

# Characterization through multiple perspectives

Business



The gap between fiction and reality can be difficult for authors to close, partly due to the fact that they usually choose one point of view to tell their story through. To portray the multiple sides of a character that make him or her realistic and rounded, Egan chose to tell the main character of her novel through the perspectives of many interconnected characters. In *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, Egan bridges the gap between reality and literature by characterizing Sasha as a complex character, through the viewpoints of others, showing her many sides. Egan opens the novel through Sasha's eyes, as she tells her own story in what seems to be present day New York City, when Sasha is thirty five years old.

Sasha reveals her stealing problem on the very first page, explaining her unexplainable urge to take items that do not really matter. Sasha seems content with her life, but, to her, there is something missing. The way Sasha explains her kleptomania, it seems that stealing temporarily fills the gaps in her life, and gives her a "personal challenge" (Egan 4). When a plumber comes to her apartment, Sasha takes a screw driver from his tool belt. "And once the screwdriver was in her hand, she felt instant relief... a blessed indifference..." (Egan 8). Once the plumber leaves, Sasha no longer feels that the screw driver is special.

Stealing satisfies a need in her, and temporarily relieves holes in her life made by experiences in her past or by things missing in her present.

Through this story, she hints that she is unhappy with her life. If the book only showed Sasha through her own perspective, it would seem that she is a troubled, sad criminal. Egan, however, shows that there is much more to her.

Later in the novel, Egan introduces Scotty as a new narrator, and old friend of Sasha's boss Bennie.

The chapter catches a snapshot of Scotty at a low point in his life. He divorced his wife Alice, works as a janitor, and seems lost. Scotty visits Bennie in his office, and meets Sasha, who he first sees simply as a receptionist. When they first meet, "she cocked her head, a look on her face like all of a sudden she'd recognized me" (Egan 98). This interaction solidifies their relationship, and relates them within the complicated characters and plotline of the book.

The interaction that Scotty has with Sasha is very brief, but he includes enough of his observations of her to further her character development. As Scotty leaves, he says "I couldn't resist one last look at Sasha. Her eyes were serious, almost sad, but she was still flying the flag of her pretty smile" (Egan 104). Through this last sentence, Egan shows that even years prior to the first chapter, Sasha is troubled and cannot hide that despite her best efforts. Scotty's view of Sasha develops her character because it shows a person's first impression of her, and proves that even Scotty, who meets her for the first time, can tell that she has troubles, but she is a caring and insecure girl.

Sasha, like most people, cares about what people think of her and self-consciously attempts to hide her negative feelings, perhaps to protect others. Adding views from people besides those close to Sasha helps further develop her character, as the way others view her at first glance is important to her identity. Egan introduces Alison Blake at the end of A Visit from the

Goon Squad, a narrator who, years in the future, lends a drastically different perspective on Sasha in her slide journal. Alison is Sasha's daughter, who sees her as a mostly normal mom. When looking through a book, Alison spots a picture of her mom from years ago, and notices "[her] mouth is smiling, but her eyes are sad" (Egan 258). When Alison asks about the picture, Sasha says that the time was "...all so imbued with my own struggles" (Egan 259).

Egan gathers sympathy for Sasha by showing the many sides of her, and how she is a troubled woman with a strong will. Alison sees Sasha, like all mothers, as annoying and exasperating, citing her collage making. Despite her past, her daughter shows that Sasha grew up and led a mostly normal life, and Alison's narration gives the narrative a glimpse into Sasha's future, and shows where she ends up years later. Without Alison's perspective, the book would lack the future Sasha and the characterization of her from a daughter's view. Different characters throughout the book place Sasha in different times in her life and, through different lenses, Egan shows who she truly is. The perspectives of minor characters each of whom Egan gives a chapter to narrate help to characterize Sasha from many different sides, but all of these characters see her in a similar way.

Scotty, Alison, and Sasha herself all see her as a troubled, strong-willed girl who does her best to get by. These perspectives, along with those of many other characters throughout the book, help Sasha become a realistic and complex character.