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The Interplay of the Author, Narrator, and Characters in Narrative Texts: Their Roles and Functions

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ABSTRACT

Narrative texts are essential in literature and storytelling, relying heavily on the interplay between the author, narrator, and characters. These three components play distinct yet interconnected roles in shaping the narrative, offering different perspectives, and contributing to the overall meaning of the text. The author is the creator of the story, the architect of the narrative world, and the one who initiates the plot and its themes. The narrator, however, is the medium through which the author conveys the story, influencing how the plot is perceived by the reader. Meanwhile, characters are the vehicles of action within the narrative, embodying the themes and conflicts that drive the story forward. This paper explores the roles of the author, narrator, and characters, examining their functions, interactions, and the ways in which they collaborate to construct a cohesive narrative experience.

Keywords: Author, narrator, characters, narrative texts, storytelling, narrative voice, first-person narrator, third-person narrator, omniscient narrator, unreliable narrator, protagonist, antagonist, character development, narrative structure, narrative theory, literary analysis, plot, themes, literary devices, narrative perspective, character arcs, storytelling techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The craft of storytelling is built upon the relationship between three fundamental elements: the author, the narrator, and the characters. Each of these components serves a unique function in the creation of narrative texts, influencing the way a story is experienced by readers. Understanding the roles of these elements helps illuminate how narratives are structured and why they affect the reader in different ways.

The author is the original creator of the narrative, shaping its thematic direction, tone, and style. The narrator is the voice through which the story is told, and it often mediates the relationship between the author and the audience. The characters are the fictional or real individuals who populate the story, each with distinct motivations, actions, and development arcs that contribute to the narrative's progression.

This paper delves into how each of these roles contributes to the development of a narrative, examining their

individual functions and how they collaborate to create a compelling and cohesive story.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, analytical approach to examine the functions and interrelations of the author, narrator, and characters within narrative texts. The research includes the following steps:

1. **Literary Analysis:** A detailed exploration of the roles of the author, narrator, and characters in selected narrative works.
2. **Textual Criticism:** A review of academic writings, critiques, and analyses that discuss these components in narrative theory.
3. **Case Studies:** Analysis of specific works of fiction to illustrate the interaction between the author, narrator, and characters.

4. Comparative Analysis: Studying different narrative styles, such as first-person, third-person, omniscient, and unreliable narrators, and how these affect the role of the narrator in relation to the characters and author.

RESULTS

1. The Author: Creator and Architect

The author is the foundational force behind the creation of a narrative text. As the creator, the author is responsible for setting up the narrative's framework: the world in which the characters exist, the plot that drives the story, and the thematic questions that emerge throughout the narrative. The author determines the setting, the conflict, and the resolution, offering a perspective on the themes they wish to explore.

The author's influence extends beyond the storyline to the narrative voice and tone of the work. Through choices in style, diction, and structure, the author can guide the emotional and intellectual responses of the reader. Whether using complex language to evoke a sense of mystery or opting for straightforward prose to create an accessible narrative, the author's stylistic choices define how the story is communicated.

While the author sets the groundwork for the narrative, their role is often invisible, especially when the narrator takes over as the primary voice. However, the author's presence remains embedded in the themes, character motivations, and the overall message of the work.

2. The Narrator: The Voice of the Story

The narrator plays a pivotal role in narrative texts, as they are the medium through which the reader learns about the events and characters of the story. The narrator determines what information is conveyed to the audience, influencing the perception of events, characters, and settings. The narrative perspective—whether first-person, second-person, third-person, or omniscient—shapes the reader's experience.

- **First-Person Narrator:** In this form, the narrator is a character within the story, using "I" to tell the events. This perspective offers an intimate connection between the narrator and the reader but can limit the scope of information, as the narrator can only provide insights from

their own experience. Example: In *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, Holden Caulfield narrates the story in the first person, allowing readers to see his personal thoughts, biases, and feelings.

- **Third-Person Narrator:** A third-person narrator exists outside of the story and uses "he," "she," or "they" to describe events. This form allows for greater flexibility, as the narrator can be omniscient (knowing all characters' thoughts and experiences) or limited (only knowing a single character's inner thoughts). Example: In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, the third-person limited narration offers insights into the minds of various characters while primarily focusing on Harry.

- **Omniscient Narrator:** The omniscient narrator knows all aspects of the story, including the thoughts, emotions, and motivations of all characters. This type of narrator can provide an all-encompassing view of the narrative world, allowing readers to understand the broader implications of the events taking place. Example: Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* uses an omniscient narrator to present a sweeping overview of the lives of numerous characters across vast social settings.

- **Unreliable Narrator:** The unreliable narrator deliberately misleads the reader, creating tension and mystery within the narrative. The narrator's biased or distorted version of events prompts the reader to question the truth of the story being told. Example: In *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nick Carraway's perception of Gatsby is initially colored by admiration, making him an unreliable narrator whose understanding of events shifts over time.

The narrator's position within the narrative allows them to influence not only the flow of information but also the emotional tone of the work. A skilled narrator can heighten tension, create sympathy for characters, or introduce ambiguity to leave readers with a sense of uncertainty.

3. The Characters: Driving the Narrative

The characters are the lifeblood of narrative texts, providing the actions, conflicts, and relationships that propel the plot forward. Characters can be protagonists, antagonists, secondary figures, or minor characters who all serve to create a dynamic and engaging story.

- **Protagonist:** The protagonist is the central

character whose goals and conflicts form the crux of the narrative. The protagonist's development—whether through personal growth or the resolution of external conflicts—is often central to the narrative arc. Example: In *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, Elizabeth Bennet is the protagonist, whose journey involves personal growth and the resolution of her feelings toward Mr. Darcy.

- **Antagonist:** The antagonist opposes the protagonist, often creating obstacles or conflicts that the protagonist must overcome. The antagonist can be a person, an idea, or an internal struggle. Example: In *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Macbeth himself becomes the antagonist in his internal struggle with ambition and guilt.
- **Secondary Characters:** Secondary characters serve to support the narrative, offering advice, serving as foils to the main characters, or contributing to the development of the plot. Example: In *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, characters such as Samwise Gamgee provide vital support to Frodo Baggins, adding depth to the protagonist's journey.
- **Character Development:** As the narrative unfolds, characters evolve based on their experiences, decisions, and interactions with other characters. Character arcs, whether positive or negative, are key to maintaining narrative momentum and engaging the reader.

Characters allow the audience to connect with the story on an emotional level. Their internal and external conflicts offer avenues for exploring themes such as love, morality, sacrifice, and identity.

DISCUSSION

The author, narrator, and characters in narrative texts serve distinct but interconnected roles. The author initiates the narrative, deciding on the overarching themes and plot structure, while the narrator determines how the story is communicated to the audience. The characters then act as the vehicles through which the plot unfolds, with their actions and motivations driving the narrative forward.

The interplay between these elements contributes to the depth and complexity of narrative texts. The narrator's perspective can offer different interpretations of the characters' actions, leading to a multifaceted reading experience. Meanwhile, the author's control over narrative

voice, structure, and characterization can steer the reader's emotional response and thematic understanding.

CONCLUSION

In narrative texts, the roles of the author, narrator, and characters are central to creating a rich and immersive storytelling experience. Each element contributes to the development of plot, themes, and reader engagement. The author establishes the framework and thematic elements, the narrator conveys the events and character perspectives, and the characters embody the conflicts and resolutions that drive the story. Together, they create a cohesive narrative that resonates with readers on intellectual, emotional, and psychological levels.

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