

Backstory

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backstory>

As a literary device backstory is often employed to lend depth or verisimilitude to the main story. The dramatic revelation of secrets from the backstory, as a useful technique for developing a story, was recognized as far back as Aristotle, in Poetics.

Backstories are usually revealed, partially or in full, chronologically or otherwise, as the main narrative unfolds. However, a story creator may also create portions of a backstory or even an entire backstory that is solely for their own use in writing the main story and is never revealed in the main story.

Backstory may be revealed by various means, including flashbacks, dialogue, direct narration, summary, recollection, and exposition. It may eventually be published as a story in its own right in a prequel.

Flashbacks

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flashback_\(narrative\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flashback_(narrative))

Flashback is an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached. Flashbacks are often used to recount events that happened before the story's primary sequence of events or to fill in crucial backstory. In the opposite direction, a flash-forward (or prolepsis) reveals events that will occur in the future. The method is used to create suspense in a story, develop a character or structuring the narration. In literature, internal analepsis is a flashback to an earlier point in the narrative; external analepsis is a flashback to before the narrative started.

Dialogue

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue>

Dialogue (sometimes spelled dialog in American English) is a literary and theatrical form consisting of a written or spoken conversational exchange between two or more ("dia" means through or across) people. Its chief historical origins as narrative, philosophical or didactic device are to be found in classical Greek and Indian literature, in particular in the ancient art of rhetoric.

Direct Narration

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative>

A narrative (or story) is any account of connected events, presented to a reader or listener in a sequence of written or spoken words, or in a sequence of (moving) pictures.

Recollection

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recollection>

Recall in memory refers to the retrieval of events or information from the past. Along with encoding and storage, it is one of the three core processes of memory. There are three main types of recall: free recall, cued recall and serial recall. Psychologists test these forms of recall as a way to study the memory processes of humans and animals. Two main theories of the process of recall are the Two-Stage Theory and the theory of Encoding Specificity.

Exposition

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposition_\(literary_technique\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposition_(literary_technique))

The exposition is the portion of a story that introduces important background information to the audience; for example, information about the setting, events occurring before the main plot, characters' back stories, etc. Exposition can be conveyed through dialogues, through a character's thoughts, through background details, through in-universe media such as newspaper clippings, trial reports and letters, or through a narrator telling a back-story or by establishing scenes where a character is followed. Exposition is considered one of four rhetorical modes of discourse, along with argumentation, description, and narration.

Backstory - Exercise

1. Write a short description of an important event from your main character's past and how your character felt about it.

Example: Whenever Sam got a minor injury (splinter, scraped, bruise) as a child, his mother would laugh it off as a minor boo-boo and walk away. This made Sam feel like his mother didn't care about him.

2. Write a short scene of an event in the present that is similar in some way as the past event and evokes the same feelings in your character. Do not directly refer to the past event.

Example: Sam and his girlfriend Tilly are having an argument. She makes a stinging comment, laughs mockingly, and walks out of the room. Sam feels like Tilly doesn't care about him.

3. Write a short scene that happens after the event in exercise 2 in which your character recalls the past event and uses it to either justify or explain his/her reaction.

Example 1: Sam storms out of the house and meets up with his friend Jeff at a bar. Sam tells Jeff about the fight with Tilly and recalls feeling the same way when his mother walked out of the room when he was a kid. If Tilly doesn't really care about him, then why should he stay with her?

Example 2: Sam and Tilly make up later and Sam tells her about what his mother used to do when he was a kid. Tilly apologizes for laughing and walking out of the room, and explains she did it only because she was too angry to and responded without thinking.

4. Write a flashback that happens after the event in exercise 2 in which your character re-lives or remembers the past event.