

Example of story
structure within love
and honour and pity
and pride and
compassi...

[Family](#), [Father](#)



Nam Le's, " Love and Honour and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice," is an intelligent and gripping short story, which is largely autobiographical. The author uses a variety of narrative techniques to enhance both his theme and his characters. His use of summary passages and present scenes, combined with flashbacks, are of particular interest. Overall, his choice of story structure serves to deliver the main theme in a pace and tone which is appropriate for the reader.

Nam's family are Vietnamese immigrants and they currently reside in Australia. However, Nam has left his job working as a lawyer and has relocated to Iowa to learn to be a writer. Very soon into the story, we learn that Nam's father has come to visit. We also learn that he has arrived at the most inopportune time possible.

The story has numerous themes running through it, the central one being the complexities of the father and son relationship. There are important other themes in the piece, such as ethnicity and immigration. However, the paternal relationship appears to be the main crux of the story.

Nam Le's story relies on the commonly used technique of starting the narrative in the present and then including flashbacks. Sometimes, in stories that are written in this way, tension can be created and built as the reader is slowly fed information about the past that impacts on the situation that they are reading about in the present. However, the technique in this story fails to do this, perhaps because it is a reflective, character-based, story, rather than an action based one.

However, the author also uses summary passages intermingled with scenes, which produces more interesting results. In the sections which are summary

based, the pace of the story is slowed right down. This gives the reader time to take in what has happened before the next scene is introduced. An example of summary is the passage beginning: “ I'd told Linda only the previous night that he was coming” (Nam Le).

When the story switches back to scene, the pace tends to pick up. This happens particularly in the scenes which are heavily centred around dialogue, which many of them are. The first conversation between the boy and his father runs at a fast pace; this is a result of the dialogue used. The overall effect of the switching between summary and scene, with incorporated flashbacks, is that the main theme is introduced and then developed at a pace that is most effective for the reader. The story begins in the present and also ends in the present. This demonstrates the shift in the narrator's state of mind and, moreover, attitude towards his father. Perhaps the major benefit of the flashbacks, in particular, is that the story can take place within a short space of time, while still informing the reader of the backstory and the reasons that the relationship between Nam and his father is the way it is.

This story is both poignant and gripping. The author's decisions regarding structure are successful in setting the correct tone and pace for such a delicate subject matter as the relationship between father and son. For a reflective narrative such as this, the balance of summary and scene, with the additional use of flashback, is just right.