**Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered:**  **ENGLISH B**

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

**Title of the extended essay:** A COMPARISON OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE DIFFERENT NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN "BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY" BY HELEN FIELDING AND "THE BACHELORETTE PARTY" BY KAREN MCCULLAH LUTZ SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER.

**Candidate's declaration**

If this declaration is not signed by the candidate the extended essay will not be assessed.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____________________________ Date: __________

International Baccalaureate, Peterson House, Melbourne Avenue, Cardiff Gate, Cardiff CF23 8QL, Wales, United Kingdom
Supervisor’s report

The supervisor must complete the report below and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) __________________________________________________________________________

Comments

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate’s performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate’s own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Ana chose two novels which she really enjoyed reading and learned a great deal from choosing to examine them from the point of view of narrative structure. It was difficult for her to find relevant secondary literature with which to support her arguments since both works are so recent and very little has been written about them. As a result, she was quite dependent on her own ideas and this was challenging for someone her age and with her limited experience of the English language. Ana should be commended for the fact that she rose to the challenge and I was greatly impressed by her efficient and methodical approach. In her viva, Ana said that she had learned a great deal about the way in which a literary work is structured to reinforce both the central message and the perception of the main character and I feel this has enabled her to deepen her understanding of literature in general.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent __________ hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor’s signature: __________________________________________________________________________ Date: ____________
EXTENDED ESSAY

A comparison of the ways in which the different narrative techniques employed in Bridget Jones's Diary, by Helen Fielding and The Bachelorette Party, by Karen McCullah Lutz, support the development of the main character.

Name: 
School: 
Session: May 2009
Candidate Session Number:
Subject: Group 2, English
Supervisor: 
Word count: 3899 ✓
Abstract

Both *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, by Helen Fielding and *The Bachelorette Party*, by Karen McCullah Lutz, present a woman in her thirties who is afraid to die single, but who wants to be independent of men at the same time. The two protagonists, Bridget and Zadie respectively, are introduced by the authors using informal language, a colloquial style and narrative techniques which give the reader direct insight into the main characters’ thoughts.

In *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, Helen Fielding wrote the novel using the diary form and a first person narrator, so the reader thinks Bridget is the one who is actually writing the diary. In *The Bachelorette Party*, Karen McCullah Lutz uses stream of consciousness and direct speech. These different narrative techniques produce certain effects on the reader, who feels close to the main characters due to the informality and the personal style of the texts.

I decided to base my essay on these two novels, because I think it is very interesting how the authors wrote them. They used certain techniques in order to reach their audience, and to achieve the effects they wanted on the reader.

This essay will analyze and compare both novels, starting first with an explanation of their themes. Then it will continue by comparing the narrative techniques that the writers adopt in each novel, and last the way in which these techniques support the development of the main characters. Thus, it will compare the narrative techniques used in each novel, and will ask how these support the development of the main character.

Word count: 258
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1. Introduction
2. Background Information Of Both Novels
3. The Use Of Language In Each Novel And The Effects It Has On The Reader
4. A Comparison Of The Narrative Techniques Used By Each Author And How They Support The Development Of The Main Character
5. Conclusion
6. Bibliography
1. Introduction

Bridget Jones’s Diary, by Helen Fielding and The Bachelorette Party, by Karen McCullah Lutz are both very similar stories. The first novel is set in United Kingdom and the second in the United States. Both of the novels are about women in their thirties, without a partner, who are trying to find love, because they do not want to finish their lives being single.

The purpose of this essay is to show the similarities and differences that exist between both novels. After a brief outline of the plot, it will then analyse the language used in each novel, and the effects that language may produce on the reader. Finally, the narrative techniques used by the authors in both novels, the diary form in Bridget Jones’s Diary and mainly stream of consciousness in The Bachelorette Party, will be compared. In addition, the essay will demonstrate how the different narrative techniques support the presentation of the protagonists in each novel.

Thus, by analysing each novel, and comparing the effects they produce on the reader, the essay will answer the following research question: how do the different narrative techniques employed in Bridget Jones’s Diary, by Helen Fielding and in The Bachelorette Party, by Karen McCullah Lutz support the development of the main character?
2. Background Information of Both Novels

Bridget Jones's Diary is a novel written in diary form, in 1996 by the English author Helen Fielding. The main character is Bridget Jones, a 30-something woman who lives in London and works in the publishing industry. The novel consists of Bridget's diary entries during a one-year period, in which she explains everything that happens in her life, her feelings and her personal view of everybody and everything around her, giving the reader a very deep insight into the character's mind.

In her diary, Bridget counts her success and failure by her weight, the number of calories, alcohol units and cigarettes that she consumed in the day, the number of instant lottery tickets bought and won, and the obsessive or negative thoughts she had. Bridget is a "singleton" who needs the support of her best friends, Sharon (an extremist feminist), Jude (a successful business woman who has troubles with her boyfriend through the entire novel) and Tom (the gay friend who also has problems with his boyfriend) to get through life. Bridget's life is mainly based on the search of a boyfriend, in order to be successful in the eyes of her parents, her parents' friends and "smug married" people who think the correct way of life is being married.

The Bachelorette Party is a novel written by the US-American screenwriter and novelist Helen McCullah Lutz in 2005. The protagonist is Zadie Roberts, a thirty-one-year-old English teacher at one of the best high schools in Southern California. The novel is written in the third person narrator, but the story is told from Zadie's point of view.
Zadie was left at the altar six moths ago by a soap opera star called Jack, who got a role in the show *The Days of our Lives* thanks to Zadie’s support. Since the “non-wedding” day, Zadie, like Bridget, suffers from low self-esteem and a very negative view of men. These feelings make her avoid dating men, although her friends try to set her up for dates in order to make her forget her story with Jack.

However, her best friend is a man, Grey, who works as a lawyer and has had also a bad experience in a past relationship. Grey always listens to Zadie’s stories and problems, and even though she does not like showing her feelings to everyone, Zadie knows that Grey is a good listener and that he will not ask her to go into details, unlike women, who always want to know all her feelings. Those are the main reasons why she avoided all her friends who are women since the “wedding that wasn’t” happened, because Zadie does not like telling her deep emotions.

Zadie’s problem now is that Grey is engaged to her pretentious cousin Helen. The novel describes how Zadie deals with her problems and her feelings about situations she is involved in. The main point of the novel is a bachelorette party organized by Helen. Zadie goes to the party and discovers a new side of her cousin that was unknown for her.
3. The Use Of Language In Each Novel And The Effects It Has On The Reader

Bridget Jones’s Diary is written in diary form, a narrative technique that gives the reader direct access to the main character’s mind, showing, in this case, Bridget’s thoughts and feelings.

Bridget uses very informal vocabulary in her diary, for example, words that she and her friends have invented, like “singleton” for spinster and “fuckwittage”, which is “the emotional turmoil intentionally wreaked by men who fall anywhere along the spectrum of womanisers to commitment-phobics”, or colloquial words, like “tellie” for television and “nightie” for pyjamas.

Another characteristic which shows the informality of the diary is the use of telegram style. The writer misses out the subject, mainly when Bridget talks about herself or something she has done, and sometimes she misses out articles. In the next piece of text, the characteristics mentioned can be seen:

V. Bad night. On top of everything else, tried to read myself to sleep with new issue of Tatler, only to find Mark Bloody Darcy’s face smouldering out from feature on London’s fifty most eligible bachelors going on about how rich and marvellous he was. Ugh. Made me even more depressed in way cannot quite fathom. Anyway. Am going to stop feeling sorry for myself and spend morning learning newspapers by heart.¹

This informality contrasts with the serious and formal language of the quotes from self-help books that Bridget adds in between her stories. Particularly, these quotes appear when Bridget’s life is most chaotic and when the situations she finds herself in are the craziest. In those moments, Bridget always thinks about the inner poise she has to achieve and she often quotes sentences from the self-help books she

¹ Helen Fielding, Bridget Jones’s Diary (London: Viking Penguin, 1998) 194
has read. For example, when Daniel stood her up, she writes: “However, one must not live one’s life through men but must be complete in oneself as a woman of substance.” A few weeks later, she writes again: “I shall be poised and cool and remember that I am a woman of substance and do not need men in order to be complete.” These quotations create a comical effect because there is an enormous contrast between what Bridget usually writes, which is always full of different emotions and using very informal language, and the sentences from the self-help books, which use formal and sophisticated language and leave emotions apart.

The Bachelorette Party is written using mainly stream of consciousness, which is a literary method for representing a continuity of impressions and thoughts in the human mind in unpunctuated or fragmentary forms of interior monologue. This means that the writer abandons any grammatical rules or logical connection, because the text reflects Zadie’s thoughts exactly. Direct speech is also very important in the novel, so the reader has to learn about the characters from their dialogues. In addition, a third-person narrator tells the story from Zadie’s point of view. This is not usual, because third-person narrators are normally omniscient, objective and are distanced from the characters.

As the characters usually talk with their friends or people they know, most of the language is informal and colloquial, though neutral language is frequently used.

For example, on this extract very informal and even vulgar language is used. When girls from the bachelorette party are drinking at a hotel, Betsy and Jane, (two

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2 Helen Fielding 31
of Helen’s friends) have a small argument because Jane has done things that Betsy did not imagine she could do.

Betsy was appalled. “Jane! What’s happened to you? Is it a stewardess thing?”
“Yes, Betsy. We have to screw all the pilots before we board.”

Besides the language, the direct speech technique and the way the story is told, make the reader feel closer to Zadie and that she could be a real person.

However, in spite of the writer’s attempt to bring the characters closer to the reader, there is not a deep insight into the protagonist, because the descriptions are quite superficial, and Zadie does not like talking about her feelings. Zadie’s conversations with Grey are an important part, because he is a great support for her, so she tells him all her problems. For example, here it is seen how Zadie trusts Grey:

“I fantasized about one my students today.” She liked opening with a shocker.
“What?!”

[...
She rolled her eyes. “Save your praise. I watched Days of Our Lives today. By accident.”
“And?”

“I watched Jack kiss another woman with the same cheesy look on his face that he used to have when he kissed me, which means he acted during our entire relationship - not that I didn’t know this.”

In this extract, it is obvious that Zadie trusts Greg, otherwise she would not tell him her feelings. The reader is able to see how close the two friends are.

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5 Karen McCullah Lutz 7
4. A Comparison Of The Narrative Techniques Used By Each Author And How They Support The Development Of The Main Character

Helen Fielding chose to write Bridget Jones's Diary, using the language and the techniques already described, in order to achieve certain effects on the reader, which will be discussed next.

As the novel is Bridget’s diary, the reader feels very close to her and is aware of her thoughts, her feelings and everything she does in her daily life. The reader likes Bridget and, in spite of all her crazy ideas, the reader does not laugh at her, because he feels a certain attachment to her. The reader knows how Bridget feels, so he understands her and why she acts the way she does. In this extract, it is noticed how Bridget feels about her friends the day of her birthday. She wanted to cook for them, but everything goes wrong. When they go to her house, they tell her they “booked a big table at 192 [a restaurant] and told everyone to go there instead of [her] flat”, so she writes: “Love the friends, better than extended Turkish family in weird headscarves any day.”6 Bridget realizes that her friends care about her, and they would do anything to help her, so she feels fond of them and happy.

Moreover, although Bridget is not a real person, the reader feels that she is, and that they could be friends. A diary is a very personal piece of writing, where the author explains her feelings and thoughts, and any spelling or grammar mistakes do not matter, because nobody will read it except for the author, in this case Bridget. Moreover, most of the information written in a diary is shared with close friends. In fact, it seems Bridget is a real person writing her diary and the reader is allowed to

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6 Helen Fielding 84
read it, because she wants her friend to know what happened to her. This effect is achieved using informal and colloquial language. The reader wants to become her friend, so he expects Bridget to trust him the same way she trusts her diary. For example, she starts to be paranoid about Daniel having an affair, so she writes this:

God. I just started having paranoid fantasy for no reason about Daniel having an affair with someone else and thinking up dignified but cutting remarks to make him sorry. Now why should that be? Have I sensed with a woman’s intuition that he is having an affair?  

In this extract, she seems to be talking to a friend, because of the informal style, the short sentences and the questions. Bridget is actually writing in her diary, but the reader feels she is telling him her thoughts directly.

Apart from Bridget’s comments and stories, direct speech is also used in her diary to show long dialogues. Alternating direct insights into Bridget’s thoughts with pieces of direct speech, makes the novel more dynamic and allows the reader to rely on what Bridget says, although these dialogues are told from her point of view, the reader sees more clearly how she interacts with other people. This extract shows how Bridget takes Rebecca’s questions as offensive (and the reader agrees with her), while if they were seen from a different point of view, they could be seen as innocent questions:

“How’s Magda?”
“Fine,” I replied.
“She’s incredibly attractive, isn’t she?”
“Mmm,” I said.
“And she’s amazingly young-looking – I mean she could easily pass for twenty-four or twenty-five. You were at high school together, weren’t you, Bridget? Was she three or four years below you?”
“She’s six months older,” I said, feeling the first twinges of horror.

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7 Helen Fielding 143
“Really?” said Rebecca, then left a long, embarrassed pause. “Well, Magda’s lucky, she’s got really good skin.”

The combination of both direct speech and deep insight into Bridget’s thoughts and feelings, achieves the desired effect, which is to make the novel entertaining. If the novel consisted only of one of the two techniques, it would be either too superficial or too boring.

The attachment to Bridget and the friendly effect that she has on the reader, makes him feel sorry for her when bad things happen and happy when she achieves her goals.

For example, when Bridget has to interview the famous Elena Rossini, she is able to get the interview thanks to Marc Darcy. So the reader is happy for her, because she has done a good job and her boss will be pleased with her:

“And a Good Afternoon! exclusive,” it says. “Good Afternoon!: the only television programme to bring you an exclusive interview with Elena Rossini, just minutes after today’s not guilty verdict. Our home news correspondent, Bridget Jones, brings you this exclusive report.”

The reader feels close and attached to Bridget as if she were real, so he is happy when good things like her success in the previous extract happen to her. The sensation that Bridget is real is created by Helen Fielding, by describing such a complex character, who has her own personality and seems to act freely, being independent from the writer.

The Bachelorette Party is written using mainly dialogues and stream of consciousness, although there are also a few descriptions in the novel. These methods produce some effects on the reader, because full descriptions of characters

\footnote{Helen Fielding 147} \footnote{Helen Fielding 242}
are not used. For example, the reader knows what Zadie looks like only by the comments her friends make, but there is rarely any description as such, only some brief descriptions of her clothes.

Direct speech makes the reader feel that he is listening to the characters and being part of the conversation, although not talking. Dialogues show directly what the characters do, without a narrator telling the conversation. Therefore, the reader feels that he is reading a real conversation, and he believes it is true because nobody is telling it to him. For example, in this dialogue between Zadie and Eloise, at the rehearsal dinner of the wedding, Zadie tries to convince Eloise to tell her brother everything Helen did at the party.

Zadie quizzed her. “Did you tell him anything about last night?”
“Nothing. I had a long talk with Helen this morning and she assured me it was all one big drunken blur and that it would never happen again. What happened at the bachelorette party stays at the bachelorette party.”

[...]
“You realize this is your brother’s future happiness we’re discussing? You’re really going to jeopardize that for some misguided sense of female bonding?”
“I don’t see you telling him.”
“I was hoping you would. You’re his sister.”
“You’re his ‘best friend’.”

The stream of consciousness technique is frequently used in this novel. This allows the reader to know Zadie’s feelings and thoughts without any corrections of the narrator. For example, in the next fragment, when Zadie is at Grey and Helen’s engagement party, she watches them and the writer uses stream of consciousness in order to show the reader how Zadie feels.

Zadie kept watching them. Smiling. Hugging. Oozing love from every pore. She had to admit that they looked more than happy.

10 Karen McCullah Lutz 228-229
Grey was so beatific that most people would’ve thought he was overmedicated. Helen was levitating. They were perfect together. Helen radiated purity and light as Grey was aglow in her reflection, thrilled to have found a woman who would never do him wrong. Even though her bitter mood and the flying shrapnel from the plate of a ravenous pregnant woman, Zadie couldn’t help but be glad that Grey was so happy. She would still be able to hang out with him after he and Helen were married, right? Helen must have someplace to go a couple nights a week. Tupperware parties? Book club? Home for the Criminal Perky? ¹¹

In this example, the narrator does not modify any of Zadie’s thoughts, but their are directly written from her mind. The narrator does not pay attention to the syntax or to any logical connection between the different sentences throughout the paragraph. It is also noticed that these are Zadie’s thoughts because there are short sentences and rhetorical questions. The writer, Karen McCullah Lutz, often uses this technique in the novel, because it gives the reader the feeling that there is no narrator interfering, but that he is reading Zadie’s genuine thoughts and feelings. The writer uses this method, so the reader can picture Zadie. Another example of this technique is when Zadie goes with the bachelorette party girls to the bar, where Trevor’s band is playing, and after the performance she goes to talk with him.

Jesus. Could she have been any more boring? She should’ve told him she bought edible panties or some such thing. No! No! She was his teacher! She had no business talking to him about panties. Shame washed over her. It didn’t matter if everyone agreed with her that he was hot. It was entirely inappropriate for her to be talking to him in a bar. She should go. She should walk out right now. ¹²

The narrator does not modify anything, so the reader sees exactly what Zadie is thinking. There is not a logical sequence used, because it all comes from Zadie’s mind, when she is struggling with the dilemma about Trevor. So there are parts when she wants to talk with him, but suddenly changes because she realizes that she

¹¹ Karen McCullah Lutz 27-28
¹² Karen McCullah Lutz 156-157
is his teacher and should not be doing it. Her dilemma is very clear, because Zadie changes her mind between how to cause a good impression on Trevor, that is why she is annoyed with herself and think “Jesus. Could she have been any more boring?”, and after that, Zadie realizes that she is Trevor’s teacher and feels guilty for trying to flirt with him, so her desperation in trying to make a decision can be read when she thinks “No! No! She was his teacher!”.

The small number of descriptions in the novel is only used to describe scenes that help the reader to picture the situations Zadie is in. These descriptions mostly focus on the kind of places which Zadie goes to look like, who is there and the impression Zadie gets from people. The descriptions make the reader imagine the scenes and picture the people Zadie sees, but this is always told from Zadie’s point of view. In the descriptions, she gives her opinion of people, so the reader tends to think the same as her, because he does not have any other source that tells him the opposite. For example, when Zadie goes to Helen and Grey’s re-engagement party, there is a description of the place, and Zadie’s opinion of the people there.

When Zadie got to Grey’s house there were already a dozen or so people in the backyard: Bill, his law partner and best man, Betsy and her husband, Denise and Jeff and her now eight-month-pregnant belly, Marcy and Kim and their sullen husbands, Jane, three of the groomsmen whose names Zadie had never even learned, and of course, Helen, beaming and glowing at the same time.  

The pace at which the novels are set, is another factor that affects their understanding of the main characters and of the novels themselves.

As has been said before, Bridget, is a very emotional person, who acts constantly according to her feelings, and changes opinion and mood quite easily.

13 Karen McCullah Lutz 271
This is reflected in her diary, and thus, in the novel. Sometimes, the diary jumps from one day to a day in the following week, for instance, in October she writes the 24th and the next day she writes is on the 1st of November. There is a week difference, so the pace of the novel is fast. At some other times, however, Bridget describes events using many details and dialogues to address her descriptions, which make the pace of the novel slow, for example on the 23rd of September, Bridget explains all her feelings and she includes a conversation with her father. Therefore, the pace of Bridget Jones’s Diary changes constantly, depending on Bridget’s mood.

In The Bachelorette Party Zadie goes through different situations just as Bridget does, but the text does not reflect her feelings. This can been seen because the novel goes at a steady pace, independently from Zadie’s feelings. So Zadie’s mood or emotions are a different aspect of the novel, because it is always written depending on the story line, and it stresses the most important events, but not her feelings.
5. Conclusion

Both Bridget Jones’s Diary and The Bachelorette Party are very similar novels in the theme, but they differ greatly in how they were written and the effects they produce on the reader.

The novels are written using very informal language and a conversational tone, which helps the reader to become more attached and closer to the protagonists, Bridget in the former and Zadie in the latter.

The understanding of the main characters depends on the narrative techniques used in each novel. In Bridget Jones’s Diary the reader feels Bridget is a real person and a close friend, because the novel focuses on Bridget’s feelings. While in The Bachelorette Party the reader sees Zadie as a more distanced character, because the novel concentrates more on the story than on her feelings.

Due to the different aspects of both novels, Bridget Jones’s Diary is more effective in appealing to the reader. This attachment the reader feels to Bridget, does not occur towards Zadie, because of the different narrative techniques Helen Fielding and Karen McCullah Lutz used to write the novels. Helen Fielding wrote Bridget Jones’s Diary using diary form, and Bridget as the first person narrator. Bridget writes her diary emotionally, so the reader is aware of how she feels. Karen McCullah Lutz chose to write The Bachelorette Party as a third person narrative. The writer is therefore able to show Zadie’s point of view, but does not tell as much about her feelings, because it is not the main focus of the novel. So the reader likes Zadie, but in a different way than he likes Bridget. For these reasons, Bridget
Jones's Diary is a more successful novel, because it makes the reader feel the main character is a real person.

The candidate has a good understanding of the 2 works. There is some knowledge of the literary techniques demonstrated, but the candidate does struggle with the more complex aspects of narrative technique. There is an attempt to support most of the assertions made. Despite some repetition and gaps in theory, this is on the whole a good effort by the candidate.
6. Bibliography

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


## Assessment form (for examiner use only)

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