

BARTON

LIBRARY

Dare to know

Stream of Consciousness Fiction

Fiction that features a character's perceptions, thoughts, and memories in an apparently random order.

A sub-genre that utilizes “hearing” a protagonist’s inner thought processes to depict a more realistic portrayal of their psychology and worldview. Visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal observations can inform the consciousness and awareness of the narrator. The author may incorporate flashes of incoherent thought, lopping repetitions, ungrammatical punctuation and syntax, and free association of ideas, words, and images. These narrative techniques, which replicate a complete flow of thought, assists in exploring the trend of rational thoughts and the inner mentality of a character. Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759), Nikolai Gogol’s *Diary Of A Madman* (1835), Ambrose Bierce’s “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1890), Arthur Schnitzler’s *Leutnant Gustl* (1901), James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* (1931), and Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy* (1951) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Non-linear thought processes
Contemplations of the protagonist
First-person point of view
Emotional and psychological truth

Sensory details
Unusual syntax
Memories
Flashbacks

Benefits of Reading

Captures for readers human emotions in writing
Allows readers to truly experience the characters’ thoughts and feelings first

hand
Permits readers to consider other perspectives

Modern Literary Examples

<i>American Pastoral</i> (1997) by Philip Roth
<i>Battle Without Honor or Humanity</i> (2015) by Harlan D. Wilson
<i>Beast</i> (2017) by Paul Kingsnorth
<i>Caliban’s Filibuster</i> (1971) by Paul West

<i>Death in Equality</i> (1997) by Lucinda Ebersole
<i>The End of the Moment We Had</i> (2018) by Toshiki Okada
<i>Near Water</i> (2000) by Hugh Hood
<i>Novelist</i> (2022) by Jordan Castro

<i>Pastoralia</i> (2000) by George Saunders
<i>Schooling</i> (2001) by Heather McGowan
<i>Snow</i> (1998) by Betsy Howie

<i>Trainspotting</i> (1993) by Irvine Welsh
<i>Yes</i> (1992) by Thomas Bernhard
