Exposition is a device used in television programs, films, literature, poetry, plays and even music. It is the writer's way to give background information to the audience about the setting and the characters of the story.

Definition of Exposition

I have a past, you have a past, and everyone you know has a past. When you start to read a book or watch a movie or television program, the story does not typically begin with the birth of the main character. Instead, the narrative begins whenever the writer wants to start the character's journey. This journey could begin when a character is 5 or 35 or even 95 years old.

However, often times a writer will need to provide certain details about a character's past in order for the reader or spectator to understand the story. This backstory is called exposition. It provides an audience not only with the important details about the characters before the story begins, but it also helps the audience get to know the setting of where the narrative will unfold.

How Exposition Is Delivered

Exposition can be conveyed in many different ways. One of the most popular methods is via dialogue, where the characters are talking to another about the past. A writer can work background information naturally into a conversation so that a reader or spectator can piece together the relevant information they need. We can also gain background information through a character's thoughts. This is also often called an internal monologue, which is very popular in novels. Other popular methods are the use of newspaper clips, flashback sequences, or even through a voice-over narrator who speaks directly to the audience.

Popular Examples of Exposition

One of the most popular examples of exposition in film occurs at the beginning of every Star Wars movie. Using a crawl of moving text, the spectator reads all the past details that they will need to know to understand where the plot of the film will begin. You've no doubt read or heard the opening line many times: 'A long time ago in a galaxy far away, far away…' The opening title sequence in Star Wars is an excellent example of exposition in film.

In a novel, the author typically places the backstory at the beginning. The aim here is to immediately introduce the reader to the characters and the setting. Think about the popular children's story 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears.' How does it begin?

Once upon a time, there were three bears. There was a Daddy Bear, who was very big, a Mama Bear, who was …

Chapter 2

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How is background information delivered to the readers of Chapter 2? Explain fully and provide details and examples.
2. What title would you give Chapter 2 and why? Provide support for your choice.