

IN TODAY'S SESSION...

- ❖ Part 1:
 - ❖ Narrative modes
 - ❖ Subversive forms
- ❖ Part 2
 - ❖ Close readings and discussion
- ❖ Part 3
 - ❖ Writing exercise
 - ❖ Feedback



NARRATIVE MODES

- **Narrative time** – time span, how time and how your story is **structured**. Beginning and endings. Present or past tense etc



- **Who tells the story** – which type of **narrator**? What is their distinctive **voice**? and whose **point of view** are they giving?
- **Stylistic elements:**
 - Balance of showing and telling
 - Balance of prose and dialogue (what can the dialogue show us about the characters?)
 - Balance of action and reflection
 - Construction of pace
 - Short or long sentences; plain or flowery writing

WHICH NARRATIVE MODES TO USE?

- This largely depends on **what kind of story** you want to write and how much you want to **reveal to the reader**. But it's important to think about what will best **suit** your protagonist and their story.
- If your protagonist is morally ambiguous, is dealing with trauma or mental illness, or would have a particularly interesting narrative voice, you should use **first person**.
- If your story contains a lot of characters who all carry the story but not necessarily in the same place, then use **third person**.
- Remember: you can always change narrator type or tense in the editing stage, or use more than one.

NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW

First person: interior monologue, dramatic monologue, detached autobiography

- All need an engaging, single voice telling its own story in a way that produces a strong sense of realism.

Third person: degrees of knowing - omniscience, free indirect / close 3rd person

Second person: not so common, implicates the reader to a certain extent, with the use of 'you'.

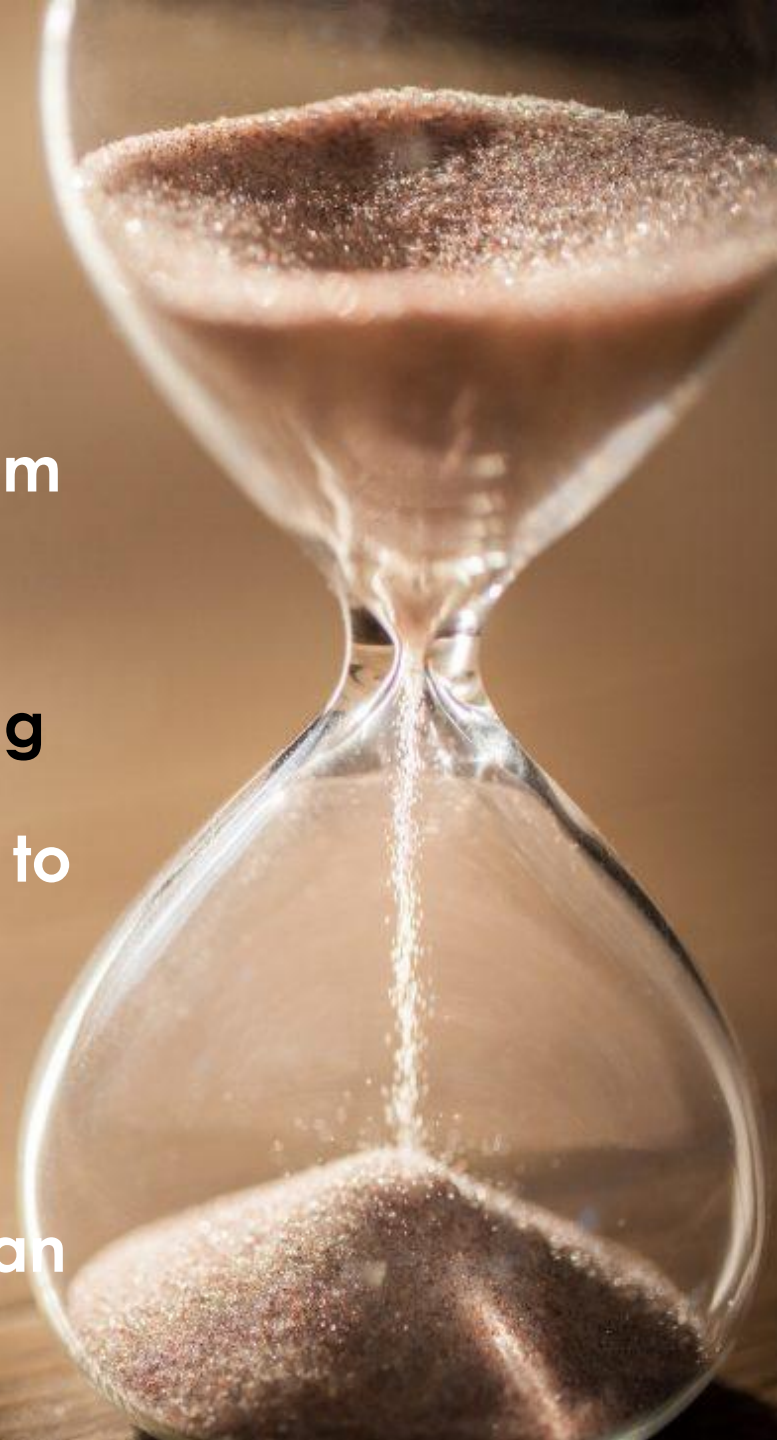
NARRATIVE VOICE



- The critical element of any point of view is the **narrative voice** – the defining tone and attitude which filters through the story.
- i.e. the type of language and sentence structures used which define the voice of the narrator or the narrator-protagonist.
- How casual is your narrator's voice? Standard-English? Local accent? Idiolect.
- In the case of the first person narrative, it is more common to use a defined lexicon and syntax that reveal character and add richness to the prose.

NARRATIVE TIME

- Time is one of the key building blocks of structure
- Establishing a dramatic 'present' gives the story a stable centre from which to navigate through past and future
- Temporal variation mirrors the human mind – we're often thinking about the past and the future
- Foreshadowing allows the author to tease the reader with a future event
- Flashbacks can offer backstory and give depth
- Time travel doesn't have to be enormous: statements of habit can also be effective



FORESHADOWING

“Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.”



SUBVERSIVE FORMS

- Telling a story with fragments 'out' of time (Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*)
- Stream of consciousness (e.g. Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*, Eimear McBride's novel *A Girl is a Half-formed Thing*)
- Interweaving a strand of story that we can't place (Maggie O'Farrell's novel *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox*)
- Telling a story in reverse order (Courtia Newland's short story 'Reversible')



PART 2: CLOSE READING

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- What do you observe about the narrative voice?
- Who is doing the speaking and to whom? (Is it 1st person? 2nd person? 3rd person?)
- What is the form of the narration (Spoken? Written? Epistolary? etc.)
- What can you say about the structure of the narrative?
- How has the author manipulated narrative time?
- How does the narrative form interact with the theme?



PLAYING WITH NARRATIVE TIME

You could start with a sentence that joins the fictional present with the fictional past. For example:

“On this very day, eight years ago....”

You could start with a birds' eye view over time – a position where you can see the past and the future.

“In five years time, I will be dead. But I don't know that yet. Right now, I'm sitting in the bath...

You could introduce a conceit that explains to the reader that you are about to play with time:

“In the moments of his drowning, time bent in waves around his thoughts.”

PART 3: CREATIVE EXERCISE

STEP 1: Make a list, numbered 1 to 6 with enough space between each number that you can jot down some thoughts.

STEP 2: Look at your phone and find a recent message from someone close to you. On a separate scrap of paper, copy down the most recent message they sent you.

STEP 3: On the same scrap of paper, next to the message, write down the name of an acquaintance from back home: first name and surname.

STEP 4: Fold it over and put in the envelope.

STEP 5: Choose a different slip of paper from the envelope.

PART 3: CREATIVE EXERCISE

- Under Number 1 on your writing space, jot down the name that you've been given.
- Under number 2, copy down the message.
- Under number 3, note down your initial thoughts about this person.
- Under number 4, jot down something that happened to this person years ago.
- Under number 5, jot down what they are doing right now in the fictional present.
- Under number 6 write down something that is going to happen to them in the very near future.
- The message that you've copied down at number 2 on your list is the last message the character sent before number 6 happened.

NOW...WRITE

FEEDBACK ETIQUETTE

- ❖ ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’
- ❖ ‘Critical Friends’: We are a community of readers and writers. Please be constructive and specific about the work on the page.
 - ❖ ‘What worked well is...’
 - ❖ ‘It would be even better if...’
 - ❖ ‘I think the problem could be solved if you...’
 - ❖ ‘You could try...’
- ❖ Balance positive and negative criticism: Start and end on a positive note, using the sandwich method.
- ❖ Avoid: ‘I like it’ and ‘I don’t like it’.
- ❖ Focus on what engages you and why.