

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 16

Read the following notes about style in literature.

Definition of Style

The style in writing can be defined as the way a writer writes and it is the technique which an individual author uses in his writing. It varies from author to author and depends upon one's syntax, word choice, and tone. It can also be described as a voice that readers listen to when they read the work of a writer.

Types of Style

There are four basic literary styles used in writing. These styles distinguish the work of different authors from one another. Here are four styles of writing:

Expository or Argumentative style

Expository writing style is a subject-oriented style. The focus of the writer in this type of writing style is to tell the readers about a specific subject or topic and in the end the author leaves out his own opinion about that topic.

Descriptive style

In descriptive writing style, the author focuses on describing an event, a character or a place in detail. Sometimes, descriptive writing style is poetic in nature in, where the author specifies an event, an object or a thing rather than merely giving information about an event that has happened. Usually the description incorporates sensory details.

Persuasive style

Persuasive style of writing is a category of writing in which the writer tries to give reasons and justification to make the readers believe his point of view. The persuasive style aims to persuade and convince the readers.

Narrative style

Narrative writing style is a type of writing where the writer narrates a story to. It includes short stories, novels, novellas, biographies and poetry.

Examples of Style in Literature

Here are some examples of different writing styles from literature:

Example #1

An excerpt from "*The Pleasures of Imagination*" by Joseph Addison

The pleasures of the imagination, taken in their full extent, are not so gross as those of sense... A man of polite imagination is let into a great many pleasures... A man should endeavour, therefore, to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, that he may retire into them with safety ... Delightful scenes, whether in nature, painting, or poetry, have a kindly influence on the body, as well as the mind, and not only serve to clear and brighten the imagination, but are able to disperse grief and melancholy...

This is an example of expository writing style in which the author describes advantages of imagination with facts and logical sequence and tells his delight of imagination. Then, he discusses its benefits and finally gives opinions in its favor.

Example #2

Here is an excerpt from a poem.

A drop fell on the apple tree,
Another on the roof,
And made the gables laugh,
The breezes brought dejected lutes,
And bathed them in the glee;

And signed the fete away.
(*Summer Shower by Emily Dickinson*)

This poem is giving an example of descriptive style. Emily gives a description of a summer rainstorm in detail and visualizes with images so that the readers could visualize this storm in their own minds as if it is actually happening.

Example #3

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.'
By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
...
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst hear the merry din.
(*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge*)

In this poem, Coleridge uses narrative style and tells a story about the ancient mariner. He uses dialogues, disputes, actions and events in a sequence, thus provides a perfect example of the narrative style of writing.

Example #4

An excerpt from *Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
"The studio was filled with the rich odor of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden... The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through... or circling with monotonous insistence..."

This is a good example of descriptive writing style since the author gives visualizations, feelings, description of a location and details about bees that could be seen and heard.

Function of Style

A unique literary style can have great impact on the piece in which it is used and on the readers. When authors write and put their ideas into words, they meet with a large number of choices which include: words, sounds, logic, sentence structures. However, different authors use different literary styles that depend on their distinct expression and their utilization of these choices. And their choice creates their niche.

PRACTICE

Read the following selections and comment on their style. Use the notes above.

Selection 1

An excerpt from William Wordsworth's famous "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800). In the preface, Wordsworth (a Romantic poet) explains his attempt to write in a manner hitherto unknown.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a

plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.

Based on this selection, what is the style of Wordsworth's writing in the preface?

Selection 2

A poem by Emily Dickenson, in which death is personified

Because I could not stop for death
He kindly stopped for me
The carriage held but just ourselves
And immortality.

We slowly drove - he knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For his civility

We passed the school, where children strove
At recess - in the ring
We passed the fields of gazing grain
We passed the setting sun

Or rather - he passed us
The dews drew quivering and chill
For only gossamer, my Gown
My tippet - only tulle

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground

The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice - in the Ground

Since then - 'tis centuries - and yet
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity

What is the style of Dickenson's writing in this poem?

Selection 3

From a modern English translation of an epic poem "Beowulf." "The poem is set in Scandinavia. Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, comes to the aid of Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, whose mead hall in Heorot has been under attack by a monster known as Grendel. After Beowulf slays him, Grendel's mother attacks the hall and is then also defeated. Victorious, Beowulf goes home to Geatland (Götaland in modern Sweden) and later becomes king of the Geats. After a period of fifty years has passed, Beowulf defeats a dragon, but is fatally wounded in the battle. After his death, his attendants cremate his body and erect a tower on a headland in his memory." (Wikipedia)

One night, after a beer party,
the Danes settled in the hall
for sleep; they knew no sorrows.
The evil creature, grim and hungry,
grabbed thirty warriors
and went home laughing.

At dawn, when the Danes learned
of Grendel's strength,
there was great weeping.
The old king sat sadly,
crying for his men. Bloody
footprints were found.

That was bad enough,
but the following night
Grendel killed more--
blinded by sin,
he felt no remorse.
(You can bet the survivors
started sleeping elsewhere.)
So Grendel ruled,
fighting right,
one against many,
and the greatest hall
in all the earth
stood empty at night.

Twelve years this went on,
Hrothgar suffering
the greatest of sorrows.

Poets sang sad songs
throughout the world,
how Grendel tormented Hrothgar;
how no warrior,
no matter how brave,
could kill Grendel.
How Grendel wasn't
about to stop,
or pay damages.
Grendel kept ambushing from his lair,
the moors which lay in perpetual darkness.

What is the style of the poet's writing?

NOVEL STUDY

What is the style of William Golding's writing in *Lord of the Flies*? Discuss any two aspects of his style. You may refer to the notes posted on the school's website.

Aspect 1: _____

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THE END