the Slaying of Kinsmen While Powerless to Prevent It
(2) Helping to Bring Misfortune Upon One's People Through Professional Secrecy

B.
(1) Divining the Death of a Loved One

C.
(1) Learning of the Death of a Kinsman or Ally, and Lapsing into Despair