Narrative as information management

Example: In "To Build a Fire", London teaches us what we need to understand, how important it is, and how difficult

How do you give information in narrative?
When do you reveal information? (**pace**)
How much do you have to teach you reader vs. what can we assume the reader knows?

How -
- what the character says
- what others say
- what the author says
* what the reader can see

Need to have a mixture, but the more the reader connects the dots, the more the reader is involved.

The more the reader can connect the dots, the more satisfying the now moment will be, the more the reader will be invested in the emotional reality of that moment.

What does the reader _need_ to know?
In what order?
When?

Examples:
"Sweat" – how we know of Delia's fear of snakes, how cruel her husband is.
Saboteur – his illness, his desire for revenge

If you **build anticipation**, the pay off better measure up (think Christmas).

In **pacing**, make sure the reader has time to assimilate information.

"expository lumps"
People like exposition, learning new things, seeing how things work, but they don't like a big chunk of exposition without ties to the characters and story.

Think of feeding the reader information like food
- nothing too big
- bite sizes
- steady pace, then let digest

Make it natural and embedded in the story.
"As you know, Bob…" Do NOT have the characters say things to each other that they wouldn't actually say to explain things to the reader. "As you know, Bob, we always have fireworks on the Fourth of July…" means that the reader will not suspend disbelief. In fact, it will likely push the reader out of the experience of the story and make the reader throw the book across the room.

Give the reader the information s/he needs, but make sure it is embedded. ("Have you bought the fireworks for the Fourth yet, Bob?" tells us about the fireworks without it seeming ridiculous.)

Balance:
- **external** and **internal**
- **backstory** and **event**

Writers love backstory. We spend loads of time working on it, expanding, getting our understanding of the now from the then. Readers do not always love backstory. Beware indulgence here—but also make sure that your reader understands enough information to understand the now.

Backstory is TELLING. Event is SHOWING. Show, don't tell.

(Okay, sometimes you tell. But it's too easy and it's a trap. If you make "show, don't tell" your mantra, you'll hit it more often. This doesn't mean that you never ever tell, but that you should have a good reason for doing so. And length isn't a good reason. That's laziness on your part. Remember that your reader does not experience identification with something that is told in the way s/he does with something that is SHOWN—that s/he can actually live through vicariously in the act of reading.)

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