

a)

Situational models are an easy way to understand and empathize with another entity through reading, factual or fictional, but I would imagine this is limited to those things we can easily simulate in our mind. Take a scientific paper for example. If the paper is about geological sediment deposits, it's likely going to be difficult to empathize with inert matter. Yes, we could likely imagine certain models of prehistoric rock distribution over time, given a good enough description, but we are limited here by the inability to mentally become sedimentary rock. However, a factual retelling of an historical battle during the civil war could be readily created. Not only through good story-telling, but we can mentally model the situation including all of the images of the civil war that we've been exposed to in the past; through American education, or Hollywood. We can place ourselves in the lives of others much easier than that of particle physics, or any entity without goals or needs. In the case of instructions, there is a certain amount of situational modeling here, however it does not allow for a situational model outside ourselves like a story does, it simply allows us to imagine ourselves in the process of creating something. I think this is incredibly similar to situational models of fictional characters, except that it is a situational model for future action of the reader.

b)

Back in high school, some stories of tribulation or embarrassment would get retold with a very high frequency. I had moved to the high school in my sophomore year, and made friends with this group of guys that had been friends for many years before. Sometimes, a frequently told story would become so ingrained in my mind through situational modeling, that I had difficulty knowing if I was present as a witness to many of these events. In this case, whenever the story was told (I will not get into the stories themselves, but I can guarantee they were remarkably immature, and generally outrageous) I would create a situational model as it was retold, sometimes I would tell it, reconstructing the story from my knowledge of the narrative, as well as the locations this stories would take place, even if I had only been to them long after the event occurred. So, in this situation, I created a situational model of a narrative event I was never present for. Because I was informed by personalities and locales that knew very well, the characters were incredibly easy to empathize with and environments were no problem recreating in my mind. After enough rehearsal of this story, I could hardly separate myself from it, often absolutely certain I was present for events that occurred long before I knew these particular gentlemen.

c)

This sort of understanding of how narrative helps us empathize is incredibly important to making a well-formed story. Especially when constructing drama, as it allows us to feel sadness, or relief, or a myriad of emotions based on how well the story helps us imagine ourselves in the protagonist's shoes. Another very important idea to story-telling is the assumptions we can often make given limited information. A great deal of comedy is based on those assumptions that you automatically create in your situational model (like the electrician that is automatically male). For example, the ancient classic "take my wife, *please*" is only a joke because the clause 'take my wife' is a common reduction of the phrase "take my wife, for example". People hearing 'take my wife' will

automatically assume he is beginning a story, but then in one word, "*please*", he alters the meaning of "take" from demonstrative in nature, to literal. Queue rimshot.