

WTheck is Monogatari Narrative?

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/wtheck-is-monogatari-narrative/>

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What is a Monogatari Narrative and how can a writer use this? A fellow writer recently asked me to write about "something unusual." Okay, here we go.

Monogatari is a Japanese literary form, the legendary epic tale.

But what is it that makes a monogatari distinct from other epic stories and how might a storyteller use this to enhance their own writing?

WARNING: This is not about the *Monogatari Series*, which is the title of a Manga series. This article is about a long-standing traditional narrative form.

The word monogatari means legend in Japanese.

You do not need to be Japanese to write a monogatari narrative, because it has nothing to do with the

language in particular – not now that it has become internationally recognized as great stuff. Monogatari is the literary expression of Japanese folklore, so it expresses a lot of what the culture values and it uses certain types of imagery to suggest those traditions.

Still, anyone can use this writing style. It's beautiful and lyric, often magical. Applying this form to one of your manuscripts might be just what your protagonist's story needs to give it a special something.

What you need to know about Monogatari as a writer.

There are 10 essential aspects of monogatari literature. The most important attributes are all about narration, themes and the use of hot objects.

The Traditional Monogatari Narrative Voice

Monogatari is very closely tied to the oral tradition of storytelling, so the voice of the monogatari narrator is extremely important. If you decide to use a monogatari form to your storytelling, then **Monogatari will be the Narrative Voice of your story.**

The Narrative POV

The Narrative POV can be the protagonist, but it's more often someone else who is really important to the protagonist, like a mentor. There are no specific restraints here as to the POV, but if you write in first person it should probably be one of these key characters.

The Narrative Modes

The Narrative Mode is often in first person but it can also be third person.

Never Non-fiction

Monogatari is always fictional on a grand scale. Even if the story or the characters in it were part of history, the story about those characters must be fictionalized. It's a key and steady component of this form. These are legends, not historical accounts.

Magical

Magic is perhaps the most commonly associated aspect of monogatari storytelling. It's hard to imagine this epic form without magic because even if there are no wizard-like characters and no special powers, there is always a sense of wonder and myth. So it feels like magic. (More on that below.)

Strong Themes

Honor, Loyalty and Family are prevalent themes in a monogatari narrative. Identity is also important, but then it's heavily tied to Family.

Mood and Emotion and Things

One of the most striking aspects of monogatari narrative is that moods and emotions are treated like heavy objects, things that are so important you can touch them. This is why (one of the reasons) these stories feel magical even when there is no magic (in the traditional sense) in a story.

Imagery and symbols are very prevalent. The use of **hot objects** in writing may well stem from monogatari literature. No one knows. (To find out [what a hot object is and how to develop one that simultaneously enhances a storyline and character, go HERE.](#))

Poetry

Monogatari is epic, but not epic poetry. However, it isn't uncommon to find poetry included in the stories, just as western epic stories so often do. (Think Tolkien.)

Archetypal

Monogatari characters are archetypal (that doesn't mean they're flat though!). You can get details about what that really means and a list of [what those characters can be right HERE.](#)

Karma and other cultural specifics

Karma always plays a role in monogatari. You don't need to name Karma to sense when it's about to strike.

Buddhism and the Warrior Ethic are both common ideologies that you see in monogatari stories, but not always. You do not need to involve Buddhism or the Japanese Warrior Ethic into your story in order for it to be monogatari.

Examples of Monogatari

- Kubo and the Two Strings
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
- The Tale of Genji
- The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter

Writing Monogatari Style

What is an aspect of story that you particularly love but aren't sure how to capture on the page? Write below, let me know – or as ever, just send me an email. I love getting those.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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