



Point of View:

Who Is Telling the Story?

Introduction to Point of View

Point of view (POV) refers to the position from which a story is told. It determines who is narrating the story and how much the reader knows about the events, thoughts, and feelings of the characters.

Why POV matters:

It shapes how the reader experiences the narrative.

It controls the flow of information between the characters and the reader.

It affects the reader's emotional engagement with the story and characters.

Why Point of View Matters

The POV determines what the reader knows and how they feel about the events unfolding.

Influences the reader's emotional connection to characters: A close POV (like first person) makes it easier to empathize with the narrator's feelings, while a more distant POV (like third person) can create more objectivity

POV shapes the reliability of information: Some POVs offer a more limited or unreliable perspective, which can change the way readers interpret the story.

First Person Point of View

In First Person, the narrator is a character in the story, using "I" or "we." The narrator has direct access to their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences, but can only describe what they know or observe.

Advantages: Provides a deep, personal, subjective experience of the narrator's inner world, allowing for strong emotional engagement.

Disadvantages: The narrator's knowledge is limited to their own perspective, so the reader may miss important information or get a biased view of events.

Example: *"I walked through the dark forest, wondering if I'd ever find my way out."*

Common Use: Often used in character-driven narratives or when an author wants to create a personal connection with the reader.

Second Person Point of View

In Second Person, the narrator directly addresses the reader using the pronoun "you." Rarely used in fiction, but it is common in choose-your-own-adventure stories or instructional writing.

Advantages: Can create an immersive, participatory experience for the reader, making them feel like they are directly involved in the story.

Disadvantages: Can feel forced or artificial if not done well, and might distance the reader if they don't connect with the "you."

Example: "You open the door and step into the unknown."

Common Use: Common in experimental fiction, interactive narratives, and self-help books.

Third Person Limited Point of View

In Third Person Limited, the narrator is outside the story but focuses on the thoughts and experiences of one specific character. The narrator uses "he," "she," or "they," but only knows what the chosen character knows and experiences.

Advantages: Allows for more objectivity than first person while still offering an in-depth, personal perspective of one character's thoughts and emotions.

Disadvantages: The reader is limited to the perspective of one character, so they cannot know what other characters are thinking or feeling.

Example: *"She gazed out the window, wondering if he would ever come back."*

Common Use: Popular in many contemporary novels, where the reader follows the story through the eyes of one central character.

Third Person Omniscient Point of View

In Third Person Omniscient, the narrator is all-knowing and can access the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of all characters. The narrator is outside the story and is not limited to any one character's perspective.

Advantages: Provides a complete view of the story world, offering insight into multiple characters' thoughts, motivations, and actions.

Disadvantages: Can feel detached or less personal, and sometimes readers may struggle with too much information.

Example: *"She wondered if he would return, while he, far across town, pondered the same thing."*

Common Use: Frequently used in classic novels, like those by Jane Austen or Charles Dickens, to offer broad societal insights and character perspectives.

Third Third Person Objective Point of View

In Third Person Objective, the narrator is a detached observer who reports only observable actions and dialogue. The narrator does not have access to any character's inner thoughts or feelings.

Advantages: Offers a more objective, neutral point of view; creates suspense by withholding inner character details.

Disadvantages: The lack of access to character thoughts may limit emotional connection and make it harder to understand characters' motivations.

Example: *"He entered the room and sat down. She smiled and handed him the cup."*

Common Use: Seen in works where the author wants to focus more on action and dialogue rather than internal states, such as journalistic writing or some modernist literature.

Unreliable Narrators

An unreliable narrator is one whose account of the story cannot be fully trusted, either due to intentional deceit, personal bias, or limited perception.

Why use an unreliable narrator?

- It adds layers of complexity and mystery to the narrative.
- It challenges the reader to interpret the truth for themselves, questioning the reliability of the narrator's perception.

Common Examples:

- In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield's narrative is colored by his personal biases and mental state, making him an unreliable guide.
- In *Gone Girl*, the alternating perspectives of Nick and Amy show how each character's version of events can be distorted

Effect of Point of View on the Story

The choice of POV shapes the entire narrative structure and influences the reader's understanding of the plot, characters, and themes.

For example:

- First person makes the reader closely aligned with the narrator's emotions and thoughts.
- Third person omniscient allows for a broader, more complex perspective, showing multiple sides of the story.
- Unreliable narrators challenge readers to critically assess what is true and what is not.

POV can affect the tone of the story, the pacing, and the reliability of the information presented.

Conclusion

Choosing the Right Point of View



First person can create a strong emotional connection but limits the reader's access to other characters' thoughts.



Third person limited is ideal for focusing on one character's perspective without getting too distant.



Third person omniscient works best when the author wants to explore multiple characters or offer a sweeping view of the story's world.



Unreliable narrators are a tool to create mystery, manipulate reader perception, and keep the audience guessing.

Examples from Literature

First Person: *The Great Gatsby* (Nick Carraway narrates the story, and his limited perspective shapes how we understand Gatsby and others).

Third Person Limited: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Mostly follows Harry's perspective, but we also get glimpses into other characters' actions and thoughts).

Third Person Omniscient: *Pride and Prejudice* (We see into the minds of multiple characters, especially Elizabeth and Darcy, giving us a well-rounded understanding of the story).

Unreliable Narrator: *The Catcher in the Rye* (Holden Caulfield's perspective is distorted by his emotions, leaving us uncertain of the truth behind his narration).

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