

Narrative Techniques

1. Backstory - Story that precedes events in the story being told—past events or background that add meaning to current circumstances.
2. Cliffhanger - The narrative ends unresolved, to draw the audience back to a future episode for the resolution.
3. *Deus ex machina* - Resolving the primary conflict by a means unrelated to the story (e.g., a god appears and solves everything). This device dates back to [ancient Greek theater](#), but can be a clumsy method that frustrates the audience.
4. flashback - General term for altering time sequences, taking characters back to the beginning of the tale, for instance
5. flash-forward - Also called [prolepsis](#), a scene that temporarily jumps the narrative forward in time. Flashforwards often represent events expected, projected, or imagined to occur in the future. They may also reveal significant parts of the story that have not yet occurred, but soon will in greater detail.
6. foreshadowing - Implicit yet intentional efforts of an author to suggest events which have yet to take place in the process of narration
7. frame story - A main story that organizes a series of shorter stories
8. *In medias res* - Beginning the story in the middle of a sequence of events. A specific form of narrative hook.
9. red herring - Diverting attention away from an item of significance.
10. poetic justice - virtue ultimately rewarded, or vice punished, by an ironic twist of fate related to the character's own conduct
11. predestination paradox - time travel paradox where a time traveler is caught in a loop of events that "predestines" them to travel back in time
12. ticking clock scenario - threat of impending disaster—often used in thrillers where salvation and escape are essential elements
13. unreliable narrator - The narrator of the story is not sincere, or introduces a bias in his narration and possibly misleads the reader, hiding or minimizing events, characters, or motivations.

14. audience surrogate - A character who expresses the questions and confusion of the audience, with whom the audience can identify. Frequently used in detective fiction and science fiction, where the character asks a central character how he or she accomplished certain deeds, for the purpose of inciting that character to explain (for the curious audience) his or her methods, or a character asking a relatively educated person to explain what amounts to the backstory.

15. magical realism - Describing events in a real-world setting but with magical trappings, often incorporating local customs and invented beliefs. Different from [urban fantasy](#) in that the magic itself is not the focus of the story.

16. stream of consciousness - The author uses narrative and stylistic devices to create the sense of an unedited [interior monologue](#), characterized by leaps in syntax and punctuation that trace a character's fragmentary thoughts and sensory feelings. The outcome is a highly lucid perspective with a plot. Not to be confused with [free writing](#).