



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



---

**ISSN 2278-9529**

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**  
[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## **Exploring Ruskin Bond's Fiction: A Linguistic Analysis of Narrative Voice and Style**

**Ayush Prasad**

Student,  
Amity School of Languages,  
Amity University Lucknow Campus.

**&**

**Dr. Aayushee Garg**

Assistant Professor,  
Amity School of Languages,  
Amity University Lucknow Campus.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13683680>

**Article History:** Submitted-21/07/2024, Revised-07/08/2024, Accepted-14/08/2024, Published-31/08/2024.

### **Abstract:**

This research undertakes a close reading of Ruskin Bond's short fiction to illuminate the stylistic and thematic intricacies of his narrative craft. The article especially focuses on key texts such as "The Eyes Have It" and "A Job Well Done," exploring Bond's evocative power of description, the strategic placement of climactic moments, and the nuanced use of language to craft alluring tales. Taking a closer look at Bond's simple yet expressive language reveals his ability to build suspense, take emotions to the crescendo, and showcase the natural beauty of the resplendent Himalayas. Bond's unique sensibilities of humour and horror are also subtly discussed in terms of comparative analysis of stories. This analysis positions Bond as a significant figure in contemporary English literature, whose work continues to captivate and inspire readers across generations, receiving admiration from both young and old and leaving a lasting impact on readers of all genres.

**Keywords:** Ruskin Bond, narrative techniques, literary analysis, Himalayan fiction, short story.

"Her stories provide children with a safe and secure environment, despite impossible adventures and derring-do, in which there is a clear moral code between right and wrong, good and bad" (43). This statement by Jenny Byrne highlights the impact of Enid Blyton's stories on young readers, as discussed in her paper "Loved by Children and Derided by the High-

Minded: Understanding Enid Blyton and Her Appeal.” Like Blyton, Ruskin Bond has crafted heartwarming stories for children, often featuring adventures and friendships set in idyllic natural settings. Bond is undeniably regarded as “the most popular Indian English novelist and short-story writer among school children and adolescents” (Sinha 1). Despite being a children’s author, his works are widely appreciated by readers of all ages and have significantly contributed to Anglo-Indian literature. His diverse body of work includes genres such as horror fiction, autobiography, travelogues, poems, and essays. Having spent much of his life in the hilly regions of northern India, Bond's writing reflects influences from local languages, legends, and myths. His captivating narrative techniques draw readers across generations, and this paper will explore some of his notable horror stories.

This paper examines the linguistic and narrative techniques used in Ruskin Bond’s works that contribute to his distinctive writing style. It specifically analyses how Bond deftly handles elements of storytelling, including narrative voice, point of view, and style. This research provides insights into how Bond uses various techniques to achieve specific effects in his stories. The paper explores Bond’s unique approach to language, particularly in depicting actions, emotional expressions, thoughts, and understanding. Interestingly, Bond’s clever narrative techniques often lead readers to question the sequence of events in his stories. His ability to craft effective climaxes keeps readers engaged until the very end. For this study, the researcher has closely examined several of Bond’s works, including “The Eyes Have It,” “A Job Well Done,” “A Face in the Dark,” and “Hanging at the Mango-Top,” all selected from his renowned collection *Time Stops at Shamli and Other Stories*. Additionally, the research references a few of Bond’s other notable works.

While classical English writers like Jane Austen, William Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens are known for their intricate plots and complex narratives, Ruskin Bond’s writing stands in stark contrast with its simplicity and straightforwardness. Bond’s stories often focus on social issues, nature, and occasionally mythology, each conveyed through his use of a simple narrative style. A unique and memorable aspect of Bond’s works is their ability to linger in the reader’s mind long after the book is closed, provoking reflection and deep thought, a quality appreciated by many. Bond frequently employs the first-person narrative, which gives his stories an autobiographical feel. However, there is limited evidence available to substantiate the autobiographical nature of his narratives.

Regarding the simplicity of language and narration, it is important to note that Ruskin Bond himself emphasises the value of clear and straightforward writing in his book *How to Be a Writer*, where he states, “It’s the language that makes the world go round. So, keep it simple. Speak with clarity. Don’t add to the confusion that already exists” (60). Despite his straightforward narrative technique, Bond’s writing is rich in detail, vividly capturing the essence of characters, situations, and settings. His simple style should not be mistaken for a lack of skill. Although Bond is well-known as a children’s author, his works often tackle complex and mature issues, such as the exploitation of nature in *Angry River* and socially relevant themes in stories like “The Thief.”

Ruskin Bond frequently romanticises nature, filling his works with acute descriptions and vivid portrayals of the natural world, particularly in the foothills of the Himalayas. In *The Eyes Have It*, he paints a picture of Mussoorie in October with lines such as, “The hills are covered in wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a log fire and drink a little brandy...”(4). Similarly, in *The Room on the Roof*, Bond describes the time spent in Dehradun with, “The light spring rain rode on the wind, into the trees, down the road; it brought an exhilarating freshness to the air, a smell of earth, a scent of flowers; it brought a smile to the eyes of the boy on the road” (1).

Jagat Singh Bisht, in his research paper *A Bent-Double Beggar: A Study of Narrative Technique in the Short Story of Ruskin Bond*, aptly observes, “The versatility of Ruskin Bond as a short story writer takes full swing in his nature stories, where his stories are not just about the background of nature but deal with nature as a power that influences our mind and soul” (1). This perspective highlights how deeply nature affects Bond. He does not merely appreciate its aesthetic beauty and the positive feelings associated with it; he is profoundly touched by it. Nature serves as his friend, philosopher, and guide, and his descriptions transport readers to the Himalayan landscape.

Bond’s works often explore the beautiful interaction between humans and nature, as illustrated in the story “A Tiger in the House.” The narrative delves into the endearing bond between the narrator’s grandfather and the tiger cub, Timothy. The story concludes with a surprising twist when the grandfather realises that the tiger he had been caring for was not Timothy, who had died earlier. This climactic revelation reflects Bond’s deeply sensitive and

empathetic nature, showcasing how he weaves his emotional connection with nature into his storytelling.

Vandana Shiva, a renowned Indian environmental activist and writer, advocates for sustainable practices and biodiversity conservation. Both she and Ruskin Bond share a deep concern for the environment. However, their approaches differ significantly. Bond's message is subtle and indirect; readers must be sensitive and attentive to grasp the underlying themes in his stories. Through illustrations of deforestation, pollution, and reckless industrial development, as seen in *Angry River*, Bond subtly highlights the consequences of environmental degradation. However, Shiva's approach is more direct and outspoken. She calls for policy changes and critiques harmful industrial practices in her works, such as *Earth Democracy* and *Soil Not Oil: Climate Change, Peak Oil and Food Insecurity*. While Bond emphasises the aesthetic beauty of nature and the risk of losing it, Shiva actively fights to prevent that loss through concrete actions and advocacy.

The story "The Eyes Have It" is a first-person narrative in which the narrator recounts a train journey where he meets a girl. As the story unfolds, the narrator eventually discovers that the girl was blind the entire time, a fact he missed due to the darkness in the train compartment. Throughout the journey, the narrator tries to ensure that the girl doesn't realise he is blind, as he remarks, "...I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind"(3). The story progresses in a relatively simple manner until the climax, where the narrative takes a surprising turn. The reader, along with the narrator, realises that all his efforts to describe the scenery—talking about the trees seeming to stand still as they moved and the views of Mussoorie—were futile because the girl couldn't see them at all. This story is a beautiful example of how Ruskin Bond portrays innocent love. The reader can sense the narrator's feelings for the girl, despite the fact that he never saw her face properly. Gulnaz Fatma, in her paper "A Literary Analysis of Ruskin Bond's Love Stories," states, "The love stories by Ruskin Bond are always told in the first person, and an unnamed protagonist in his mature age falls in love with a young innocent girl" (91). The researcher fully agrees with Fatma's observation, which is perfectly illustrated in this story. The strength of "The Eyes Have It" lies in its simple plot with a surprising twist, prompting reflection on perception, connection, and the limitations of sight itself.

Ruskin Bond has an unmistakable sense of humour. His stories are funny in a way that sometimes provokes belly laughs and at other times evokes a friendly giggle or a happy smile. For instance, in the previously mentioned story “The Eyes Have It,” the narrator, assuming the girl can see, describes the scenery to her, unknowingly revealing his own blindness through this act. This situation is sweetly amusing for the reader, making it inimitably entertaining. In another story, “Frogs in the Fountain,” the narrator recounts how he unintentionally introduced frogs into his grandmother’s home by cultivating tadpoles in the fountain, mistakenly believing them to be fish. The character of Aunt Mabel adds to the humour, especially when the narrator mentions, “She left for Lucknow that day, saying she would be safer in a zoo, where his cousin was the superintendent” (23), after she had a few unfortunate yet funny encounters with the frogs. The story becomes even more amusing toward the end when all the frogs are gathered and sent to the Lucknow Zoo’s superintendent, concluding with the line, “... ‘A zoo is the best place for creatures great and small,’ opined our philosophical Station Master who had previously sent them a consignment of stray dogs” (24).

The second story undertaken for this paper is “A Job Well Done.” This story is also narrated in the first person. It revolves around the young narrator, the family’s gardener, and their mutual dislike for the narrator’s stepfather. The family’s portrayal of dislike and fear of the stepfather, Major Sahib, is evident throughout the story. The narrator remarks, “The Major’s absence made life pleasant again” (116), and describes his mother as “just a little bit scared of Major” (116). Dhuki, the gardener, admits, “...he’ll get into one of his raging fits and I’ll be looking for another job” (115), expressing his fear of the Major’s capricious behaviour. As the story progresses, readers learn how Dhuki “pushed” the Major into the well, which he was then ordered to cover up permanently. The entire sequence of events is witnessed by the narrator. Towards the climax, the narrator hints to Dhuki about his knowledge of the incident by saying, “...we can always open up the well again” (119). A distraught Dhuki then decides to seal the well completely, decorating the seal with plants and flower pots. This story perfectly exemplifies Bond’s crime fiction with a touch of humour.

Ruskin Bond is as renowned for crafting and handling comic situations in his stories as he is for his distinctive horror tales. The following story, “A Face in the Dark,” is a horror short story often included in the curriculum for high school students in India. It centres on a teacher named Mr. Oliver, who is returning to his school through a path on the outskirts of Shimla. On his way, he encounters a weeping boy. As Mr. Oliver approaches and enquires about the boy’s distress, he is horrified to discover that the boy has no eyes, nose, or mouth. Terrified, Mr.

Oliver flees toward the school building, only to run into a curious watchman, who asks why he is out of breath. In the chilling climax, Mr. Oliver realises that the watchman, too, lacks facial features, possessing only a smooth head. The story ends at this point leaving the readers dumbfounded.

Edgar Allan Poe, the American writer, is well-known for his horror stories, which are deeply Gothic and dark, and characterised by gloomy settings. Similarly, Ruskin Bond's stories share a comparable tone, though they are set in the Himalayas. However, there are distinct elements that make Ruskin Bond's work unique. Poe's stories often deal with psychological horror, exploring themes like madness, guilt, death, and the supernatural. His narratives build suspense, leaving much to the reader's imagination. In his celebrated story "The Black Cat," a tale of crime and horror, Poe examines such dark themes through a narrator whose behaviour deteriorates from sanity to satanic violence due to alcohol addiction, culminating in bloodshed, murder, and pervasive uncertainty. The use of graphic language, such as "Suddenly, I was not myself anymore" (2) and "I took my knife from my pocket held the poor animal by his neck and cut out one of his eyes" (3) might discomfort some readers, making it unsuitable for sensitive audiences.

On the other hand, Bond's horror is more subtle and atmospheric. While he incorporates elements of the supernatural and folklore, the true horror in his stories often lies in the disruption of the natural world or the revelation of dark aspects of human nature. This is evident in several of his horror stories, such as "Trouble with the Jinns," where a Jinn, a friend of Bond's, can control his extending hands to prank people. Bond's horror stories are generally less intense, featuring a lighter touch that appeals to a broader audience. For instance, the sentence "His arm would start stretching, his fingers would feel their way along the rows of seats, and his lengthening limb would slowly work its way along the aisle... if the girl felt anything and looked round, Jimmy's hand would disappear... ready to strike again" (121) humorously describes the Jinn's antics in a cinema hall, making the horror more playful and enjoyable than terrifying.

Our final story, "Hanging at the Mango-Toppe", tells the tale of two policemen captured by Mangal Pandey, a notorious dacoit. Mangal Pandey seeks revenge on Inspector Hukam Singh for the death of his son the previous year, by hanging the Inspector from a tree. He gives Guler Singh, the sub-inspector, a chance to save the Inspector's life by shooting at the rope on

which he is hanging. Just before firing the last bullet, a monologue runs through Guler Singh's mind, where he realizes that Hukam Singh has always been an obstacle in his life and that it might be better if the Inspector dies. As a result, Guler Singh deliberately misses the last shot, allowing the Inspector to die. The villagers later consider Guler Singh a hero for his apparent attempt to "save" the Inspector, but only Guler Singh knows the truth, which he instantly forgets.

One of the many things Bond is renowned for is his vivid character descriptions. The portrayal of Mangal Singh as a dacoit, with details like his "turban tied rakishly" and "dhoti extending right down," helps create a clear image of the character in the reader's mind. Similarly, the description of Dhuki as old, using words like "skinny," "bent," and "spindly-legged," effectively gives away his age. Bond's descriptive prowess isn't limited to characters; he also paints eerie images of settings, such as when he describes the unsettling atmosphere of the place Mr. Oliver was passing through with phrases like "...pine trees made sad, eerie sounds..." (137) and "...down the narrow forest path..." (137).

All the above stories share one common thread: a perfectly executed climax. In "The Eyes Have It," the story's twist is masterfully handled, leaving a lasting impression. The climax of "A Job Well Done" resolves the tension as the Major's death ends the trouble. In "A Face in the Dark," the revelation that both the watchman and the boy are ghosts adds a chilling surprise. Lastly, "Hanging at the Mango-Top" lays open the dark consequences of selfish motives, turning a seemingly heroic act into that of sinister intent. Each story captivates the reader, compelling them to keep turning the pages, eager to discover what happens next. This is especially palpable in the first two stories, where the first-person narrative offers a limited perspective, heightening the suspense.

Ruskin Bond's enduring popularity as a children's writer is founded on his extraordinary skill of crafting stories that are both enticing and deeply relatable to the readers, all through the use of simple yet powerful language. This paper took into account various narrative techniques that Bond masterfully employs, such as first-person narration, vivid descriptions, and unexpected climaxes. These elements reveal his unique talent for creating stories that resonate with readers of all ages. Bond's ability to use straightforward language to convey complex emotions ensures that his work remains accessible to a wide audience, allowing readers from different backgrounds and age groups to connect with his narratives.



At the same time, the research highlighted Bond's extraordinary use of humour and horror, which he effortlessly seems to weave into his stories, adding layers of intrigue and metaphorical depth. His deep love for nature, particularly his romantic portrayal of the Himalayan foothills, brings a distinctive charm to his works, thus immersing the reader in the serene and mystical landscapes he vividly portrays. The paper also acknowledged that reading Bond is not just about deriving pleasure out of words but also about becoming morally and socially responsible human beings.

**Works Cited:**

Bisht, J.S. "A Bent- Double Beggar: A Study of Narrative Technique in the Short Story of Ruskin Bond." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 11, 2016, pp. 1.

Bond, Ruskin. *Classic Ruskin Bond Complete and Unabridged*. Penguin Books, 2013.

--. *Frogs in the Fountain (Broadway 6)*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

--. *How to Be a Writer*. Harper Collins Children's Books, 2020.

--. *The Best of Ruskin Bond*. Penguin Books, 1994.

--. *The Big Book of Animal Stories*. Rupa Publications India, 2015.

Byrne, Jenny. "Loved by children and derided by the high-minded: Understanding Enid Blyton and her appeal." *Auto/Biography Review*, 2019, pp. 43.

Fatma, Gulnaz. "A Literary Analysis of Ruskin Bond's Love Stories." *Ruskin Bond: Man and the Writer*, 2013. pp. 91.

Poe, E.A. *Level 3: The Black Cat and Other Stories*. Penguin Books, 2008.

Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. North Atlantic Books, 2015.

--. *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. North Atlantic Books, 2015.

Sinha, M. P., et al. *Ruskin Bond: A Critical Evaluation*. Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2012.