

Narrative techniques used in pride and prejudice assignment

Sociology



Throughout this passage from *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen utilises various narrative techniques. These include dialogic qualities (showing) and the use of third person narrative including focalisation and free indirect speech (telling). Both showing and telling work on different levels to further the reader's interpretation of different characters and give meaning to the novel as a whole. The use of dialogue allows the reader to engage in conversations between characters, thus adding drama to the novel and also giving an insight into the personalities of those speaking.

In comparison, the use of telling permits the reader to observe the unspoken, private thoughts of characters and often allows for a deeper analysis of the novel. The passage begins with the story being told by the omniscient narrator, who describes the events from a third person perspective. However, as the events are concentrated around the actions of Elizabeth it can be said that she is being used as the focalizer; it is not only her actions which are being narrated but her feelings too.

Austen's technique of using focalization allows the reader to build up a relationship with Elizabeth so that we can better relate to, and sympathise with her feelings. As the reader sees much of *Pride and Prejudice* through Elizabeth's eyes, it is with her that one of the strongest relationships is formed. The narrator's choice of language in the first paragraph confirms Elizabeth's feelings towards both Wickham and Darcy.

Describing it as a 'refreshment' to speak about Wickham illustrates her agreeable feelings for him, whereas, her ill feelings towards Darcy are highlighted when she is 'left to fret over her own want of presence of mind'

when she accepts his invitation to dance. As a reader, we are unsure, at this point in the novel, the extent to which we are to believe Wickham's words about Darcy, but, as much of the plot surrounding Wickham's admissions has been focalized from Elizabeth's point of view, we do lean towards her viewpoint.

After the scene has been set, the presence of the narrator gives way to a passage of dialogue between Elizabeth and Charlotte. This technique of showing allows the reader to become more involved with the character's feelings and provokes the reader into a response. In unison with the first paragraph, Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy is clearly visible.

The numerous exclamation marks used by Elizabeth displays how strong her feelings against Darcy are and Austen's choice of language ' hate, misfortune, evil' all emphasise further the negative light in which she views him. This considerable prejudice against Darcy is pivotal to the novel's plot. The use of free indirect speech within the passage can be seen shortly after the dialogue between Elizabeth and Charlotte when Charlotte whispers to Elizabeth ' not to be a simpleton and allow her fancy for Wickham to appear unpleasant in the eyes of a man ten times his consequence.

The effect of presenting this in narrative form rather than direct speech gives the sense of generalized opinion and through hearing these words through the narrative voice, we as a reader are more likely to trust and see truth in Charlotte's words as we trust the narrator more than any character. Of course, as the novel develops, we learn how true these words actually are.

The words spoken by Charlotte are of common opinion throughout the novel and are in keeping to the time period in which it is set.

The idea of men being judged by their material possessions and wealth is frequently demonstrated throughout the novel; Austen frequently refers to the male characters in terms of how much they earn a year. The Dialogue between Elizabeth and Darcy within the passage further reinforces Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy. While Darcy alludes to the formalities of the time period being quite cordial towards Elizabeth, she is barely civil, and her wit and irony is visible as she reveals her feelings for Wickham while poking fun at Darcy.

When describing Mr Wickham as being 'unlucky' to lose Darcy's friendship, her satirical tone mocks Darcy's preceding comments, however, subsequent reading of the novel show a deeper irony in Elizabeth's misconceptions about both Wickham and Darcy. A further use of irony is visible when Elizabeth states 'we (Elizabeth and Darcy) are each of an unsocial, taciturn disposition' this of course, especially within this passage is totally unfounded, as while Darcy may remain reserved, Elizabeth behaves quite contradictory.

The use of silence proves as important as dialogue between the two characters in the passage as it serves to reveal Darcy's feelings for Elizabeth which develop further as the novel unfolds. Although as a reader we remain sympathetic to Elizabeth's feelings, Darcy's good manners throughout the passage develop our compassion towards him. While all that Elizabeth says is 'shown' through dialogue, Darcy's responses are via a combination of

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dialogue and 3rd person narrative; this, along with the use of silence, presents a sense of non-disclosure and we do not get establish Darcy's real feelings until his letter to Elizabeth.

It is clear that Darcy's silence only serves to make Elizabeth more incensed. To start with she only hints at her previous conversation with Wickham stating (on her opinion of Darcy) ' I must not decide on my own performance' when this is met by Darcy with silence, unable to resist temptation she brings Wickham into conversation as it clear she wishes Darcy to know of her information surrounding the two characters, even though this proves to be unfounded.

However sympathetic we may be towards Elizabeth at this point in the novel, it is worth noting that her emotional disposition makes us question the validity of her opinions, more so as very little judgment is made through the impartial narrator. However as this is a realist novel, the boundaries between the heroine and hero must be so great so that we can trust in the sincerity of their future and share their personal journeys with them. To conclude, Austen uses a variety of narrative techniques in the passage to provoke a variety of responses with the reader.

Both showing and telling provide the reader with all that they need to become involved with the characters and plot but just the right amount of information is withheld so that we are encouraged to read on. The underlying themes of both pride and prejudice are visible in the passage not just between Elizabeth and Darcy's characters but the pride and prejudices of society at that time. Austen's ability to overcome the prejudices that she

creates between the hero and heroine imply that she views love as being separate from the views of society at the time and that love has a much greater power than money, social class or moral standing.