

TIME—EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE: transitional phrases & white space  
James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"

"I won't forget," I said. "Don't you worry, I won't forget. I won't let nothing happen to Sonny."  
My mother smiled as though she were amused at something she saw in my face. Then, "You may not be able to stop nothing from happening. But you got to let him know you's *there*."

Two days later I was married, and then I was gone. And I had a lot of things on my mind and I pretty well forgot my promise to Mama until I got shipped home on a special furlough for her funeral.

And, after the funeral, with just Sonny and me alone in the empty kitchen, I tried to find out something about him.

"What do you want to do?" I asked him.

"I'm going to be a musician," he said.

EXAMPLE: leaking the past through a character's reference  
Margot Livesey, "The Niece"

"So," she said, folding the sandpaper onto the sanding block, "is decorating the family business? Or your heart's desire?"

"Neither." He was longing to ask about her, so he offered himself up, a pound of apples, a fistful of bananas. "My father was a greengrocer in Brighton. Got up at seven at night, hauling sacks of potatoes and chatting up housewives."

EXAMPLE: narrator dips into a character's memory  
Adam Johnson, "Trauma Plate"

This is a careless spirit Jane had forgotten. As she sees them whisper, she remembers that time before Bill, and tries to read her daughter's lips. Ruthie rubs her forehead against the jut of this boy's cheekbone, whispering, and Jane almost thinks she can make it out—*let's make a break for Texas*, her daughter might be saying, and *I want my Monte Carlo back*, Jane thinks. She imagines a car she will never see again, enters it under maroon T-tops, feels the rocking slosh of dual fuel tanks, smells the leather, hears the spark plugs crackle to life, and swivels in custom seats to see it all disappear behind her.

EXAMPLE: narrator tells the reader about the past without the medium of a character's memory  
Elizabeth Tallent, "The Fence Party"

No one knows how badly Hart wanted this house on the river. Not Caro, and not Kevin, Hart's 15-year-old son, who read his father's emotions with uncanny and troubling accuracy. But Caro and Kevin would never have suspected Hart of such single-mindedness, though in fact he was intent on having the house as soon as he saw it, from the intaglio Moorish Cross on the granite threshold, through each of the quiet, cobwebbed rooms, to the chicken coop on the slope.