



Can a Machine Write Literature? Comparing Human and AI Generated Short Story

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Abstract:

*With the revolution of artificial intelligence (AI), the areas of language and literature have undergone swirling transformation. The way language and literature has been taught and learned in academia changed drastically. The AI assistance made it easy to compose and teach literature but with the expense of human creativity and thinking. AI generated literature is being published everyday— poems, stories, essays, fiction and plays. It has been so easy to take help from AI and generate with simple prompts, but at the same time, it is killing the creativity of learners and users. The scholars and researchers have studied the effects of AI on human creativity and challenges posed by it. The present paper is an investigation of human and AI generated short stories on the basis of creativity, language and cultural connotations. It is a comparative analysis between R. K. Narayan's *An Astrologer's Day* and similar stories generated by AI models— ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Grok and Perplexity. The comparative creativity experiment is carried out focusing primarily on the composition elements of literature such as emotional depth, imagery, originality, cultural rootedness, voice/ narration, pacing/ structure, and thematic relevance— how human and AI generated stories share differences and similarities in its composition. The study employs the method of close-reading of each text and drawing inferences from it for further analysis and interpretation.*

Keywords: Machine, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Literature, Creativity, ChatGPT 4.0, Short Story.

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Introduction

Literature is one of the fundamental arts for human beings that shaped the societies and individuals around the world. It is the creative expression of the human mind which evolved generation by generation throughout the centuries. First, it was shaped in the form of oral traditions, the most ancient form, then with the advent of writing, it transferred into the written form. Both oral and written form has undergone a lot of alterations till date reaching at its culmination after the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) occupying almost all the fields of human life. A new dichotomy has emerged that is human

generated or AI generated literature impacting the writing. AI generated literature has been published in abundance and readers find it interesting to read and have fun with it. The question, whether a machine can write literature is now no more important because already machines (AI) have started writing literature. But the advanced question that will affect literature is more important— will the AI replace human authors or poets? The traditional writing and publishing has been changed enormously with the rise of indie authors and publishers. Fundamentally, writing a story, poem or a novel is a creative process highly based on the feelings and lived experiences of human beings, and

composed by human beings themselves. However, the AI has posed a challenge before such a creativity wiping out the process of forming emotions in the mind while writing. It is deeply cutting the roots of creativity and imagination.

As literature is not just a brain child of a human mind born with the flights of imagination, moreover, it is shaped through memory, moral conflict, emotional tension, lived experiences in the real world, deeply rooted in the consciousness and the culture where a writer lives. How is an algorithm going to replace these factors that are most essential in writing any piece of literature? AI can become a collaborator, helping writers to shape their literature but cannot be a creator.

The present paper is a straight examination of a short story written by a famous English author R. K. Narayan's *An Astrologer's Day* and the similar short stories generated by AI models– ChatGPT 4.0, DeepSeek, Grok and Perplexity. The story chosen here depicts Narayan's world culturally and experientially rooted in Malgudi– an imaginary town in south India with a typical set up, time-frame and people living there. The human author looks at it with a live experience and then transforms them into *An Astrologer's Day*.

The above-mentioned AI models are implicitly trained to mimic the human style and tone, and they are self-developing models that can have their own suggestions to provide irrespective of the new prompts given– it elaborates the given prompt as per need. For example, if we provide a prompt to write a short story similar to R. K. Narayan, immediately writes the similar story and at the end suggests– if we want, it can summarise, write on themes, compare between the two stories or find out the difference. These models are good at imitating style, structure, tone, rhythm, rhyme and imagery but fail to incorporate originality, emotional depth and human touch of experience. According to Cleveland,

“The main difference between poems made by AI and those written by people lies in style, depth, method, and purpose. Artificial intelligence writes by joining patterns, tones, and images drawn from enormous stores of existing writing. Human poets express emotion from thought, memory, and shared culture, which lends their work true feeling and sincerity. Artificial intelligence can imitate feelings through chosen words, yet its verse often sounds polished and hollow at the same time– a lasting limitation.”

Another limitation of AI is the capacity to observe and interpret it with an individualised perspective or point of view. For example, a teacher teaching in a rural area, and everyday, when he reaches his college, he finds grave silence around the college. This grave silence may be due to no students turning to college or might have happened something there. A teacher can have his or her opinion about the conditions prevailing right there. How will an AI know and have its perspective, experience and opinion? There is obviously a difference between lived experience and learned patterns based on pre-installed or existing data.

It is assumed that there is a fundamental difference between AI generated and human written short stories based on experiential depth, moral and ethical consciousness, cultural memory, and lived experiences. AI can successfully imitate the human features of writing a story such as formal tone, plot or its structure, narrative technique, imagery, and stylistic patterns. It also can imitate the emotional patterns through pre-existing data collection using similar words but it feels explicit and pre-structured, hence less appealing.

Reviewing the studies on AI creativity and literature, a number of research studies have been published in the last decade and the process is being continued till date. The study carried out by Chakrabarti et al. (2022) supports that AI can mimic the form and theme but readers consistently feel a deficiency in ‘emotional resonance’ and ‘cohesive intentionality’

while reading the text. In the similar research on narrative analysis, Ippolito et al. (2022) maintains that AI faces difficulties with keeping long range coherence, deep character motivation, and innovative plot constructions beyond merely recombinations, as these models are trained to analyse, combine, restructure and reproduce. It lacks the ‘close-reading-based literary analysis’ that applies the comparative method of examination of voice, irony, subtext and cultural connotation which differentiates human writing from machine generative language. Sarkar (2023) worked on the assumption that AI can meaningfully replace human creativity, finding human creative faculty is not solely a measurable property but deeply rooted in human intention, context, and community interpretation. So the literature becomes an outcome of human efforts tied in a culture, society and geographical location to impart it a reality. According to Sarkar, AI results often reflect statistical combinations of existing material, raising questions about originality and authorship. Borinstein et al. (2024) states generative AI models like GPT foster individual novelty in small-stories but disrupts collective diversity and continuity. It cannot maintain the long narrative structures but only limited. In another study, Begum (2025) analyses how AI has posed questions of narrative forms and authorship where AI not only helps to create but also becoming a co-creator, sometimes, a co-author demystifying the traditional assumption that the human being is the sole creative creator. Holzner, Maier, and Feurriegel (2025) found that the human creative writing and AI do not significantly differ in overall creative performance, imitation and production of systematic material, however those who have been assisted by AI outperform and achieve better results than those without AI assistance. Further, they state that the AI output influences nature and range at the expense of idea diversity– modification in story generation is amply sought on sentence construction, word selection, grammar and linguistic devices. Shirisha Rani (2025) in her research, explores the AI tools in English literature and language and its effects on

self-regulation, motivation and satisfaction. According to her, the creativity of the students: “In the realm of English literature, especially creative writing, stands out as vulnerable, AI can mimic form, trance patterns in sonnets, rhymes, and dissect metre, but does not feel the spark of sudden insights, emotional depths and sensitivity like a human author”.

AI may generate data sets from the available data sets, converting them into another data set as new, but the crux and feel cannot be generated as human language can. In most of the cases of idea generation, refining a draft or writing something new, AI produces round-about sentences or such language, obviously losing the grip or hold of the point or topic under discussion. Finding the gap among these studies, the present paper directly juxtaposes R. K. Narayan’s short story *An Astrologer’s Day* with similar AI generated short stories, a comparison between human and AI generated stories considering the interpretative methodology based on literary analysis and the area of digital humanities. The method of interpretation involves close reading of the texts emphasising on creativity, emotion, cultural depth, human touch, experience and other related factors. The text *An Astrologer’s Day* is selected for its canonical status in Indian writing in English, cultural rootedness, emotional and ethical conflict, a twist in the plot and role of coincidence in the story that shapes and turns the story with its thematic relevance. The following AI models are used to generate the stories with the prompt:

ChatGPT 4.0: “I’m a researcher attending a one-day national seminar on Humanities in the Age of AI: Challenges and Opportunities where I want to present a research paper on the theme can a machine write literature? For that I’m writing a research paper on the idea of comparative creativity experiment, for that I have chosen R. K. Narayan’s short story *An Astrologer’s Day*. Generate a story on the same theme for comparison.” (chatgpt.com).

DeepSeek: “Write a short story like R. K. Narayan’s *An Astrologer’s Day*”. (deepseek.com).

Grok: “Write a short story like R. K. Narayan’s *An Astrologer’s Day*”. (grok.com).

Perplexity: “Write a short story like R. K. Narayan’s *An Astrologer’s Day*”. (perplexity.ai).

The stories generated by these models are: *The Palm Reader at Dadar Crossing*, *The Palm-Leaf Scribe*, *The Temple Watchman’s Coin*, and *The Vendor’s Palm* respectively. The link to these stories are provided in the references section where full stories can be read and analysed.

In these multiple case studies, each text is read closely with a comparative framework to emulate its style, structure, setting, tone, and ironic twist– a holistic examination of the texts individually before cross-comparison, finding patterns of similarity and divergence. Line-by-line examination is carried out focusing on language, structure and meaning, especially emotional depth, cultural rootedness, character context, author’s point of view, his experiences, human touch, lived memories, moral conflict, emotional tension, and consciousness. To measure the results, six parameters are set based on aforementioned elements combined as: emotional depth, imagery, originality, cultural rootedness, voice, pacing/ structure, and thematic subtlety.

An Astrologer’s Day depicts emotions more subtly, naturally and originally as it arises from the protagonist’s guilt, fear and relief. The recognition of Guru Nayak by the astrologer and confessing the same to his wife exposes the psychological layers of terror and at the same time the feeling of redemption and moral burden which is a strong unresolved thread of the story flowing in a natural narration. Narayan did not state the emotions but the readers discover them through action and silence– only with a few words, “a great load is gone from me today”– it came from a lived experience of the protagonist, his fear and survival, to which readers can co-relate in vivid manner. AI generated stories merely

describe emotions through words often felt explicit and mechanical, for example, “Hari’s heart thumped” (*The Palm Reader at Dadar Crossing*); “Tears traced clean lines through the dust” (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*); and “the weight in his own chest feeling, for the first time in twenty-five years, a little lighter too” (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*); these seem emotionally convincing but pre-fabricated that resemble emotional templates rather lived experiences of the protagonists in the stories. It becomes a theatrical presentation and catharsis carefully structured into the story rather than happening naturally.

The imagery and sensory texture from the original story is derived from typical Indian village and its set-up of street life– cowrie shells, saffron turban, tamarind tree, groundnut vendor, flickering flares, and cycle lamps– these details create live images in the mind of readers, generating the feeling of socio-economic environment and a breathing town. AI stories also have generated vivid descriptions but feel more aestheticised and decorative– “under the flickering yellow streetlight ” (*The Palm Reader at Dadar Crossing*); “dappled shade” (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*); “dusty swirl of Malgudi’s evening market” (*The Vendor’s Palm*); “A brass inkpot, a fine-tipped stylus, and a magnifying glass polished smooth by decades of fingertips completed his altar” (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*); “banyan tree” (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*); and “the ancient Vishnu temple in the heart of Hingoli town” (*The Temple Watchman’s Coin*)– are more cinematic trying to paint the picture of India whereas Narayan writes from inside India. The AI generated texture is more inert, not functional, seems decorative, rearranged from existing patterns.

Narayan’s story displays cultural rootedness and authenticity through the use of seamless Indian English, “pyol”, “jukta”, “anna” without providing any gloss trusting the reader to infer. The typical town described in the story is borrowed from imaginary Malgudi, a typical south Indian semi-rural set-up presenting a microcosm of Indian small town life, not just backdrop. The story generated by

ChatGPT has its location and setting at Dadar Railway Station in the present Mumbai, DeepSeek could retain Tamil Nadu's locale, Grok found Hingoli as its setting and Perplexity maintained the same location. So the cultural difference is clear in all the stories generated by AI. Malgudi is a lived Indian culture and ethos whereas AI stories tried to maintain cultural and experiential fidelity but often it relied on surface level tropes or inaccuracies. Narayan's work embedded culture as lived reality whereas AI draws from datasets, risking exoticising and anachronism, for example, AIs mix eras inconsistently. The original story is deeply rooted in south Indian cultural life but AI pulls data from digitised summaries and pre-existed information about the place and culture. Ultimately, Narayan writes from within a culture; the AI writes about it. A machine (AI) can write all about, but it cannot live the reality and have actual experience of a culture or place, just an information algorithm.

The next criteria is originality— how a reader immerses into the narration. Narayan introduces a unique twist in the story that arises from the character's history and fear is psychologically shocking and ethically complex forming an original narrative pattern: structure + character + moral revelation. AI stories don't have such originality but combinations and re-mixing the elements of guilt, coincidence, redemption and forgiveness. Actually, the original story does not show forgiveness towards any character, instead it's more complex emerges from character, not from plot mechanics. AI stories follow a set structural pattern without any moral or ethical complexity but earnest moralising with a clear lesson at the end, for instance, "Anger is a heavier chain than loss" (*The Palm-Reader at Dadar Crossing*); and "You can put it down now" (*The Palm-Leaf Scribe*). AI has repetition of tropes like debt, betrayal, a past accident, a chance encounter that is stripped of Narayan's specific and cultural texture. The invention of Malgudi, though fictional, magnificently authentic town in south India. AI is

just a mimicry based on prompts provided, not stemming from personal human experience.

Narayan uses third-person omniscient narration with ironic tone, for example, the astrologer's "shrewd guesswork" as "honest man's labour". It resembles oral story telling. AI tone is gentle but shifted to didactic and moralising. Human voice is a consistent flow from experience, AI varies in length mechanically, often overusing adjectives for style. Narayan's voice seems intimate and ironic, a wry observation as "even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle" rhythmic sentences blending humour and pathos, vernacular infused English. However, AI is a neutral, descriptive prose mimicking Narayan— a polished but soulless imitation.

The structure and pace of the story is gradual, accidental and serious plot tension, in opposition, AI stories are designed and intentional. The twist in the original story is morally ambiguous, in AI, it's morally comforting. In the original, the ending is quiet with ironic relief, in AI, it is emotional resolution. Considering the test of thematic subtlety, the original human story explores fate vs. chance, deception's reciprocity— astrologer's "prophecy" as shrewd psychology not mysticism. In AI stories, it reiterates con-artist tropes overtly, for example, "a clever reader turned dust into dinner" (*The Vendor's Palm*)— more philosophical in tone than real.

By examining the above parameters, it is clear that AI can imitate human creativity with subtle pre-existing data or information that it uses to recreate according to the prompts provided, but cannot replace an author or take his/ her place as an experienced human creator. It may help or support in forming and technically correcting sentence patterns, grammar or generating or suggesting vocabulary in a particular context, but cannot be a soul-living author or poet. In the words of Rani:

"AI excels at spotting patterns in metres, rhyme, and creating suspense scenes, but it stumbles over idiom, misses sarcasm and deliberate ambiguity. AI can improve productivity for writers, who can work

innovatively and effectively, on English literature, providing deeper insights into literary history, research and evolution, considering ethics.”

Hence the question: can a machine write literature? is worth exploring and finding the answer as yes, it can, but only as a machine with limitations and cannot be a human creator.

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