

Stream of Consciousness

Stream of Consciousness is a literary style in which the author follows visual, auditory, tactile, associative, and subliminal impressions and expresses them using "interior monologue" of characters either as a writing technique or as a writing style that mingles thoughts and impressions in an illogical order, and violates grammar norms.

The phrase "stream of consciousness" was first used in 1890 by William James in "Principles of Psychology." In literature it records character's feelings and thoughts through stream of consciousness in attempt to capture all the external and internal forces that influence their psychology at a single moment. Any logical or sequential approach is disregarded.

The first example of this style is considered to be a novel by Edouard Dujardin Les Lauriers sont Coupés (We'll to the Woods No More), but the technique itself was pioneered by Dorothy Richardson in Pilgrimage (1915-35) and by James Joyce in Ulysses (1922), and further developed by Virginia Woolf in Mrs. Dalloway (1925) and William Faulkner in The Sound and the Fury (1928).

Main characteristics:

- Recording multifarious thoughts and feelings
- Exploring external and internal forces that influence individual's psychology
- Disregard of the narrative sequence
- Absence of the logical argument
- Disassociated leaps in syntax and punctuation
- Prose difficult to follow

Examples:

from The Sound and the Fury, William Faulkner

...you might go up into maine for a month you can afford it if you are careful it might be a good thing watching pennies has healed more scars than jesus and i suppose i realise what you believe i will realise up there next week or next month and he then you will remember that for you to go to harvard has been your mothers dream since you were born and no compson has ever disappointed a lady and i temporary it will be better for me for all of us and he every man is the arbiter of his own virtues but let no man prescribe for another mans wellbeing and i temporary and he was the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was

The last note sounded.

from Dharma Bums, Jack Kerouac

I bade farewell to the little bum of Saint Teresa at the crossing, where we jumped off, and went to sleep the night in the sand in my blankets, far down the beach at the foot of a cliff where cops wouldn't see me and drive me away. I cooked hot-dogs on freshly cut and sharpened sticks over the coals of a big wood fire, and heated a can of beans and a can of cheese macaroni in the redhot hollows, and drank my newly bought wine, and exulted in one of the most pleasant nights of my life. I waded in the water and dunked a little and stood looking up at the splendorous night sky, Avalokitesvara's ten-wondered universe of dark and diamonds. "Well, Ray," sez I, glad, "only a few miles to go. You've done it again." Happy. Just in my swim shorts, barefooted, wild-haired, in the red fire dark, singing, swigging wine, spitting, jumping, running—that's the way to live. All alone and free in the soft sands of the beach by the sigh of the sea out there, with the Ma-Wink fallopian virgin warm stars reflecting on the outer channel fluid belly waters. And if your cans are redhot and you can't hold them in your hands, just use good old railroad gloves, that's all. I let the food cool a little to enjoy more wine and my thoughts. I sat crosslegged in the sand and contemplated my life. Well, there, and what difference did it make? "What's going to happen to me up ahead?" Then the wine got to work on my taste buds and before long I had to pitch into those hotdogs, biting them right off the end of the stick spit, and chomp chomp, and dig down into the two tasty cans with the old pack spoon, spooning up rich bites of hot beans and pork, or of macaroni wit sizzling hot sauce, and maybe a little sand thrown in. "And how many grains of sand are there on this beach?" I think. "Why, as many grains of sand as there are stars in that sky!" (chomp chomp) and if so "How many human beings have there been, in fact how many living creatures have there been, since before the less part of beginningless time? Why, oy, I reckon you would have to calculate the number of grains of sand on this beach and on every star in the sky, in every one of the ten thousand great chilicosms, which would be a number of sand grains uncomputable by IBM and Burroughs too, why boy I don't rightly know" (swig of wine) "I don't rightly know but it must be a couple umpteen trillion sextillion infideled and busted up unnumberable number of roses that sweet Saint Teresa and that fine little old man are now this minute showering on your head, with lilies.

Jack Kerouac

(12 March 1922 - 21 October 1969)

Jack Kerouac

Kerouac Jack was a writer, mainly of the Beat Generation. He met Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs at Columbia University and, together they started a new way of literary expression, which included writing about their personal lives, dominated by alcohol and drugs, and a general feeling among young intellectuals disappointed in a reality of wars and injustice in post-war America. He is considered to be the father of the Beat Generation movement. Kerouac enjoyed popularity during his lifetime, but his literary works were regularly rejected by publishers due to his experimental writing style and its sympathetic tone towards minorities and marginalized social groups of the United States in the 1950s. His writing style follows the idea of breath (borrowed from Jazz and from Buddhist meditation breathing) and it improvises words over the inherent structures of mind and language, and does not edit a single word. He was an inspiration for many young writers, including Tom Robbins, Lester Bangs, Richard Brautigan, Hunter S. Thompson, Ken Kesey, Tom Waits and Bob Dylan, as well as countless artists, such as George Condo (Painter), Roger Craton (Poet and Philosopher), and John McNaughton (filmmaker). Write for fifteen minutes or 250 words