

Frame Story

Definition of Frame Story

Frame story is a story set within a story, [narrative](#), or movie, told by the main or the supporting [character](#). A character starts telling a story to other characters, or he sits down to write a story, telling the details to the [audience](#). This technique is also called a “frame narrative,” and is a very popular form of literary technique employed in storytelling and narration.

Frame story usually is found in novels, plays, poems, television, films, musicals, and opera. It is a unifying tale within which one or more related stories appear. For instance, in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Odysseus tells about his wandering experience in the court of King Alcinous, or his visit to the island of a sorcerer.

Examples of Frame Story in Literature

Example #1: *Frankenstein* (by Marry Shelley)

There are several examples of this technique used by Marry Shelley in her novel, *Frankenstein*. She has given multiple framed stories in this novel. For example, Robert Walton describes a story – told by Frankenstein, – in his letters that he writes to his sister. Frankenstein’s story contains the tale of a creature, and the creature’s story briefly contains the story of the family with which he has been living.

Example #2: *Inception* (by Christopher Nolan)

In the film, *Inception*, Leonardo DiCaprio enters into a dream of Cillian Murphy to embed an idea into his subconscious. Leonardo puts him to sleep in a dream, following him to a second layer of dream that soon gives way to another dream. In the innermost dream, Leonardo is blown out and enters

into an endless dream – “limbo” – which could last for eternity, but only a few seconds pass in a real world. Leonardo, eventually wakes up through layers of dreams, feeling as though years have passed away, returning to his waking life.

Example #3: *Titanic* (by James Cameron)

In the movie, *Titanic*, an elderly woman Rose begins the movie by telling a story of her voyage in the Atlantic Ocean. When the reader gets into her narrative, he finds himself in the year 1912, where the story begins. Only a few times do readers return to the elderly Rose to get in touch with her experience; however, the movie ends as it begins. This is called framing technique in which the writer tells a story within a story.

Example #4: *The Canterbury Tales* (by Geoffrey Chaucer)

In *Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer has used frame narrative, bringing different characters, each of whom tells a story. This pilgrimage frame story brings together a number of storytellers, who appear with vivid personality traits, and build up dramatic relationships with one another and with the tales they tell. General [Prologue](#) is the section of this poem that deals with frame narrative.

Example #5: (*Wuthering Heights* (by Emily Bronte)

Wuthering Heights, like *Frankenstein*, also has frame stories. Emily Bronte introduces Mr. Lockwood as the first narrator, who depicts his visit to the Wuthering Heights, and the narration switches to the [perspective](#) of Mr. Dean, who describes the estate's history. Readers are introduced to all the major characters.

This switching in narration is very helpful, as it connects the present with the past. Mr. Lockwood tries to find out what could have happened in the past that made the current dwellers of the estate depressed and stubborn. Mrs. Dean, however, provides information about the past, which caused the characters to transform in this way.

In Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*, there are two narrators: (1) the anonymous passenger traveling on a pleasure ship, listening to the story of Marlowe; and (2) Marlowe himself. The first narrator, on the behalf of four other passengers, uses the first person plural. Marlowe, on the other hand, narrates his story in first person, describing whatever he has seen and experienced. This provides a commentary on the entire story, acting as a frame story.

Function of Frame Story

This literary technique uses embedded narratives, which provide readers with a [context](#) about the main narrative. Frame story leads the readers from the first story to the other one. This is a sort of guidance, which establishes the context for an embedded narrative, helping the writer to create a context for interpreting a narrative. It also offers multiple perspectives to the readers within a story, as well as about the story. These multiple perspectives give the readers more information about the characters regarding their feelings, thoughts, and motivations.