ENG2602   PROSE   E-TUTOR NOTES   2017

1. Introduction
by C BARRINGTON - 21 Aug 2017 @ 19:33

Hello Everyone

In Study Unit 2, we look at the different genres of texts that fall under the category of 'prose'.

As you know, there are two primary modes of prose: **Fiction** and **non-fiction**.

- If you glance through the study guide, you will notice that Unit 2, 4 and 5 fall under 'fiction', while Units 3 and 5 are best represented by the label 'non-fiction'.

ALWAYS remember the questions **WHAT**, **WHY** and **HOW** when critically reading a text. (Please see Week 1 and 2.)

Prose Fiction:

What does the term 'prose fiction' mean within literature?

If you look at the first page of your Study Guide's Unit 2 you will see an attempt at answering this exact question under the heading "The Purpose of Fiction".

Through fiction literature, readers are able to negotiate a specific perspective of reality, or perhaps even just something as simple as questioning reality.

It is not, however, just about *reality*. Literature provides entertainment for the reader as well.

Your Study Guide mentions the term "*Ideologies*" (p. 7). This is the plural of ideology, which essentially refers to a body, set, or group of ideas which inform on personal, social and cultural identity.

There are any number of levels of ideologies from individual (your personal set of beliefs, including religious, moral and ethical) to group (an institution made up on individuals who all believe in the same ideas) to cultural (a mass group of agreed upon ideas which inform cultural behaviours).

Prose Fiction often tends to support or challenge ideologies which where (or are) prominent at the time the author wrote the text.

For example:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (aka: Charles Dodgson) is often considered a children's novel due to its sheer absurdity. However, Carroll's novel may be read as a political satire of Victorian England (Millikan 2011). Such a reading of the novel changes the way we approach a text and what we seek to interpret.

Another famous text known for its social commentary is Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This novel deals with the theme of slavery in the United States of America as both a historical act as well as how the trauma of slavery informs on American culture to this day.

Both are works of **fiction** and thus are **creative works** that have narratives. While they may have themes, ideologies and elements of the society in which they are produced, the works themselves are original and imaginary. Even those works, which are inspired by historical and sociological events, are at their core **fictitious**.

Those works that are historically accurate and follow actual events and people would be considered works of non-fiction.Biographies, New Reports, Articles and Reference works fall into the latter category.

Beloved by Morrison, is still in copyright and can be purchased from most book shops or from online dealers.

Alice in Wonderland, is out of copyright and therefore is available for download (in a variety of formats including audio) from Project Gutenberg here: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/928.

Reference List:

Millikan, L*. Curiouser and Curiouser: The Evolution of Alice Criticism*. 2011. Available from: <http://www.carleton.edu/departments/ENGL/Alice/criticism.html>. [19 February 2015].

You will note that twice now I have referenced within my discussions. I will be posting a forum discussion relating to referencing (closer to the assignment date).

Hello Everyone

Now that you have an idea of what type of texts we examine in Unit 2, I will be focusing on the category of fiction.

Prose Fiction has categories of its own.

The texts structure will determine the sub-category of the text:

Novels: Multi-chapter narratives without an expected or restrictive length.

Novellas: Multi-chapter narratives are shorter than novels, although not overly short (about 100 pages).

Short Stories: Normally a single-chapter narrative of about 10-30 pages in length.

Flash Fiction: An extremely short work of fiction, approximately 100 words.

I will be dividing up the 'Features of fictional prose' up and expanding on what is available in the study guide. Before I do this however, it is important to consider why we focus on the categories of prose and why it is important for you to distinguish between works of fiction and non-fiction.

When you are critically analysing a text, the first question you should ask yourself is **what kind of text am I reading?**

If I mistakenly read Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* as a biography of Edmond Dantès in the early 1800s, I immediately misunderstand the **why** and the **how** *of the text.* All conclusions drawn from a close reading of the text will therefore be incorrect.

While there are commonalities between the different forms of prose, and the **What**, **Why** and **How** questions are continually asked regardless of genre and category, it is important that you are able to recognise the difference between a text like *Monte Cristo* and Rebecca Skloot's biography *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

3. Prose Fiction: Character
by C BARRINGTON - 23 Aug 2017 @ 16:19

Hello Everyone,

In this post, we will consider characterisation within prose fiction.

Remember the t**ypes of fiction:**

Novels: Multi-chapter narratives without an expected or restrictive length.

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Character:

As mentioned within the previous topic, the **protagonist** and the **antagonist** are, generally speaking, the two characters that the plot revolves around.

There can be, often in longer works of fiction, numerous characters, ranging in the hundreds. The more complicated works may avoid having a single character who, as the primary protagonist and antagonist, will drive the plot. Often these such novels are considered Epic or Grand narratives.

Within shorter bodies of literature (**Novellas, Short Stories and Flash Fiction**) characters can be limited to as little as one or two characters. This is determined on the length and complexity of the work.

Remember the **rise of the action** element within the example of plot development?

·   Often the conflict that drives the plot is driven by the interaction between the protagonist and the antagonist.

Protagonist as the antihero:

·   Within literature or any other type of narrative text, things often are not as simple as they seem. Sometimes the protagonist is not the 'hero' and can actually be the villain or 'antihero'.

·   Within these more complicated plots, the antagonist is then defined as the source of the conflict.

For example, *The Blacklist*'s (NBC 2013) Raymond "Red" Reddington is the television show's main character (along with Elizabeth Keen). He also happens to be an **antihero**.

Characterisation can be found through the plot and the sub-plot, within the descriptions, the thoughts, the dialogue (the monologues, soliloquies, internal monologue), the actions and reactions of the various characters.

<p align="center">Understanding Characterisation:</p>

Point of View:

Our understanding of the story is based off what is provided within the text. The descriptions of events, places, people and interactions are all reliant of the **perspective** with which the author chooses to present the narrative structure.

As such, there are three different accepted modes of perspective with which to frame the narrative.

·   **First-Person:**

o   When the point of view which the reader finds him/herself in, is situated in a personal capacity of a character.

o   The text is subjective and based off of an individual's own perspective.

o   I; Me; Mine and My – the use of personal pronouns within the text suggests that the perspective is biased towards an individual.

o   The audience then, only knows what the narrator knows. Knowledge and perspective is then limited to the individual.

o   The narrator's limitations must be acknowledge when reading such a text, and questions must be asked about how the narrator's impression of a sequence of events or a conversation have been distorted to present a singular perspective.

Example of a first-person point of view:

> Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*'s narrator is the child Scout. As she is a child, Scout is unable to grasp fully the social complexities (specifically those linked to race) which the reader is asked to consider. We are introduced to the action of the novel through the eyes of an innocent child, which makes the realities of a racist American South being represented all the more brutal:

>> Cecil Jacobs made me forget. He had announced in the schoolyard the day before that Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers. I denied it, but told Jem.

>> "What'd he mean sayin' that?" I asked.

>> "Nothing," Jem said. "Ask Atticus, he'll tell you."

>> "Do you defend niggers, Atticus?" I asked him that evening.

>> "Of course I do. Don't say nigger, Scout. That's common."

>>   (Lee 1960 77)

·   **Second-Person:**

o   The point of view is secondary. This means that the narrative, most likely the author, often talks directly to the audience, asking them to engage in the reading of the text from an often more personal and intimate space.

o   You and Your are indicators of an author using second-person narrators.

o   This is a rare form of writing in literature and is very difficult to get right.

Example:

> Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *If on a winter's night a traveller* is a story about trying to read a story. In this way, Calvino's novel uses the framing device to write of a story, within a story.

Contained in each chapter are sections of the second-person narrator, who explains the process of reading. Such utilisation of the second specked challenges the readers own perception of the novel about reading.

> Find the most comfortable position: seated, stretched out, curled up, or lying flat. Flat on your back, on your side, on your stomach. In an easy chair, on the sofa, in the rocker, the deck chair, on the hassock. In the hammock, if you have a hammock. On top of your bed, of course, or in the bed. You can even stand on your hands, head down, in the yoga position. With the book upside down, naturally. (Calvino 1979 1)

· **Third-Person:**

o The narrator is on the outside looking in, without being directly involved with the action.

o There are generally two types of third-person point of views:

· **Third-Person Omniscient**

- All is known to the reader and all characters thoughts and feelings are exposed.

· **Third-Person Limited.**

- When the reader is limited to a particular individual or individuals' within sections of the text or sometimes this limitation is found throughout an entire work.

o It is the author's voice which provide the detail within the description of the text, in comparison to the first-person narrator whose singular voice is heard throughout the text.

Example:

> J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is an example of the third person **limited** narrative:

>> Three boys entered, and Harry recognized the middle one at once: it was the pale boy from Madam Malkin's robe shop. He was looking at Harry with a lot more interest than he'd shown back in Diagon Alley.

>> "Is it true?" he said. "They're saying all down the train that Harry Potter's in this compartment. So it's you, is it?". (Rowling 2006 86)

Useful Links:

https://prezi.com/g2ys1ui-d-gs/narrative-perspectives/

https://prezi.com/d9te-rlswikt/narration/

https://prezi.com/eadbzwm_2-gk/character-analysis/

Reference List:

Calvino, I. 1979. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller.* Random House, New York.

Lee, H. 2010. *To kill a mockingbird.* Random House, New York.

Rowling, J. K. 2004. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Bloomsbury, London.

4. Prose Fiction: Plot
by C BARRINGTON - 28 Aug 2017 @ 9:24

Hello Everyone

This post will examine the feature 'plot' relating to works of fiction.

Types of fiction:

Novels: Multi-chapter narratives without an expected or restrictive length.

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Plot:

Definition: The plots in a narrative (or dramatic work) are the **events** and actions of the narrative, the structure of said events (the sequence of events) and how they relate and interlink to form a **story**.

A plot is not a summary, nor is it the story itself.

In order to define the plot of the story you need to:

Explain how [this] even and/or action is related to [that] event and/or action, taking into consideration

The sequence of events:

How is the narrative ordered?

Is it fragmented, with continuous interruptions? Or is there one continuous narrative?

Is the narrative chronological (the story is arranged in a continuous timeline? Or are there flashbacks or leaps into the past or future?)

How these events considered together bring about specific effects within a text, both in terms of aesthetical and emotional impact.

The plot is closely tied to the primary characters of the narrative

The **protagonist** and the **antagonist**

This is because the characters will drive the plot as they initiate schemes or quests. Often the tension between the **protagonist** and the **antagonist** will be a determining factor regarding the direction of the plot.

The plot is ONGOING. What I mean here is that it continually evolves throughout the narrative. Because of this continual development, there is an emotional connection with the audience who become invested in the outcome and their lack of certainty over the expected (and hoped for) outcome.

Suspense and surprise are plot devices that help to achieve this emotion connection.

There are two types of 'plot':

Main Plot:

The primary (dominant) action and events which overarch across the entire narrative.

Sub-plot:

Sub-plots support the main plot, while being distinct from the main plot. Sub-plots form a 'second story' within the narrative and often provide added depth to the story by providing additional perspectives.

Often within **short stories**, there are few if any sub-plots and only a main plot within flash fiction. The longer a work of fiction is, the more space there is to include sub-plots.

The number of plots and sub-plots linked to character development and overall development of the story in its entirety.

A plot can be **linear** and **chronological** (the action happening within a specific order), or **non-linear** (the plot can be **fragmented** and disordered, meaning that **sequences of events** do not happen within the narrative as they would in real time).

The more complex a work of fiction is, the more detail will be incorporated into the sub-plots and there will be a larger number of sub-plots incorporated into the work.

Protagonist:

A protagonist is the story's hero. Often, the plot will follow the development of this character.

Antagonist:

Often the villain of the story, the antagonist is a plot device which is used to drive (move the plot) onwards to some form of resolution.

There are various types of plot development, although the basic plot development follows a fairly standard structure:

Exposition: The beginning of the story will introduce the protagonist, the setting of the narrative (the location and time period). Sometimes the conflict and antagonist are introduced early in the story.

Rise of the action: This is the event within a plot where the conflict develops and the characters are 'fleshed out'. Moral and physical challenges are presented to the protagonist who will attempt to negotiate around the difficulties faced.

The Climax: Is the point in the plot where the greatest tension/information/challenges and difficulties are presented. This adds to the suspense and the development of the action. This also signals a resolution to the conflict is on the horizon and that the character has reached a point of revelation and realisation and is ready to grow and develop.

Fall of the action: As there is a build up to the climax, the revelations and resolutions, which have happened in the climax, are then situated into the narrative, often pushing the story to the resolution.

Resolution: The end of the story in which the conflicts have been resolved, the protagonist has overcome the challenges set and has in some way, developed and grown from the experience.

Example:

White Oleander by Janet Fitch is a **novel** that follows twelve year old Astrid Magnussen, the protagonist, after her mother Ingrid, the antagonist, a famous poet and eccentric soul is arrested for murdering her lover. Based primarily in her teenage years, Astrid is confronted with a number of foster homes. Each foster home signifies a sub-plot within the story, beginning with Astrid's developing sexuality and moving on to drug addition, race relations, suicide and growing up in a

hostile environment. Although the plot is chronological in sequence, Astrid continually reaches back into her past for memories which might help her reconcile her past with her present.

Astrid's various foster homes provide a wealth of conflict for the narrative. However, it is her relationship with her estranged mother that drives the narrative. Within each foster home, Astrid constantly engages with the foster mothers. Each reaction is different, although all culminate in a psychologically and physically traumatised girl.

The various representations of the mother figure (a motif within the text) are the various facets of the original mother figure, Ingrid. Astrid is forced to confront her mother's complex personality through these substitute women. This continues until her confrontation with Ingrid, who, through her act of murder, imprisoned her child while simultaneously abandoning her. After Astrid finally confronts her mother (the climax) she begins to settle down and become more self-assured, until the novels resolution, where a grown up Astrid is no longer dominated by her mother or the maternal figure.

Useful Links:

https://prezi.com/v2mniwnv9e-3/plot-and-conflict/

https://prezi.com/7ifds1m8wjwt/the-plot-diagram-the-structure-of-a-story/

https://prezi.com/aaub7nl7fwyh/the-five-elements-of-plot/

https://prezi.com/-vikz9kluhe2/fiction-plot-elements/

5. Prose Fiction: Setting and Theme
by C BARRINGTON - 28 Aug 2017 @ 9:25

Hello Everyone,

This post will examine Setting and Theme.

Remember the t**ypes of fiction:**

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Setting:

Definition: The time and location in which the narrative is positioned.

The setting assists in establishing the contextual elements within the text.

When is the story set?

- Is there more than one time period within the text?
- Sometimes texts are fragmented and jump between time periods that can span moments or centuries.
- How does the time period and the structure of how time is used influence your reading of the text? Why?

Where is the story set?

- How many locations are there with in the narrative?
- How does the author negotiate the between the location and time within the text?
- If there is a change in location, how is this transition made?

Within the longer texts (Novels and Novellas) there can be multiple locations as well as time period used.

- It is dependent on the complexity of the text and the development of the plot.

Within the shorter texts (Short Stories and Flash Fiction) often there is only a single setting through the narrative.

- These texts, due to their limited length need to be as simple contextually as possible.

It is even possible to have a single location over multiple temporal periods and vice versa.

Questions you should consider as you examine the text:

- What are the expectations that are raised with the particular settings of the novel?
- Does the author attempt to subvert these expectations?

    · How the author uses the setting will determine quite a bit of the understanding of the text.

    · For example:

- A narrative, set in *out of space* in the year 3004, immediately places it in the genre of science fiction.

- A novel set within a world with unicorns and winged individuals would be considered fantasy.
- Placing a text within a particular genre will allocate certain expectations of how the text will develop.
- A different example is the Victorian novel, which traditionally will have a bildungsromans plot development.
- Is the setting appropriate for the text?
- How does the author negotiate between the plot, the characterisation and the setting?

Theme:

Definition: The central topics or ideas that the text considers.

These topics and ideas are often woven throughout the plot. Themes are based on almost anything, although often, themes are associated to human existence and identity.

- Emotions (such as love and hate)
-
- Social (gender and relationships)
-
- Economic issues (ownership and production)
-
- Political (conflict and globalism)
-
- Environmental (eco-politics and veganism)
-
- Physical (Body issues)
-
- Metaphysical (questions of existence)

Such examples as the ones above provide a broad-base on which you may consider the notion of theme. If you consider the topics above, you may see that they overlap.

This is why theme is such an interesting literary device. Themes can merge and blend together, providing support and opposition within a text, ultimately adding a level of complexity to the text, which will influence the reader's understanding.

As you should have noticed by now, the longer more detailed texts have, due to their length, the space to consider more topics and ideas of interest.

Therefore, these texts will have multiple themes in comparison to shorter texts. Shorter texts generally have one or two themes.

The wonderful thing about literature is that everyone can interpret tests differently. The theme plays a major role in how individuals interpret the text.

This means however, within literature studies that the interpretation of the text must be substantiated through a close reading of the text as well as, if needed, secondary readings. If you do not argue for your interpretation through close readings, then the actual essay or paper becomes problematic.

Just as there are main plots and sub-plots, so too, are there major and minor themes to be found within texts.

An example: Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare.

- Major theme: Fate, destiny love.
- Minor theme: Gender.

Of course, within this play there are other themes, however, it is dependent on your reading of the text, what you recognize as a theme, which will direct how you understand the text.

Useful Links:

https://prezi.com/m-tfq0obugsz/analyzing-theme/

https://prezi.com/epl4jvr3_ght/understanding-theme-in-fiction/

6. Additional Links
by C BARRINGTON - 28 Aug 2017 @ 9:26

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https://prezi.com/qqjefjy1coaz/elements-of-fiction-plot-characterization-setting-tone-imagery-irony-and-theme/

https://prezi.com/8r8figy9yykc/13-14-literary-elements-terms-review/

https://prezi.com/oxglcas-peo2/elements-of-fiction/

https://prezi.com/epl4jvr3_ght/understanding-theme-in-fiction/

https://prezi.com/u1sw5y9fb0-f/character-and-plot/

Re: Z - Questions
by G BASTOS - 2 Oct 2017 @ 20:32

Hi Can you please assist me on how to write a prose essay I am getting confused between a persuasive prose and prose essay

Re: Z - Questions
by C BARRINGTON - 8 Oct 2017 @ 13:31

Both analyse texts: The persuasive prose are (the WHAT) adverts, speeches, newspaper and magazine articles. So your primary focus here is analysing

- WHY the text is has been written (What is the primary message--is it selling anything (a vacation, a home, food, cloths?), trying to convince you that something is important (perhaps the plight of firemen, or water conservation), or change your ideological ideals (political and personal ideas which you hold to be important), perhaps even just to inform you of an even or issue in the world.)).
- and the HOW -- what effects are used, what language style and register, tone and diction, any images or examples which are effective...

That is a very basic outline, I have posted a number of comprehensive ones in other posts.

The a Prose essay will be a fictional work, such as an extract from a novel. There, it is not so much a 'why' is it being written (so don't focus on 'it's for entertainment', because that can get silly really quickly) as the what and how.

So I like to read through an extract, try to find information on 1) Setting, 2) Characterisation, 3) Plot (what of it is visible in the short extract) and most important 4) Theme. Then I formulate how I know all this information through diction analysis and merge it with the above (mostly setting, characterisation and theme, with a little plot if it is visible). Then I would chose how to structure the essay, depending on what is being asked of me.