Flash-forward

Flash-Forward Definition

Flash-forward, or "prolepsis," is a literary device in which the plot goes ahead of time; meaning a scene that interrupts and takes the [narrative](#) forward in time from the current time in the story. Generally, a flash-forward represents expected or imagined events in the future, interjected into the main plot, revealing important information to the story that has yet to be brought to light. It is the opposite of a [flashback](#), or "analepsis," which reveals past events.

Difference Between Flash-Forward and Foreshadowing

Flash-forward is similar to [foreshadowing](#). However, foreshadowing hints at the possible outcome in the future, without any interruption. Instead, it uses events or [character](#) [dialogue](#) in the current time. It may also be present in the titles of narratives or chapters.

Flash-forward, on the other hand, is an interjected scene in a narrative, which takes the narrative forward in time. The events presented in a flash-forward are bound to happen in the story. Foreshadowing predicts the future events, but the events do not necessarily take place in the future.

Examples of Flash-Forward in Literature

Flash-forward is essentially a postmodern narrative device, but there are a few flash-forward examples in early literature. Let us look at some famous examples of flash-forward in literature below:

Example #1: A *Christmas Carol* (By Charles Dickens)

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* depicts the character Scrooge in a flash-forward scene. The tightfisted and ill-tempered Scrooge is visited by

the "Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come," who shows him his future. Scrooge sees himself dead, and people finding comfort and happiness in his death. No one mourns his death, and the people he ruined in his life steal his wealth. Scrooge sees Mrs. Dilber, his housekeeper, selling his property to junkmen and friends.

The only ones touched by his death are a young, poor couple. His only legacy is a cheap tombstone in a graveyard. He weeps on his own grave, and asks the third ghost of Christmas to give him a chance to change himself. He wakes up and finds that he is back on Christmas morning of the present. Scrooge repents, and becomes kind and generous.

Example #2: *Isabella* (By John Keats)

> "So the two brothers and their murder'd man
> Rode past fair Florence …"

These lines show a future event as if it has already happened. Lorenzo, who is called *their murdered man*, takes the character to a time in the future when the two brothers of his beloved Isabella will assassinate him.

Example #3: *The Dead Zone* (By Stephen King)

In Stephen King's novel *The Dead Zone*, the hero receives a special power of predicting the future after a car crash. Through physical contact, he sees the future of a person. After some time, he feels cursed with the gift. Like when he shakes hands with a politician and flash-forwards to the future, seeing a nuclear war. He says:

> "If you knew Hitler was going to do what he did to the Jews,
> would you kill him before he had the chance?"

At this moment, the hero suffers from a moral conflict between what he knows about the future, and what he might do to save people.

Example #4: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (By Muriel Spark)

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie, by Muriel Spark, makes extensive use of the narrative technique of flash-forward. The story takes place at Marcia Blaine School, where six girls are handed over to Miss Brodie.

In the very beginning of the novel, Spark tells us that Miss Brodie is betrayed. He then gradually reveals the betrayer and, finally, reveals all the details related to the event. Similarly, he introduces Joyce Emily, as the rejected girl from the "Brodie set," and later tells readers the reasons.

Function of Flash-Forward

Flash-forward enables a writer to give logical explanations to the actions of the characters in a narrative. The character's actions make more sense to the readers after having developed a greater understanding of the character and the his or her personality.

Moreover, flash-forward grabs the readers' interest in the current events of the narrative, to see how the story develops towards the future that has already been shown to them.