Cntrl Q

Second and Third Thoughts on Internal Dialog (Narrative Thought)

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Why does an author want to tell a story? For now, let's stick to this deeper concept... the author wants to reveal some information.

Will the author be successful in telling their story?

What does successful mean?

For now, let's define success as a story where the reader is never taken out of the story by authorial intrusion (bad spelling, bad grammar, inconsistent style …)

We want our readers to get emotionally involved.

We want our readers believe what we're telling them – what we're revealing to them.

What is a reveal?

Reveals of various shades of dramatic impact are required to tell a genre story.

Where are we, when are we, who are we, what we're doing and why we're doing it, what happened to us, how did we handle it – and every bit of detail that goes into this.

I think it's important to recognize the above information as forms of reveal at some level.

It's also interesting to understand, the reveal from the page to the reader may also be a red-herring or misdirect.

The character reveals that they, in fact, do not know what the answer is, through either being ignorant of the facts, or having the incorrect facts.

The reveal to the reader is that the character or information is unreliable, and that can add drama and suspense.

Now, how does the author go about revealing information to the reader?

In a way that is smooth, seamless, believable, interesting and unique, and using writing techniques that enhance the moment in the scene. There are bags full of writing techniques an author can access.

The writing techniques we're learning (through practice) provide more authorial choices to make our stories efficiently different.

A prime writing tool is to understand the use of POV

Point of View filters everything in your story. Everything in your story must come from a point of view.

The term Point of View is derived from the Latin word, <u>punctum visus</u>, which means <u>point sight</u>.

The point of view is where a story teller, or writer, directs the sight of the reader.

What is the reader looking at? Hopefully, at what the author wants them to.

A story requires a story teller within the pages.

The story teller is often called the narrator. The one who tells the story.

Note – the narrator is NOT the author. The narrator is a character in the story. The author provides a voice to this character.

This narrator character may be off stage throughout, or it may be one of the on stage characters.

Telling vs showing – there is often a stick in hand when discussing telling vs showing…

For now, lets all agree that both are useful in story.

The trick is to understand the moment in scene, and using the correct technique to control the next reveal.

Dialog is always a go to technique – but what about internal dialog – narrative thought?

Have you ever heard someone say – 'What on Earth were they thinking?"

So : What's going on in your character's head and why should the reader care?

The POV character's inner thoughts can reveal deeper insight into who they are and what motivates them.

By knowing what a POV character is thinking, a reader has access to information no other character does.

As a writer, you may share these internal thoughts in order to:

- reveal a character's true feelings: A character might say one thing but think another.
- To help character development: use thoughts to reveal backstory or secrets that no other character knows, making your character more well-rounded or relatable.
- To set the mood: Are your character's thoughts dark or light?
- To increase the tension: knowing your character knows they are trapped can increase tension.
- To reveal internal motivation and what drives the character in their quest:
- To uncover an inner conflict which can provide deeper character development.

Using narrative thought is often implemented differently depending on the POV of the story.

First Person

- The reader is being asked to 'be' the character in the story.

- The POV character's mind is completely at the reader's disposal.
    o For the author, revealing what the character knows or is thinking can be quite easy – and easily made ineffective, letting the reader off the hook. It's very easy to tell, rather than show. The reader wants to see what the character does, and not necessarily what they're thinking.

- Use this when you want to relate the character's story, as opposed to an overarching story (worldbuilding).
    o And in this case, (or always) your character must be approachable and interesting – or the reader will lose interest.

Second Person

- Not that common, the story is being told 'to' you, about you.

- Pretty much always a telling style of story.

- The reveals are told to you, so the reader can feel it, as it's happening to the reader.
    o The author has to convince the reader they are no longer themselves – for a while, anyways – and more often than not, the reader is not interested in that experience.

Third Person

- Most often the narrator is not a character of consequence in the story, or a character at all – but for me, the narrator is always a character, and needs to be trusted.

Third Person Omniscient
- Deep, where all characters are revealed in the same fashion.
- The easiest to write, potentially the hardest to read, even if done quite well.
    o The reader's mind will be tasked to manage all the character's internal emotions and conflict.
    o Good drama is hard to manage when the reader knows what every character is thinking. The reader needs to be able to ask questions that the story stream answers, and Omniscient rarely suits that requirement.
- Best used where setting is the main character.

Third Person Limited
- Private, only immediate character's thoughts or motives are revealed.
- By far, the most common form of genre story telling, and one that requires very tight control of POV
- The challenge - allow non POV characters come to life and to be interesting and believable to the reader.
- The reactions of the non POV character can offer terrific insights into your POV character

All in all – what ever POV you chose, it takes some real skill to get it right and consistent and to keep your reader in the page.

The author has to be open to recognize that the POV they've chosen really might not fit the story they're trying to tell – and then rewrite the story correctly. This editorial technique takes time and commitment and a real desire to tell the best story you can.

When using third person, especially omniscient, it's extremely tempting to bring your character closer by telling the reader their thoughts… this is very easily overdone.

To the point of this discussion – does the author need to give the reader access to the POV character's thoughts? They certainly can if they want to, but does this provide the experience the reader wants…

This question depends on the POV you've chosen, and how important that reveal is to the scene, and to the continuity of the story… the story cannot be told to the effect required without telling the reader what the character is thinking.

Really? Maybe…

Also, this is something I see a fair bit :

When the reader is in the character's mind – through actions, dialog, reaction to setting, back story memories – the reader is engaged and is in sync with the character's motivation and the outcome of the journey in that particular scene.

It's crucial that POV is maintained.

If the author inserts an internal narrative, it's often all too often obvious it's an authorial intrusion to provide information or melodrama.

When writing, the author is in control, the author knows what's going on, and often knows what's going to happen. Adding thoughts to enhance the scene, to increase the drama, is very easy to do and initially it can look pretty good – but for the reader, this can be an intrusion into the emotional flow of the scene. So extreme care needs to be taken to maintain the desired POV.

There's no universal style for how to handle inner thoughts in fiction writing.

It's solely a writer's preference.

However, with the first occurrence of narrative thoughts, you'll likely want to stick with the same format throughout the entire story for consistency.

Use dialogue tags without quotation marks.

Write he thought or she thought to identify a phrase as something a character thinks to themselves.

Use dialogue tags and quotation marks.

The Chicago Manual of Style suggests using quotation marks for what they call unspoken discourse. Today, this is considered least favorable. Readers noting a quotation mark will automatically assume "speech" – so this technique lends itself to confusion if not done with consistent perfection.

Where you'll get away with it is when the technique is used infrequently, and as such, when required.

The quotations will be ignored if the reader needs the information more than they need consistency of style.

Use Italics.

Italics are often used for *emphasis* in writing, though *they need to be used sparingly*. Word choice is always a better approach.

Today, italics are most often recognized as inner dialog. Italics make a clear distinction between thoughts and the surrounding text.

However, too much italicized inner dialog can be an eye strain, and some readers may choose to skim that section - because it's easier for them.

Why give them that choice? Use Italicized inner dialog sparingly and when it's the most appropriate way to advance the story

Start a new line if mixing dialog with internal thought.

Writers will often start a new line for each character's dialogue. For a lengthy internal monologue, start a new paragraph. This is a visual cue that we're no longer in the external world but in the character's head.

You need to be aware that in the genre writing's most common style of third person past tense, mixing internal narrative using present tense thought can be confusing to the reader, especially if there is a lot of it.

Use internal thought with a lot of care and for the right reasons.

What is a very exciting tool, for me, is when …

The POV character is set in a time and place that offers them some sort of opportunity.

Show the reader through action how the character uses that opportunity, and the reaction and consequence to that action.

These reveals are what the author want the reader to see.

This is often far more readable, believable and entertaining than the author 'telling' the reader what the character thinks.

Anything the narrator says to the reader ought to reveal something to the reader.

Any dialog from the POV character ought to reveal something to the reader.

Anything the POV character see's in setting ought to reveal something to the reader.

Any decision or action or consequence to the POV character ought to reveal something to the reader.

Using your tools in a consistent and appropriate but manner will guarantee a better experience for the reader. I believe the author needs to write the story, yes, but then review it from the reader's perspective. The story is for the reader.

Not always easy, and that's why we have editors.

Examples of internal or narrative thought used in different POV situations and techniques:

Linda rounded a bend in the path, and came face to face with the bear. "A Bear," she thought! "What did the ranger tell me to do?" was her only reaction before turning to run. The sound of the grizzly crashing through the bush behind her gave her feet wings.

(third person narrative thought as speech using tags)

Linda rounded a bend in the path, and came face to face with the *bear*. "*A Bear*," she thought! "*What did the ranger tell me to do*?" was her only reaction before turning to run. The sound of the grizzly *crashing* through the bush behind her gave her feet wings.

(third person narrative thought also using italics to highlight dramatic intention)

Linda rounded a bend in the path, and came face to face with the *bear*. *A Bear*, she thought! *What did the ranger tell me to do*? was her only reaction before turning to run. The sound of the grizzly *crashing* through the bush behind her gave her feet wings.

(third person using italics to show thoughts and to highlight dramatic intention without tags)

You round a bend in the path and come face to face with the bear. *"A Bear,"* you think! *"What did the ranger tell me to do…"* is your only reaction before turning to run. The sound of the grizzly crashing through the bush behind gives your feet wings.

(second person narrative thought)

I rounded a bend in the path and came face to face with the bear. *"A Bear,"* I thought! *"What did the ranger tell me to do*?" was my reaction before turning to run. The sound of the grizzly crashing through the bush behind me gave my feet wings.

(first person narrative thought)

I rounded a bend in the path and came face to face with the bear. I'd written down the ranger's instructions but forgetting every word I turned to run. The sight of the grizzly grinning at me before crashing through the bush gave my feet wings.

(first person narrative with a smidge of bear pov)

Linda rounded a bend in the path, and came face to face with the bear. *"A Bear,"* she thought! *"What did the ranger tell me to do?"* was her only reaction before turning to run. *"I'm hungry,"* was the only thought in the bear's head as he tore straight through the bush blocking his way.

(omniscient - adding a second pov)

Linda rounded a bend in the path, and came face to face with the bear. Both she and the grizzly snorted in surprise, then Linda felt her knees turn to jelly, but managed to suck in a gasp of air for energy – and turning, she ran for her life. The sound of the grizzly crashing through the bush and the glimpse of the slathering beast actually grinning gave her feet wings.

(limited third person, no narrative thought and adding a touch of the bear's pov)

Which one is best? Depends on your story and how you want to tell it – but no matter the story, take the reader into consideration, provide them with the easiest read and one that invokes the most immersive experience.

Happy Writing !!!!!