When reading a story people often try to connect with it on some emotional level. Whether or not the narrator being natural plays a part in the reader's attachment to the story is something that those in the field of narratology have been debating about for a long time. Finally, we can have some answers.

## THE RESEARCH

In 2020, { HYPERLINK "https://aias.au.dk/aias-fellows/former-fellows/former-fellows-archive/jan-alber/" \h }, { HYPERLINK "https://www.accels.rwth-aachen.de/cms/ACCELS/Das-Zentrum/Unser-Team/~djuwi/Jessica-Jumpertz/?lidx=1&allou=1" \h }, and { HYPERLINK "https://www.uni-

bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/psychologie/abteilung/arbeitseinheiten/06/personen/leitung/index.xml" \h \cdot from the \{ HYPERLINK "https://www.rwth-aachen.de/go/id/a/?lidx=1" \h \cdot and the \{ HYPERLINK "https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/" \h \cdot conducted a study to gather empirical evidence to support\_their theories about narrators. In their article, "\{ HYPERLINK "https://doi.org/10.1075/ssol.19005.alb" \h \cdot ," Alber, Jumpertz, and Mayer gathered a group of thirty English students and had them read four stories with varying degrees of naturalness.

The first story was deemed as "definitely natural" (Alber, Jumpertz, and Mayer, 2020), and was about a backpacking tourist in India. The second story was deemed as natural, and was about a hallucinating woman. The third story was deemed as unnatural, and was about a man reborn as a parrot. The fourth story was deemed as "very unnatural" (Alber, Jumpertz, and Mayer, 2020), and was about a talking golden coin. After reading each story, the readers were given a survey asking them to determine the strangeness of the narrators and how well the readers empathized with the narrators.

After the researchers analyzed the survey answers and compared them with the other responses, they found that the readers attributed the stories with unnatural narrators to be works of fiction and found it harder to empathize with those narrators. They also found that in the unnatural narrator stories, the readers mixed attributes of the storyworld with the real world in order to try to better understand the story. The more unnatural the narrator was, the more the reader would mix the two worlds. The readers said that they were able to find relevance in all four stories to the real world in some way.

It should be noted, however, that the second story was found to be the most unnatural. Alber, Jumpertz, and Mayers believe that this is due to the fact that the text was just an excerpt and the readers didn't get enough of the full story to understand what was going on. The word "strange" may have also been misleading in the survey questions.

## THE IMPLICATIONS

No matter what narrator is chosen for a story, readers are still able to draw out some form of relevance. What matters is the effect the author is trying to have with their story and whether, the chosen narrator achieves that effect, Editors need to keep an eye out for these effects and edit accordingly. The more human and natural the narrator is, the more readers can connect with the story. The less human and unnatural the narrator is, the more readers will feel a sense of strangeness. So, when writing or editing, choose your narrators carefully, fully aware of what your narrator is doing to the reader.

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