

Narrative techniques

The **Interior Monologue** is a particular technique in which **the narrator almost disappears and the point of view overlaps with the internal thoughts of the character.**

Grammar rules are respected and punctuation is used to reproduce the sequence of thoughts, memories, feelings, considerations of the characters.

The main features of the interior monologue are as follows:

- it is a verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon
- it is immediate (this distinguishes it from both the soliloquy and the dramatic monologue, where conventional syntax is respected)
- it is free from introductory expressions like “he thought, he remembered, he said”
- there are two levels of narration: one external to the character’s mind, the other internal
- it lacks chronological order and the presence of subjective time
- it disregards the rules of punctuation
- it lacks formal logical order

It is necessary to distinguish three kinds of interior monologue:

- the **INDIRECT INTERIOR MONOLOGUE** where the narrator never lets the character’s thoughts flow without control and maintains logical and grammatical organization; the character stays fixed in space while his/her consciousness moves in time.
- the **INTERIOR MONOLOGUE characterized by two levels of narration:** one external to the character’s mind, the other internal.

For example in J. Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Molly’s monologue: this is an example of interior monologue with the mind level of narration. Molly Bloom lies in bed thinking over her day, various scenes from her past life crowd into her mind. She thinks of her husband, Leopold Bloom, in particular.

The **INTERIOR MONOLOGUE where the character’s thought flowed freely**, not interrupted by external events.

For example Molly’s Monologue.

An **EXTREME FORM of interior monologue is the STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**, a sort of **experimental technique** in which **the narrator disappears and thoughts are represented in their free flow.**

Grammar rules are not respected and punctuation is not used.

This particular technique very often makes the text incomprehensible.

The American psychologist **William James (1842-1910)** coined the phrase “**stream of consciousness**” to define **THE CONTINUOUS FLOW OF THOUGHTS AND SENSATIONS THAT CHARACTERIZE THE HUMAN MIND.**

The definition was applied by literary critics to a kind of 20th century fiction which focused on this inner process.

At the beginning of the 20th century writers gave more and more importance to subjective consciousness and understood it was impossible to reproduce the complexity of the human mind using traditional techniques; so they looked for more suitable means of expression.

In order **to represents the unspoken activity of the mind before it is ordered in speech in a novel, they adopted the interior monologue.**

The interior monologue is often confused with the stream of consciousness, although they are quite different.

The former (**The interior monologue**) is **THE VERBAL EXPRESSION of A PSYCHIC PHENOMENON** while the latter (**the stream of consciousness**) is the **psychic phenomenon itself.**

Differently from **J.Joyce's characters who show their thoughts directly through interior monologue, sometimes in an incoherent and syntactically unorthodox way,** **V. Woolf never lets her character's thoughts flow without control and maintains logical and grammatical organization.** Her technique is based on **the fusion of the stream of thoughts into a third-person, past tense narrative.** Thus she gives the impression of simultaneous connections between the inner and the other world, the past and the present, speech and silence.

While **J.Joyce was more interested in language experimentation and worked through the accumulations of details,** **V. Woolf's use of words was almost poetic, allusive and emotional.** Fluidity is the quality of the language which flows following the most intricate thoughts and stretches to express the most intimate feelings.