

JOINT RUNNER-UP

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In this opening letter Brontë introduces the narrator, the person to whom the story is being told and the relationship between the two. The writer has a candid tone; the letter is rife with dashes and winding sentences made up of numerous clauses (the second paragraph only amounts to two sentences but more than ten clauses and five dashes). This structuring gives the writing the jagged rhythm and impulsiveness of honest and intimate speech. The writer also has a humorous tone which lends even further to the informality and friendliness of the letter- he points out the recipient's 'stiffness and reserve' in a blunt manner which could be interpreted as hostile and accusatory in another voice, but their following admission that it would have been 'very affecting' reveals an underlying humour. The playfulness and forthrightness that Brontë gives the writer not only serves to convey their frank and liberal personality but also the closeness of their relationship with the recipient.

Brontë also introduces us to the intended reader through the eyes of the writer. He is referred to casually, greeted as 'Halford' in the initial address, and later fondly called 'old boy', revealing that his social status is equal to that of the writer- or that they are close enough that status is irrelevant. Either way, the writer does not see Halford as a superior. The writer then goes on to describe the 'taciturnity' of Halford, how he is not 'naturally communicative', and we understand the Halford is the more reserved of the two, but his opinion is still valued by the writer, or else they would not bother to 'atone' for their past offences. This shows that Halford is held in high esteem and deemed to have good judgement by the writer.

All of this construction of the writer and Halford's relationship serves to frame the introduction to the story and to make it enticing to the readers- the promise of 'frankness' and 'confidence' makes us feel as if we are being let in on a secret so scandalous or shameful that it can only be shared between the closest of friends. Brontë's description of the setting in which the story is being told also increases the feeling of intimacy and prepares the readers to enter a world of mystery. The writer describes the stark contrast between the 'rainy day' outside and his 'well roasted feet', conveying the warmth of the room coming from the fireplace. This sensory division between the writer and the outside world creates a feeling of separation from reality for the readers; we are engulfed in the inviting warmth of fantasy and do not wish to depart into the 'soaking' rain.

This letter draws the readers into the novel by placing us inside an intimate friendship where they can be given the honesty and intrigue that is generally confined to those at the heart of the story and their most trusted acquaintances, which fascinates us and makes us feel **involved**.

Professor Peter Barry comments

Very good opening paragraph, then accurate and specific throughout on tone and form. Second, again good and specific, and homes in on the import of the word 'atone'. Third, very good on inner/outer contrast. Final focus is on the constructing the sense of the reader's 'privileged intimacy' with the two men.