**Persuasive Object’s Point of View Narrative**

**Learning Intentions:**

* To appreciate how the perspectives of the character and their context informs our choices of language and persuasive techniques
* To experiment with point of view to become more effective in communicating with and impacting an audience
* To perfect skills in fluent and passionate presentation

*Your task is to write a text of about 1000 words (or less depending on your use of the 3000 so far), which you can present (in a reading of your story of up to 6 min) or not, depending on whether you have done a written piece or not yet (you have to do one written – the third task is either a digital story or a written narrative).*

The text should persuade the audience about something from the point of view of an object. You could be merely convincing the audience that the object is under valued or add layers of meaning such a message from the point of view of the object or even use the story as an allegory with a whole hidden layer.

Not-so-still Life: Writing from an Inanimate Object’s Point of View

by Katherine Quevedo

Looking for unconventional, potentially striking ways to explore what it means to be human in your writing?  It may seem counterintuitive, but personification—ascribing human qualities to inanimate objects—can open new avenues to plumb the depths of human experience.  Yes, breathing life into items and turning them into characters can stimulate both writer and reader in ways that typical, expected, *human* characters cannot.

Films such as the *Toy Story* and *LEGO Movie* series may leap to mind, but literature boasts a rich history of objects as characters too.  For example, Lewis Carroll’s *Wonderland* books feature talking flowers, playing cards, and chess pieces; L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has the scarecrow, tin man, trees, and porcelain figurines; both Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Steadfast Tin Soldier” and E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* use toys.  Caroline M. Yoachim has written rich, recent examples in stories such as “Carnival Nine,” “The Carnival Was Eaten, All Except the Clown,” and “On the Pages of a Sketchbook Universe” (wind-up dolls, confections, and illustrations, respectively).  Elizabeth Beechwood has written from the perspective of mountains in the stories “Stone Dove” and “Yes, Yes, Yes, We Remember.”

So why take on a non-human POV?  What’s the appeal?  Let’s consider the following points:

1. It challenges you as a writer while empowering you to create memorable characters and worlds, since you can explore plots and settings that humans don’t neatly fit into, either spatially or temporally.
2. Your characters and story can function as an analogy for the real world, but—importantly—the reader may reserve judgment without having human markers of status to refer to when they first encounter your character.

To the first point, in order to write objects as characters, you’ll need to figure out the basics such as how they move—IF they move—and determine any constraints around that.  It’s rather like creating the rules of a magic system, and it’s crucial not only for narrative consistency but also for the potential for deeper meaning (as we’ll get to in point #2).  For a film example of mobility constraints, see the air conditioner scene in *The Brave Little Toaster*.  My story “The Menagerie Machine,” about carousel steeds, touches on how some animals bob up and down while others stick fast to the wooden base.

You must also determine the objects’ means of communication.  Talking?  Telepathy?  Solely body language?  Use their language to describe the world where you can, without losing the reader.  Employ metaphors filtered through their perspective.  For example, a narrator made of porcelain might liken emotional pain to physical breakage, whereas a scarecrow might refer to breaking apart more as a metaphor for loss of control.  Or maybe not, in your invented world.  Your characters’ naming conventions, slang, and jargon can also further the worldbuilding while keeping it relatable to the reader, or at the very least understandable.

Essentially, personification boils down to creating culture(s), which brings us to the second point above.  Your object-as-character may be unencumbered by the usual indicators of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, etc.—at least not instantly recognizable to the reader—but you can still explore culture clash, class systems, and castes.  Even cliques.  The objects populating your story might have hierarchies or other social structures to navigate.  Just like writing human, alien, or animal characters, the conflicts between and/or within the cultures of your objects will flesh out the world and ratchet up the emotional impact.

In fact, I’d argue that using cultures of inanimate objects to grapple with these types of issues can enrich reader participation beyond more expected approaches.  When done well, it enables the reader to engage with the characters and themes at a level that doesn’t feel didactic (on the author’s part) or biased (on the reader’s part).  It opens the work up to multiple interpretations.  It’s a reflection of our complex human experiences, in a symbolic, appealing little bundle.

So, play around with turning playthings into characters, or give sentient baggage some emotional baggage.  After all, we know that the dish ran away with the spoon, but who knows what untold, breathtaking adventures they had.

**Steps:**

1. Read above
2. Consider objects that are helpful or used in unique ways to write about – maybe their point of view is that they are overlooked or taken for granted. Maybe they are really proud of their achievements and feel they are owed more praise or acknowledgement.
3. Create a world for your object, taking into account the culture suggestions in the article. What is it your object wants in this world?
4. Is there potential for this story you are writing to be an allegory – to have a hidden layer of meaning? Or to have a clear message: a tree story has a message about ecology (like Bear 71 did); a toy story (like *Toy Story*) has a message about relationships; a story about office supplies is an allegory for how the owners of the supplies treat each other.
5. Decide what the object is persuading the audience of – see point 2 and 4 for suggestions.
6. Define your purpose and audience
7. Create your plot and characters; also setting, themes, symbols; also allegory or message from the object character
8. Write draft

**Performance Standards:**

*Knowledge and Understanding*

* Knowledge and understanding of relevant ideas to the object’s perspective.
* Knowledge and understanding of ways in which you can use typical language features, stylistic features, and conventions of a narrative to convince the audience of the message your object has
* Knowledge and understanding of ways you can create a narrative for a specific purpose (to persuade but also to entertain), audience, and contexts.

*Application*

* How well you use the language and stylistic features of a narrative to address the purpose (persuade and entertain), audience, and context.
* How well you use of clear, accurate, and fluent expression.

