Narrative Conclusions

The conclusion for a narrative is a big deal. It’s important. The end of a story should wrap up enough of the story for the reader to be satisfied they spent so much time enveloped in the story’s world. Yet, if it’s a part of a series, you will also want to give the reader a reason to read the next installment. Many people think that you can just quickly brush through the events at the end of the story because the climax is the most important part. If you think that, you may want to spend some time with the pacing guide to help you see the importance there.

The end of a story should resolve much of what happened before, if not all of it, in a way that would make sense for that story. Here’s an example of what not to do: Lost was a television show in the 2000s sometime. I got sucked into that show in a huge way, and I watched EVERY SINGLE EPISODE. I know, I watch too much tv. As the seasons progressed, the writers introduced more and more conflict and questions without ever really resolving the old conflicts and questions. When it came to the final season, they had to totally alter the reality of the story to push the questions aside, saying basically that all those things I had spent the last several seasons worrying about didn’t matter after all. Haha. Joke’s on me. But the thing is, this invalidates the reader. It makes the reader an enemy, rather than a friend. Totally uncool.

Instead, try one of these tricks:

1. **End with a great imagery detail**—Description can really help you draw a story to its natural conclusion, almost like you’ve looked around and seen that it really is the end. Describe whatever you can (or feel would work here): the scene, the character, the life moving around the story.

2. **End with action**—Having the characters actually physically MOVE past the story, helps the reader to feel that it really is done, and they are moving on. Nice. Or, if you are writing a sequel, it propels them forward.

3. **And with reflection**—Give your narrator a chance to think about all that had happened, regret something, or just analyze his/her new world. Ending with the thoughts of the narrator gives the reader something to think about themselves. Always a good thing.

4. **End with dialogue**—This is particularly tricky. Ending with someone’s spoken words can give the reader that last line they want, or it can really leave them hanging. Don’t use the last lines to teach the reader a lesson. Instead, use it as a chance to hear one more fabulous line from that great character.

No matter what you do, your conclusion should be natural to the story. It should follow in the same style as the rest of your writing. It should leave the reader satisfied that they picked up the book in the first place. Avoid cheap tricks, so your readers don’t get Lost the way I did.