

Epilogue

Epilogue Definition

An epilogue, or “epilog,” is a chapter at the end of a work of literature, which concludes the work.

Epilogue, Prologue, and Afterword

Epilogue is the opposite of [prologue](#), which is a piece of writing at the beginning of a literary work. An epilogue is different from an afterword, in that it is part of the main story, occurring after the [climax](#), and revealing the fates of the characters. An afterword is typically written by someone other than the author, and describes how the book came into being.

Usually, an epilogue is set a few hours after the main body of the story, or far into the future, where the writer speaks to the readers indirectly, through the [point of view](#) of a different [character](#). In an afterword, on the other hand, an author speaks to the readers directly. In it, a writer may provide a reason for writing the book, and detail the research that has gone into writing the book.

Sometimes, a writer may employ an epilogue to cover loose ends of his story, resolving those issues that were brought up by the writer in the story, but were not resolved in the climax.

Epilogue in Greek and Elizabethan Stage Plays

Epilogue examples are abundant in Greek and Elizabethan stage plays, since including epilogues at the end of the plays was a common practice among their playwrights. After the end of the play, an actor would step forward, speaking directly to the [audience](#), offering his gratitude to them for watching the play patiently.

In comedies, epilogues uttered by those actors were often used to show the main characters of the plays enjoying a happy and contented life after experiencing the disorder during the play.

Similarly, in tragedies the actors narrating the epilogue told the audience about the [tragic hero](#)'s final suffering, caused by his poor [moral](#) choices. Moreover, the [speaker](#) of an epilogue would directly describe the lesson or moral the audience should have learned from the story.

Epilogue in Horror and Suspense Novels

In modern horror and [suspense](#) novels and stories, the epilogue is purposefully used to hint at a threat that still looms large on the horizon. The monster or villain is believed to have been done with, but the epilogue suggests that the danger is not over and still looms over them. Therefore, it adds to the horror and mystery of the work of literature, as the readers get the idea that the characters are not safe, though they might believe so. In some cases, epilogue can also be used to confirm that a [narrative](#) is not over, and there is still more to the story. It gives the readers an idea that there will be a sequel.

Examples of Epilogue in Literature

Example #1: *Romeo and Juliet* (By William Shakespeare)

Consider the following epilogue that is spoken in William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*:

“A glooming peace this morning with it brings;
The sun for sorrow will not show his head.
Go hence to have more talk of these sad things,
Some shall be pardoned, and some punished,
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”

A post-play description of the play is given in a most poignant fashion, describing the gloomy [atmosphere](#) after the [tragedy](#) befell the two ardent lovers, Romeo and Juliet.

Example #2: *As You Like It* (By William Shakespeare)

Notice a carefree sort of epilogue that marks the end of yet another of Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It*, spoken by Rosalind:

"... and I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women — as I perceive by your simpering, none of you hates them — that between you and the women the play may please. If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not. And I am sure as many as have good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths will, for my kind offer, when I make curtsy, bid me farewell."

It clearly shows how happy and contented Rosalind is.

Example #3: *Animal Farm* (By George Orwell)

We notice George Orwell appending an epilogue to his novel *Animal Farm*, as Chapter 10. He, in his epilogue, presents the situation of the Manor Farm after many years have passed, describing the fate of the characters who participated in the revolution. He says:

"YEARS passed. The seasons came and went, the short animal lives fled by. A time came when there was no one who remembered the old days before the Rebellion, except Clover, Benjamin, Moses the raven, and a number of the pigs."

Similarly, Orwell tells us about the evolution that has taken place in the dominating pigs that are still at the helms of power. He says:

"Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to

Function of Epilogue

Writers of great examples of epilogue show how useful this device is to achieve the following ends:

To satisfy the readers' curiosity, by telling them about the fate of the characters after the climax

To cover loose ends of the story

To hint at a sequel or next installment of the story