

Literary Present Tense

Literature is timeless. The events of a story happen every time someone reads that story. Therefore, we discuss and write about literature using present tense.

Wrong: Jay Gatsby **showed** Daisy around his house.

Right: Jay Gatsby **shows** Daisy around his house.

The exception is when events take place before the beginning of the plot. We might infer such events or they may appear in flashbacks. It would be appropriate to say that Jay Gatsby **knew** Daisy before she **married** Tom.

Make a conscious effort to discuss the literature we read using literary present tense.