

What is the author's purpose for beginning the story with the daydream of Mitty commanding a navy seaplane in a storm?

What is the author's purpose for beginning the story with the daydream of Mitty commanding a navy seaplane in a storm?

Beginning a story with a vivid daydream or imaginative sequence is a literary technique that authors often use to reveal a character's inner world, set the tone, or foreshadow themes. In James Thurber's short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the opening scene features Walter Mitty lost in a vivid daydream where he is a daring navy seaplane commander navigating a treacherous storm. This opening serves a strategic purpose, inviting readers into Mitty's mind and establishing core themes of escapism, identity, and the contrast between reality and fantasy. Understanding Thurber's intent behind this narrative choice sheds light on the story's deeper messages and enhances its literary significance.

Establishing Mitty's Inner World and Character Traits

Introducing Mitty's Imagination and Desire for Adventure

Thurber begins with Mitty's daydream to immediately give readers insight into his personality—an individual longing for excitement, heroism, and recognition. The vivid imagery of commanding a navy seaplane in a storm symbolizes Mitty's desire to break free from mundane routines and embody traits of courage and competence. The stormy scene emphasizes the thrill and danger he craves, contrasting sharply with his real life, which is characterized by ineffectiveness and meekness. By opening with this fantasy, the author effectively communicates that Mitty's inner life is rich with dreams of heroism, which serve as an escape from his dull reality.

Revealing the Contrast Between Reality and Fantasy

The story's opening starkly juxtaposes Mitty's mundane existence—being ordered around by his wife, forgetting errands, and feeling incompetence—with the vividness and grandeur of his daydream. Thurber's purpose is to highlight the gap between how Mitty perceives himself internally and how he is perceived externally. The seaplane scene acts as a lens into Mitty's subconscious, revealing his longing to be seen as brave and capable. This contrast effectively sets up the comedic and tragic elements of the story, illustrating how Mitty's fantasies serve as a coping mechanism.

Foreshadowing and Thematic Development

Foreshadowing Mitty's Escapism

Beginning with a powerful daydream foreshadows the recurring nature of Mitty's fantasies throughout the story. Each subsequent daydream reveals a different aspect of his idealized self—hero, doctor, spy—indicating that Mitty often retreats into these fantasies to cope with his dissatisfaction. The navy seaplane scene, as the first and most dramatic fantasy, signals to readers that escapism will be a central theme. Thurber uses this opening to suggest that Mitty's inner life is a vital part of his identity, shaping how he navigates his world.

Introducing Themes of Power and Control

The commanding role in the stormy seaplane hints at Mitty's subconscious desire for control and authority, qualities he experiences as lacking in his real life. The stormy scene symbolizes chaos, danger, and the thrill of command—elements Mitty yearns for but does not possess. Thurber's purpose is to set up the theme that fantasies offer Mitty a chance to experience mastery and power, which he cannot attain in his everyday existence. This theme resonates throughout the story, emphasizing the importance of imagination as a form of empowerment.

Creating a Dynamic Opening to Engage Readers

Capturing Attention with Vivid Imagery

The opening scene's vivid description of a storm and the commanding presence of Mitty as a navy seaplane pilot grabs the reader's attention immediately. Thurber's use of detailed imagery and action draws readers into Mitty's world, making his fantasies compelling and immersive. The dramatic scene sets a lively tone, encouraging readers to continue exploring both Mitty's real life and his imaginative escapes.

Invoking Humor and Sympathy

The juxtaposition of Mitty's heroic daydreams with his actual ineptitude creates a sense of humor that is both playful and empathetic. Thurber's purpose is to evoke sympathy for Mitty while also amusing the reader with the disparity between fantasy and reality. The opening scene establishes this tone, allowing the audience to relate to Mitty's desire to escape and to recognize the humorous absurdity of his daydreams.

Conclusion: The Significance of the Opening Scene

In summary, Thurber's choice to begin "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" with Mitty's

daydream of commanding a navy seaplane in a storm serves multiple literary purposes. It introduces Mitty's complex inner world, contrasts his fantasies with his mundane reality, foreshadows themes of escapism and desire for power, and engages readers with vivid imagery and humor. This opening not only captures attention but also lays the groundwork for understanding Mitty's character and the story's exploration of human imagination as a refuge from the frustrations of everyday life. Thurber's strategic use of a compelling fantasy at the story's outset transforms what could be a simple narrative into a profound commentary on the human need for adventure, recognition, and control through the lens of Mitty's vibrant inner life.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the author's purpose in starting the story with Mitty's daydream of commanding a navy seaplane in a storm?

The author uses the daydream to introduce Mitty's vivid imagination and desire for adventure, highlighting his tendency to escape into fantasies to cope with his mundane reality.

How does beginning with Mitty's daydream help develop his character?

It reveals Mitty's inner personality, showcasing his longing for excitement and heroism, which contrasts with his actual timid and ordinary life.

Why might the author have chosen to open the story with a vivid, action-filled daydream?

To immediately engage readers with a dynamic scene that sets the tone for Mitty's imaginative nature and hints at his wish to break free from routine.

In what way does the opening daydream establish a thematic element of escapism?

It demonstrates how Mitty uses fantasy as a way to escape the monotony and frustrations of his everyday life, emphasizing a theme of longing and escapism.

What does the stormy seaplane scene symbolize in the context of the story?

It symbolizes Mitty's inner desires for excitement and heroism, contrasting with his real-world passivity and mundane existence.

How does starting the story with a daydream influence the reader's perception of Mitty?

It creates a sense of empathy and curiosity, inviting readers to see Mitty as a dreamer who yearns for adventure beyond his ordinary life.

Additional Resources

Author's Purpose in Beginning with Mitty's Daydream: An In-Depth Analysis

Introduction: Setting the Stage with Imagination

The opening scene of James Thurber's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* immediately immerses readers in the vivid, fantastical world of its protagonist—Walter Mitty—a mild-mannered man whose inner life is rich with daring adventures and heroic exploits. The story begins not with Mitty's mundane reality but with a detailed daydream where he commands a navy seaplane in a storm. This narrative choice is deliberate and purposeful, serving as a crucial lens through which to understand Mitty's character, his internal universe, and the overarching themes of the story.

Beginning with a daydream is a literary device that functions on multiple levels. It captures the reader's attention, provides insight into Mitty's psyche, and sets the tone for the narrative. As a product reviewer of storytelling techniques, it's essential to analyze how this opening strategy lays the groundwork for the entire story, and what it reveals about the author's intentions.

Why Start with a Daydream? Analyzing the Author's Intent

1. Introducing the Character's Inner World

The first and most apparent purpose of starting with Mitty's navy seaplane daydream is to immediately introduce the reader to the protagonist's inner life. Unlike many stories that begin with external action or exposition, Thurber begins with Mitty's imagination—an escapism that defines his character.

Key points include:

- Revealing Mitty's desires: The vividness of the daydream reflects Mitty's longing for excitement, heroism, and purpose. His fantasies are a window into his aspirations and unfulfilled ambitions.
- Contrasting reality with fantasy: The stark difference between Mitty's mundane daily activities and his vivid daydreams emphasizes his dissatisfaction with reality and his need for mental escape.
- Establishing a relatable theme: Many readers can identify with moments of daydreaming or escapism, making Mitty's internal world accessible and engaging.

Expert insight: Starting with a daydream is a strategic move that aligns the reader's sympathies with Mitty, positioning them to understand his internal struggles from the outset.

2. Creating Immediate Engagement and Curiosity

Opening with an intense, action-filled sequence involving a navy seaplane in a storm is an effective hook. It arouses curiosity because:

- The reader is thrust into an exciting, high-stakes scenario—one they might not expect from a seemingly ordinary man.
- The vivid imagery and suspense pique interest, prompting questions: Why is Mitty commanding a plane? What's happening in this storm? Is this real or fantasy?

Thurber's choice to begin with a compelling, cinematic scene serves as an attention grabber—drawing readers into the story immediately and encouraging them to read further to discover how much of this is imagination versus reality.

Expert insight: An engaging opening that combines action and intrigue is a hallmark of effective storytelling, and Thurber leverages this by anchoring it in Mitty's daydreams.

3. Establishing the Theme of Escapism and Inner Life

The story's overarching theme is the contrast between mundane reality and vibrant fantasy. By starting with Mitty's commanding a navy seaplane, Thurber emphasizes:

- The power of imagination: Mitty's mind provides an escape from his dull, predictable life.
- The human desire for heroism: His fantasies fulfill a deep-seated need for admiration, purpose, and adventure.
- The disconnect between outward appearance and inner reality: The reader quickly perceives that Mitty's external world is ordinary, but his internal world is extraordinary.

This thematic foundation is essential for understanding the story's critique of everyday life and the human tendency toward escapism.

Expert insight: Thurber's opening sets a tone that invites reflection on how individuals cope with dissatisfaction through imagination.

Deeper Literary and Psychological Layers

1. The Use of Humor and Irony

Starting with an over-the-top, heroic daydream introduces humor and irony—key elements in Thurber's storytelling style. The contrast between Mitty's imagined grandeur and his actual meekness creates comic effect.

- Humor as a narrative device: It lightens the story and makes Mitty's internal fantasies endearing.
- Irony: The audience recognizes the disparity between Mitty's fantasies and his real life, adding depth and critique.

Expert insight: The humorous tone invites empathy and encourages the reader to consider the universality of escapism.

2. Psychological Insight into Mitty's Character

From a psychological perspective, the daydream at the story's outset reveals Mitty's subconscious desires and frustrations.

- Projection of heroism: Mitty's fantasies are a manifestation of his need for validation and acknowledgment.
- Escape from powerlessness: The commanding role in his daydreams contrasts sharply with his real-world submissiveness.
- Defense mechanism: These fantasies serve as a psychological refuge from daily stress and feelings of insignificance.

Understanding this helps readers grasp the author's deeper purpose: to humanize Mitty's escapism as a relatable, even universal, trait.

Broader Literary Significance and Authorial Intent

1. Setting the Tone and Mood

The initial daydream establishes a tone that combines humor, adventure, and irony, which persists throughout the story. It prepares the reader for a narrative that explores the tension between fantasy and reality with wit and compassion.

2. Symbolism and Theme Development

The navy seaplane in a storm symbolizes Mitty's tumultuous inner life—volatile, adventurous, and beyond his control. Thurber's choice emphasizes:

- The contrast between external order and internal chaos.
- The tumult of human desire versus mundane existence.

3. Reflecting the Cultural Context

Published in 1939, Thurber's story reflects the era's fascination with heroism, adventure, and the American Dream. The daydream encapsulates the desire for escapism amid the uncertainties of the late 1930s, pre-World War II America.

Conclusion: A Purposeful Opening

Starting *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* with Mitty commanding a navy seaplane in a storm is a masterstroke of narrative strategy. It accomplishes several important goals:

- Immediately introduces the reader to Mitty's rich inner world.
- Creates curiosity and engagement through vivid, action-oriented imagery.
- Establishes the story's central themes of escapism, heroism, and the contrast between inner dreams and external reality.
- Uses humor and irony to deepen character development and thematic resonance.
- Sets an optimistic yet satirical tone that echoes throughout the narrative.

In essence, Thurber's choice is both an invitation and a revelation—a window into Mitty's psyche that aligns with the story's overarching commentary on the human condition: our persistent desire to escape, to dream, and to find meaning beyond the mundane. This opening is a deliberate, artful decision that ensures the story's enduring appeal and profound insight into the nature of imagination and identity.

What Is The Author S Purpose For Beginning The Story With The Daydream Of Mitty Commanding A Navy Seaplane In A Storm

What Is The Author S Purpose For Beginning The Story With The Daydream Of Mitty Commanding A Navy Seaplane In A Storm

Related Articles

- [Adam owns a restaurant. A new dish is being added to the restaurant's menu. The cost of making the dish is \\$6.75, and he wants to make a 33% profit on each dish he sells. What is Adam's selling price?](#)
- [The Oldest Fossils To Be Designated Homo Sapiens Are _____. Multiple Choice Question. Cro-magnons Australopithecines](#)
- [3. Why Do People Need More Than One Day To Tour All Of The El Camino Real? \(1 Point\)Obecause Of The DistanceObecause](#)

[Back to Home](#)