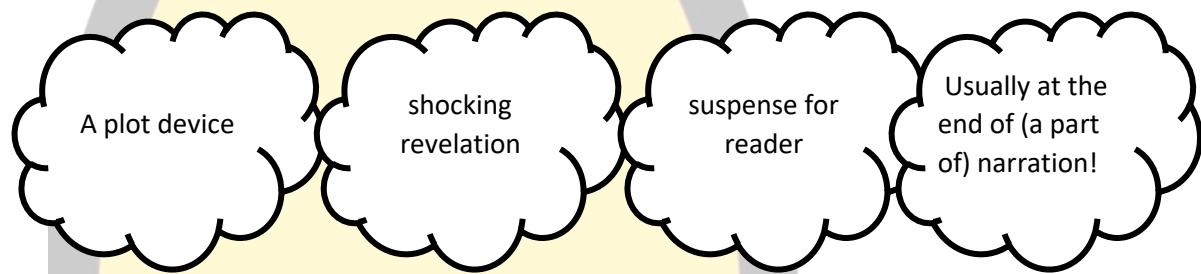


15 b. Cliffhangers in a Narration

What a cliffhanger is?

A cliffhanger in writing is a plot device in which the text ends with a shocking revelation or dramatic event. The shift in writing is usually abrupt and the reader is left in suspense and is unaware of what will happen in the story after this point.



Usually cliffhangers are used at climax, the end of a chapter or at the end of a series to sow curiosity in the reader's mind. Sometimes a narration or book also ends with a cliffhanger, avoiding typical endings where every problem is resolved!

Types of cliffhangers

A question or rhetorical question - This is a common cliffhanger ending, with the questions posed throughout the text remaining unanswered by the end. This means the audience wants to return to see these questions answered.

A new appearance - A new character may unexpectedly show up before the closing pages. They may be important to the story but their relationship with the protagonist is not explained and the audience is left wondering who they are.

New beginnings - This ending occurs usually when the main character or characters state that they will start again or move away from what has occurred in the text. They 'drive off into the sunset' but what happens to them after this is unknown and there is no way to know if they get their happy ending.

Incoming Danger - This ending usually comes with the recent elimination of the threat seen throughout a text. All is thought to be resolved and at peace with the story but new information and foreshadowing reveal that greater danger is lurking behind the corner.

Sudden death/ injury - A recurrent or main character may die in the closing section of the text or they may be injured with the implication of death. This trope is great for books with planned sequels as readers will be desperate to see if their beloved character has survived.

A new discovery - Your protagonist may stumble across a key piece of new information or evidence that changes the events of the text so far. They may discover a shocking secret or find a missing object or a main character may even go missing.

Failure - Your protagonist may fail their mission or lose a battle against their antagonist. The reader is left wondering if they will recover from their loss and if they can return to succeed.

A deadline - Your character may have limited time left or be on a ticking clock to reach a destination in time before a disaster. Your story will end without the reader knowing if they ever make it.

Yearning - Your main character may have wanted something throughout your story, this could be a dream of theirs or an item they are searching for. Before the ending they are close to getting this but the story ends before the reader is told whether or not the character gets what they want.

Practicing with Cliffhangers.....

A Korean Myth

1 One day, years and years ago, the birds of this world knew that cold winter was approaching and began to fly south to warmer countries. All except one little bird who had a broken wing and could not fly.

4 "I will ask the trees in the forest if they can keep me warm in the cold winter," he said.

6 So, he jumped and he flapped towards the trees at the fringe of the forest. He first met a majestic birch. "Magnificent Birch," he sang, "will you allow me to stay warm in your branches during the cold winter?" "Certainly not!" the birch tree said. "I have to take care of my branches."

10 The little bird staggered on until he came to a great oak tree. "Oh, mighty Oak, when winter comes, I may freeze. Will you keep me warm in your branches?" "No, for you might eat my acorns!" replied the oak. "Go away."

13 The little bird jumped and he flapped until he came to a maple tree. "Oh, glorious Maple, will you let me spend winter in your warm branches?" "I shall not!" replied the maple. "I never help strangers."

16 The poor little bird did not know where to go, but he kept staggering and flapping along with his broken wing.

18 Presently the fir tree saw him and said, "Come here, little bird. You may spend the winter in my branches." The pine tree nearby said, "I will spread my branches to keep the wind away." The holly tree added, "You may eat my berries. They are good food for birds." The little bird was

very comfortable in his warm nest, protected from the cold wind and with holly berries to eat.

24 That night, the Frost King said, "North Wind, it's time to start winter. Blow the leaves from the trees, my friend, except for those who helped the bird with the broken wing. For their kindness, they may keep their leaves, even in winter."

This story ends with a cliffhanger. What do you think, what type of cliffhanger does this fable have?

Re-write the last paragraph using cliffhanger of your choice.