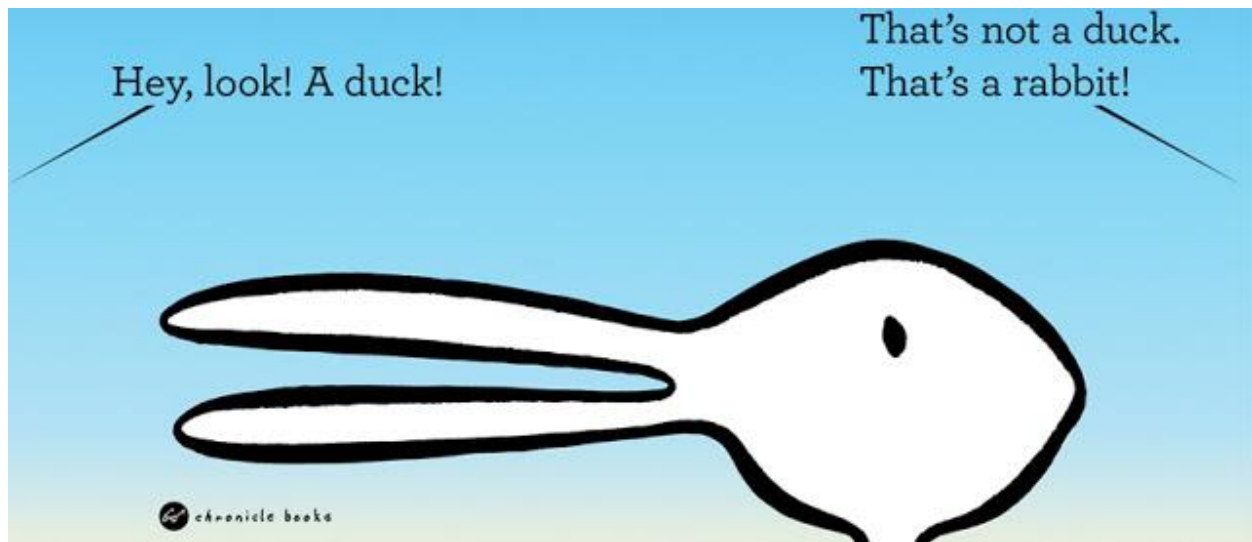


Narration from Different Perspectives



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?