

Narrative and Narration in Fictional Writing : An Unfolding

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Abstract

Storytelling began with the oral tradition of recounting stories using sounds and gestures. Myths, legends, fables, ballads, and folktales were performed aloud to entertain and teach an audience the cultural traditions and values. The two key terms associated with the art of storytelling are narrative and narration. They are the two significant aspects which are to be kept in mind while writing any fiction. Many a times narrative and narration are used synonymously but they are quite different from each other. This paper discusses in detail the differences between both the key terms and also examine and explore different types of narrations which are used in fictional writings. Some light is also shed through this paper , upon the narrative analysis method and its types.

Keywords: Narrative , Narration , Narratology , Storytelling, Narrative Analysis

Introduction:

Human beings have been reciting narratives since the beginning of the existence of human civilization. Through the centuries, the ways that narratives are expressed and passed on to an audience has changed and progressed gradually but what has remained unchanged is the essential desire and instinct—of storytelling. People have constantly been curious to know the events and happenings of others' lives. We cannot think about our lives without telling and listening stories as they are part of our lives in one form or another. Technically, stories are termed as narratives. The obsession of humans for stories is so much that they enjoy watching, reading and listening the narratives that they know are fictitious and not real.

However, the places, events and characters of such stories spark their imagination and help them experience a world beyond of actuality filled with fantasy. That is the beauty of fiction.

The significant spiritual books of the religions of the world—such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism—have roots in the oral tradition, as do epic poems like Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, the Norse Eddas and Sagas, the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf. There are several examples of storytelling as a method of passing down cultural traditions - Choctaw Storytelling, Native Hawaiian Storytelling , Western African Storytelling , The Passover Seder of Jewish people , Irish Storytelling. Storytelling has managed to be a constant pillar in our societies and has fundamentally helped us to mold our perception between right and wrong. An Irish storyteller put it : —It’s a need for connection ... I think storytelling nurtures connections with people in real life.¹¹

Later written languages developed to transcribe narratives from the oral tradition. Some of the earliest written narratives are the Sumerian stories in the Epic of Gilgamesh, which dates back to 2250–2000 BCE. With the advent of handwritten manuscripts and wood block- printed texts, written narratives continued in almost every culture in the Eastern and Western worlds. In the 15th century, Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press allowed printed texts more readily available and affordable.

Themes like love, adventure, heroes, life lessons, and supernatural and divine forces, have been used in both oral and written narratives. Modern narratives have evolved to include new genres such as Westerns, science fiction, industrialization, feminism, women empowerment, espionage, and mysteries. The popularity of different narratives depends on cultural context and often based on interests and concerns of the era.

Nowadays people watch YouTube vlogs , stage plays , stand ups shows from story-tellers , movies and daily soaps on television as well as on their smart phones to satisfy their appetite of listening different forms of narrative. However, the written form of language is the best medium to tell stories in an engaging way.

Narrative:

The word *narrative* (NAIR-uh-tihv) originates with the Late Latin word *narrate*, which means —to tell, relate, recount, explain.¹² It derives from the Middle French word *narrative* and was first used in English in the 1560s to denote —a tale, a story, a connected account of the particulars of an event or series of incidents.¹²

Narrative is a spoken or written description of interconnected episodes conveyed using certain literary techniques and devices. The systematic study of narratives in order to understand their structure (how they work) and function (what they are for) is called *narratology*. *Narratology* is closely linked with *semiotics*, the study of meaning-making processes, and in particular the use of signs and signifying systems to communicate meanings.

As the semiotician and literary critic Roland Barthes once wrote,

—The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances — as though any material were fit to receive man’s stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken

or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there has never been a people without narrative.¶³

Ignaso Rabio in his book *Prose Fiction: An Introduction to the Semiotics of Narrative*⁴ gave a definition of narrative as the semiotic representation of a sequence of events, meaningfully connected by time and cause.

Through this definition Ignaso Rabio also highlights certain key elements shared by all forms of narrative:

1. Narratives are semiotic representations, that is, they are made of material signs which can be written or spoken words, moving or still images, etc. which convey or stand for meanings that need to be decoded or interpreted by the receiver.
2. Narratives present a sequence of events, that is, they connect at least two events, actions, happenings, or incidents, in a common structure or organized whole.
3. Narratives connect events by time and cause, that is, they organise the sequence of events based on their relationship in time, or, in most narratives, by both temporal and causal relationships.
4. Narratives are meaningful, that is, they have meaning for both senders and receivers, although these meanings do not need to be the same.

Nowadays, in general, stories are classified as following -

- Fiction vs. nonfiction (based on whether the events and the characters of the story are invented or taken from reality)
- Prose vs. verse (based on the literary technique used to tell the story).
- Narrative vs. drama (based on whether the story is told or shown).
- Novel, novella, or short story (based on the length of the story).
- Adventure, fantasy, romance, humour, science-fiction, crime, etc. (based on the content of the story).

Writers rely on several other literary elements, to build a narrative including characterization, conflict, frame stories, linear vs. nonlinear narration, pacing, point of view, and tone. All these elements serve as the foundation on which a good narrative is formed.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives the following different definitions of a narrative :

- A narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events; a story.¶
- A narrative is a practice or art of telling stories.¶
- A narrative is a representation of a particular situation or process in such a way as to reflect or conform to an overarching set of aims or values.¶

From the above definitions we can deduce that narrative is a writing that connects ideas, concepts or events. It also means the account or recital of a story. Narrative is relating to narration. It is something that is narrated. A representation of the particulars of an event,

story or experiences is said to be its narrative. In creative writing, a manner of conveying a story, fictional or otherwise, in a body of work is termed as narrative. A narrative is a message that tells the particulars of an act or occurrence or course of events; narratives can be presented through a sequence of written or spoken words, still or moving images, or any combination of these. It is presented in writing whether nonfictional like memoir, biography, news report, documentary, travelogue, etc. or fictional as fairy tale, fable, legend, thriller, novel, etc. or drama or cinema or as a radio or television program.

There is a certain relationship of Narrative to Story (Fabula) and Plot (Syuzhet). Although people often use the words narrative, story, and plot interchangeably, still they are not the same thing.

Story refers to a series of events related in their chronological order. Plot indicates a series of events that are arranged deliberately to reveal emotional, thematic, or dramatic significance. This means the plot also conveys the causes, effects, and meanings of events. According to E.

M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel, the sentence —The king died and then the queen died is a story, whereas the sentence —The king died and then the queen died of grief is a plot.

Narrative, on the other hand, includes the sequence of events (the story), the causes, effects, and meaning of these events (plot), and the techniques and decisions employed by the author that determine how these events are recounted to the audience. These decisions and ways are known as narrative techniques which will be discussed further. One way to remember these distinctions is to think of what each provides. The story is what happens, the plot includes why it happens and significance of what happens, and the narrative is how what happens is recounted and conveyed.

Common types of narrative:

1. Descriptive narrative

Descriptive narrative connects imagery, ideas, and details to convey a sense of time and place. Descriptive narrative has two key purposes:

To create a sense of setting, of time and place and To convey the mood and tone of said time and place (e.g. threatening, peaceful, cheerful, chaotic).

When we describe a pastoral scene in a rural setting, for example, we might linger on specific images (such as a wide, empty field, an abandoned tractor) to build up an overarching mood (such as peaceful simplicity). The Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez is a master of this type of narration.

2. Viewpoint narrative

Often, the express purpose of a section of narration is to help us understand the views and feelings of the narrating character or 'viewpoint narrator'. Point of view or POV is thus a key element of narration. Viewpoint narrative presents events or scenes to us so that we understand them through narrators' feelings, desires, beliefs or values.

In omniscient narration, the narrator may share multiple characters' private thoughts, even in a single scene. In limited narration, by contrast, we can only know what a single person's perception tells us.

Viewpoint narrative has power. We might interpret story and its events the way the narrator does. Because we don't have a different viewpoint for comparison, or because their voice is strong, self-assured. Yet the viewpoint narrator in a scene may be unreliable, they could lie about what truly happened. Authors like Vladimir Nabokov have written novels featuring protagonists who are unethical or even abusive. In novels such as Nabokov's *Lolita*, the reader has to remember that the narrating voice has its own agenda.

3. Historical narrative

In genres such as biography, autobiography and various historical subgenres (e.g. historical romance or WWII fiction), a lot of narration recounts events in the past. Of course, the author may choose to tell a war story in a tumultuous present tense. There's no single way to narrate the past. Yet it serves a common purpose:

One thing common to historical narrative in different genres is it shows historical process. It links causation from event to event, showing the chain reactions that lead to how things came to be as they are in present. This is why in historical narrative, such as narration sharing a character's backstory, we often have words showing order of events.

4. Linear narrative

Linear narrative is narration where the narrator tells events in the order they happened, i.e. in sequence. This type of narrative is typical of realist fiction where the author wants to create the sense of a life unfolding as a character experiences day to day or year to year. The structure of a linear narrative is straightforward without any flashbacks or foreshadows. It starts with an exposition, followed by rising action leading up to a climax, falling action, and finally a resolution or denouement. An example of a novel with a linear narrative structure is *The Old Man and The Sea* (1952) by Ernest Hemingway in which the journey of an old man towards sea, his struggles with the sea along with his returning back home are described chronologically.

Linear narrative shows causes and reasons of everything clearly because the narrator shows what happened to a character in the past, then in the present, then in future without any time-shift therefore it becomes easier to notice patterns and chains of cause and effect.³

5. Non-linear narrative

The writers use different types of narrative which include narration that does not follow events in the order they happened. The story is not narrated in sequence. It can also represent the narrator's emotional state or consciousness. For example, if the narrator is severely traumatized and has flashbacks might tell events in a jumble of chapters set in different years, out of sequence, as they try to piece together fragments and memories.

It can show stories with related arcs or themes unfolding in different places and times. For example, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Emily Brontë's 1847 novel *Wuthering Heights* characters living in different time periods have personal experiences and tragedies.

Such a narration can build suspense in the work of literature. The devices like flashbacks, frame narratives and parallel plots are used in nonlinear narration.

Narration:

According to Miriam Webster Dictionary,

- Narration is the act or process or an instance of narrating.⁸
- Narration is a relating of events usually in the order in which they happened.⁹

There are several different synonyms of Narration like chronology, record , account , tale , story etc. which can be used as per the context.⁴

Narration is the act of recounting or relating in order the particulars of some action, occurrence, or affair. Simply, narration is a narrating. Narration is conveyed by a narrator who is a specific person or an unspecified literary voice, developed by the creator of the story, to deliver information to the audience, particularly about the plot (the series of events). The act of telling or relating the particulars of an event; a recital of certain events, usually in chronological order. Narration is an orderly recital of the details and particulars of some event, or of a series of events, a story or narrative. In rhetoric, narration is that part of an oration in which the speaker makes his or her statement of facts. Narration is that part of a discourse which recites the time, manner, or consequences of an action, or simply states the facts connected with the subject. It is also a message that tells the particulars of an act or occurrence or course of events; presented in writing or drama or cinema or as a radio or television program; the act of giving an account describing incidents or a course of events is also narration. Narration is the use of a written or spoken commentary to convey a story to an audience.

In writing or speech, narration is the process of recounting a sequence of events, real or imagined. It's also called storytelling. The person who recounts the events is called a narrator. The narrator, or the person telling the story, is one of the most important aspects of a text. A narrator can be a character in the story, or he or she might not appear in the story at all. In addition, a text can have multiple narrators, providing the reader with a variety of viewpoints on the text. Stories can have reliable or unreliable narrators – a narrator the reader cannot trust to tell the facts of a story correctly or in an unbiased manner. The perspective from which a speaker or writer recounts a narrative is called a point of view. Aristotle's term for narration was prothesis. Aristotle is frequently posited as the founder of modern narratology, and the Poetics is widely cited as narratology 's first, foundational work of narrative theory and criticism. Narration is the base of the story as without the narration story does not exist., as Barbara Fine Clouse wrote in Patterns for a Purpose: Everyone around us write narratives in one form or the other. It also comes into play in writing in the workplace. Teachers narrate events related to their pupil's discipline in class , physical therapists write narrative reports about the health progress of their patients , crime reports are written by police officers and insurance investigators write accident reports, both of which narrate sequences of events. Journalists also write reports and articles related to the events in a city to publish them in the newspapers and magazines.

The definitions below show three important aspects of narration in storytelling:

•It connects events, showing their patterns, relating them to each other or to specific ideas, themes or concepts.

•It is a practice and art in that when we tell a story, we shape the narrative – the connection between events.

Narrating a story involves shaping events around an overarching set of aims or effects (whether consciously or unconsciously). For example, in a comedic narrative, the overarching aim is to surprise/shock or otherwise lead the audience or reader to be amused.

Examples of Narration: 3 Main Types in Literature¹⁰ :

A novel, short story, poem, or academic essay, all are a form of narration. It takes a lot of consideration in the art of storytelling (or academic writing). One must also choose how to convey the topic to the reader. The three types of narration are: first person, second person, and third person. Each serves its own purpose.

It is important to be reminded about the difference between a narrative and narration. The two terms are often interchanged, but they don't mean exactly the same thing. A narrative is a story. It recounts a series of events that have taken place. Narration, however, is the act of telling a story. Narration is like the voiceover.

Types of Narration:

A writer can choose to tell a story any way he'd like. This is known as point of view. It addresses the perspective from which a writer tells a story. Here are the three main narrative perspectives or POV that writers use:

First Person - In this point of view, a character or the protagonist is telling the story. "I" and "me" or "we" are used in first person narrations.

Second Person - In this point of view, the author uses a narrator to speak to the reader. "You," "your," and "yours" are used in second person narration.

Third Person - In this point of view, an external narrator is telling the story. "He," "she," "it," or "they" are used by the author in this form of narration.

The way a story is told is as important as the story itself. If the author wants to write from the perspective of a single character, like the protagonist, he'll probably use a lot of "I," "me," and "mine." Or, if he wants to take on a more omniscient tone as a third-party observer who is detached from the action, he may use —he| , —she| , —it| or —they||1.

1)First Person Narration:

First person POV uses pronouns like I, me, us, our, and we. First person narration allows the author to "get personal" with their readers. It's as if one of the characters is speaking directly to someone in a friendly manner. Through first person narration, the reader is able to listen in on their thoughts. The audience will understand how the narrator is feeling and how he or she interprets the events taking place around them. The narrator will have a limited perspective; he cannot tell what the other characters are thinking or doing, and his telling of the story is influenced by his feelings about the other characters.

A passage written in first person narration helps the reader to be inside that person's head, seeing through their eyes. The reader think what the narrator think, see what he see,

know what he know, and feel what the narrator feels. This is the strength of first person that it shares emotional intensity as the reader respond to events along with the narrator.

Along with the strength there is also few weaknesses of first person POV. The weakness of first person is its lack of significant information. The reader only knows what the narrator knows; we can 't get into the heads of other characters who are nearby. The reader also only see what that narrator sees; they can 't see what else is going on around the narrator. The first person narrator 's knowledge of all the story's events is limited.

Writers tend to use first person when they want to convey emotional intensity, as in a personal narrative, or when they want us to know the narrator intimately.

2)Second Person Narration:

Second person point of view isn't quite as popular in literature. Second person POV uses pronouns like you, your, yours and yourself. Would you want to read a 200-page novel that forces you to be active the whole time? It takes on more of an instructional tone. It uses a lot of "you should" or "you can." This —you|| has the effect of engaging the reader, as the writer seems to address the reader directly. It is to be noted that second person point of view is the least common of the three narrative perspectives. This style is unique due to the implication that the reader is the main character in the story. Second-person narration can create a nice bond with the audience because it treats the reader like they're part of the story. The strength of second person is in a direct connection with narrator and reader; when reading second person, the reader feel as if he/she is having a conversation with the narrator. This is especially effective when they are giving instructions.

The second-person point of view is frequently employed as a marketing tool in Advertising. For eg. "Because You're Worth It.— (L'Oréal Paris). It's more common to see this type of writing used also in immersive role-playing video games, self-help and motivational books, marketing materials etc. Jay McInerney 's Bright Lights, Big City is one successful novel that 's told entirely in the second person. The story of the novel follows a young writer who descends into New York City 's toxic nightlife, all told from the perspective of —you.|| Also the novel The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern¹².

A second person point of view is a narrative perspective that places the emphasis on you, the one who is reading. It can be used sparingly to great effect by writers to make the reader an active participant in a story, however, this kind of narrative is very difficult to sustain.

The weakness of second person is that it limits the audience by making it seem the narrator is talking to only one person. It can create a strange —dreamy|| tone that may make the text feel strange. Writers may use second person when they want to talk directly to one reader, give instructions, or create a dreamy or meditative passage.

3)Third Person Narration:

Third person narration is quite popular in literature. The narrator could be omniscient or limited omniscient. Third person POV allows the author to open up the hearts and minds of several characters. With this form of narration, nothing remains a mystery to the audience.

Both of their thoughts and feelings are exposed to the reader and the reader is now able to take the journey to discovery or heartbreak.

While reading a passage written in third person, the reader experiences a perspective that is all-seeing and all-knowing. Third person is all about facts.

The strength of third person is its ability to be informative. It sees all, knows all, and shares this with the reader. But it's limitation is its lack of intimacy. It 's focused on information like settings and events and therefore tells us not much about emotion, feelings & human nature of the characters. When a writer want to write objectively without sounding emotional or biased, he choose to write in third person. Much college, research, and professional writing is done in third person.

Narrative Analysis:

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method in psychology, which helps into interpreting meaning which is fundamental for human development. An exploration of the questions related to meaning of experiences is accomplished by narrative analysis. Bruner (2004) commented that we live our lives as stories. The main focus of narrative analysis is the examination of literary texts that narrates events about people 's lives and experiences and to understand how humans make sense of themselves through written narratives. By narrative analysis of a story an insight into its hidden meanings, purposes, perspectives is attained through the study of its structure, content, and context. It also involves examining the different elements of a story, such as the plot, characters, setting. A close attention is paid to the patterns, recurring motifs, language, themes, and symbols used by the writer to measure the cultural and social contexts in which the narratives are written and to understand social phenomena, such as identity, race and gender.¹³

Moreover, narrative analysis method is no single dimensional. There are various types of narrative analysis based on the elements which a researcher intent to work on.

Types of Narrative Analysis are as follows:

- Structural Analysis
- Content Analysis
- Thematic Analysis
- Critical Analysis
- Discourse Analysis
- Phenomenological Analysis
- Auto ethnography

It can be declared that to explore the nuanced meanings that people attach to their experiences is the primary purpose of narrative analysis. Through this a rich and deeper understanding is gained about the experiences, identities, values and beliefs of the individual narrating the story. With the help of narrative analysis , a comparison can also be performed by identifying patterns , themes and motifs in multiple stories. Narrative analysis is not limited to written texts and stories , but interviews and various forms of visual media can also be analyzed.

With the above-mentioned multiple benefits of narrative analysis comes few drawbacks and weaknesses.

i. The first drawback of narrative analysis is that it is subjective in nature which means that different people can interpret the same narrative differently depending on their own mood, beliefs and understanding of the text. This is somewhat related to the reader-response theory.

ii. The next drawback of narrative analysis is the inability and failure to generalize the interpretations and findings as it can vary from reader to reader. Thus, the conclusions are often unreliable.

iii. Lastly, the analysis of a narrative is a tedious and a prolonged process. Thus, a sufficient amount of time must be allotted while focusing on the analysis of a narrative otherwise errors and misinterpretations can take place easily.

Conclusion:

Narrative and Narration both are significant part of storytelling and therefore whether it is about listening stories or telling of stories, nothing can take place without a narrative and its narration. As long as human beings exist, there will be the existence of the process of storytelling. Thus, it is crucial to keep in mind the elements associated with narrative and narration and their distinctive differences.

Furthermore, it is necessary for a story writing that a certain level of methodology, theory and technicality is applied to the narration. The way in which narration is done is important as it controls the mood, direction and the "regulation of narrative information" between the reader and the story (1980, p. 41). In the opinion of Gerard Genette¹⁴, narration is essentially diegesis, therefore it must be recited and narrated, in that it can achieve no more than an impression of mimesis by making the story appear real and alive to the reader. Narration can impersonate reality, it will always appear as somewhat fictional no matter how realistic the author tries to make it. However, with the proper understanding of narrative analysis methods and types, a narrative can be interpreted and the concealed meanings and purposes as intended by the writer can be unveiled smoothly. The significance of narrative lies in the fact that stories are a strong and most successful method for transfer of knowledge and information and that too in a memorable way.

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