

The writing style of trouble



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Most people do not focus on the writing style of a novel and tend to pay more attention to the broader contours of the story line. When reading Gary Schmidt's *Trouble*, the reader should pay attention to writing style because it is different from most other writers in many ways. The author pays more attention to the artful writing of the novel rather than the story line alone, making the reader have to think more about what they are reading to understand what is happening. Gary Schmidt has a unique writing style because he uses a prominent motif with the word *Trouble*, along with a separate story in italicized font that when finally put all together is understood, and each character's personality has a role in changing the tone of the story.

When the basic setting of Henry's life is being explained early in the novel, Gary Schmidt says that " Henry Smith's father told him that if you build your house far enough away from *Trouble*, then *Trouble* will never find you" (Schmidt 1). The motif of *Trouble* is shown in the beginning, which introduces the reader to how important this is to the Smith family. It also is the start of an essential part of how Henry makes his decisions. When Henry explains why he is climbing Katahdin to Thaddeus Baxter, one of his reasons is " to find out how to live with *trouble*" (240). Henry and his family use the motif *Trouble* a lot since Henry's dad says it at the beginning, and Henry says it toward the end of the story. Having *Trouble* being mentioned toward the end of the story shows that it is the motif, since it is used throughout the book. The author uses this to show the significance of the word *Trouble* to the Smith family by making it a motif. With the italicized paragraphs at the end

of multiple chapters in the story, the reader needs to put all of the paragraphs together to understand the whole story.

The reader does not know what the italicized font means in the beginning of the story, but later readers realize that it is Chay's point of view. A sample from the first italicized font is " He first saw her from high up..." referencing to when Chay saw Louisa for the first time at school (26). The reader will not think much of the italicized paragraphs in the beginning other than that they are confusing when standing alone. As the reader progresses through the book, they realize it is Chay's point of view and when put together makes a lot of sense. Without knowing putting all of the italicized stories together, the reader cannot understand fully what is happening. One of the biggest hints that the italicized parts of the novel is Chay's thoughts, is when Chay is leaving because of all the trouble in the town, an excerpt of that moment is " He packed the volume of Keats" (123). This line shows that Chay is the italics because very early in the book explains Chay received a volume of Keats from his dad. Once the reader recognizes that Chay's thoughts when he is alone is the italics, it can be important later in the book. The italicized wording is a writing concept that is not often applied in other pieces of writing, and that makes Gary Schmidt's different from the others.

Moreover, each character has a different role in making the story's tone change throughout the whole book. Sanborn is the hilarity of the novel. When Henry, Chay, and Sanborn are at the chowder restaurant, he says " I never did get my shake" (175). The book has a rather depressing plot, so when there is humor introduced, the reader becomes happier. Sanborn represents the humor, he frequently tells joke throughout and keeps the

reader from not becoming sad and not wanting to read the book. Sanborn plays a role in the book that is not as important to the storyline as it is to the tone by making it more upbeat. Franklin represents motivation for Henry, when Henry explains why he is going up the mountain to Thaddeus Baxter, he says “ I’m going up for my brother,” who is Franklin (239). Henry always desired to climb Katahdin with his brother, Franklin, who promised he would with him. Without Franklin motivating Henry, he might have given up and not climbed Katahdin. When Franklin dies, Henry is determined to climb Katahdin and his reasoning is because of his brother and the humor of Sanborn keeping him upbeat.

In *Trouble*, Gary Schmidt thus uses different writing strategies to make his novel unique. Carefully-coordinated aspects of motif, side stories, and characters change the story’s mood instead of allowing the story to lapse into a single attitude.