

Balancing Act: Managing Scene, Summary, and Interiority

“Storytelling is shaped by two contrary, yet complementary, impulses - one toward brevity, compactness, artful omission; the other toward expansion, amplification, enrichment.”

-Joyce Carol Oates, *The New York Times*

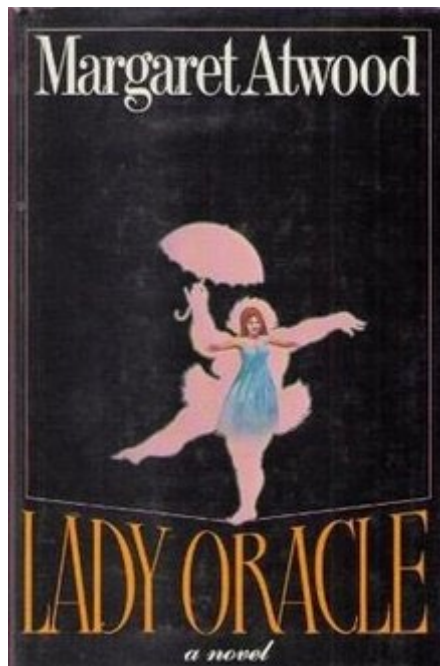
Summary

Sequential Summary

- Relates events in their sequence but compresses them

Circumstantial Summary

- Describes the general circumstances during a period of time—not necessarily what happened, specifically, but the kinds of things that happened, the kinds of things that a character or characters said.



Scene

- Real time
- Action
- Dramatizes a significant moment
- expansion, amplification, enrichment

Interiority

What's it like, what's it really like, to be in this thing that has happened?

“I see many students assuming that “show don’t tell” means we shouldn’t give any information whatsoever; that we should write fiction like a screenplay. Well, that’s what screenplays are for. And moreover: movies aren’t just screenplays. In a movie, your character’s interiority is brought to life not just by words and actions but by the face of an incredibly gifted actor, one who is trained in using facial muscles to convey emotion. Unless Jodie Foster is going to come over to my house and read your book to me, you don’t have that going for you. Giving your character zero interiority is simply not going to work. And look: Fiction is more capable of deep interiority than any other art form. Neglect this tool at your peril.”

Rebecca Makkai, “Interiority Complex”

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“Hills Like White Elephants”