

What is a Monologue?

Definition of Monologue

Monologue comes from Greek word *monos* means alone and *logos* means speech. It is a literary device, which is the speech or verbal presentation that a single character presents in order to express his/her collection of thoughts and ideas aloud. Often this character addresses directly to audience or another character. Monologues are found in the dramatic medium like films, plays and also in non-dramatic medium such poetry.

Types of Monologue

There are two types of monologues:

Interior Monologue

In interior monologue, a character externalizes his thoughts, so that audience could witness the experiences, which might otherwise be remained internal. Often found in plays, movies and novels, this technique is also called as stream of consciousness. It has further two categories, direct and indirect. In direct interior monologue, an author does not show his presence and directly reveals his character, while in an indirect interior monologue, an author appears as a commentator, guide, presenter and selector.

Dramatic Monologue

In this type of monologue, a character speaks to the silent listener. This type has theatrical qualities.

Hence, it is known as dramatic monologue, and is frequently used in poetry.

Difference between A Monologue and A Soliloquy

Monologue and soliloquy are similar as both are speeches presented by a single person. But a major difference between them is that, in monologue, a speaker reveals his thoughts to the audience or any other character, whereas in a soliloquy, the speaker expresses his thoughts to himself/herself, and it does not involve any other characters.

Example 1

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair...
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will
reverse.'

(The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S Eliot)

This entire poem is written in the form of a dramatic monologue in which the poet is trying to explore the causes of pain and suffering of insecure young man, who is confused about attending the party whether he should or not. Eliot reveals his thoughts to an audience how Prufrock feels that in case he goes to the party, it might disturb the entire universe.

Example 2

Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, ‘Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark’ — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E’en then would be some stooping...

(My Last Duchess by Robert Browning)

This poem also presents an example of a dramatic monologue, as it has a theatrical quality in which the poet expresses his viewpoint through the speech of his character. The single speaker is addressing to servant of a count.

Example 3

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief...
O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

(Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare)

This is a famous balcony scene when Romeo hides in the garden of Capulet, and waits for the glimpse of his beloved Juliet, who comes out on the balcony, and then Romeo uses monologue by sharing his thoughts with the audience.

Example 4

In her novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf has presented her characters by using the technique of stream of consciousness or interior monologue. The consciousness of characters move backward and forward. Author has molded and shaped their personalities at critical moments by interior monologue. Her particular deployment of this technique consists of authorial interjections to provide guidance to the readers and give shape to the narrative.

Function of Monologue

The purpose of writing in monologues is to convey an idea or viewpoint through words. However, sometimes, we notice a tricky part of writer's expression as the opinion of speaker and writer do not match because he tries to convince the audience,

and may not tell the exact reality. It allows the readers to move from one character to another and have an insight into their imaginations. A monologue serves as a basic source through which writers express their emotions and thoughts.