

Voiceovers and Asides/Footnotes

Definition: An off-screen voice that informs the audience of important facts or opinions in fiction and non-fiction productions. Authors typically do not inject themselves into the events that they are writing about. On occasion they can't seem to help themselves and insert a "voice over" that overrides what the characters are doing in the text. This is a subcategory of a phenomenon which is called the "Omniscient Narrator." Since the author sometimes reveal things that are inside the head of one of the characters that are not voiced out loud by them. The narrator knows more than the characters and sometimes reveals that info directly to the reader. They function like an aside or a footnote.

Modern Examples:

As Middle-earth teeters on the brink of ruin at the beginning of Peter Jackson's cinematic epic *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, viewers hear the words of Galadriel in somber voiceover: "The world is changed: I feel it in the water, I feel it in the earth, I smell it in the air.... Much that once was is lost, for none now live who remember it.... But the hearts of Men are easily corrupted. And the Ring of Power has a will of its own.... And some things that should not have been forgotten ... were lost."

Biblical Examples

Gen 22:1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Genesis 34:7 The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

2 Sam. 11:27 But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord

2 Samuel 17:14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel." For the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring harm upon Absalom.

Book of Kings

The heavy-handed voiceover editorial evaluation in Kings seeks to determine the meaning of the historical details of the kings on the front end—for example, "he did evil in the eyes of the Lord."

Isaiah 39:8 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."

Esther 6:6 So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?"

John 2:19–22 ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. Voiceover is directed to the reader!

Whys and So what's:

1. Authors of narrative texts generally speak in "3rd person" but when they inject something and address the reader directly that is something readers should pay attention to. Gives a clue from the author about how to directly apply the text.
2. Authors typically "show" rather than "tell" readers how they are to think about a character's actions. In these "voiceover" cases they are clearly communicating a divine perspective on the action.
3. Recognize that readers are influenced by the nature and skill of the narrator. Many times, narrators leave us hanging (we know nothing about how Abraham and Isaac are emotionally reacting to the events of Gen 22) but occasionally they reveal inner thoughts of characters or actions behind closed doors – hence the "omniscient narrator."