

CREATIVE WRITING PART TWO

LESSON THREE:

Foundations:

English Usage and Grammar Point:

Affect, effect:

(From Longman's Guide to English Usage)

To **affect** something is to "influence" it:

Example: The appointment of a new Minister will affect the department's policy.

To **effect** something is to "bring it about" or "carry it out".

Example: The new Minister will effect changes in the department's policy.

Confusingly, one meaning of the *noun* **effect** is close to that of the *verb* **affect**. To *affect* a policy is to *have an effect* on it.

Affect as a *noun* exists only as a technical term in psychology, meaning the conscious subjective aspect of an emotion, considered apart from any bodily changes it may produce.

The *noun* **effect** in the plural can mean one's property: *my personal effects*.

The purpose of this lesson is to identify a pattern of structure and to apply it to a piece of writing.

I have a word that acts as a *mnemonic* when I use it as an *acrostic*. That word is FOCUS.

This is helpful also in the sense that your work needs *focus* to give it clarity and to help it connect with the audience.

Structure is more than simply something to hang your words on. It's the structure of a piece of writing that offers the points of recognition for the audience that enables them to engage with what you've written. The simplest story structure is:

Beginning

Middle

End

We instinctively recognise this pattern and if our writing conforms to it then the audience will know where they are.

Obscurity is never desirable. If the audience have no ideas of where they are what can your writing possibly tell them? Obscurity is employed by people who have little to say.

This is how FOCUS works as an acrostic:

- F - The first. (Paragraph; argument; character etc.)
- O - Opposition (*All writing needs tension; without that it's uninteresting. Tension is achieved partly through conflict. These first two elements suggest that.*)
- C - Catalyst (*All stories need change. The condition of the characters/ hero by the end must be different from what it was at the beginning. The catalyst is the agent of change*)
- U - The unexpected (*this is the really creative area. Always undermine the audience's expectation*)
- S - Synthesis (*the bringing together of all the elements for the conclusion; in a drama the denouement*)

I use the word *synthesis* to suggest the dialectical nature of this shape:

Thesis

Antithesis

Synthesis

A shape that describes conflict and resolution.

I will give you an example of this shape in action by describing the story of the Sophocles play *King Oedipus*.

Notice how the shape introduces elements like *dramatic irony* (Oedipus the good king but flawed human being, as a result of the conflict implied in his relationship with Creone fuelled by his own *tragic flaw*, his anger, and the information about why the city is

suffering the plague – the catalyst – sets up the investigation that will bring about his own downfall)

The Exercise:

Take a couple of minutes to think of a landscape. (Could be a cityscape etc.)

Now take a couple of minutes to think of a character (real, historical, fictional)

Write this:

You are taking a walk in the landscape and you meet the character. Use FOCUS

Your initial conflict (F and O) may be between

- the character and himself
- the character and his environment, weather etc.
- the character and another character who leaves before the C character arrives

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