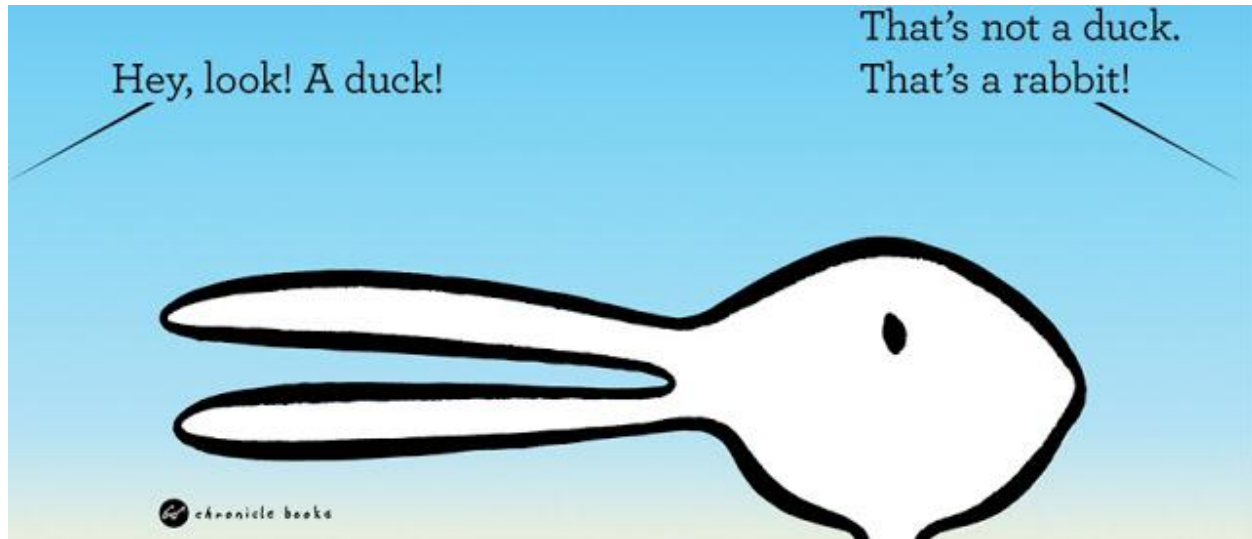


Narration from Different Perspectives



One of the first things a writer must decide is which point of view (POV) to use. Usually we do so at the beginning of a project, but it can also happen when we revise. Crazy as it sounds, sometimes a story can be better if we *change* the narrator for the whole story later. That can be a drastic change, but it can give us new ideas, too.

Let's look at the various types of POV: first person, second person, and third person.

First Person Point of View:

First Person: The main character tells the story. Because readers experience the story events through this person's eyes, they won't know anything about the people or events this character hasn't personally experienced or heard about. That doesn't mean the character knows everything or is always right.

Sometimes it's fun to let the first-person narrator be flawed and possible of *misunderstanding* or misinterpret thing the reader perceives clearly. Think about when you ask a very young child why the sun comes up: often it's something like, "so I can have light." It's cute because *we* know the sun comes up for lots of reasons, none of which have anything to do with that particular child's need for light.

A variation on first person is **First Person Peripheral**. The *peripheral* narrator is a **supporting character** in the story, not the main character. The narration still uses the pronoun *I*, but since the narrator is not the protagonist, he or she doesn't always know what happens to the protagonist until later.

Second Person Point of View:

Second person point of view is told from the perspective of a narrator who addresses you, the reader, directly. Most stories don't use it, but it isn't impossible.

Third Person Point of View: *Third-person POV* is when the narrator is not a character in the story. Third person uses the "he/she/it" narrator.

Third Person POV usually falls into three main types:

- **Third-Person Objective Narration.** In this mode, the narrator tells a third-person's story (pronouns: he, she, him, her), but the narrator describes only the characters' behavior and dialogue. **The narrator does not reveal any character's thoughts or feelings.** Readers will be able to understand characters' thoughts and motivations based on their characters' actions and dialogue, which are narrated; however, the narrator will not explicitly reveal character's thoughts and/or motivations in narration.
- **Third Person Limited:** *Limited* means that the POV is limited to only one character. That means the narrator knows only what that one character knows. With third-person limited, you can choose to view the action from right inside the character's head, or from further away, where the narrator has more access to information outside the protagonist's viewpoint.
- **Third Person Omniscient:** This point of view still uses the "he/she/it" narration but now the narrator knows EVERYTHING. The narrator isn't limited by what one character knows, sort of like the narrator is God. The narrator can know things others don't, can make comments about what's happening, and can see inside the minds of other characters.

Even though third person is the most common kind of narrator, it's important to be careful, especially when the narrator is omniscient. Often, writers have a hard time keeping the narrator out of the way of the story. It's easy to let the narrator comment about every little thing and voice opinions or witty remarks unnecessarily. Such an approach can be lots of fun, but if you're not careful it can also be very distracting for your reader, and it often leads to a lot of telling (vs. showing).

Which one are you using in your story? Which POV do you prefer to use?

Name: _____

Exercise: Identifying Narrative Perspective

Directions: Read the following passages and determine the narrative perspective. If the passage is third person and which character's thoughts are revealed.

Narrative Perspective (point of view): first-person, second-person, third-person objective, third-person limited, third-person omniscient.

1. *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* by Louis Sachar

Leslie sat in front of Paul. She had two long, brown pigtails that reached all the way down to her waist. Paul saw those pigtails, and a terrible urge came over him. He wanted to pull a pigtail. He wanted to wrap his fist around it, feel the hair between his fingers, and just yank. He thought it would be fun to tie the pigtails together, or better yet, tie them to her chair. But most of all, he just wanted to pull one.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

2. *Invitation to the Game* by Monica Hughes

And we scrounged. Next to *survival*, *scrounge* was probably the most important word in our new vocabulary. We found a store that was throwing out water-damaged mattresses. Getting them home was a problem, since we had to make two trips, leaving Brad and Katie, armed with sticks to guard over the remained. I truly expected them to be challenged by some gang boss, but they said that the only person who came by was a scrawny little rat of a girl living alone. We let her have one of the mattresses.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

3. *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt

At dawn, Mae Tuck set out on her horse for the wood at the edge of the village of Treegap. She was going there, as she did once every ten years, to meet her two sons, Miles and Jesse, and she was feeling at ease. At noon time, Winnie Foster, whose family owned the Treegap wood, lost her patience at last and decided to think about running away.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

4. ***Curious George and the Pizza*** by Margret Rey

At the pizza place, Tony the baker was getting the pizzas ready for baking. He flattened out a ball of dough into a large pancake and tossed it in the air. He spread tomato sauce on it, sprinkled it with cheese, and shoved it in the oven. Then the telephone rang. "A fellow from the factory wants a large pizza delivered in a hurry," Tony's wife called. "OK, I'll get my coat," said Tony.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

5. ***The Baffled Parent's Guide to Great Basketball Drills*** by Jim Garland

When your players arrive, check that they have the proper footwear and that they've removed any jewelry, which could injure the player wearing the jewelry or another player. Always carry a list of emergency phone numbers for your players, and know where the nearest phone is located. You should also have a first-aid kit, and you might want to take a first-aid course.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

6. ***The Ninja Housewife*** by Deborah Hamlin

After dropping her son off at school, Sara sat at a traffic light and waited. She was on her way to her office job as a secretary in a law office. It was mainly paperwork with very little time to interact with other people, but Sara had gotten used to that. It also gave her plenty of time to daydream, something she had also gotten quite used to. She was a woman in her mid-30s, married 13 years, with one child.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____

7. ***Anne of Green Gables*** by L. M. Montgomery

Marilla's lips twitched understandingly. She had expected Mrs. Rachel to say this; she had known that the sight of Matthew jaunting off so unaccountably would be too much for her neighbor's curiosity. If Marilla had said that Matthew had gone to Bright River to meet a kangaroo from Australia Mrs. Rachel could not have been more astonished. She was actually quiet for five seconds. It was unsupposable that Marilla was making fun of her, but Mrs. Rachel was almost forced to suppose it.

Narrative Perspective: _____

If it is third-person, which character's thoughts are revealed? _____