

A Study of the Elements of Surprise and Twist in the Short Stories of Ruskin Bond

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Abstract

This paper studies the use of surprise and twists in the short stories of Ruskin Bond. Bond is well known for his simple writing style, nostalgic tone, and gentle description of life in the hills. However, many of his stories also include small but meaningful twists that change the way readers understand the characters or events. Unlike the shocking twists found in detective or thriller stories, Bond's surprises are emotional and realistic. They are based on human feelings and everyday life.

By closely studying stories such as "The Eyes Have It," "The Night Train at Deoli," "Time Stops at Shamli," and The Blue Umbrella, this paper shows how surprise is used as an important literary technique. These twists help develop characters, strengthen themes, and keep readers interested. The paper also explains how Bond uses irony, simple language, realism, and deep understanding of human emotions to make his storytelling special and meaningful.

Keywords: Surprise, Twist Ending, Irony, Realism, Psychological Insight, Narrative Technique

1. Introduction

Ruskin Bond is a well-known writer in Indian English literature, famous for his short stories. His writing is warm, easy to read, and full of emotions. Although his stories seem simple, they are carefully planned. Many of them have small surprises or twists that change how we understand the characters or events. These twists are quiet and gentle, not loud or dramatic. They keep readers interested, make us think, and create stronger feelings. In Bond's stories, surprises often focus on human relationships, memories, loneliness, and personal growth. They are small but meaningful, leaving readers thoughtful rather than shocked.

This paper looks at how these surprises and twists work in the stories and what they add to the themes and structure of Bond's writing.

2. Theoretical Perspective: Surprise and Reader Response

In literature, a twist is an unexpected event that changes how we understand what happened before. Surprise is related to reader-response theory, which focuses on how readers react to stories. A surprise makes readers think again and see the story in a new way. Writers create this effect by carefully

controlling what they reveal, giving information little by little, and sometimes leading readers in one direction before changing it.

Ruskin Bond shows how to create surprise without using shocking or dramatic events. He often keeps important details hidden until the end, making readers think and connect the dots themselves. These surprises are not just about the story structure—they also affect our emotions, making us reflect and feel empathy for the characters.

3. Analysis of Selected Short Stories

The Eyes Have It: This story is a great example of Bond's quiet surprises. A man on a train talks to a young woman. The story makes it seem like he can see everything around him. At the very end, we learn that the narrator is blind, and the girl he liked is also blind. This gentle twist makes readers rethink the earlier parts of the story. It highlights ideas about perception, illusion, and emotional connection. **The Night Train at Deoli:** In this story, the surprise comes from what doesn't happen. The narrator meets a young girl selling baskets at a railway station and feels a quiet emotional connection with her. Readers expect them to meet again, but she disappears without any explanation. This open ending emphasizes themes of fleeting moments, memory, and how brief human encounters can be. **Time Stops at Shamli:** The surprise in this story comes from the mood and feeling of stillness. The main character visits a small town where everything seems to stop. What seems like a simple pause in life becomes a time for reflection. The subtle twist is psychological—the calmness outside reflects the inner restlessness of the narrator. **The Blue Umbrella:** This story has a moral twist. Instead of the usual ending where envy or wrongdoing leads to punishment, Ram Bharosa changes for the better. He shows compassion instead of resentment, giving readers a gentle and unexpected moral lesson.

4. Narrative Techniques Used to Create Surprise

Ruskin Bond uses different techniques to create surprise in his stories: 1. **Dramatic Irony** – Readers learn important truths only at key moments. 2. **Understatement** – Twists are shown quietly, which makes them more touching. 3. **Realistic Settings** – Everyday places make surprises feel natural and believable. 4. **Psychological Depth** – The stories focus on characters' feelings and thoughts rather than big actions. 5. **Open Endings** – Some stories do not have a clear ending, making readers think and reflect. These techniques show how Bond mixes simple storytelling with careful planning to make his stories meaningful and engaging.

5. Conclusion

The surprises in Ruskin Bond's short stories are quiet, realistic, and full of emotion. He does not use big shocks or dramatic events. Instead, his twists come naturally from the way his characters think, feel, and interact. These gentle surprises change how readers understand the story, leaving a lasting impression.

Using irony, calm storytelling, and insight into human emotions, Bond makes his short stories both simple and meaningful. Studying the surprises in his works shows that there is careful planning and

depth behind his easy-to-read writing. This makes him an important and talented storyteller in Indian English literature.

Books Cited

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