

Sirius' Death: Students Handout

Here's a passage with bold and italics to give you a visual example of Rowling's ratio of action and dialogue to introspection in a high-crisis scene:

Harry turned to look where Neville was staring. Directly above them, framed in the doorway from the Brain Room, stood Albus Dumbledore, his wand aloft, his face white and furious. Harry felt a kind of electric charge surge through every particle of his body—they were saved.

Dumbledore sped down the steps past Neville and Harry, who had no more thoughts of leaving. Dumbledore was already at the foot of the steps when the Death Eaters nearest realized he was there. There were yells; one of the Death Eaters ran for it, scrabbling like a monkey up the stone steps opposite. Dumbledore's spell pulled him back as easily and effortlessly as though he had hooked him with an invisible line—

Only one couple was still battling, apparently unaware of the new arrival. Harry saw Sirius duck Bellatrix's jet of red light: He was laughing at her.

"Come on, you can do better than that!" he yelled, his voice echoing around the cavernous room.

The second jet of light hit him squarely on the chest.

The laughter had not quite died from his face, but his eyes widened in shock.

Harry released Neville, though he was unaware of doing so. He was jumping down the steps again, pulling out his wand, as Dumbledore turned towards the dais too.

It seemed to take Sirius an age to fall. His body curved in a graceful arc as he sank backwards through the ragged veil hanging from the arch....

And Harry saw the look of mingled fear and surprise on his godfather's wasted, once-handsome face as he fell through the ancient doorway and disappeared behind the veil, which fluttered for a moment as though in a high wind and then fell back into place.

Harry heard Bellatrix Lestrange's triumphant scream, but knew it meant nothing—Sirius had only just fallen through the archway, he would reappear from the other side any second....

But Sirius did not reappear.

"SIRIUS!" Harry yelled. "SIRIUS!"

He had reached the floor, his breath coming in searing gasps. Sirius must be just behind the curtain, he, Harry, would pull him back out again....

But as he reached the ground and sprinted towards the dais, Lupin grabbed Harry around the chest, holding him back.

"There's nothing you can do, Harry—"

"Get him, save him, he's only just gone through!"

"It's too late, Harry—"

"We can still reach him—"

Harry struggled hard and viciously, but Lupin would not let go....

"There's nothing you can do, Harry...nothing....He's gone."

(p. 805-806, *Phoenix*)

Key: **Bolded** = action

Italicized = dialogue

Left normal = narration or introspection

Note: I marked "they were saved" as dialogue because even though it is technically not voiced, by the fact that it's in italics and written as Harry's thoughts, it has the impact of voiced words. My analysis isn't perfect as not everything can be labeled only action, dialogue, or introspection, but this visual shows how little introspection Rowling uses.

Sirius' death is a hugely important and emotional scene for Harry, the reader, and a critical turning point in the series. Yet, only one and a half sentences and a couple of fragments could be considered introspection. This from a book which I consider to have the highest amount of introspection Rowling had used to that point. Sirius falling behind the Veil delivers an active, visceral punch.