

Narrative point of view influences the audience's perception of characters, themes and meaning in a text by manipulating the emotional implications, tone of observation and perceived importance of each element. Two texts are used in this essay to explain how the responder's perception of each different element is affected. The novel *We Were Liars* written by E. Lockhart (2014) follows the story of Cadence Sinclair as she discovers why she lost her memory; and the film *A Beautiful Mind* directed by Ron Howard (2001) looks at the life and struggles of brilliant yet schizophrenic mathematician John Nash. The perception of characters is most influenced by emotional factors and the reliability and quantity of information given, the themes by the narrator's personal view on what's occurring, and the meaning of the text by how important specific components of the text are.

Different narrative points of view expose a responder to different aspects of characters in texts, they reveal different emotional and physical characteristics and control the viewers perception of other characters. In *We Were Liars*, when Cadence's cousin Mirren abruptly becomes very sick Lockhart immediately engages the responder to Mirren's situation using strong emotive language; "Suddenly Mirren starts choking. Gagging, like she might vomit. Bending over at the waist, her skin damp and pale." This imagery gives the responder a powerful mental image of the situation making it engaging and memorable. In *A Beautiful Mind*, the narrator John Nash has schizophrenia and therefore hallucinates some of the characters shown in the film. There is a scene where a shot from Nash's point of view shows his wife Alicia before panning to the character Parcher. The next shot is taken from Alicia's point of view and shows her turning to look in the direction Nash is glancing; she sees that Nash is talking to no-one. Howard uses point-of-view shots to show that Parcher is a hallucination of Nash's mind and therefore is untrustworthy along with Nash. In both texts the perception of the legitimacy and attributes of each character is defined in accordance with the narrator's point of view. In *A Beautiful Mind*, it's becomes obvious in the above scene, that Parcher is a hallucination, in *We Were Liars* however we are more subtly exposed to Mirren also being a hallucination. At the time her illness although unexpected, is just seen as a memorable event highlighted using powerful emotive language, however looking back it fits into the picture of Cadence being an unreliable narrator like Nash. Hallucinations occur in each text for different reasons, however, in both instances the narrative point of view used falsely convinces the responders of their authenticity. Overall, narrative point of view influences: how the audiences emotionally reacts to a character; the responses they expect of those characters; and the information relating to each character that the responder believes to be true.

In relation to theme, narrative point of view affects the perceived importance of certain themes, and the responders attitude concerning each theme. In *We Were Liars*, the fracturing of the Sinclair family is a prominent theme. According to Cadence, "[the aunties] were quarrelsome. They no longer had the glue of Gran keeping them together and they fought over their memories." Relating Cadence's Gran to glue through metaphor enforces the idea of the family separating after her death. It gives the responder a strong mental image of her role in the Sinclair family and their interactions. In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash resolutely refuses to continue taking his medication saying, "It's a problem. That's all it is. It's a problem with no solution. And that's what I do, I solve problems. That's what I do best." Using truncated sentences Howard clearly displays the theme of perseverance apparent throughout the film. The urgency and certainty with which Nash believes he can solve the problem of his schizophrenia becomes palpable and definite, which wouldn't have been conveyed so quickly using complex sentences. Seeing through Nash's narrative point of view means that his motivations for wanting to avoid the treatment and solve the problem himself are understandable. His perseverance is also viewed admirable and justified. However, the themes in each book which are perceived by the narrator to be important might not necessarily be so, or the attitude towards a theme could be biased. Cadence might be incorrectly believing her family is falling apart, and from another's point of view Nash could just be unaccepting of his condition. Through narrative point of

view however, less viability is given to other potential aspects of a theme. Each theme's emotional connotations, importance and credibility is defined in accordance with the narrator's view.

The meaning explored through a text as perceived by the responder is influenced by the narrative point of view through its highlighting of supposed important events or objects. In the quote "I tore all the roses off a single sad bush and threw them, one after the other, into the angry sea." Lockhart uses pathetic fallacy to give the inanimate objects human emotions. Here the responder draws more detailed connections concerning the symbolism of the beach roses to Cadence's relationship with Gat. Both are beautiful in the summer, before dying in the winter and then returning the following summer. The pathetic fallacy used can be related to Cadence's emotional upheaval she experiences following her discovering of Gat's girlfriend. In *A Beautiful Mind*, Nash gives Alicia a faceted glass sphere saying; "The refractive faces of the glass... create a full wavelength dispersal, so... inside it... [is] every possible colour." Howard uses register, or word choice to accentuate Nash's intelligence and difficulty in directing normal conversation. This adds another layer to the motif which the glass sphere represents. The fracturing of light through the prism, and into all the visible colours is symbolic of Nash's schizophrenia; representing the beautiful yet fractured nature of Nash's fragmented mentality. Viewing the film through Nash's narrative point of view means that the significance of the fragmented colours is fully appreciated, and therefore the glass sphere becomes a powerfully symbolic motif. By viewing a story through a specific narrative point of view we appreciate the meaning of different connections, objects and events in accordance with their significance to the narrator and their story. Objects which could have gone unnoticed can be related to other elements of a text using the information the responder is exposed to through the narrators dictation. The narrative point of view defines what is important, and therefore shapes the meaning of the text.

In a text, the narrative point of view through which the responder then observes the events of the text adds a specific flavour to the story. It changes the way that characters are perceived by defining which emotional reaction is appropriate and can deceive the responder regarding their perception of the authenticity of a character. Different narrative points of view consider different themes to be more important, and which aspects of a theme are the most prominent. It also influences the responder's perception of meaning, focusing on certain events, or objects as important and symbolic. Narrative point of view is a composer's tool to manipulate the responder into a specific mindset from which the story should be viewed for the most enjoyment or surprise.