

Perception

- A short essay on one of the most overlooked elements of a story by Jerry Crane.

Perception of a story is the way a particular plot is interpreted. Every fable, tale, story, novel, novel series and screenplay has a particular and unique way to narrate the plot. But one part of this method of interpretation always remains the same, the immediate classification of the hero and the villain. Along the course of a story all characters are classified as either good or evil. The good draws all our optimism, support, sympathy and trust. The rise and fall of the good triggers ups and downs in the viewer, or reader's mind in the exact rhythm. What's left for the evil party, is just a sack of negative emotions and hatred. But this is the way it should be, isn't it? Good and evil, each get what they deserve, don't they? Well, the answer's a bit tricky.

The problem lies in the differentiation of the hero and villain itself. While reading a story we are only exposed to one aspect of the tale. Confusing? What 'bout this analogy? According to science, only one side of the moon is visible to us, i.e. near side. The other side which always hides from us is called the far side. Similarly, only one way of perception of a story is visible to us. We never get to see its far side, i.e. its alternate aspect. The role of the protagonist and the antagonist can be exchanged in almost every story. Each tale can be narrated in a way which favours its present villain.

Let's take an example of two of my favourite movies. (SPOILER ALERT!!)

'The Book Thief' and 'The Enemy at the Gates' are two stories both based in the time period of the Second World War. However, the former is based in Germany and tells the story by the way the Axis Powers interpreted the war, whereas the latter is based in Russia and tells the story by the way the Allies interpreted the war.

While reading or watching the 'book thief', we are told the German aspect of the war. This story revolves around a girl who had lost her parents and also her foster parents because of the attacks by the Allies. Germans regarded the Allies as their enemy and so does the viewer or the reader. We sympathize the girl, German commoners and soldiers.

But while reading or watching 'The Enemy at the Gates' we are told the Russian aspect of the same war. This story revolves around the cat and rat game of the Russian sniper and German sniper in the War of Stalingrad. The Russians considered the Axis powers as their enemy and so does the reader or viewer. The story depicts the harsh life of the Russian army troops and all other people concerned with the war, and the victory of Russia over the axis powers. With the victory of the Russian sniper we all feel happy and patriotic even if we are not Russians.

Wait, did the same person who sympathized the Germans after the Allies attack, feel satisfied when the Germans got crushed by the allies? Yes, and every other person who saw both the

movies or read the books had similar emotions. Is our brain so fickle? I don't blame you if you asked the same question to yourself. It is the opposite perception of both stories that get our minds in a fix.

This concept also has a philosophical aspect that every person has both good and bad and so and so, but I wouldn't get into that. The main idea is that the plot, the climax and the characters are vital criteria on the basis of which a story is judged. But Perception is a key factor in deciding a story's fate.

It can be possible that the characters that we believe to be the antagonist like Tom Riddle (Harry Potter), Shylock (The Merchant of Venice), Goneril and Regan (King Lear), Duryodhana (Mahabharata) or even Ravan (Ramayana) can turn out to be the hero if presented by a different perspective.

Examples of a twist in the story just by changing the perspective can be seen in 'Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows' when we are told about Snape's past when the perspective changes from the golden trio to Snape himself and also in the 'Retrieved Reformation' when Ben Price sees Jimmy Valentine with a new perspective.

Waving the wand and casting the spell of perspective can make one's story more or less appealing. If one is targeting a particular group viewers (Nationality, Age, etc.) expressing the story with the perspective of that group makes the story more relatable and real to the audience.

To conclude.....

They say, "You cannot judge a book by its cover", but turns out you cannot judge the book even after reading it.

Word count-820

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Rhymes and Words