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Narrative time in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Annie Ernaux's "Stories": A comparative study for creative writing pedagogy

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Abstract: *Narrative time plays an important role in shaping how literary experiences are presented, remembered, and interpreted. This study examines the narrative time in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Annie Ernaux's "Stories" through Gérard Genette's narratological framework of order, duration, and frequency. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a comparative narratological method. Data were collected through close reading and documentary analysis of the two short stories and were coded according to temporal order, duration, frequency, and supporting aspects of focalization. The findings show that both stories employ retrospective narration and temporal shifts to reconstruct past experiences, while their temporal strategies produce different narrative emphases. "Jubilee" uses analepsis, scene, summary, and iterative narration to connect personal memories with family relationships, cultural inheritance, and diasporic experience. "Stories" similarly combines retrospective narration, scene, summary, selective temporal omission, and iterative narration to foreground childhood memory, self-reflection, and the relationship between lived experience and storytelling. The study demonstrates that narrative time functions not only as a structural device but also as a means of constructing meaning and offers practical implications for teaching creative writing through conscious manipulation of narrative time.*

Keywords: *narrative time, Genette, narratology, comparative literature, creative writing*

INTRODUCTION

Narrative time shapes how readers understand events, interpret characters, and connect past experiences with their later significance. In short fiction, decisions about when an event is revealed, how much narrative space it receives, and how often it is recounted can give a brief episode lasting emotional weight. Genette's (1980) framework distinguishes three dimensions of narrative time: order, or the relationship between the sequence of events and their presentation; duration, or the relationship between elapsed story time and the space devoted to its narration; and frequency, or the relationship between how often an event occurs and how often it is narrated. These distinctions provide a systematic basis for examining how stories transform chronological experience into meaningful narrative.

Jhumpa Lahiri and Annie Ernaux bring distinct literary backgrounds to this comparison. Lahiri, born in London to Indian parents and raised in the United States, explores migration, belonging, and family relationships. Her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies*, received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000 (The Pulitzer Prizes, 2000). Ernaux, a French writer whose work examines personal memory and its social dimensions, received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2022 (Swedish Academy,

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2022). These achievements establish their international literary standing, while their engagement with remembered experience provides a specific rationale for examining how their narratives connect individual lives with wider social contexts.

Lahiri's "Jubilee" (2025) and Ernaux's "Stories" (2026), both published in *The New Yorker*, offer a productive basis for this comparison. Each presents childhood experience through an adult narrator's retrospective perspective, yet each gives storytelling a different place within the remembered world. "Jubilee" revisits a family journey from New England to London during the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Childhood friendship, maternal storytelling, photographs, and preserved objects connect this visit with earlier family histories and later experiences of separation and loss. "Stories," by contrast, recalls a ten-year-old girl's encounters with the younger child she accompanies to school. Her invented tales become a recurring means of frightening and comforting her companion, before the adult narrator reconsiders the episode in relation to her desire to write (Ernaux, 2026; Lahiri, 2025).

The comparative value of these texts lies in the different ways they organize the relationship between childhood experience and adult understanding. In "Jubilee," the remembered visit becomes meaningful through its connections with family histories and subsequent losses. In "Stories," repeated childhood encounters acquire further significance through the narrator's later reflection on storytelling. Reading the texts together therefore makes it possible to examine how temporal arrangement shapes the interpretation of memory, relationships, and narrative authority. Such analysis requires a distinction between retrospective narration and analepsis: an adult narrator's account of childhood establishes a retrospective position, whereas analepsis involves a movement back from an already established point in the story's chronology (Genette, 1980).

Genette's framework allows these differences to be examined through specific textual choices. Order directs attention to how earlier and later events are introduced and connected through analepsis and prolepsis. Duration reveals which experiences are expanded into scenes, compressed into summaries, suspended through descriptive or reflective pauses, or omitted through ellipsis. Frequency distinguishes an event narrated once from an event recounted more than once and from recurring events represented in a single account. Focalization provides a complementary perspective by clarifying whose perceptions organize a passage and how childhood awareness interacts with adult interpretation. Keeping these concepts distinct supports a more precise account of how temporal structure produces meaning.

This comparison also has implications for creative writing pedagogy. The two texts provide concrete examples through which students can examine how the placement, length, and recurrence of an episode affect its interpretation. Such analysis can inform exercises that ask students to rearrange a sequence, expand a summary into a scene, condense repeated actions into an iterative passage, or revisit an event from a later narrative position. These activities connect narratological concepts with practical decisions in composition and revision. Their educational value is proposed on the basis of textual analysis; classroom investigation would be needed to establish their effectiveness.

Accordingly, this study examines how order, duration, and frequency operate in Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Ernaux's "Stories," with complementary attention to focalization and retrospective narration. It investigates how these temporal choices shape the representation of memory and the relationship between childhood experience and adult understanding. By connecting close comparative reading with practical writing activities, the study seeks to contribute to the analysis of narrative time and to the teaching of deliberate temporal choices in short fiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The examination of narrative temporality in this study is primarily grounded in Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980), which conceptualizes the relationship between story time and narrative discourse through three categories: order, duration, and frequency. Order concerns the chronological arrangement of events and their presentation in the narrative, including analepsis and prolepsis; duration examines the relationship between the time occupied by events in the story and the textual space devoted to narrating them; and frequency addresses the relationship between the occurrence of events and their repetition in narration (Genette, 1980). Subsequent scholarship has extended and applied these concepts across different narrative forms and interpretive contexts. Yousef (2023), for instance, demonstrates the applicability of Genette's framework to *The Hunger Games* while emphasizing the need to connect formal analysis with communicative and sociocultural dimensions. Research on narrative comprehension further indicates that temporal shifts can function as event boundaries, affecting readers' processing and retrieval of previously presented information (Speer & Zacks, 2005), while studies of digital storytelling highlight the challenges that indeterminate temporal relations pose to conventional models of narrative sequence (Wei et al., 2010). More recent work on narrative temporality has explored how temporal structures articulate historical and environmental concerns (Byproduct Temporalities, 2020) and how temporal organization can be investigated through visual methods in qualitative narrative research (Ku, 2025).

From the perspective of creative writing, McCormack (2020) identifies the manipulation of fictional time as a crucial component of short-fiction composition, whereas Cosgrove (2020) examines the relationship between showing, telling, narrative pacing, and temporality in microfiction. Recent research also revisits Genette's temporal categories from a constructivist perspective, questioning the assumptions underlying linear and structurally fixed conceptions of narrative time (Syrov & Agafonova, 2026). Although these studies establish the analytical value of temporal structure for literary interpretation, narrative comprehension, and writing practice, they do not provide the specific comparative account pursued here: an integrated analysis of order, duration, and frequency in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Annie Ernaux's "Stories." The present study addresses this gap by examining how the two works organize temporal sequence, narrative pacing, and event repetition in relation to memory, subjective experience, and narrative meaning, and by translating these findings into pedagogical principles for teaching creative writing, particularly the deliberate arrangement of events, the modulation of narrative pace, and the strategic use of repetition.

The duration category explores the relationship between the temporal extent of an event in the story and the textual space or time allocated to narrate it in the narrative. Genette identifies four primary forms: pause, scene, summary, and ellipsis. A pause occurs when the narrative progresses while the story remains temporally stagnant; scene aligns narrative time closely with event time; summary condenses a period of story time into a concise narrative rendition; and ellipsis excludes a segment of story time from the narrative (Genette, 1980).

The frequency category examines the correlation between the occurrence frequency of an event in the story and its recounting frequency in the narrative. Genette delineates three primary forms: singulative, repetitive, and iterative. Singulative narration recounts once what transpires once; repetitive narration iterates several times what occurs once; and iterative narration narrates once what unfolds multiple times (Genette, 1980). Repetitive narration can alter the perspective or significance of an event through its reiterated narration, whereas iterative narration can transmute individual experiences into patterns of habitual or broader societal experience.

These three Genettean concepts can be augmented by focalization, as the character possessing or accessing specific temporal information may not necessarily be the same as the one narrating it (Noonari et al., 2024). Consequently, order, duration, and frequency serve not only as instruments for recognizing formal narrative temporal patterns but also for elucidating how texts construct memory, knowledge, social experience, and perspective. The analytical framework derived from these concepts is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical Framework of Narrative Time Based on Gérard Genette's Theory and Pedagogical Implications

Aspect	Analytical Focus
Order	Analysis of analepsis (flashback), prolepsis (flashforward), and the chronological arrangement of narrative events.
Duration	Examination of scene, summary, ellipsis, pause, and stretch, focusing on the relationship between story time and discourse time.
Frequency	Analysis of singulative, repetitive, and iterative narration, examining whether an event is narrated once or multiple times.
Pedagogical Implications	Exploration of how narrative time techniques can serve as instructional models and inspiration for teaching creative literary writing.

METHOD

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology employing a comparative-narratological technique to scrutinize the temporal structure in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Annie Ernaux's "Stories," utilizing Genette's theoretical framework concerning order, duration, and frequency in narratives. The primary corpus comprises the aforementioned texts, while supplementary sources encompass pertinent scholarly discourse on narratology and creative writing pedagogy. The investigation encompasses textual segments embodying various narrative elements such as analepsis, prolepsis, pause, scene, summary, ellipsis, singulative, repetitive, and iterative narration, alongside considerations of focalization and temporal orientation.

Data collection was executed through documentary analysis and meticulous textual scrutiny. The analytical process entailed the identification, coding, categorization, interpretation, and comparative evaluation of temporal configurations evident in the texts. Methodological rigor was ensured through sustained engagement with the material, theoretical corroboration, judicious referencing, and meticulous validation of textual references. The interpretive framework was derived from Genette's seminal work (1980) and consistently applied to both textual sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The analysis identifies shared temporal strategies and different narrative emphases in Jhumpa Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Annie Ernaux's "Stories." Both texts reconstruct childhood from a later narrative position, alternate detailed encounters with compressed periods, and distinguish particular experiences from recurring practices. Tables 2 and 3 present the analytical categories and their pedagogical implications. The pedagogical entries represent proposed applications of the textual findings rather than observed classroom outcomes.

"Jubilee" follows an adult narrator's recollection of a family visit from New England to London in 1977, around her tenth birthday. She renews her friendship with Joya while her parents revisit places associated with their early married life. Her mother's stories connect the visit with migration, childbirth, and the death of the narrator's grandmother. The account later moves to adulthood, Joya's death, and the narrator's changing understanding of her mother. Objects, photographs, and repeated family stories connect these periods, making remembrance both a source of belonging and a reminder of loss (Lahiri, 2025).

Table 2 presents the temporal patterns identified in "Jubilee." Its categories describe the relationship between the adult narrator's retrospective account, the childhood experiences being recalled, and the family narratives through which some of those experiences become accessible.

Table 2. Analysis of Narrative Time in "Jubilee" by Jhumpa Lahiri and Implications for Creative Writing Pedagogy

Narrative feature	Main finding	Original textual evidence	Writing application
Order: analepsis	Returns from the London visit to the parents' earlier life.	"They had lived there for the first two years of my life"	Use a backward shift to reveal otherwise inaccessible history.
Duration: scene	Action and dialogue give the birthday incident sustained attention.	"So sorry, she said, and I pretended not to be upset with her."	Develop a significant interaction through action and dialogue.
Duration: summary and omission	Compresses the long separation; leaves intervening experiences unnarrated.	"Our vow to write to each other after 1977 was short-lived, and many years had passed since our families were in touch"	Condense transitions while making temporal distance clear.

Narrative feature	Main finding	Original textual evidence	Writing application
Duration: reflective pause	Suspends the event sequence to consider the meaning of the title.	""Jubilee" is a form of synecdoche"	Use reflection selectively without losing the narrative thread.
Frequency: singulative	Individually recounts a particular remembered outing.	"One Sunday, for example, we had driven out past sheep fields to Cambridge"	Give a distinctive occurrence its own narrative space.
Frequency: iterative	Presents recurring slide shows in one account.	"For years and years, usually on weekend nights when we weren't entertaining, my mother would announce that it was time for a slide show."	Represent a routine without listing every occurrence.
Frequency: repetitive	Revisits the same broken sword, later identifying Joya's role.	"the delicate gold sword he clutched in his fingers snapped in two." / "It was in Joya's hasty fingers that the guard's sword snapped in two."	Return to an earlier incident to add information.

As Table 2 shows, the retrospective frame accommodates both remembered childhood episodes and a past known through other people's accounts. The narrator returns to London during the 1977 Silver Jubilee while also recalling her parents' earlier life there. She describes her earliest years as "a time I could not access through memory, only through their stories" (Lahiri, 2025). This distinction establishes two sources of retrospective knowledge: personal recollection and inherited family narration. The question "Why, when I stick my hand into the past, does it come away coated with cobwebs?" makes the incompleteness of recollection explicit (Lahiri, 2025).

Photographs, souvenirs, and a Madame Tussaud's brochure provide material points of return. The phrase "Intertwining invention with preserved bits and scraps of life" connects these objects with the reconstruction of experience (Lahiri, 2025). The narrator's description of her parents as "translators of my origins" further identifies family storytelling as a source of knowledge about a past she cannot independently remember (Lahiri, 2025).

Duration varies across the account. Interactions involving the narrator, her mother, her friend Joya, and the Palit family receive sustained attention, while extended periods are compressed. "That summer marked ten years since my mother had become a mother" condenses a decade into a short statement (Lahiri, 2025). The parents' London life during the narrator's first two years is likewise presented through retrospective compression. Reflection interrupts the progression of remembered action, while intervening periods receive limited treatment. However, the statement "Those three months in London, my grandmother still hovered between the dead and the living" conveys the persistence of loss within memory; it does not, by itself, establish a formal ellipsis or a complete suspension of story time (Lahiri, 2025).

Frequency distinguishes individual experiences from habitual acts of remembrance. The mother's announcement "time for a slide show" on many weekend nights represents a recurring family practice collectively (Lahiri, 2025). Her retelling of family history to different listeners also makes storytelling recurrent within the represented world. Particular London experiences and the grandmother's death receive individual attention. The repetitive-narration category in Table 2 requires a further distinction: repeated acts of telling by a character do not necessarily mean that the narrative discourse recounts one event several times. The slide shows establish iterative narration, while the mother's repeated storytelling identifies recurrence at the level of the represented act of telling.

The later movement to adulthood and Joya's death also makes long-term separation central to the narrative. Moreover, the broken toy sword is mentioned near the opening and revisited at the birthday gathering, where Joya's role becomes clear. This provides firmer evidence of repetitive narration: one occurrence returns with additional information. The grandmother's death is also revisited through different accounts (Lahiri, 2025).

In "Stories," an adult narrator recalls escorting five-year-old Marie-Paule to school when she herself was ten. She begins inventing stories during their walks, then discovers that imagined threats can frighten the younger child. The pattern becomes habitual: she provokes distress and subsequently offers comfort. When Marie-Paule stops attending the school, the narrator experiences the separation as a loss. Looking back, she attempts to understand her desire to write while acknowledging that the remembered episode has itself become another story. The account links the pleasures of invention with unequal power and the limits of self-understanding (Ernaux, 2026).

Table 3 summarizes the temporal organization of "Stories." The findings distinguish the retrospective frame from the sequence of childhood events and separate recurring experiences from the repeated narration of a single occurrence.

Table 3. Analysis of Narrative Time in "Stories" by Annie Ernaux and Implications for Creative Writing Pedagogy

Narrative feature	Main finding	Original textual evidence	Writing application
Order: embedded analepsis	Interrupts the escorting episode with an earlier school memory.	"when I had first started out, an older student, a mechanic's daughter, had taken me to school."	Connect a present role with an earlier experience.
Duration: scene	Successive actions slow the account of the child's distress.	"She pulled on my arm with all her might, and I had to let her go."	Use action sequences to focus attention on consequences.
Duration: summary	Compresses repeated routines before the next detailed encounter.	"She'd arrive during the radio-news hour, just after lunch, with her buttoned-up coat and her schoolbag."	Use habitual summary to establish context economically.
Frequency: singulative	Marks the first spoken invention as a distinct occurrence.	"This was the first time I'd ever spoken my daydreams aloud, and it excited me."	Distinguish a first occurrence from the habit that follows.
Frequency: iterative	Collectively narrates the recurring pattern of frightening the child.	"So it continued on all the other school days."	Show how repetition establishes an unequal relationship.
Self-reflexivity	Distinguishes the remembering subject from the remembered self.	"in my memory, I'm a character to myself."	Reflect on the distance between experience and its narration.

As Table 3 indicates, the adult narrator recalls an experience "from the year I was ten" (Ernaux, 2026). Within this retrospective account, the remembered events progress from the Easter holiday through subsequent school days toward the end of May. A backward movement from the narrating present therefore coexists with a broadly chronological sequence inside the recalled episode.

The walking episodes and encounters with Marie-Paule receive detailed treatment. By contrast, "May was drawing to a close. I was about to leave for a First Communion retreat" compresses a transition and locates the impending separation in time (Ernaux, 2026). After Marie-Paule stops attending school, part of the intervening experience remains unrepresented. The passage marks a transition, but does not by itself establish a clearly bounded ellipsis. Table 3 therefore foregrounds the more directly evidenced use of habitual summary rather than assigning a separate ellipsis category.

The distinction between singular and habitual experience is particularly explicit. "This was the first time I'd ever spoken my daydreams aloud, and it excited me" marks an individually narrated first occurrence (Ernaux, 2026). "So it continued on all the other school days" then presents repeated encounters collectively, while "as on the previous day" confirms recurrence across successive days (Ernaux, 2026). These passages show a transition from a formative event to a routine. They do not establish repetitive narration in the strict sense of recounting the same event several times.

The closing reflections make the reconstruction of experience explicit. The narrator observes that "in my memory, I'm a character to myself" and describes the

episode as "just another story" (Ernaux, 2026). The remembering subject thus also becomes a character in the retrospective account. This self-reflexive ending connects the childhood practice of storytelling with the adult act of narrating it.

The storytelling relationship also includes harm. The older child repeatedly frightens Marie-Paule with invented threats and then comforts her. Recurrence therefore establishes an unequal relationship rather than an uncomplicated apprenticeship in creativity. The late-May ending interrupts this pattern, and the retrospective conclusion leaves the narrator's attempt at self-understanding unresolved (Ernaux, 2026).

Tables 2 and 3 show that the texts share retrospective framing, changes in narrative pace, and iterative representation. Their differences concern the relationships organized through these devices. In "Jubilee," recollection is distributed across family stories, preserved objects, and recurring rituals of remembrance. In "Stories," the recalled sequence follows an encounter that develops into a repeated practice and is subsequently reconsidered by the adult narrator. Both accounts foreground the distance between experience and its later representation, but they give that distance different interpersonal and self-reflexive emphases.

Discussion

Order and the reconstruction of remembered experience

Genette's (1980) framework requires a distinction between the time of narrating and the order of events within the narrative. An adult's account of childhood is subsequent narration; it becomes analeptic when it moves backward relative to an established narrative sequence. Accordingly, Tables 2 and 3 identify specific backward movements within the narrated sequences: the parents' earlier London life and the narrator's earlier experience of being escorted to school. This distinction prevents past-tense narration from being treated automatically as disrupted chronology. Akimoto (2019) likewise distinguishes temporal ordering from the relation between a story and the act of producing or remembering it.

The comparison suggests that retrospective distance has an interpretive function. In "Jubilee," the narrator's access to origins depends partly on accounts supplied by her parents. The past is therefore relational: family members preserve and transmit experiences that the narrator cannot retrieve alone. In "Stories," the adult narrator reconsiders a childhood self whose storytelling is itself the subject of the account. The two temporal positions make it possible to represent an experience and question its subsequent reconstruction within the same narrative.

This reading connects formal analysis with research on Ernaux's self-representation. Kawakami (2019) examines the effort to recover past selves and the explicit reflection on remembering in Mémoire de fille. Although that study addresses a different work, it provides a relevant comparison for the distance between the narrating adult and the remembered child in "Stories." Taken together, the distinction between temporal positions and attention to the act of remembering help explain why retrospection produces interpretive distance rather than merely supplying background information (Genette, 1980; Kawakami, 2019).

The comparison can be sharpened by distinguishing autobiographical reconstruction from a transparent account of the self. Jordan (2011) discusses the transpersonal orientation of Ernaux's writing, in which intimate experience acquires significance beyond the individual. Kawakami (2019), examining a different text, emphasizes the difficulty and self-consciousness of recovering earlier selves. These perspectives support an approach to "Stories" that attends to both the remembered child and the adult's present interpretive position (Jordan, 2011; Kawakami, 2019). Neither study analyzes "Stories" directly; their relevance lies in the questions they make available for this reading. The ending need not be treated as a successful explanation of why the narrator became a writer. Its self-reflexive uncertainty is itself a finding: narration makes the experience available for scrutiny without closing the distance between the person who acted and the person who now recalls the action.

Duration and the allocation of narrative attention

Genette's (1980) account of duration provides a basis for interpreting the duration categories in Tables 2 and 3. The central issue is the relationship between the time occupied by events and the space devoted to their narration. Detailed encounters receive greater textual attention than compressed transitions. This distribution allows a brief interaction to acquire prominence within a much longer remembered period, without requiring the inference that all detailed passages constitute temporal stretch.

Cosgrove (2020) offers a useful complement to this formal account by relating showing and telling to the construction of time in microfiction and flash fiction. Her argument challenges the assumption that detailed dramatization is always preferable to compressed narration. Although the present corpus comprises different works, that insight helps explain why summary should be evaluated by its function rather than treated as an inferior substitute for scene. The formal distinction and the compositional argument together suggest that pacing depends on the relationship among passages, not on the uninterrupted accumulation of detail (Cosgrove, 2020; Genette, 1980).

In Table 2, the alternation between family encounters and compressed history gives everyday interactions a place within migration, belonging, and loss. In Table 3, detailed exchanges with Marie-Paule foreground the emergence of storytelling as an interpersonal practice, while the movement toward late May carries the account toward separation. Both texts therefore organize significance through selective elaboration. The comparison concerns the allocation of attention in the texts; it does not establish experimentally measured effects on readers.

The table labels also require precise application. Scene should not automatically be equated with stretch: scene conventionally approximates the duration of represented action, whereas stretch implies a more substantial expansion of discourse relative to story time. Similarly, reflection constitutes a pause only when narrated action is suspended, and an unreported experience constitutes ellipsis only when a temporal interval is omitted. These distinctions qualify the broader descriptions preserved in Tables 2 and 3 and prevent the analysis from treating every reflective or abbreviated passage as evidence of the same temporal operation (Genette, 1980).

Narrative comprehension research adds a different, carefully bounded perspective. Across four experiments, Speer and Zacks (2005) found that temporal changes could function as event boundaries and were associated with costs in retrieving preceding information. They also caution that slower responses may reflect processing demands rather than simple loss of information from memory. This evidence makes temporal transitions relevant to questions of coherence, but it does not establish how readers respond to either story examined here. Formal segmentation and cognitive updating can therefore be considered complementary concerns, while remaining distinct kinds of evidence (Genette, 1980; Speer & Zacks, 2005). For the present analysis, the implication is methodological: identifying a temporal shift should precede claims about its interpretive function, and claims about actual reader responses require separate empirical investigation.

Frequency and the transformation of experience into practice

Genette's (1980) distinction among singulative, iterative, and repetitive narration clarifies the strongest contrast between the two texts. The relevant question is how often an event occurs in relation to how often it is narrated. An action repeated on several days belongs to the frequency of events; repetitive narration requires several accounts of one occurrence. These levels must remain distinct when interpreting the repeated storytelling in Table 2 and the iterative encounters in Table 3.

In "Jubilee," the slide shows turn remembrance into a family routine. Iterative narration presents repeated occasions collectively and makes their continuity visible without recounting every gathering. The mother's recurring stories also locate remembrance within interpersonal exchange. In "Stories," a first act of speaking daydreams aloud is singled out before subsequent school days are gathered into an iterative pattern. The movement from first occurrence to habit gives temporal form to the development of storytelling as a practice.

The comparative contribution lies in identifying different uses of shared temporal devices. Lahiri's account connects recurrence with the transmission of family memory, whereas Ernaux's account connects it with the development and later reconsideration of a childhood activity. The evidence does not justify a simple opposition in which only one text uses iteration or only one contains self-reflection. Rather, both use selective narration to establish what becomes memorable, habitual, and available for later interpretation.

Akimoto's (2019) translation of narratological categories into a model of story-form memory provides another way to understand the connection between frequency and recollection. In that account, stories are constructed representations rather than copies of past events, and iterative narration can be understood in relation to the generalization of similar occurrences. The present study uses this connection as a conceptual comparison, not as a diagnosis of the narrators' cognitive processes. Read together, temporal analysis and the concept of constructed memory clarify why a narrative may move between a particular incident and a generalized practice without treating the two as equivalent (Akimoto, 2019; Genette, 1980). Singulative narration identifies the event that needs individual attention; iteration establishes its relation to a

broader pattern. Repetitive narration, where demonstrable, changes the information available about an occurrence already introduced.

Implications for creative writing pedagogy

The pedagogical proposals in Tables 2 and 3 can be developed into a sequence of close reading, controlled rewriting, and reflection. Students can first distinguish the chronology of events from their order of presentation, then rewrite a short episode from a later temporal position. Comparing the versions would allow them to explain what the retrospective frame adds to characterization and to the narrator's knowledge. This activity applies the distinction between story time and narrative discourse to a concrete compositional decision (Genette, 1980).

For duration, students can rewrite one encounter as a scene and as a summary, then identify which details become prominent or disappear. A further version can omit an intervening period, provided the temporal transition remains intelligible. For frequency, students can write one occurrence, summarize a repeated habit, and recount the same event twice from different later positions. The distinction between these tasks is essential: repeated content should have an identifiable temporal and interpretive purpose.

A further exercise can connect temporal revision with ethical interpretation. Students can identify who controls an embedded story, who listens, and whose interpretation becomes available to the reader. They can then revise the temporal position of the telling and explain how later knowledge changes the evaluation of the earlier action. This exercise follows from the present comparison rather than from an established intervention. It would allow discussion of responsibility to emerge from close analysis of narrative choices, while avoiding the assumption that every instance of storytelling is beneficial. Assessment could focus on the accuracy of temporal distinctions, the coherence of transitions, and the quality of students' explanations for their revisions. The combination of formal analysis and reflective writing is supported at the level of pedagogical rationale by Genette (1980), Cosgrove (2020), and Duarte et al. (2020).

Combining analysis with rewriting has a relevant precedent in Duarte et al. (2020), whose pilot study investigated close reading and writing in relation to the structural complexity of university students' narrative analysis. That study supports the relevance of connecting reading with written transformation, but it does not validate the particular exercises proposed here. The present framework combines a narratological basis for selecting temporal features with a pedagogical rationale for examining them through writing (Duarte et al., 2020; Genette, 1980).

These implications remain proposals derived from two literary texts. The study contains no classroom intervention, assessment of student writing, or reader-response experiment. Its account is also limited to the selected English-language texts and the textual evidence presented. Further research could test whether explicit comparison and revision of temporal choices improve students' explanations of narrative structure and the coherence of their own writing.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis shows how order, duration, and frequency organize remembered experience in Lahiri's "Jubilee" and Ernaux's "Stories." Both texts combine retrospective narration with selective elaboration and the collective representation of recurring events. In "Jubilee," these strategies connect childhood recollection with family storytelling, material objects, cultural inheritance, and displacement. In "Stories," they connect a formative childhood encounter with habitual storytelling and the adult narrator's reflection on becoming a character in her own account. The comparison also shows why the circulation of stories requires ethical attention: narration can sustain relationships while also exposing unequal control over what others are invited to imagine.

The findings demonstrate the value of reading the three temporal dimensions together. Order establishes the relation between experience and later knowledge; duration distributes attention across encounters and transitions; frequency distinguishes individual events from recurring practices. Precise distinctions remain necessary, especially between recurring events and repetitive narration, and between selective omission and formally identifiable ellipsis. These distinctions strengthen the comparison by linking interpretation to the evidence available in each text.

For creative writing pedagogy, the analysis offers a basis for exercises in retrospective sequencing, modulation of narrative pace, and the representation of singular and habitual experiences. Such exercises can invite students to explain how temporal decisions shape characterization, memory, and thematic emphasis. Their effectiveness requires classroom evaluation. Within the limits of a two-text qualitative study, the contribution is a comparative account of temporal choices and a set of evidence-informed possibilities for translating those choices into writing practice.

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