

“Stream of Consciousness Novel”

Degree 1 (English Honours)

Paper 1, Section D

History of English Novel

In literature, stream of consciousness is a method of narration that describes happenings and actions in the flow of thoughts in the mind of the characters. The term was initially coined by a psychologist William James in his research, the principle of psychology. He writes;

“it is nothing joined; it flows. A river or a stream is the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In taking of it hereafter, let’s call it the stream of thought, consciousness or subjective life”.

Another appropriate term of this device is ‘*interior monologue*’ where the individual thought process of a character is associated to his or her actions, are portrayed in the form of a monologue that addresses the character itself. Therefore, it is different from the dramatic monologue or soliloquy where the speaker addresses the audience or the third person.

Examples of Stream of Consciousness in literature

The Stream of Consciousness style of writing is marked by the sudden rise of thoughts and lack of punctuation. The use of this narration style is generally associated with the modern novelist and short story writers of 20th century. Let us analyse a few examples of the Stream of consciousness narrative technique in literature.

Example#1: *Ulysses* (By James Joyce)

James Joyce successfully employs the narrative mode in his novel *Ulysses*, which describe a day in the life of a middle-class aged Jew, Mr. Leopold Bloom, living in Dublin, Ireland.

“He is young Leopold, as in a retrospective arrangement, a mirror with a mirror (hey, pestro), he beholdeth himself. that young figure of then seen, precious manly, walking on a nipping morning from the old house in Clambrassil to the High School, his book satchel on him bondolier wise, and in it a googly hunk of wheaten loaf, a mother’s thought.”

These lines reveal the thoughts of bloom, as he thinks of the younger bloom. The self-reflection is achieved by the flow of thoughts that takes him back to his past.

Example#2: *Mrs. Dalloway* (By Virginia Woolf)

Another 20th century writer that followed James Joyce’s narrative

method was Virginia Woolf. By voicing her internal feelings, that Mrs Woolf gives freedom to the characters to travel back and forth in time. Mrs Dalloway went out to buy flower for herself, and the way her thoughts move through the past and present, giving us an insight into the complex nature of her character.

Example#3: *The British Museum Is Falling Down* (By David Lodge)

We notice the use of this technique in David Lodge's novel *The British Museum Is Falling Down*. It is a comic novel that imitates the stream of consciousness narrative techniques of writers like Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf.

We see the imitation of the typical structure of the stream of conscious narrative technique of Virginia Woolf. We notice the integration of the outer and inner realities in the passage that is so typical of Virginia Woolf, especially the induction of the reporting clauses "he thought," and "he wondered," in the middle of the reported clauses.

Function of Stream of Consciousness

Stream of consciousness is a style of writing developed by a group of writers at the beginning of the 20th century. It aimed at expressing in words the flow of characters' thoughts and feelings in their minds. The technique aspires to give readers the impression of being inside the

minds of the characters. Therefore, the internal view of the minds of the characters sheds light On plot and motivation in the novel.

By, Arshad Khan

Department of

English

J N College

Madhubani