 Voice

Stage 6 preliminary common module

Reading to Write - Transition to Senior English

Definition

* A voice in literature is the form or a format through which narrators tell their stories.
* It is prominent when a writer places himself / herself into words and provides a sense the character is real person conveying a specific message the writer intends to convey.
* In simple words, it is an author’s individual writing style or point of view. When a writer engages personally with a topic, in fact, he imparts his personality to that piece of literature. This individual personality is different from other individual personalities, other writers put into their own works.
* Thus, voice is a unique personality of a literary work. Depending upon the type of work, authors may use a single voice, or multiple voices.

Types of Voice

There are many types of voices; however, it has two major types

Author’s Voice – Author’s voice is his particular style he employs in that particular story of a piece of writing.

Character’s Voice – A character’s voice is the voice of the main character how he views the world. It is a common narrative voice used with first and third person point of views, and author uses a conscious person as a narrator in the story.

Function of Voice

* While identifying the function of voice in literature, it is necessary to consider the narrator’s degree of objectivity, reliability and omniscience.
* Voice shows whose eyes readers see the narrative through that gives a personality to a literary piece.
* Moreover, a strong voice helps making every word count, sets up consistency and most importantly grabs the attention of the readers.

Voice Examples in Literature – Notes

* Stream of Consciousness Voice

* Character Voice

* Unreliable Voice

* Epistolary Voice

* Third-person, Subjective Voice

* Third-person, Objective Voice

Voice examples in literature – Examples

In groups of three, compose a short paragraph example for each of the 6 voices presented.

* Stream of Consciousness Voice

* Character Voice

* Unreliable Voice

* Epistolary Voice

* Third-person, Subjective Voice

* Third-person, Objective Voice

Speaker and voice

Speaker/ Addressee

* Who “tells” the poem? Are there things you can say about the speaker’s personality, point of view, tone, society, age, or gender?
* Does the speaker assume a persona at any point in the poem, and speak “as” a particular person (e.g., “I am Lazarus, come from the dead . . . I shall tell you all”)?
* Does the speaker seem attached or detached from what is said?
* What effect do the speaker’s characteristics have on the poem?
* Is it possible to figure out to whom the poem is addressed? Is there an ideal listener/reader?
* Does the speaker seek anything from the listener/reader (sympathy, support, agreement, etc.)?

Narrative/ Narrator

* What is happening in the poem?
* What action, drama, or conflict is present?
* Is there more than one event in the poem?
* Does anything change in the poem (is an action completed, does an attempted action fail, or does someone change in an important way)?
* Who tells the story, and what relationship does the narrator have to the story?

Using one of the poems below, answer all questions from Speaker and Voice

* “Nobody calls me a wog, anymore” Komninos Zervos
* “To Denis” (Son of Mine) Oodgeroo Noonuccal
* “Big Jim” Bruce Dawe

Different voices in poetry

The Little Mute Boy

Read ‘The Little Mute Boy’ by Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), translated by the contemporary American WS Merwin.

[The Little Mute Boy](https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/little-mute-boy): https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/little-mute-boy

How many voices do you think there are in this poem? Highlight them.

There are three.

* There is a narrator, who says things about the little boy,
* There is the little boy himself, who the ‘I’ refers to.
* There is another voice (inside the brackets), which seems to know things that neither of the other voices do, such as where the mute boy’s voice is.

The poem encourages the reader to feel as if they are sharing a secret with this voice.

1. Imagine three voices: (1) someone who has lost something important to them – either solid, like a watch, or abstract, like a voice or a memory; (2) a narrator telling the story about the person who has lost something; and (3) someone who knows where the lost thing is hidden, and who will tell the reader in lines put in brackets.
2. Spend ten minutes writing as if you were the person who has lost something important. Don’t worry too much about how it sounds at the moment, but do write as clearly as possible. How do you feel about the lost thing? What does it look, smell and feel like? What will happen if you don’t get it back?
3. On a new sheet of paper, spend ten minutes writing as the narrator.
4. Do the same for the person who knows the secret.
5. Read through what you have written. Underline arresting lines.
6. On a new sheet, write out lines from your three voices, arranging them together as a poem. Think about what you want the reader to know, and when. What story are the voices telling? Which voice should have the first line and which one the last?
7. When you are satisfied, write your new poem. Next lesson, look at it again. Cut out as many words as you dare.
8. Finalise your composition.