



MODES OF STORYTELLING

Most writers use five different methods, or “modes,” for telling stories.

Narration is where the writer tells you something is happening. It’s the “live action” parts of the story.

I laid the bag on its side in front of him, then grabbed a tennis racket and tried to gently nudge him to go inside. Instead, he hopped to the left and got even closer to me, causing me to drop the racket and run screaming back to my bedroom.

Description is where we are getting a detailed look at something in the story. A description will appeal to at least one of the five senses.

In the dim hallway, his squatty little body was a silhouette in the light coming from the living room, like a buffalo wing someone had dropped on the floor.

Dialogue is where the characters speak out loud.

She exhaled, hard. “Chloe can’t come.”

My dad looked up from tying his shoes. “What happened?”

“Stomach virus,” Mom said, tossing her phone on the bed.

Interior monologue is where we see a character’s thoughts.

Seriously, girl, I thought to myself. You’re like a hundred times bigger than him. Just end this already.

Exposition is where we learn facts or background information about the characters, setting, and situation.

Chloe is a college student, the daughter of my parents’ friends, and they say she just comes over to “hang out” with me.

Most writers take all five modes and mix them up in their stories. This section of “Frog” contains all five modes:

She exhaled, hard. "Chloe can't come."

My dad looked up from tying his shoes. "What happened?"

"Stomach virus," Mom said, tossing her phone on the bed, where I was sprawled out, watching them get ready for the wedding. Her boss was getting married. I wasn't invited. Not that I wanted to go anyway.

 narration  dialogue  description  interior monologue  exposition

When you are writing your own story, try to do the same: Use all five modes to tell your story, but weave them together to keep things interesting.

In the mini-lessons that follow, we will look at some ways to do that.

What to Do Now

To see how well you understand the difference between these five modes, do the Story Mode Sort exercise. If you are in a class, your teacher will have a group version for you. If you are on your own, get the independent version of this activity.