

# Narrative voice in 'Graveyard'

The composer has chosen first person narrative voice to maximise connection with the reader and take them on a narrative journey during which they explore ideas about discovery.

Using first person narrative voice gives the composer the advantage of placing the reader and the protagonist within a close emotional range and so they maximise the opportunity of allowing the reader to empathise with the protagonist and to see things from their point of view. This is a persuasive strategy and a particularly effective one to use in a story about self-discovery.

The opening sentence immediately links the reader with the action in the story and introduces a discovery theme. The opening image is a clumsy attempt to pull down a box in an old and neglected attic. The protagonist is a teenager named Mei. It is an awkward moment. The tension is heightened by a brief narrative block, which introduces the protagonist's mother as the secondary and only other character in the story. This narrative block reveals the primary reason why Mei is in the attic. It also indicates that there is a potential for conflict as the mother expects a quick cleaning job while the protagonist seems to be in a more inquisitive and explorative frame of mind.

A description of the attic from the protagonist's point of view tells us that she has agreed to complete the spring clean of the attic but informs us that the attic is full of decaying objects and remnants from the past. The mess is huge and most of the attic's contents have been forgotten. Mei draws the reader's attention to the box that has collapsed and exposed its contents – a collection of notebooks. This event has added to the mess in the attic and she is initially annoyed but then becomes more curious when her attention is drawn to one particular notebook.

The notebook's contents suggest a fantasy element in the story through a description, in child-like writing, about how to make a fairy flower. This immediately links the reader with Mei's earlier self, when it was easier for her to become absorbed with imaginary beings rather than the unpleasant reality of tidying the attic. The idea of fairies triggers a series of childhood memories for Mei. Her exploration of her past self is cut short after she realises that the notebook is incomplete.

Her attention is drawn to her name in the top right hand corner and it triggers a vision of her primary school playground. The playground is presented as a contradictory place – a dark physical presence containing a colourful imaginary space filled with fairies and other mysterious beings.

The notebooks span a ten-year period and while Mei flicks through them she moves through her past. However, this is not a seamless, but rather a fragmented and jarring experience because none of the books are complete.

A moment in childhood when one relished being in the rain is colourfully presented with immediacy and delicacy. This allows the narrator to contrast her experiences from the past, of being her child self, with the present, of being a more mature, teenage self. She questions herself about what is left of the child who enjoyed the rain and recorded her thoughts in a notebook.

The innocence of childhood is contrasted with the messiness and constant pressure of being a teenager. The beauty of the past has been replaced with the uncertain social responsibilities in her life.

The silence of being in the attic gives her the opportunity to reflect and the composer allows the narrator's mind to settle on the images in the visual stimulus. Mei's thoughts show the darker side of life's experiences and the link between past and present. The metaphor of her life being a river rushing along is introduced. It becomes clear to Mei that the notebooks are the only remnants of her child self that she possesses. So in a sense, they are like a graveyard of her past experiences.