The LITERARY PRESENT TENSE

Use the LITERARY PRESENT TENSE when writing about a literary text. This includes fiction, nonfiction literature, and poetry.

Example:

William Shakespeare’s drama *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* follows the brief and fatal love attraction of Rome and Juliet.

Use the PAST TENSE when writing about historical events. This also includes historical events about the author or the literary work.

Example:


Use the PRESENT TENSE when writing about a speaker or author’s arguments in a speech or essay.

Example:

In his *Remarks on the Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.*, Robert F. Kennedy states that the United States needs love.

Sometimes, you’ll use the LITERARY PRESENT TENSE and the PAST TENSE when writing about multiple events within a literary text, or when writing about a historical event and a literary event.

Example:

Haruki Murakami’s short story *The Seventh Man* recounts the events of a child of when he survived a giant tsunami. In the short story, the narrator expresses the emotional toll of the near-death experience.
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