

Pacing

Definition of Pacing

Pacing is a stylistic device, which shows how fast a story unfolds. It is because when readers feel frustration in the length of the story, the writers use different techniques to control the pace of the story. If he writes a short story, he does not have to tell his tale through many pages, therefore, he cuts away extra words.

However, when it is a long story or a novel, the pace is controlled through mix up, which means to use short sentences and active verbs in intense action scenes, and use descriptions with details for slower-paced scenes. Writers use this pace by choosing the exact words. In simple words, pacing is moving a story forward with a certain speed.

Elements of Pacing

Let us see a few important pacing elements:

Action – An action scene dramatizes the significant events of the story and shows what happens in a story.

Cliffhanger – When the end of a chapter or scene is left hanging, naturally the pace picks up, because readers would turn the pages to see what happens next.

Dialogue – A rapid fire dialogue with lesser or irrelevant information is captivating, swift and invigorates scenes.

Word Choice – The language itself is a means of pacing, like using concrete words, active [voice](#), and sensory information.

Examples of Pacing in Literature

Example #1: *Da Vinci Code* (by Dan Brown)

The most exciting stories use sequences that move forward at different paces, which keep the [audience](#) engaged. In his novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown has accomplished this task by juxtaposing various chapters, featuring dialogues, which convey information about relics, and characters with very fast-paced action sequences. Though the book moves quickly, the chapters move with a leisurely-paced sequence that helps keep the tension in the story high. This all contributes to a well-paced story, without letting the readers feel bored.

Example #2: *The Most Dangerous Game* (by Richard Connell)

In his short story, *The Most Dangerous Game*, Richard Connell creates exciting and tense feelings of anticipation and uncertainty throughout the story. [Suspense](#) is the key that makes the story powerful and keeps it fast paced, but the story does not feel rushed. We also do not find a good stopping point anywhere. In fact, every event of the plot is marked by a great moment of suspense. For instance, when Whitney starts the [narrative](#) by saying, “Off there to the right – somewhere – is a large island. It’s rather a mystery.” This gives a hint to the readers that the island is very important, and thereafter the story jumps into resolving the mystery.

Example #3: *Pride and Prejudice* (by Jane Austen)

There are various subplots in Jane Austen’s novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, which keep the story of the novel moving. These subplots include the [romance](#) between Bingley and Jane, the marriage of Collins and Charlotte, the seduction leading to marriage between Lydia and Wickham, and a major [conflict](#) between Wickham and Darcy. Jane Austen also has used letters as a literary device to change the pace of her story through emotional communication.

Example #4: *The Necklace* (by Guy de Maupassant)

The most incredible thing about writing is his control over pacing and timing. To capture the superior mentality of Mme. Loisel in his famous story *The Necklace*, he vividly immerses readers into the reality.

Then there is a ball invitation, and a necklace ball sequence, where she loses her necklace – a sequence of looking for it, not finding it, and finally buying a brand new one. Then there are ten years of hard living and poverty, which M. Loisel and Mme must confront. In fact, there is a lot to cover in just five or six pages; despite that, the story does not feel rushed or slow.

Function of Pacing

Pacing is not only the speed at which a story moves, but also a technique, which determines the appeal of the story for the audience. It is because a slow-paced work appeals to older audiences, while a fast-paced work appeals to younger audiences. It is not only [fiction](#) writers who use this technique, but poets also employ punctuation and formatting to set pace of their poems. Even they use [meter](#) and [rhyme](#) to affect the pace. Besides, nonfiction writers use it to keep their work fast-paced to avoid dullness, and slow-paced to give more attention to details.