

'tickets, please', 'a serious talk' and 'the tell-tale heart'

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In this essay I will be considering the different ways that D. H. Lawrence, Raymond Carver and Edgar Allan Poe have used to get inside a character's thoughts and feelings. I will be referring in detail to 'Tickets, Please' by D. H. Lawrence, 'A Serious Talk' by Raymond Carver, and 'The Tell-Tale Heart' by Edgar Allan Poe. I will be exploring how these writers use language and other techniques to create the internal world of each character. I have chosen these stories as they are all different and I will evaluate the effectiveness of the use of language used by each writer.

I will first of all explore the way each writer introduces his main character. In 'A Serious Talk' the writer introduces the character of Burt and immediately takes us into his feelings from the first sentence: " Vera's car was there, no others, and Burt gave thanks for that. " Although the story is told in the third person, the reader is given information about Burt's inner thoughts and feelings, which lets us know that the story will be told from his point of view. Carver describes Burt's feelings as he gives presents to his wife and children, Burt " felt a welling in his chest.

This creates sympathy in the reader as Burt's feelings of love for his wife and children are expressed. We can also see his vulnerability and hurt in the way that his behaviour with the pies is described: " He stacked them in his arms, all six, one for every ten times she had ever betrayed him. " Carver uses this incident with the pies to show the reader how Burt has become childish in his feelings of anger and pain. In contrast, in 'Tickets, Please' Lawrence introduces Annie in a less direct way, first of all describing the physical surroundings and the community before Annie is brought in.

The reader first meets her in a dialogue between her and Ted. He says she must have " a heart of stone" for treading on his corn. The fact that her name is Miss Stone emphasizes this aspect of her character. She is then described from an external perspective as " peremptory, suspicious, and ready to hit first. " Unlike the way Carver presents Burt, Lawrence shows Annie first of all from the point of view of a passenger on the tram. He talks to the reader as if he/she is a stranger visiting that part of the country.

He then moves inside Annie's thoughts and feelings with the line " there is a certain wild romance aboard these cars- and in the sturdy bosom of Annie herself. " With the use of the words " wild" and " sturdy" in the same sentence, Lawrence sets up a contrast between the two different sides of Annie's character. This makes her more interesting, so that the reader wants to find out more about her. He takes us inside her thoughts and feelings but also contrasts this with an outside view. This is an effective technique for creating depth in her character.

Both the stories I have discussed so far have been written in the third person. However, Lawrence writes from the point of view of an omniscient narrator and he is able to describe the thoughts and feelings of other characters, not just Annie. While Carver also writes in the third person, 'A Serious Talk' is told from Burt's perspective and we are left to guess at how the other characters feel from what we are told about their behaviour.

For example, when Burt cuts the phone wire, his wife's reaction is clearly one of anger: " She screamed, 'Out, out, where you belong! " Yet we are given no further information about how she feels. This gives the reader the impression

that Burt considers her behaviour unreasonable. It is particularly interesting to compare these stories with an example of a story written in the first person, as this creates a completely different effect. In 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' Poe uses the first person to create an immediate dramatic impact as he introduces his character: " True! -nervous-very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am". The style of the writing in this story imitates the nervous, disjointed speech patterns of the mad man's voice.

The use of the first person present tense is a very powerful technique for getting into the mind of a character. The reader is immediately taken into the mad man's inner thoughts and feelings. However, it is also very limiting to the writer, as unlike Laurence, for example, he cannot describe anything from another character's point of view. I will now look at the development of the characters as each story progresses. Poe develops his character by describing the mad man's feelings continuously. He uses emotive words and imagery: " His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness".

This almost gives a sense of the darkness being something the reader can physically feel. He describes emotion in a dramatic way: " it was the groan of mortal terror. " The way that Poe describes the mad man creates a strong image in the reader's mind. The language he uses is practical and shows no emotion when he talks about " the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. " He talks about dismembering the corpse as though he is a butcher cutting up meat. This develops our sense of the mad man's character, as we realise how insane he must be to behave in this way.

Lawrence's story is a complete contrast to this as he uses different techniques to develop his character, Annie. He describes Annie's feelings in direct plain language, " she wept with fury, indignation, desolation, and misery. " This shows her vulnerability and takes the reader inside her character. In this story the reader can relate to Annie's feelings, we can sympathize with her anger and pain at being rejected, whereas the mad man is presented as a character who no reader is likely to understand.

Annie is presented as a human being with similar feelings to ourselves, while the mad man is presented as a vile repulsive individual with feelings that are alien to most human beings. It is not always necessary for the reader to empathize with a character, as Poe's story shows. Carver has created a character that from the beginning, is shown to have weaknesses and faults. As the story continues, Carver develops Burt's character by describing his inner feelings indirectly, unlike the technique that Lawrence uses to tell the reader about Annie's feelings.

Burt's emotions are communicated by his focus on details such as: " A turkey carcass sat on a platter in the centre of the dining room table, the leathery remains in a bed of parsley as if in a horrible nest", tells us about how Burt is feeling towards Christmas as we see the scene through his eyes. He is miserable and has a negative attitude expressed in this description. Finally I will turn to the way each writer presents his character at the end of the story. In the final scenes of 'A Serious Talk' we see Burt clutching the " goddamn ashtray" as a symbol of his marriage.

His language shows how he feels: " He'd tell her the goddamn ashtray was a goddamn dish". This reveals his anger and a controlling attitude, which is unrealistic. The ending of the story encapsulates Burt as a character. It sums him up as a person. He is strong minded, determined, stubborn, childish and bitter. By this time Carver has created a strong contrast for the reader between how Burt sees himself as justifiably angry, and how the reader sees him, as abnormal and ridiculous. In the ending of 'Tickets, Please' Lawrence presents Annie's feelings very seriously, emphasizing her pain and suffering.

She does not seem to be furious now but hurt, and this is shown in his use of language: " bitter", " agony", " something was broken in her", " as if in torture". Both Annie and Burt end by feeling that they have not got what they really wanted from the other person. In contrast, the ending of 'The Tell-Tale Heart' contains a twist and the effect is dramatic as the mad man reveals himself as a murderer. Although he is convinced that the police officers can hear the beating of the old man's heart, the reader knows that it is his paranoia and guilt, which leads him to confess.

This is shown by Poe's use of repetition, which communicates the mad man's state of mind, " louder! louder! louder! louder ! " This rhythmic rapid use of language conveys a sense of the mad man's panic and also imitates the sound of a heartbeat or ticking watch. In this way, he takes us inside the mind of the character by reproducing the disjointed pattern of his thoughts. In conclusion all three stories are highly effective in their use of language and techniques at creating the inside of a character's mind.

Lawrence is the only writer of the stories I have considered to make use of the omniscient narrator technique. He takes us into different characters minds and allows us to contrast them from both inner and outer perspectives. He has created a story full of detail, description and emotion. Carver has also used the third person but presents his characters thoughts and feelings through describing everything from his point of view, allowing the reader to see the distortions in Burt's way of thinking.

He skilfully creates a sense of emotion in an indirect way, through physical description, which presents Burt's perspective. Finally, Poe has used a dramatic first person monologue, which suits the extreme character of the mad man and creates an intense sinister atmosphere, which Poe is famous for. His story has a strong sense of tension and horror. Overall these three stories are very different, and show the variety and creativity in the short story form.