

Name: Chloe Price

Student Number: 1902095

BA Course: BA Hons Illustration

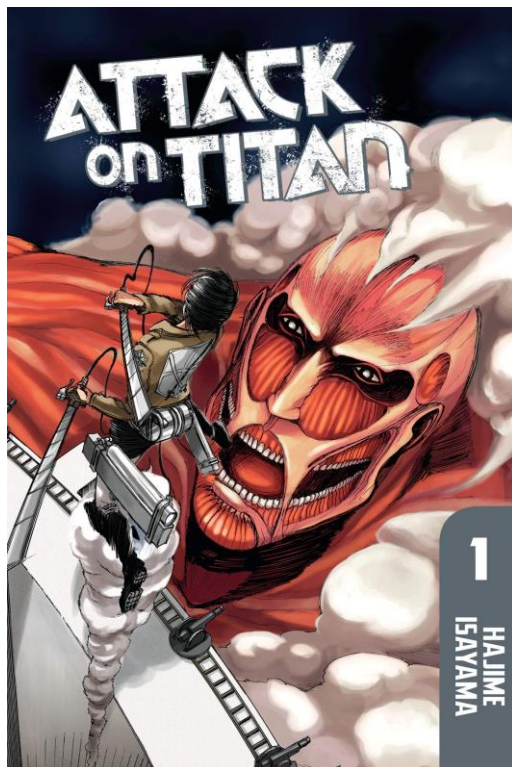
Keywords: Narrative, Character, Presentation

Word Count: 2508

What makes a successful story?

When it comes to creating a story, there 3 important aspects to consider which would be a compelling narrative, interesting characters and presentation. These aspects are in every story as without them the story itself would fall through and would draw people in to give it a chance.

A compelling narrative is a key part to have as without it there isn't really a story to be told. An article from Virtual Speech talks about the benefits of storytelling such as being 'Memorable. Grab's attention. Evokes emotion' (VirtualSpeech). When it comes to writing a story making sure that it remains consistent and interesting to keep the people invested. There are multiple ways that can make a story interesting but one of the most interesting is a black and white conflict turning out to be a conflict that is in morally grey area. In the TVTropes website they state that 'The most basic form of fictional morality, black and white morality deals with the battle between pure good and absolute evil' (TVTropes). They explain how writing a story based on this morality effects every part of the story such as motivation, choices and characterization, this in turn can make the story seem a little stock or boring due the fact that limited in what you can include. Like TVTropes states 'The villains never have a sympathetic motivation for their actions' (TVTropes) this limits the writer in how interesting they can make the characters. Of course, this would affect other parts of the story such as choices the characters make are clearly either right or wrong without any nuance to make the decision have consequences that effect the story and characters. That's why writers at some point in the story add nuance by revealing that the situation isn't just black and white which then adds the grey morality which makes the story more interesting. In TVTropes article about 'Grey and Gray Morality' it states, 'An all-grey conflict, neither side is totally good nor completely evil' (TVTropes), meaning both sides of the conflict have a justifiable reason for fighting. Most writers usually write this until revealing that the one side has more good people and better and justifiable reasons so people will still root for the main protagonist but by developing the opposite side it allows people to feel conflicted and question whose side they should be on. Sometimes writers will also include a morally grey character to act as an allies and enemy to both sides as they will work with whichever side that benefits for their own goals and motives at that moment. An article from Inspired Lines Editing states 'Morally grey characters are the intermediate between a villain and a hero. They are neither wholly bad nor good' meaning when having this kind of character in a story adds a lot of potential as they could join either side of the conflict or could even become the main villain who tricked both sides. An example of a series that goes from a black and white conflict to a morally grey conflict is the Japanese manga series Attack On Titan created by Hajime Isayama. Throughout, the beginning of the series the conflict is simple as it focuses on the last of humanity who are trapped inside of this gigantic walls fight against the titans that reside outside of walls to eventually gain back their freedom.



However, as the series continued, we learned more about the world and soon realised there was more to this conflict than before. It's discovered that they are not the last of humanity as across the scene there is another nation however, they have been the ones creating titans and sending them to kill our main protagonists which makes the audience instantly hate this other nation just as much as our protagonist do. The audience is soon introduced to the other nation of Marley, and we begin to see their side of the story and soon learn that they attacked our main cast out of fear and hatred due to them being part of the Eldian nation whose ancestors were Marley's former oppressors. Now both the cast and audience are faced with a moral dilemma as they now must decide whether to continue with their attack or to try and make peace. This is good example of a black and white conflict to morally grey as the audience has spent a large majority of our time with the main cast and have seen all the hardships and horrors, they have been through which leads the audience to already be biased against Marley but then are suddenly being asked to understand sympathize with the perceived enemy and leads them to question their own morality along with the characters.

Another example is from the series My Hero Academia by Kohei Horikoshi where even though one side is clearly the right side there isn't a clear solution to the conflict. In the world of the My Hero Academia there is the highly praised and popularised hero society and opposing them is the villains trying to take them down.



As the story continues, we learn more about the hero society and how protecting people wasn't every hero's type priority as well as the higher ups behind the heroes making questionable and sometimes underhanded decisions. The main villains of the series steal the ideals of a fellow villain who killed the heroes that he saw that were unworthy of that title leading to the catalyst event of the series where the public begins to question the heroes' intentions themselves and whether they should put so much of their faith in them.



Along with the main cast and the public, the audience themselves must question whether the heroes are doing their jobs for the right reasons. As TVTropes it states that 'In most cases, one side has better reasons and more good people than the other.' (TVTropes), this is the grey morality that Kohei Horikoshi has used, as the heroes is clearly the right side to root for and the audience can still sympathize with the villains without condoning their actions. However, the heroes' side of society is so severely broken that the audience along with the cast must question what the solution is or whether there is a solution at all.

Another key aspect of a story is characters as without them what's the point of a good story. A story requires characters as they are the reason the plot can move forward, in NY Book Editors states that 'Readers can experience the world that you've created through your characters, both from the way that your characters interact with their environment and the way that your characters view their environment.' (NY Book Editors), this is very true especially if the story is set in a fictional world, the characters play a key part in introducing the audience to the world and teaching them about it. NY Book Editors also talk about how the themes are personified and illustrated through the characters. Characters are also a key part in making a story memorable through their development and character arcs, in an article by Helping Writers Become Authors state 'Character evolution is at the heart of any good story. Whether it's the protagonist doing the changing, or whether the protagonist is changing the minor characters, character arcs are ultimately the whole *point* of fiction.' (Helping Writers Become Authors). Character arcs are the development the character goes through, throughout the story as we seen them grow and learn to overcome their weakness and flaws so when we reach the end of the story, they are different from how they were at the beginning of the story.

An example of good character development is the main character of Attack On Titan, Eren Jaeger. At the beginning of the story Eren starts the series as a 15-year-old who chooses to join the military after losing his mother and vowing to get revenge and gain his freedom. He begins the story as an optimistic, hot-headed, bad tempered teen who quickly gets a reality check when facing the titans. Throughout the series he continues to go through more horrors as in finding out he can turn into the horrible creatures he despises, is continuously threatened with his death by both the titans as well as the military he works for. Once he discovers that Marley was the reason for their imprisonment that when he finally gains freedom and finally sees the ocean for the first time with his two best friends, he couldn't even be excited to have finally gained freedom because all he could think about was the fight waiting for them across the ocean. Up to this point despite the hardships Eren kept up the idea that they could win this war against the titans but once he learns of Marley and what is waiting for him and his friends, he is more serious, deadpanned and depressed for the fight to come which is in stark contrast with how he was at the beginning.

We skip four years ahead and we see a now 19-year-old Eren who is now alone in Marley even more cold and distant than before. After finding out about the past between Marley and Eldia, Eren's friends begin to plan to make peace with Marley however, Eren cannot let it go that easily believing they have to pay for all the suffering they have caused or at least that's what he leads everyone to believe. Due to his power, we find out he had seen all these events happening and so is making sure the events happen the way he saw which is why he pushes away everyone he cares about so they wouldn't hesitate in stopping him. In the end, Eren makes himself become the villain to unite Eldia and Marley as to stop the war and to believe that with him gone they can move on. Eren ends the series as a self-sacrificial, cold, distant man willing to give up his own life to protect the people he loves. Considering he was the protagonist of this series to have him ultimately become the hero and villain and willing die and give up his freedom for everyone else shows the amount he has changed from the brash kid he was at the beginning.



(Beginning of the series)



(End of series)

The last aspect that matters when it comes to storytelling is the presentation as it's the medium that the story is mainly told through especially when it comes to manga and graphic novels where a majority of the story is told through the art. So, the presentation we'll focus on is visual storytelling, according to an article from DebbieMillman states 'Visual Storytelling is the art of using language and images to convey a narrative account of real or imagined events.' (DebbieMillman). In visual storytelling the artist has to think about every line they draw to convey the emotion or impact they want a scene to show as without those visuals the audience would have as much investment if they could see the impact of a scene or the characters expressions. The best way to see visual storytelling is by looking at artwork from manga and graphic novels.



Looking at this panel from Attack On Titan we're going to focus on the character in the top right Levi. Now despite this art being a very simple black, white and grey colour scheme the detail is in the way Hajime Isayama drew the lines. You can see the creases around Levi's

eyebrows, as well as the heavy shading around his narrowed eyes and how small his pupils are. Just through his eyes alone you can see the pure anger and hatred he is feeling as he chases after his enemy. That's not all that shows the intensity of this scene the harsh yet thin lines across his face with small patches breaking them up doesn't just visually show that he is covered in blood but also shows just how fast and intense he is moving its almost as if he is leaping off the page towards the reader. Now let's shift focus to the character on the top left while his lines aren't as intense the heavy use of them around his eyes and brow help to amplify the fear and dread in his eyes as he knows he his plan failed. The lines drawn inside of his mouth almost give off the impression that his teeth are chattering another way to show fear, but another possibility is that it could show how he is terrified to the point where him moving even his jaw is near impossible.



Another manga that does this well is My Hero Academia with this panel of one of the main characters, the number one All Might in his final battle. Through his pose you can tell he was triumphant in the fight shown by the fact he is standing with his fist raised in the air which is commonly seen as a sign of the victor. However, the heavy shading and the panels that surround hardly give off that heroic vibe, you can see his suit is ripped and torn but also covered in dirt and blood showing how intense and dangerous the battle was. His arms are bruised to the point you can barely see his skin tone shown by the small white patches on

his arms. All Might throughout the series has been known to always smile no matter the danger but the fact that his face is mostly obscured, and you can see from his eyebrow his intense expression that not only did the people of this world lose a great hero, but they also lost the smile that brought them all peace and safety. The panels behind him show how the rest of the world is reacting to this final battle in the middle panel you see a large crowd of people cheering happily knowing he's won and protected them again not knowing that this was the final time. The character in the top left was a mentor, in his half-closed eyes you can see his tired, yet sad and defeated expression as he now must watch as the hero he raised finally step down and give up what he fought so hard to uphold and protect. The character on the bottom left holds a similar expression yet slightly different, his eyes while sad also look intense due to his furrowed eyebrows as if he is unsure of what to think as he sees the person, he looks up too in his final moments as a hero.

Overall, a lot of aspects go into making a successful story, however these seem to be the most important. As when it comes to making a story that is both narratively and visually interesting having these key aspects greatly helps to improve the story.

Bibliography:

- Attack On Titan manga by Hajime Isayama.
- My Hero Academia manga by Kohei Horikoshi.
- <https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/write-character-arcs/>
- <https://www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans/the-art-of-storytelling/>
- <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BlackAndWhiteMorality>
- <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/GreyAndGrayMorality>
- <https://writingcooperative.com/8-writing-tips-that-will-make-you-a-powerful-storyteller-85592cf26cee>
- <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/tell-story-delivering-presentation>
- <https://www.inspiredlinesediting.com/blog/4-tips-to-write-morally-grey-characters>
- <https://nybookeditors.com/2018/01/5-important-characters-to-have-in-every-story/#:~:text=Characters%20serve%20as%20the%20driving,your%20characters%20view%20their%20environment.>
- <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-tips-for-character-development#how-to-develop-a-protagonist>
- <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/the-definition-of-character-in-fiction-writing-1277093>
- <https://www.debbiemillman.com/visual-storytelling>