

## THE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE VOICE IN MODERNIST NOVELS

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**Abstract:** *The role of narrative voice in modernist novels is a central element that shapes both the form and content of these works. Emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, modernism sought to break away from conventional storytelling methods, reflecting the complexities of a rapidly changing world. In this context, narrative voice beco.*

Modernist authors often employ a subjective narrative voice, delving into characters' inner thoughts and feelings through techniques such as stream of consciousness. This approach emphasizes the fragmented and often chaotic nature of human experience, allowing readers to witness the intricate workings of the mind in real time. As a result, the narrative voice often mirrors the

**INTRODUCTION.** Additionally, modernist narratives frequently embrace ambiguity and multiplicity, utilizing unreliable narrators and varying perspectives to challenge traditional notions of authority and truth. This complexity invites readers to engage critically with the text, questioning the reliability of the narrative and the nature of reality itself. By reflecting the disjointedness of modern life, these voices convey themes of alienation, identit

Ultimately, the innovative use of narrative voice in modernist novels transforms storytelling into a dynamic exploration of consciousness and meaning, marking a significant departure from earlier literary conventions. Through this lens, modernist writers invite readers to navigate the intricacies of perception and the human condition in a world increasingly defined by ambiguity and fragmentation.

**THE MAIN PART.** The function of narrative voice in modernist novels is a crucial aspect that shapes how stories are told and perceived. Modernist literature, emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,

often experiments with traditional narrative structures and techniques. Here are several key functions of narrative voice in this context:

**1. Subjectivity and Stream of Consciousness.** Modernist authors frequently utilize a subjective narrative voice, reflecting the inner thoughts and feelings of characters. Techniques like stream of consciousness allow readers to experience the character's mental processes in real time, blurring the line between thought and narrative. This approach emphasizes individual perception and fragmentation, illustrating how reality is filtered through personal experience.

**2. Fragmentation and Discontinuity.** Modernist narratives often disrupt linear storytelling, using a fragmented voice that mirrors the complexities of modern life. This disjointed narrative style reflects themes of alienation and disconnection, forcing readers to piece together meaning from disparate elements. Authors like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce exemplify this, creating a narrative that challenges conventional plot structures.

**3. Multiplicity of Perspectives.** Many modernist works employ multiple narrative voices, allowing for diverse perspectives on events and themes. This polyphonic approach creates a richer, more nuanced understanding of the story, as seen in works like "The Sound and the Fury" by William Faulkner. Different voices can reveal varying truths, emphasizing the subjectivity of experience.

**4. Ambiguity and Unreliability.** Modernist narratives often feature unreliable narrators, complicating the relationship between the reader and the text. This ambiguity invites readers to question the nature of truth and perception, reflecting the uncertainties of the modern world. Authors like Kafka and Nabokov use this technique to challenge readers' assumptions and create a sense of disorientation.

**5. Interrogation of Language and Meaning.** Modernist writers frequently explore the limitations of language and its ability to convey meaning. The narrative voice may become self-reflexive, drawing attention to its own construction and the act of storytelling itself. This exploration often leads to a questioning of established narratives and societal norms, aligning with modernism's critical stance toward tradition.

**6. Emphasis on the Inner Life.** The modernist narrative voice often prioritizes the inner lives of characters over external action. This focus on introspection allows for a deeper exploration of themes like identity,

memory, and existentialism. Works like "To the Lighthouse" by Woolf delve into the complexities of human consciousness, emphasizing the significance of personal experience.

**7. Cultural and Historical Context.** The narrative voice in modernist novels often reflects the cultural and historical upheaval of the time, such as the impacts of World War I, industrialization, and urbanization. Authors use voice to comment on societal changes and the resulting existential crises, capturing the fragmented nature of modern existence.

In summary, the narrative voice in modernist novels serves to challenge traditional storytelling, reflecting the complexities and uncertainties of the modern experience. By employing techniques like fragmentation, subjectivity, and ambiguity, modernist authors invite readers to engage deeply with the text and explore the intricacies of perception, identity, and truth.

**CONCLUSION.** In conclusion, the narrative voice in modernist novels serves as a pivotal mechanism that shapes both the structure and thematic depth of these works. By breaking away from traditional storytelling conventions, modernist authors utilize innovative techniques—such as stream of consciousness, fragmentation, and multiple perspectives—to explore the complexities of human experience in an increasingly disordered world.

This narrative voice not only highlights the subjective nature of perception and truth but also challenges readers to engage critically with the text, questioning the reliability of the narrator and the very nature of reality. Through ambiguity and introspection, modernist literature reflects themes of alienation, identity, and existential uncertainty, inviting readers to navigate the intricacies of consciousness and the human condition.

Ultimately, the diverse functions of narrative voice in modernist novels contribute to a richer understanding of the fragmented, multifaceted realities of modern life, marking a significant evolution in literary form and encouraging a deeper exploration of meaning in an age defined by ambiguity and change.

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