

## How does narrative point of view influence the audience's perception of characters, themes and meaning?

The point of view a narrative is told from heavily influences the audience's perceptions and interpretations of the story. The perception of the characters, themes and the meaning of a text can easily change as the point of view shifts between characters. *We Were Liars (WWL)* by E. Lockhart (2014) is written from the point of view of Cadence Sinclair Eastman, a girl belonging to an affluent family but has suffered a head injury, causing her narration to be unreliable. *Star Wars: The Original Trilogy* by George Lucas, the three movies *A New Hope (1977)*, *Empire Strikes Back (1980) (ESB)* and *Return of The Jedi (1983) (RTJ)*, are portrayed from the perspective of Luke Skywalker, showing the audience his journey through a reliable subjective third person point of view. The use of changing perspective is an important element in portraying the themes of family and revelation in these two texts.

The theme of family connection and relationships occurs in both *WWL* and *Star Wars*. In *WWL*, Cadence is a part of the Sinclair family, a family seen as proper, regal and above everyone else. Cadence describes the family as having no flaws and being perfect in every possible way. "Welcome to the beautiful Sinclair family. No one is a criminal. No one is an addict. No one is a failure." Cadence's anaphoric sentences convey the outside perspective of the Sinclair family, displaying perfection and righteousness. The repetitious use of defending statements creates intrigue and importance in these statements from the early sections of the novel. All three aspects that Cadence describes create a dark tone and appear in Cadence's memories. The fragmented nature matched Cadence's memories also, in that the fractured pieces come back at different times, and often not in the right order. "I remember this" "I remember that" "I don't remember all of it". This non-sequential order is significant, as the three aspects described do not occur in the order told to the reader. This display of the Sinclair family in a regal and noble light helps shape the initial perception of the characters in *WWL* by giving a misleading foundation for the family through Cadence's point of view. Similarly, in *Star Wars*, family connection is an ever-present story arc, being the basis for the entire plotline. The Skywalker family is the centrepiece and helps provide an evolving perspective on all the characters. The most important moment is the reveal of Luke's parentage in *ESB*. Lucas used suspense and a plot twist during this scene to bring greater significance to the relationship between Luke and Vader. When Vader states "No, I am your father" delivered with gusto and backed by a suspenseful soundtrack, the effect of this discovery is conflicting, for Luke and the audience. The character who has been viewed as the villain for half of the trilogy is revealed to be the hero's father. This manipulates the perception of Vader's character, from one of complete evil to some sympathy and connection from the audience. "Do not underestimate the powers of the Emperor, or suffer your father's fate you will ... The Force runs strong in your family ... There is another Skywalker." This foreshadowing from Yoda in *RTJ* causes Luke to discover Leia as his sister. This then changes the perception of characters again and strengthens the bonds between the characters. The theme of family in *Star Wars* helps reinforce the importance of the characters and their connections to each other, which then influences the perceptions made by the viewers.

Emotional revelation is an important theme in both *WWL* and *Star Wars*. In *WWL*, Cadence has intense moments of revelation when all her memories flood back to her at once and she realises the consequences to her actions. A quote from Cadence showing this is "Oh God, oh

God, oh God. The dogs. The f\*\*\*ing dogs". Cadence's use of repetitious and emotive language helps the audience understand the sheer revelation in Cadence's character and provokes empathy in the reader, making sure that the reader has understood the severity of the statement as it reflects the raw emotion and the return of these memories to Cadence, acting as short stabs to her soul as she realises what has happened. The empathy creates a deeper connection to Cadence's character, as she is opening up to the reader, inviting them to understand her thoughts as her fractured memories are finally piecing together. The display of revelation through a dark and emotional point of view alters our perceptions of the characters and the events of *WWL*. Emotional revelation is also apparent in *Star Wars*, as a pivotal moment in the series is the reveal of Luke's parentage in Darth Vader and the changes of perceptions that it brought with it. The element of revelation becomes apparent in the changes in Luke's thoughts before and after his encounter with Vader at Cloud City. In *ESB*, Luke's thoughts on Vader are depicted through hatred, heavily displayed in the Dagobah tree cave scene. This scene depicts Luke decapitating a hallucination of Vader out of his fright which reveals to the audience the raw emotions of hatred towards Vader even Luke before he learns about who Vader truly is. In *RTJ*, Luke's emotions towards Vader are much different, after learning about Vader's true identity. He feels much more empathetic and caring, which is all shown through Vader's death scene. Luke says to Vader, "No, you're coming with me. I'll not leave you here. I've got to save you". Here, Lucas has used the contrast of Luke's thoughts and feelings between these two scenes to show the emotional revelation in his character. Many elements of these scenes help depict the revelation, such as the soundtracks, camera angles and atmosphere of the scenes. The soundtracks of these scenes have harsh contrast, with the thoughts and feelings towards Vader's character being changed upon his final moments, from hatred to sympathy. This interaction and knowledge also assists the audience to understand Luke's confliction and change, as he turns from a naïve padawan training with Yoda to a respected Jedi Knight after he has learned his purpose after his interaction with Vader. The contrast between these two scenes, using narrative point of view, influences the viewer to have empathetic beliefs and perceptions of characters in *Star Wars*.

Narrative point of view is used effectively in both texts to convey the major themes, perceptions of characters and meaning behind the texts. Through the use of evolving narration, the texts thoroughly explore the themes of 'family' and 'revelation'. Both *WWL* and *Star Wars* bring these themes to the attention of the audience, prompting them to form perceptions on the characters, themes and meanings behind the texts. *WWL* uses imagery and emotive language to convey these themes in a powerful stance, making the reader feel personally connected to the characters and form stronger perceptions of the events of the novel. Both texts convey important messages to the audience, prompting them to question their thoughts on the impacts of revelation, the bonds of family and the extent of the sacrifices made to satisfy conscience.

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