



Serialized Story Telling : A Study of Narrative Mode in Comics

KEYWORDS

Neuromuscular hamartoma, benign Triton tumour, peripheral nerve tumour

Mrs. N. Jenipha

Assistant Professor of English, Anna University University, College of Engineering, Ramanathapuram – 623 513

ABSTRACT Comics are the most effective and powerful communicative medium of any literature. Through images and texts, it attracts people of all ages. For this reason, it is considered as the powerful visual medium. Comics narrate the story or happening through the series of images arranged in a sequential order. The major components of a story are conflicts, characters, events and settings. In Comics, the readers can directly see all the components. This kind of work – of – art creates the feeling of liveliness among the readers. Besides, it enables the reader to imagine each and everything as if it happens before their eyes. The writers make use of devices such as speech balloons, captions, onomatopoeia and comic strip to tell his / her story in comics. Every story is told by means of narrative mode. Dialogues, action, description, exposition and thought are the examples of narrative mode. In Comics, the writer employs the narrative mode called "Serialized storytelling". It is a technique used to tell a larger story in small parts. Because of presenting all the actions in a series of images, this technique renders the writer to achieve his / her task triumphantly. The aim of this paper is to discuss the characteristic features and the importance of serialized story telling technique elaborately.

Introduction

Comics act as the most fascinating tool to grab the attention of readers. Now a days, it is regarded as the efficient communicative medium. The comic writers with the help of pictures and texts narrate the story in a simpler and easy manner. Without taking much effort, the writers convey what they ought to address the readers. The readers in turn develop the sense of liking towards the comics due to the juxtaposing arrangement of images and texts. Comics create the feeling of liveliness. It makes the readers believe that they can witness the entire story revolves around them. Since the readers enwrap in the world created by the writers, they could find enjoyment in understanding the story.

Comics narrate the experiences of human, super – human, animals, birds or make believe characters. The experiences are arranged in the sequential order. The format of a comic book comprises panel, gutter, characters, captions, speech balloons, thought balloons and onomatopoeia. In Comics, the images are either drawn in square boxes or in rectangular boxes called 'Panels'. A single panel denotes the moment of time. Series of panels are arranged in the chronological order. Gutter, a space that demarcates the two panels. The arrangement of multiple panel is termed as 'Comic strip'. Each panel presents the images of major characters involved in action. There is a clear portrayal of every character's emotions, actions and reactions. Characters converse through dialogues that are represented in speech balloons. According to the necessity of expressing various deeds and emotions, the variety of speech balloons may be used. Thoughts and feelings are expressed through thought balloons which resemble cloud shaped and a series of small bubbles connect the speaker to the thought balloons. Using onomatopoeia words, the writers create the sound effect. Through captions, (texts written in a small rectangular box at the top corner of the panel) the writers convey the information that is not uttered by the characters.

Comic writers very skillfully make use of the format to narrate the story. They employ the technique called "Se-

rialized Storytelling" to achieve craftsmanship. Storytelling recounts the portrayal of events or incidents in an order. Any event or incident can be narrated only by giving background information about the following elements which include Time, Setting, Plot, Characters, Narrators, and narrative structure. These elements in toto are considered as the essential elements of a story. The writer has to blend all the elements meticulously in order to form a single unit called story. Comic writers have the privilege of reciting a story through images that are arranged according to time. Pictures, captions and texts in a panel impart information to infer the events. The whole story is divided into various parts and all the pivotal actions are picturized in each panel. Every panel describes the crucial point of action in the story. The panels enhance the readers to experience the actions and comprehend the true essence of a story. The aim of the paper is to discuss in detail how the stories are constructed in multiple panel of images. It also focuses how the writers clearly depict the narrative through panels of images and texts.

Serialized Storytelling

Time

Time is the first and foremost factor essential for narrating a story. Every panel represents the moment in time. All panels are arranged according to the time sequence. The presence of some objects in pictures which intimate the readers about the time of the events take place. This leads to improve the comprehensibility. It is easy for the reader to get the understanding about at what time the story begins, proceeds and ends. The objects in every panel help to indicate time. Objects such as clocks, calendars, hour glass, the position of the Sun, the size of the Moon, cloud, lighting candle, stars and shadows aid the reader to know the specific time period. Hands of clock, weather change, melting candle, dead flowers show the passing time. Ruins of buildings, wrinkles in character faces, ancient antiques, demolished sites, flowing of river and growth of plants and trees project the shift in time. Portrayal of time through objects reflect the mood of the story.

Setting

Setting plays a major role in moving the story line. The story may set in the open environment or in the natural environment (forest areas, river beds, sea shore and mountain ranges) or inside and outside the building. Pictorial representation of place reminds the actual happening of a particular event. Besides, the locale gives additional information about the story. It transcends the readers mentally to view the events in the particular time period. The drawings make the task of assuming the place an involuntary process. It reduces the burden of exercising one's imaginative faculty. The panels have the images of buildings like ordinary room, home, place of worship, organization, trees, rivers, bushes, playground etc in the backdrop. The backdrops determine the nature of the story. As a result, there is a change in backdrop according to the flow of story. Setting concretized whether the story takes place in ancient period, historical period, contemporary period or imaginary future. The subtle difference in the present, past and future is differentiated in all the panels. The apt placing of images corresponding to the story line develop the interest in reading. Setting imparts the prior knowledge about the incidents that are going to happen. Without picturizing the backdrop, the panel is considered to be an incomplete one.

Plot

Events in the story are arranged to form a unit called plot. This is considered as the core of the novel. The plot is usually set by the introduction of mysteries, conflicts, frustrations, shock, revelation, gaiety, and judgements. Characters' emotions and reactions reveal the impact created by the plot. In Plot, the events are narrated with causality. In order to understand the plot, the readers should have the prerequisites including intelligence and memory. They should follow the concepts called "Closure" and "Encapsulation". The former requires the prior knowledge to combine all the panels and view them as events. The latter captures the significant events. It is mandatory that the readers should remind the incidents. The readers should have the capability of reading between the frames. There is a space between every panel. The action present in the first panel may not be repeated in the second. Next action in progress occupies the second panel. It is the duty of the readers to fill in the space with the assumption of what happens in the space between the two panels. Pictures are partially visible. Readers become the facilitators to complete the left out parts. For that, they have to rely on their imaginative trait entirely in order to find out the right description.

Plot discloses conflicts. Conflicts may occur due to difference of opinions arise in expressing one's idea, desire or will. They are divided into two types internal conflicts and external conflicts. The former focuses on the conflict between the character and the character's nature. The latter explains the conflict between two characters or between the character and the environment. Texts inside the thought bubbles sometimes mention the internal conflict. External conflict is revealed through texts in speech balloons and captions at the top of the panel. If a conflict occurs between two characters, dialogues explicitly state the conflict. The conflict arises due to the environment is explained in captions. A plot is called good only when the events are ordered rightly.

Characters

Characters are the doer of action. The story revolves around the characters. Every story is crowded with major characters that include Protagonist, the central character,

and antagonist, the opposing character or traits and some minor characters. Pictures of characters reveal the nature of characters. It supplements information about whether the character is kind – hearted, cruel, cunning, brave, short – tempered, or gloomy etc. Characters' appearance, facial reactions, dress code and pictorial description of their physique make the readers realize that the characters are drawn from real life. Prior knowledge and previous experience learned from life assist them to infer the unique personality traits of characters. In comics, all characters are made to believe characters. The projection of half a size portrayal of images prepare the reader to use their evaluating criteria of passing judgement about the characters. Besides, their mentality is highlighted through dialogues and internal thoughts. Characters' both extrovert and introvert nature reveal in the progress of story. While the characters involve in conversation with other characters, the extrovert nature takes the lead role. When the characters are in solitude and at the time of reacting to the situations internally, the introvert nature begins to play. Dialogues indicate extrovert nature whereas thought balloons represent introvert nature. No characters are treated as an exceptional one regarding the projection of mentality.

Narrators

Every story has a narrator. The narrator acts as a ventriloquist in a story. The narrator's existence is predominant in the fictional world. He/ She acts as the mediator between the writer and the readers. Narrator's presence is mandatory throughout the story. Narrator's voice conveys different emotions and situations. It may be overt or covert. Through clues, the narrator conveys his / her beliefs, values, view points, and attitude towards people, events and things. There are three types of narrators: First person narrator, Second person narrator and Third person narrator. The first type narrator is the part of the observer. He / She recites the story using first person narrative 'I'. In comics, the usage of pronoun "I" indicates who the person is. This reduces the readers' task of assuming the person from complex to simpler. This type of narrator discusses feelings, opinions and perceptions of a particular story and how the characters look at the world. The second type narrator directly addresses the reader. Since it is noted for the artificiality, it is employed very rare in literary works. The third type is further divided into two types: Third person limited narrator and Third person omniscient narrator. Through third person limited narrator, the author associates him / her with a major or minor character in the story. The knowledge level is limited. He / She can report everything about a single character.

Most of the comics are narrated by Third person omniscient narrator who is not one of the characters. The narrator does not interact with the characters and exchange dialogue or participate in the action of the story. Captions give space for the narrator to express his / her view points. When the story begins, the narrator introduces the characters, gives description about the backdrop, informs the forthcoming situation and provides the readers with ample information.

Narrative Structure

Authors follow the narrative structure to tell a story. In narrative structure, the events are ordered. They are told by using flashback techniques, dream sequences, repetition of events, revealing different characters' point of view, showing different time frames and foretelling the events. Flashback technique is introduced through characters' recollection of memory through dialogues or thought balloons.

loons. Dream sequence is shown by representing the idea in the thought balloons. The consecutive panels show the continuation of events happen in the dream. The internal thoughts of various characters are depicted in the thought balloons. Sometimes, the expression of internal thoughts creates the clear perception of viewing things. The information regarding foretelling is introduced in the captions. The narrative structure leads the readers to enjoy the story.

Conclusion

The act of serialized story telling in comics raises readers' intention to know the forthcoming events eagerly. All panels exhibit thorough information that is essential for recounting the story. They facilitate the readers to read and enjoy a story. Besides, the act of story telling induces the readers to make use of their own imagination. The process of imagining event or incident is not complex. Prediction is possible because of images and texts. Limited usage of vocabulary does not create the boring effect. Till the end of the story it holds the readers' attentiveness. Because of this nature, comics never distract the readers.

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