

What techniques has  
mcewan used to  
make his opening  
striking, in chapters  
1-3 ess...



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McEwan uses a variety of literary devices within the structure of Chapters 1-3 of "Enduring Love". The use of syntax, time, focalisers, sensory and metanarrative techniques have the effect of holding the reader in suspense as well as creating characterisation to a lasting effect. Time is used to create transformations between suspense and exhilaration.

The striking first sentence utilizes a short syntax, "The beginning is simple to mark", (whereby the use of rhetorical questioning teases the reader) creating an abrupt, heart-stopping sense of trepidation from the very beginning. Longer, more complex sentences are used in conjunction with this, to create a feeling of continuous action, "I was wild by now, ready to fight, run, dance, you name it"; via the use of syndetic listing, a drag in time is formed.

The differentiation between the two, causes a bigger build up as the alternating tempo contrasts to a more pronounced effect. A change between perfect and imperfect tense is used, "I was stretching out my hand" and "we heard a man's shout", to form a dramatic break in the change of events, as McEwan's narrative changes between an observed account, and an account to which the reader is involved - the difference between objective and subjective that guides the reader through fragmentary events.

Through the use of metanarrative, McEwan refers specifically to time, "This was the moment, this was the pinprick on the time map", whereby the imagery of time being diagrammatically plotted allows the reader to conjure thoughts of before and after the event as well as during; whereby the change in events are linked together, giving the 'story' a chronology, yet

still depicting the way Joe cannot see an overview of proceedings at the present time.

Gaps within Joe's thought process are described, as if they are merely a memory, "saw the danger. Next thing, I was running towards it", as a memory will remember certain events, whereas real-life scenarios cannot it is of course impossible to 'fast-forward' time - the way one could in a video or book.

This also implies that Joe's interpretation of events draw upon the benefit of *heinzzeit*, as he is recalling a memory (as characteristically memories recall significant and poignant snapshots in time, not necessarily in the sequence they may have occurred in reality) and therefore in this mode of thinking he has the clarity of mind to calmly present the situation as he's looking back at it, as opposed to as it occurs 'in the heat of the moment'.

Correspondingly, the use of *prolepsis*, "running away from our happiness", whereby future events are foreseen and anticipated (such as Joe and Clarissa running away from their pleasant picnic, and running away from their blissful relationship), and prophecies what is to happen later in the novel. Similarly, changes within the focaliser are used, fabricating a distancing effect. Joe's personal first person account, "I was stretching out my hand, and as the cool neck and black foil touched my palm, we heard a man's shout", gives a clear recollection of events, as if the reader is viewing the scene through Joe's eyes.

This not only engages the reader through the use of all-encompassing

sensory stimuli (in this case sight, touch and hearing), but also allows the <https://assignbuster.com/what-techniques-has-mcewan-used-to-make-his-opening-striking-in-chapters-1-3-essay-sample/>

reader to become emotionally involved with Joe's thoughts and visions, grounding McEwan's use of imagery. However, other differing views are given, " I see us from three hundred feet up, through the eyes of the buzzard", whereby Joe distances himself from the scene within his imagination. This has the effect of giving a ' crime-scene-esque', ' out-of-body' experience, aiding the reader's broad introspection of the situation.

Joe is distanced from the action as a shift in time is marked by a change in viewpoint. Likewise, Joe and Jed are described from the buzzard's point of view as " like lovers, innocent of the grief this entanglement would bring"; this is ironically proleptic of the rest of the novel, as Jed will believe they are lovers, yet it is Joe who will feel " grief" - further evidence that it is Joe's opinions and thoughts we are hearing. The irony is represented by the buzzard's point of view being embedded in Joe's first person narrative.

The reader is kept in suspense throughout via McEwan's use of ambiguity in order to build tension. Calm is evident in first few paragraphs, creating a bigger rift between the (immediate) tension caused further on in the chapter, " We were in sunlight under a turkey oak, partly protected from a strong, gusty wind" as opposed to, " The wind renewed its rage in the treetops just before I felt its force on my back", as the wind is introduced as a pathetic fallacy, depicting events to come.

This subtly implies an inevitability of impending drama, using a sensory depiction (touch) of the ruthless and cruel forces that will act upon him, as does the wind. Initially, McEwan does not state what is happening to the balloon as it happens: by referring to it as " the event I am about to

describe". This use of deliberate reader confusion via the with-holding of facts adds to the uncertainty, yet augments the memorability of the opening chapters.

However, a lack of build up is also, " the black foil touched my palm, we heard a man's shout", as McEwan combines the banal (" black foil") with important factual knowledge (" man's shout"). This essentially sets the tone for the beginning of the story in a concise, yet terse way, having the effect of shocking the reader due to the immediacy with which the action begins. Joe's reactions are the first glimpse the reader gets of the event, " Next thing I was running towards it", prolonging the process of the event being ' observed' by the reader, adding suspense to the alarm and immediate action, as felt by Joe.

The divergence of characters shows the conflict between science and human-nature, adding another layer to the novel via the archetypal representation of man and woman within the novel. Whilst Clarissa embodies creativity and intuition, Joe embodies logic and reason. Keats' letters to Fanny are used as a metaphor for Joe and Clarissa's relationship within their dialogue, " He knew he'd never see Fanny again', Clarissa said, ' He loved her so hard", " I squeezed her hand and said nothing [... ] I thought it possible that in his hopeless situation he would not have wanted to write precisely because he loved her so much".

Joe is portrayed as not being in touch with his emotions in the same way as Clarissa is - whilst she finds the romance of Keats exciting, emotional and attractive declaration of love, Joe interprets his letters as unnecessary in a

condition of 'love already won'. This suggests a dire incompatibility. On the contrary, Joe uses the scientific analogy, as describing their relationship as being an "equilibrium", showing the way in which Joe deals in measurable, quantifiable facts. This need for solidity, sense and repeatability creates a void within his understanding of emotions which cannot be put into formulaic form.

Overall, whilst McEwan's use of syntax, time, focalisers, sensory and metanarrative techniques are used effectively, and bring excitement to the novel, it is his use of imagery that truly grips and insights thought within the reader. For example, the use of the metanarrative metaphor, "a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fate would buckle into new shapes", that describes the creative process by putting the author in the position of a blacksmith forging and shaping characters from metal, and creating a sub-context within the novel, enables McEwan to create a story that does not follow the linear predictability of other novels.