ENGLISH: *STASILAND*

Who is the narrator? How does the narrative voice shape the information conveyed about East Germany in the past and present.

Anna Funder, the narrator of 'Stasiland' subjectively portrays East Germany's past and present by using a narrative voice. This voice strengthens the relationship between the reader and the character which influences the perception of East Germany's past and present, and evokes feelings of sympathy for the victims of the Stasi. These elements are achieved through development of the characters, fine detailed descriptions of the atmosphere, and through assumptions regarding the feelings of the characters.

Funder's voice changes with each person she encounters. This technique aims to develop the characters in the text, evidently separate the victims from the perpetrators and encourage the reader to feel sympathy for those who have been wronged by the Stasi. The narrative voice used when Funder speaks to the protagonists in the text, Miriam, Julia and Frau Paul is delicate and empathetic. She acts as a friend to these women and often adds emotion and personality to their characters by emphasising their behaviour and facial expressions. The minute detail in Funder's writing also allows the reader to imagine the atmosphere she would have been in when conducting the interviews and thus strengthen the bond between the reader and the characters. Funder notices that Frau Paul is *"already holding a pressed handkerchief" pg 205.* The purpose of including this information is to portray Frau Paul as a fragile and hurt victim of the German Democratic Republic and therefore evoke sympathy for her. Funder effectively uses the fact that one tends to sympathise with the victims in any situation to make the reader side with Frau Paul an innocent and well intentioned mother, and in turn view the Stasi as ruthless perpetrators who denied Frau Paul access to seeing her sick child. The author's voice when speaking about the Stasi men is distinctively different from when she interviews the victims. Sarcasm and humour are often used to ridicule the Stasi and the GDR regime. *"I pictured the street ballet of the deaf and dumb: agents signally to each other from corner to corner."pg 7*. The purpose of this is to remove merit from their stories and therefore show disbelief, disapproval and disgust towards East Germany's past.

The highly descriptive and emblematic imagery used in the text positions one with a skewed portrayal of East Germany. The reader is presented with a negative view of its past, and a hopeful view on its present and future. East Germany's past and present are noticeably different in the way they are portrayed by Funder as the text begins with a bleak outlook and ends with a high outlook for the future of the country. The past is observed by Funder through the present time at Alexanderplatz station. The vivid imagery used to describe the atmosphere of the station takes the reader there with her and thus paints a dull and lifeless scene which is used to foreshadow the events in the text that take the reader back to life in the GDR. *"Alexanderplatz is a monstrous expanse of grey concrete designed to make people feel small."pg 2.* This is then contrasted with an optimistic and vibrant Rosenthaler Platz station at the end of the novel. *"The park is alive, the light so bright" pg 282.* The present time is portrayed as a hopeful and forgiving society who is willing to acknowledge the GDR regime had occurred, but move on and start afresh. In both cases, Funder is at a train station in East Germany which shows the location is not much different from the beginning of the novel; however the imagery created is markedly different from the other to symbolise the change in East Germany's past and present with misery in the beginning, and hope in the end. Credibility towards Funder's view is granted through the way the reader is made to recreate the moment in the text in their own imagination. The vivid imagery and detailed descriptions of the atmosphere contribute to this and therefore can shape the reader's perception of East Germany from a hopeless society to a hopeful one.

Stasiland conveys a subjective account of events as we are positioned through the narrator Anna Funder to view East Germany in its past and present. Funder often makes assumptions, speculates, and shares her own personal thoughts on matters, which in turn influences the reader's feelings towards the GDR. Although this forms a biased account of events, it is an extremely valuable tool

used to make readers sympathise with the victims of the Stasi and create feelings of animosity towards the GDR. This is particularly evident when she speaks to Miriam and is used to further emphasise the GDR's faults as well as portraying Funder's own opinions on the matter. *"In her voice is a combination of pride in how she became such a fiend, and disbelief that this country created enemies of its own children."pg 15* Funder holds her own attitudes towards East Germany and therefore her assumptions and speculations about how Miriam may be feeling may not depict reality; however her narrative voice can therefore be used as a technique to show her personal disapproval of the GDR and consequently, influences the reader to feel the same way.

"Stasiland" makes effective use of narrative voice with the purpose shaping the account of events to portray East Germany's past negatively and the present as a positive and hopeful society. The narrator, Funder achieves this through making assumptions regarding how people feel about the regime, developing characters of victims of the Stasi to evoke sympathy for them, and through highly descriptive atmospheric imagery.