

Storytellers often play a role in the credibility of their story. Compare how two works establish credible or incredible stories through reliable or unreliable narrators.

Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner were both pioneers in modern literature and Modernism in the 20th century. Both authors took artistic liberties to create their characters. In Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, the narrator, Frederick Henry, presents a clear and honest window into his mind and thoughts. He often uses stream of consciousness to give an unfettered look at his feelings and insights. This form of narration is used even more heavily in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, where the author shifts narrators across each chapter and provides readers with multiple perspective on events. Both authors are very successful at illuminating characters through narrative techniques. Through the use of archetypes, stream of consciousness and unreliable narration, Hemingway and Faulkner both illustrate how well-intentioned protagonists can be driven to insanity by their circumstances.

Both novels set up their characters with clear and well-rounded archetypes that evolve throughout the characters' journeys. In *A Farewell to Arms* Henry is a noble but flawed protagonist, who wants to help the allies in WWI but is held back by his own shortcomings. His alcoholic tendencies and battle with jaundice are relatedly to the reader through his use of plain diction and few adjectives, which contributes to his archetype of a manly man. He barely expresses emotion, and when he does, as he does for Catherine, it is only in short, punchy sentences. He believes that emotions should come second to action, which is why the reader sees him as a typical army man. Faulkner uses a similar narrative technique though Darl. He is a quiet, humble and intellectual type, who goes along with what his family wants, complains little and rarely thinks about personal gain. In the chapters that Darl narrates, Darl uses the present simple tense that is absent of opinion or desires. Darl is also a man of action, as he helps Anse with his work, Cash with the wagon and Dewey Dell with chores. In the beginning of the novel, his thoughts are about helping his family and taking action to do so, just like Henry is about helping the war

effort and taking action to do so. Both authors use archetypes to make the reader think that the protagonists are simple men.

As both novels progress and the narrators start to experience adverse circumstances, the narrators tell their story through a stream-of-consciousness narration, which makes the reader realise that these characters are more complicated than originally imagined. Henry sees the horrors of war but is not sure how to deal with it. In an unexpected bombing, someone's leg is blown off and bodies are mangled. Henry is unable to describe the blood dripping onto him. His descriptions become jumbled and he becomes frightened. Although he also kills people in the novel, which he describes in a merciless tone with plain diction, he later shows remorse, confusion and feelings. His love for Catherine brings out his emotional side. He describes his dreams about her in a stream-of-consciousness style which includes more expressive diction. The reader realises that he is more conflicted and complicated, as events progress. Similarly in *As I Lay Dying*, Darl becomes more conflicted and troubled as the story progresses, and this can be seen through his use of stream-of-consciousness narration. Two scenes in particular act as turning points for Darl in *As I Lay Dying*: the burning of the barn and the river crossing. Whereas he is removed from the drama of the family at the beginning of the novel, when they are dealing with his mother's death, he reaches a breaking point. He starts to realise how crazy his family is and snaps. The reader can see his thoughts turn darker as he tries to burn the barn with his mother's corpse inside and abandon the coffin during the failed attempt to cross the river. He wants to help his family bury his mother, but he also wants to protect his brothers and sisters from their selfish and incompetent father. As the situations of both novels grow more complicated, so too do the thoughts of both narrators, which can be seen through their stream-of-consciousness narration. The simple archetypes from earlier chapters evolve into troubled characters who struggle during adverse circumstances.

In the end of both novels, the reader is left with a broken protagonist who is defeated by circumstances. Because the characters return to the state from which they started, readers question if they are reliable. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Henry never overcomes alcoholism, and his

actions make readers wonder if he is a reliable narrator. At the end of the novel, when Catherine is going into labour with their child, Henry is mentally absent, as he stares into the rain. When the doctor shows him their baby boy, he does not even notice that the child is dead and tells Catherine that their son is healthy. Then she dies, and Henry describes her death without emotion, using the language of the masculine man from earlier chapters. It seems he has learned nothing about living life after having experienced so much death. Readers experience a similar frustration with Darl, who is admitted to an insane asylum. Whereas he started as the only rationale person in the Bundren family, he ends up laughing uncontrollably as he is dragged through the mud to the asylum. Either his dysfunctional family drove him to craziness, or he was crazy to love his dysfunctional family all along. The reader wonders if Darl plays the insane brother for his family, so that Bundrens are not held accountable for his burning of the barn, or if he is actually crazy. Both Hemingway and Faulkner use unreliable narrators in their novel to make readers question the sanity of humanity.

As I Lay Dying and *A Farewell to Arms* use unreliable narrators, archetypes and stream-of-consciousness narration to shine a light on people's inherent flaws. In these works, Faulkner and Hemingway show how humanity can be cruel. The authors show how adverse circumstances, such as war and death, can break seemingly good men. What's more, their works suggest that human existence will always be a struggle, which readers should come to understand and accept.

Criterion A: Knowledge, understanding, interpretation and comparison – 6 out of 10

This essay shows good knowledge and understanding of the works. While there are references to the characters and events from the novels, generalisation are sometimes made about 'adverse circumstances' and 'good men'. Interpretations could have drawn more on the differences between these men and these circumstances, especially in relation to the question. Only the last body paragraph seems to focus explicitly on the exam question, though other paragraphs do this implicitly.

Criterion B: Analysis and evaluation – 6 out of 10

This analysis shows adequate analysis and evaluation of how both authors use language and structure in similar ways. Although the term 'archetype' is not clearly defined, the essay aims to show its relevance to both works. 'Stream-of-consciousness' is also not explored beyond "his descriptions become jumbled." Nevertheless the essay focuses on how style and structure shape the meaning of the works.

Criterion C: Coherence, balance, focus and organisation – 5 out of 5

The analysis is clearly organised, following a set structure for each body paragraph. For this reason it is easy to read. Each paragraph is built around a different textual feature and each paragraph retains its focus on its particular feature in relation to both works. The introduction and conclusion are particularly well organised.

Criterion D: Language – 5 out of 5

The student has a strong command of the English language and can express complicated ideas succinctly. One example of this is the sentence: "Either his dysfunctional family drove him to craziness, or he was crazy to love his dysfunctional family all along." Such phrases give the reader of this essay a clear understanding of the characters and the works.