

Personal history – brooke auchincloss essay sample

[Family](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The narrator in this story is a 1. Person narrator and the story is therefore told from the narrator's point-of-view. An example of the first person narrative is already in the opening line: " Yes I'm from New York" I say shifting my drink to my other hand." This in-medias-res opening throws us right into the story without telling when or where we are. It informs us that the narrator is from New York, and indicates that she isn't there at the moment. The setting of this dialogue is probably a bar somewhere in England, seeing that she has a drink, and that the one who answers her in the end has an accent that " reeks of Cambridge." Because the narrator is not in her hometown, the interior monologue following the answer to the strangers question is almost nostalgic. She is thinking about the entire story of her family coming to America and reminiscing about her annual trips. " When New York is white and red and green. I sit in the window of my sister's apartment watching the snow." If the narrator had been in New York at the time, she would not have been evoking all these memories. So I presume this dialogue takes place in England.

Seeing that the author Brooke Auchincloss was born in New York and moved to England in 1983, the monologue is probably meant to be understood as a small autobiography and a tribute to her hometown. It is, of course, going on in New York. The story spans over the entire 20'th century and is a story about the author's family and their fancy life of wealth in The Big Apple. But when reading about the family and their doings, I found that all the members of the family only did things on their own. The narrator doesn't tell about the couples doing anything together. " In the morning my great grandfather would walk to the corner," " My great grandmother would have been driven

from the ship," " One night my grandfather helped wheel the spirit of St. Louis through the sleeping streets." There are no descriptions of the couples doing anything together except for the parents of the narrator who " wore bell bottoms and taught me to walk up the stairs." They have a lot of arrangements and are seen alone by the public. They can't really be together very much, because of all the people trying to get them to go to functions and debutant balls.

Another pattern in the family's behavior is all the moving. The great grandparents moved to NY from Great Britain. Their son and daughter-in-law moves out of NYC and the narrator's parents had a baby in a hospital in New York and raised it on the Upper West Side. Then they moved out of the city, and later the narrator moves to NY. Throughout the story we hear about this elegant lifestyle with " a state room and a carriage," " tea served by uniformed maids," " elegant silk slip gowns." The narrator is the only one in the family that isn't living the glamorous life in NY. She is living in a flat with cockroaches and a mattress on the floor. She is the one who breaks the pattern by living a humble life. She is also the only one described as going to an event with a date. " We went to studio 54." She is the first one who isn't going to functions and has tea served in the afternoon. Therefore I think this story is mainly about concepts of time, and about the evolution of a family and a city. We start off with this traditional, wealthy, British family who is welcomed to the new world with a carriage and tea in a large room. Their child is wearing sailor's outfits from a gentlemen's outfitter and there are fruit sellers and dairymaids in the streets every morning. They even have maids who iron dollar bills to the kids' pleasure.

In the next generation the grandfather pushes the Spirit of St. Louis through the streets, and the grandmother attends functions with people wearing gowns and starched bowties, and they are indeed so fancy, their kid is attending debutant balls. This kid is also growing up to be relatively wealthy with big art, in his apartment, but time has changed. He isn't attending any more balls in tuxedos. In this time they are wearing bellbottoms and have big hair and moustaches. It's the 60's in New York. It is a time of freedom. When the narrator grows up, she inherits the freedom of her parents. She is independent enough to move to New York by herself as a 16-year old. She is the first one in this family living a poor life in NY. She is dating a dangerous guy and is everything the rest of her family isn't. In this time it is acceptable not to choose the same direction as your parents. It is acceptable not to act wealthy and classy even though your family does. I interpret this story as the author's way of portraying her rebellion against her fancy ancestors.