



6 Writer's methods

Written in the first person, *No et moi*, draws the readers into Lou's world and through her skilful writing techniques Delphine de Vigan reveals Lou's inner world to the readers.

1 La structure de l'histoire

Une structure linéaire

The structure of the book is simple and easy to follow; it is a **linear story** with a few **flashbacks** that follows Lou's life and her evolution over one academic year. This structure makes the story more powerful and more believable as we follow the everyday life and the inner troubles of a young girl. Throughout the book there are **chronological references** to the school year, for instance, Christmas ('déjà Noël, déjà l'hiver', page 75), Easter and the end of the school year. When we meet Lou for the first time she is 13 and 2 years ahead of her peers at school, but throughout the book she changes and catches up, both physically and emotionally. Lou will start to rebel and her understanding of the world will change. On page 228 she says 'Avant de rencontrer No, je croyais que la violence était dans les cris... Maintenant je sais que la violence est aussi dans le silence', a very powerful statement that highlights the fact that Lou's perception of the world is changing and becoming more mature.

Les retours en arrière

Delphine de Vigan only includes a few flashbacks in the book, but they are essential to understanding **key elements** of the story and the characters, for instance the first meeting between No and Lou at gare d'Austerlitz with this sentence 'Bref, voilà pourquoi je me trouvais gare d'Austerlitz' (page 16) or on page 21, on the first day back at school: 'Je ne connaissais personne et j'avais peur'. Others are more significant; for instance when Lou **recounts** the death of her little sister, Thaïs. For 11 pages Lou tells us about the tragedy that happened to her family 5 years earlier starting: 'Quand j'avais huit ans ma mère est tombée enceinte' (page 44).

Flashbacks are used by Delphine de Vigan to maintain the **momentum** of her linear story but also to allow the readers to enter the characters' world, giving Lou in particular a way to confide in us and to give us the key information to understand other aspects of their lives. For instance, throughout the long flashback of Lou's sister's death we acquire a better understanding of Lou's parents' emotions.

linear story la structure linéaire

flashback le retour en arrière

chronological references les références (f) chronologiques

TASK

1 Lisez les pages 21, 83, 98, 246 et 249 et repérez les indices temporels.

key elements les éléments (m) clé

to recount raconter

momentum le dynamisme

TASK

2 Lisez les pages 131-133. De qui parle le retour en arrière ? Qu'apprenons-nous dans ces pages ?

plot l'intrigue (f)
leap le saut, le bond
to move the story forward faire avancer l'histoire (f)/l'intrigue (f)

TASK

3 Repérez le début de quelques chapitres et dites comment ils commencent. Quels nouveaux aspects ou aspect récurrents de l'histoire sont introduits ?

inner interne, intérieur(e)
point of view le point de vue
voice la voix

Build critical skills

1 Lisez le flashback aux pages 212-213. De quelle période de sa vie Lou parle-t-elle ? Qu'est-ce que ce retour en arrière nous aide à comprendre ?

GRADE BOOSTER

Always use evidence from the book to illustrate your ideas. The evidence can be a direct quote, a reference to an event in the book or a chapter.

Les chapitres

The story is divided into 55 chapters (although they are not numbered or given titles) that focus on different aspects of Lou's life. The chapters help build the **plot** and maintain the momentum of the story. Moving from one chapter to another, we follow Lou's adventures and Delphine de Vigan is able to introduce new aspects of the story without having to make a logical link. So, for example, she starts chapter 2 (page 15) with 'La gare d'Austerlitz...', chapter 3 (page 21) with 'Lucas s'est assis au dernier rang' and chapter 4 (page 24) with 'No est assise par terre'. Each chapter unfolds something new and sometimes a **leap** in time **moves the story forward**.

2 Les éléments stylistiques**L'oralité de l'écriture de Delphine de Vigan**

Lou comes alive to the reader through the writing, and we feel her emotions and understand her thoughts — we really hear her voice. Many stylistic elements contribute to convey this orality in the writing.

La focalisation interne et la première personne du singulier

This is the story of Lou and the style invites us into her world. We feel her emotions, her **inner** struggles and her questions about the world. Lou expresses her **points of view** and describes the world as she sees and experiences it.

We understand what she is going through and the flashbacks help us to understand her life better. We laugh with her, we worry with her, we panic with her and we sometimes wish we could give her the answers. Through her work, Delphine de Vigan gives a **voice** to Lou but also draws the readers into Lou's world and enables them to understand it.

TASK

4 Lisez les premières lignes du roman et identifiez les éléments de la focalisation interne.

Les parenthèses

One of the characteristics of Delphine de Vigan's writing is the use of **brackets**. By using brackets she manages to share Lou's thoughts but also to explain her thoughts. Lou talks to herself but at the same time she gives us a better understanding of her way of thinking; her choices, her fears or incomprehension. Lou momentarily stops the flow to share her thoughts. For instance, on page 37, she explains in brackets why fractures are painful '(je le sais parce que je me suis cassé le bras...)' and on page 45, again in brackets, she explains that she would have like to have had a sibling through IVF.

La syntaxe

Another way for Delphine de Vigan to convey Lou's emotions and personality is to play with the **syntax**, in other words, the way the words are put together in a sentence. There are lots of very long sentences, where we would have normally expected **full stops** and other punctuation marks. Through lengthy utterances we understand Lou's inner **turmoil** and **panic** and her frenetic mind. She cannot stop thinking, she does not breathe in and we witness her **ramblings**. On pages 27–28, the sentence 'Elle me demande...elle perd son temps', is about 19 lines long. The juxtaposition and accumulation of so many ideas highlights that her thoughts are going into overdrive and display a wandering and overactive mind.

On the other hand, very short sentences bring some space and breathing into the text, but they can also express a more objective view on something. It sometimes feels like Lou is paralysed and unable talk. The writing is stilted. Long sentences convey Lou's emotions, while the short sentences are used to give facts. For example, on page 101 Lou sums up No's life with short sentences: 'Il faut tuer le temps. Marcher pour ne pas avoir froid' and on page 100 short sentences describe Lou meeting up with No.

Sometimes short sentences describe anticipation as in these examples on page 106:

J'attends quelques jours pour me lancer. J'attends le bon moment.
Il n'y a pas trente-six façons de présenter les choses. D'un côté la vérité. Brute.

and on page 38 when Lou follows Lucas:

Je lui emboîte le pas. C'est un garçon particulier. Je le sais depuis le début.

A few lines above there is a mixture of both short and long sentences:

Je suis muette. Je suis une carpe. Mes neurones ont dû s'éclipser par la porte de derrière, mon cœur bat comme si je venais de courir six cents mètres, je suis incapable d'émettre une réponse, ne serait-ce que oui ou non, je suis pathétique.

Build critical skills

2 En quoi est-ce que le titre du roman est énonciateur de cette focalisation interne ?

brackets les parenthèses (*f*)
syntax la syntaxe
full stop le point
turmoil l'agitation (*f*)
panic l'affolement (*m*)
ramblings les divagations (*f*)

TASK

5 Lisez la page 99 quand Lucas demande à Lou d'aller à la patinoire. Identifiez l'usage des parenthèses. Que dit Lou dans ces parenthèses?

TASK

6 Lisez les pages 29 et 30 et identifiez une autre phrase extrêmement longue. Combien de lignes est-ce que cette phrase fait ? Quelles sont les idées qui y sont exprimées ? Donnez-en quelques-unes pour démontrer les pensées frénétiques de Lou.

The use of the two different types of sentences demonstrates how the syntax conveys Lou's emotions; at first surprised and then in inner turmoil.

Build critical skills

3 À la page 12, on trouve une autre phrase très longue « Ses yeux sont immenses...je serais dispensée. » Pourquoi, à votre avis, est-ce que Delphine de Vigan a utilisé cette technique ici ? Que veut-elle nous faire comprendre et ressentir ?

Build critical skills

4 À la page 107, lisez la section suivante « J'annonce la couleur... une nouvelle perspective) » et analysez la syntaxe.

L'extravagance et la divagation

We cannot help but feel exhausted and perplexed at times when reading some of Lou's streams of consciousness, when her overactive mind is given full rein. It is as if her brain cannot contain all her thoughts and she needs to offload. Lou says it herself on page 136: 'Dans la vie il y a un truc qui est gênant... il est impossible d'arrêter de penser.' It is sometimes difficult to follow her thoughts, although maybe she is the only who can do this: 'ils ne voient pas le rapport, mais moi oui' (page 143).

But this is who Lou is; a precocious young teenage girl who thinks about everything, who is interested in details and who is trying to comprehend the world. Her **exuberant**, frenetic thoughts do not always make sense to us but Delphine de Vigan shares them with us. Her thoughts ramble and the slightest detail triggers her **digressions**. 'Il faut toujours que je prenne les chemins de traverse, que je me disperse...' (pages 25-26).

Who would not be puzzled and amused by 'Panique à Disneyland, alerte rouge, mobilisation générale, affolement biologique, court-circuit, carambolage interne, évacuation d'urgence, révolution sidérale' (page 79) or 'je suis *insomniaque*, un mot qui finit comme maniaque, patraque, hypocondriaque... quelque chose qui se détraque' (page 56).

Lou's mind is also very fanciful and she often goes her into a world of her own: 'À partir de quand il est trop tard ? Depuis quand il est trop tard ?' and she continues for another 18 lines (page 68).

Un répertoire scientifique

Lou is an **ebullient** and **inquisitive** little girl with an uncontrollably lively mind and an **insatiable** thirst for knowledge, highlighted by the presence of lengthy scientific explanations as, for example, on page 94: 'Quand je regarde le ciel, je

exuberant exubérant(e)

digression la divagation, la digression

ebullient
bouillonnant(e),
exuberant(e)

inquisitive curieux
(-euse)

insatiable insatiable

me demande toujours jusqu'où ça va, s'il y a une fin. Combien de milliards de kilomètres... C'est pour ça que les gens restent chez eux...' (18 lines).

TASK

7 Lisez les page 97, 'Quand on reste dans un bain...entre les pieds, page 137 'Elle ne trouve pas ça idiot...toute ironie', pages 178-179, 'Le périphérique était bloqué...au bord du périphérique' et page 196, 'À la maison...sans No' et pour chaque extrait, dites quels aspects de la personnalité de Lou apparaissent à travers l'écriture.

Build critical skills

5 Lisez le paragraphe « Je commence à parler très vite et je perds le fil, j'oublie le plan...je ne sais pas pourquoi je pense à Boucle d'Or...Un long long silence » (page 109). Que comprenons-nous sur Lou et pourquoi ? Donnez des exemples concrets.

L'anaphore

The use of anaphora (repetition of certain phrases or structures) is used throughout the book to emphasise certain ideas expressed by Lou. On page 96, for example, 'Quand j'étais petite' is repeated and on page 209 Lou repeats 'C'est vrai' and 'Avant je croyais'; these repetitions reinforce the importance of what Lou says and compel the readers. This device could also be seen as a way of showcasing Lou's busy mind, which cannot stop but which seeks systematic and logical patterns.

Ideas are also repeated throughout the book. The idea of being able to send rockets to space but not being able to help homeless people is repeated several times, for example, on page 82 ('On est capable... dans la rue'), page 46 and page 178. Even though, the idea is expressed slightly differently each time, it is a recurrent idea. This underlines what matters to Lou and what she cannot understand. We can feel, here, her sadness about having no power to help others.

Build critical skills

7 Lisez l'extrait à la page 55 « Plus jamais...contre elle ». Identifiez l'anaphore et analysez son effet sur le lecteur.

Le discours direct dans le récit

Direct speech is often in the **narrative** without any **speech marks**. For example, on page 13 when Lou reports Mr Marin's speech, she does not use indirect speech but rather inserts his words into her own sentence.

Monsieur Marin note mon nom, le sujet de mon exposé, je vous inscris pour le 10 décembre, ça vous laisse le temps de faire des recherches complémentaires...

Build critical skills

6 Delphine de Vigan utilise aussi souvent les mots en italique. Lisez la page 106 et identifiez pourquoi les mots ont été italiques.

TASKS

8 Lisez les pages 46, 82 et 178 et identifiez les idées récurrentes et les anaphores.

9 Lisez les pages 190 et 191 et identifiez les anaphores.

direct speech le discours direct

narrative le récit

speech marks les guillemets (*m*)

TASK

10 Lisez page 57 la conversation entre Momo et Roger et la conversation entre Lucas et Lou, pages 71-72.

Identifiez les exemples de discours direct dans le récit.

colloquial language

le langage familier

colloquialism

l'expression (f) familière

In this example we would have expected either of the two conventional styles to have been used:

- 1 Monsieur Marin note mon nom, le sujet de mon exposé et dit qu'il m'inscrit pour le 10 décembre.
or
- 2 Monsieur Marin note mon nom, le sujet de mon exposé. « Je vous inscris pour le 10 décembre, dit-il. »

By inserting speech into the narrative Delphine de Vigan keeps the flow of the Lou's voice, without having to interrupt it with punctuation. The narrative is more alive and less descriptive.

Le langage familier

Colloquial language is used throughout the book to add to the realism of the story. Whether it is used when Lou speaks ('C'est mort', page 13) or when No does ('T'as pas une clope?', page 16) **colloquialism** conveys particular messages. Through Lou's colloquialism we discover teenagers' talk, but when it comes to No the way she speaks shows her background and current circumstances.

Here is some of the colloquial language used in the book.

Langage familier	Équivalence
c'est mort	ce n'est pas possible
je m'en fous	ça m'est égal
dégage/barre-toi	pars, vas-t'en
être foutue de	être capable de
une clope	une cigarette
les potes	les copains, les amis
ouais/mouais	oui
un truc	une chose
des emmerdes	des problèmes
qu'est-ce que tu fous	qu'est-ce que tu fais
dégueulasse	dégoutant, sale, pas correct
les sous	l'argent
t'as rien à foutre ici	tu n'as rien à faire ici
tu me fais chier	tu m'énerves
la tronche	le visage

On a few occasions, Delphine de Vigan chooses to go beyond colloquialism and uses a rather **vulgar register**. This is not gratuitous; she does it to convey a message. In the following sentence, for instance, we understand No's anger about life on the streets: 'Voilà ce qu'on devient, des bêtes, des putain de bêtes' (page 65).

vulgar register le registre grossier/vulgaire

Les erreurs grammaticales

Sometimes the difference between **grammatical errors** and colloquialism is difficult to distinguish as grammatical errors can be adopted as part of spoken colloquial language. Expressions such as 'y a pas' ('il n'y a pas') or 't'as pas' ('tu n'as pas') are examples of this.

grammatical error l'erreur (f) grammaticale

The most common grammatical error in this book is the missing *ne* in negative expressions such as above in 't'as rien' ('tu n'as rien') or 'on t'a jamais dit' ('on ne t'a jamais dit'). In fact, the **omission** of *ne* is becoming increasingly common in spoken French. It is used in the book to add realism to the story by reflecting the way people really speak.

omission l'omission (f)

Les formes élidées et l'élision

In French certain vowels disappear when they come before other vowels such as *la* becoming *l'*. However the elision of the letter 'u' is not accepted — *tu* must remain *tu* whatever follows, e.g. 'Tu as quel âge?' and not 'T'as quel âge?' Yet in this book there are numerous examples of *tu* becoming *t'*, e.g. 'T'as pas une clope?' (page 16) and 'T'aurais pas deux ou trois euros, j'ai pas mangé depuis hier soir?' (page 17). In written French, unless the tone of the writing is quite colloquial, *tu* will never be seen shortened.

All the above stylistic choices add to the authenticity of the writing as we hear the characters in the novel speak.

GRADE BOOSTER

Always use technical terms when you refer to the techniques, and always identify the effects on the readers and the plot. When developing your arguments, consider whether the techniques are effective or not.

TASK

11 Lisez la conversation, page 174, entre Lou et No et identifiez les formes du langage utilisées.

L'humour

Lou's funny and **quirky** personality is also conveyed through **humorous touches**, dotted throughout the book. Her extravagant descriptions and rambling thoughts contribute to giving some **lightness** to the plot.

quirky excentrique
humorous touch la touche d'humour

lightness la légèreté

TASK

12 Delphine de Vigan utilise aussi un répertoire moderne. Lisez les pages 34, 145 et 207, et notez les références sociotemporelles.