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Steps for Analyzing an Unreliable Narrative

in Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012)

Presented by Song Namgung

Abstract

This poster provides the steps that the reader of Toni Morrison's novel needs to follow in order to cope with the unreliable narrative of Frank Money in *Home* (2012). Morrison discloses violence inside and outside America through the lens of Frank's first-person narration. Under his self-rationalization, his desire to be part of America is buried, and he confirms his superiority by marginalizing the Korean girl who is his victim.

Introduction

Authors tend to construct their work as double-layered or hide a message they want to tell. By reading the text thoroughly and analyzing the mentality and circumstances of the protagonist, a literary work can be a totally new narrative to readers.

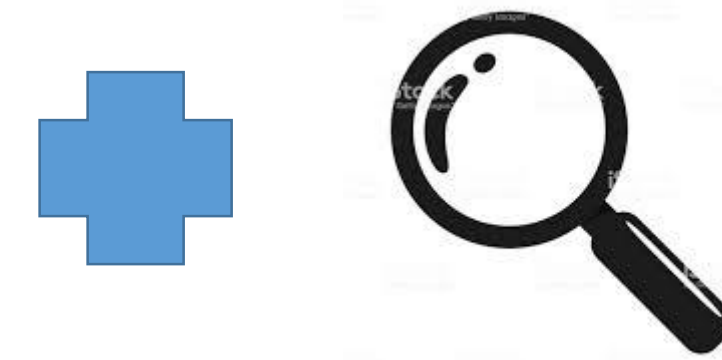
1. Be a Detective, Be Skeptical

- Set a research question.
- Ex) ①Frank Money enlisted to escape from his futureless hometown. ②He suffers PTSD but overcomes it rather simply and begins his new life ③ He murdered a Korean girl due to her sexual aggressiveness and he thinks she is a sexual slave.

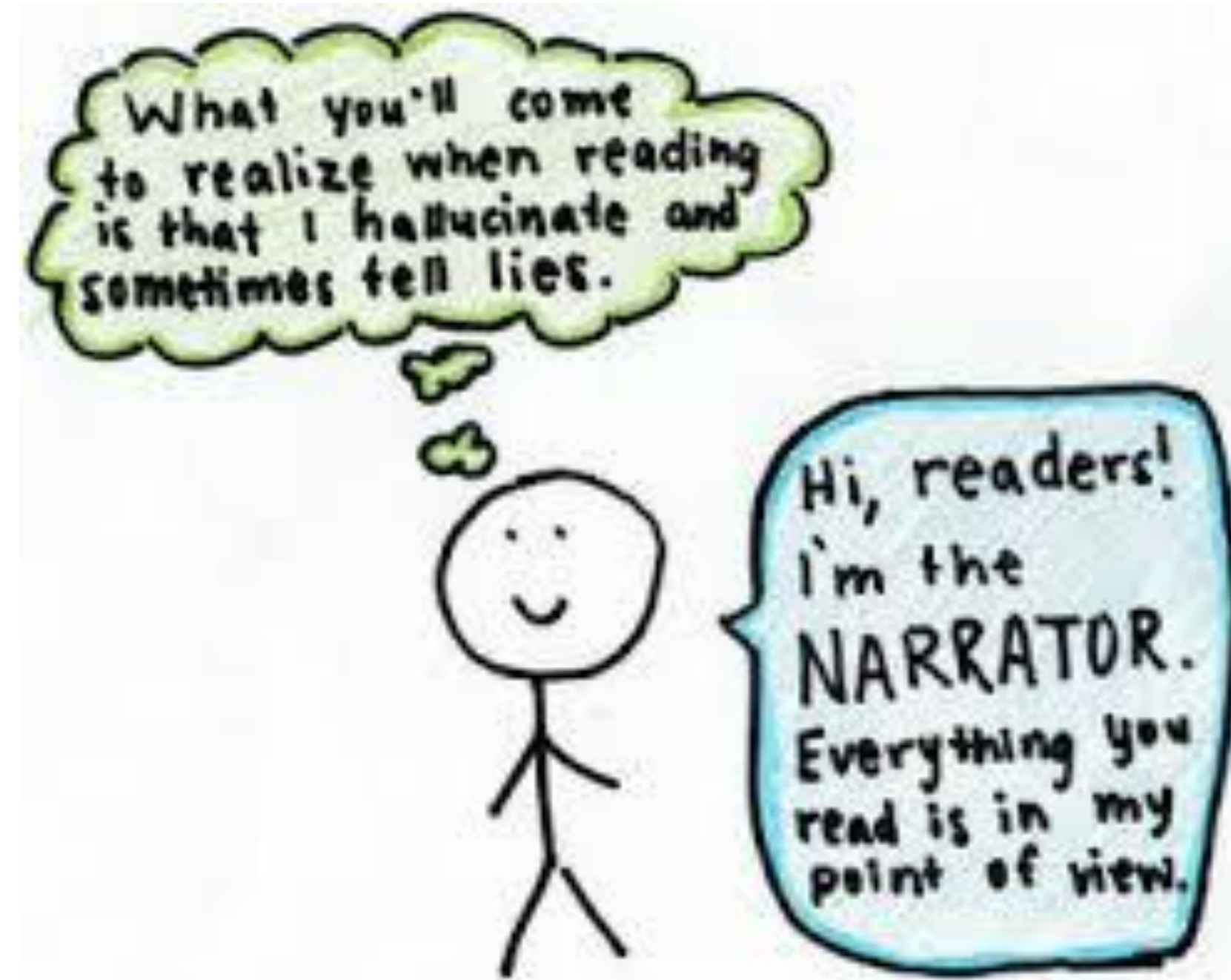
➡ What if these are not true?

2. Search for Evidence

- Dissect and analyze the text, words, and behavior of the narrator.
- Ex) ①Frank repeated self-rationalization, saying that she should be killed to protect his dignity. ②He knew about the Korean girls who were sexually abused. ③He understood the Korean words as a sexual signal but he must have not known the Korean language.



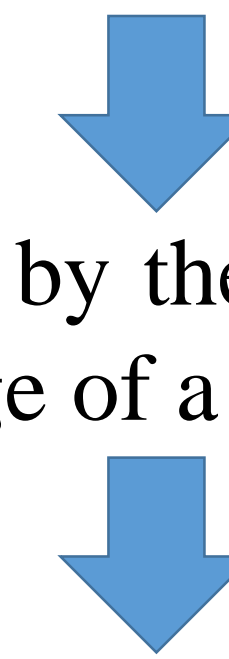
- Search for historical evidence to support your idea, too.
- Ex) ①The U.S. Army was racially integrated for the first time during the Korean War (Lee, 2013).



②In a 2012 interview, Morrison publicly denounced war crimes committed by America (Bollen, 2012). ③America has exerted the most dominant authority over Thrid-World countries since the 1950s (Said, 1994).

3. Organize a Hypothesis

- Make your hypothesis consistent throughout the work.
- Ex) ①Frank enlists to acquire a social status equal to that of a white soldier and becomes representative of American power.



②He is aroused by the Korean girl so he imposes an image of a prostitute into her.

③He kills her using his superiority of gender and nationality, which is newly earned during the war and rationalizes his crime.

Conclusion

Readers can use the mechanism of skeptical thinking for reading numerous first-person narratives, or even different forms of literature. By doing so, the meaning of literature is deepened and broadened, as *Home* is read as a story about the redemption of a soldier or as a hidden indictment of war crimes, made by the author.

Works Cited

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Glossary

- **First-person narrative:** a narrative where "the narrator speaks as 'I,' and is to a greater or lesser degree a participant in the story" (Abrams, 1999, p. 231)
- **Unreliable narrator/ Fallible narrator:** "one whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share" (Abrams, 1999, p. 235)