

Narrator and Voice

Feature Menu

The Narrator

Omniscient Point of View

First-Person Point of View

Third-Person-Limited Point of View

Tone

Voice

Practice



Previous

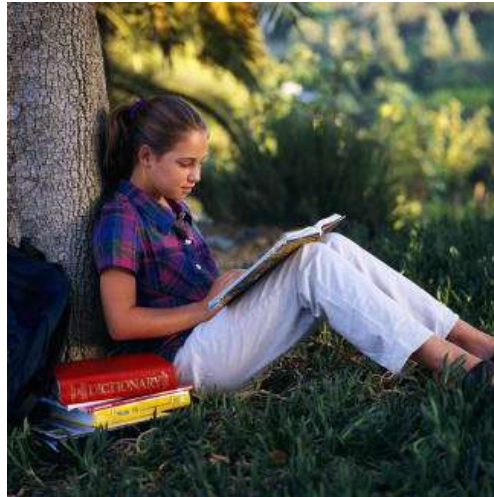
Next

Collection
Menu

Exit

The Narrator

When you read a story, the **narrator**—the person telling the story—controls everything you know about the characters and events.



The Narrator

A writer's choice of a narrator determines the **point of view** of the story—the vantage point from which the story is told. ▼

The three main points of view are ▼

- omniscient ▼
- first person ▼
- third person limited



[End of Section]

Omniscient Point of View

When the **omniscient point of view** is used, the narrator ▼



- is not a character in the story ▼
- knows all ▼
- can tell us everything about every character

Omniscient Point of View

Quick Check

One day a young woman looked out her apartment window and saw a man playing a saxophone. “Cool,” she thought as she swayed to his tune. A big brown dog joined the man and howled along with the music.

Then a man in pajamas yelled from another window, complaining that the noise woke him up and he was going to call the police. This man, who worked the night shift and had to sleep all day, liked cats better than dogs anyway. The young saxophonist left.

How can you tell this is an omniscient narrator?

Answer

[End of Section]

First-Person Point of View

A first-person narrator ▼

- is a character in the story ▼
- uses first-person pronouns such as *I* and *me* ▼
- tells us only what he or she thinks and experiences ▼



A first-person narrator is sometimes called a **persona**.

First-Person Point of View

Always question whether a first-person narrator is **credible**, or can be trusted. ▼



An **unreliable narrator** is biased and does not (or cannot) tell the truth.

First-Person Point of View

Quick Check

Oh, man! Just as I was finally dozing off, he starts playing that stupid saxophone. I've already been fired from one job because I fell asleep on the night shift. Now it's going to happen again. I don't know which sounds worse, that tone-deaf saxophonist or that yowling dog. I'm going to call the police.

How can you tell this is a first-person narrator?

Answer

Do you think this narrator's opinion of the music is reliable? Why or why not?

Answer

[End of Section]

Third-Person-Limited Point of View

When the **third-person-limited point of view** is used, the narrator ▼



- gives one character's thoughts and reactions ▼
- uses third-person pronouns (*he, she, they*) ▼
- tells little about other characters

Third-Person-Limited Point of View

Quick Check

He found a good spot in front of Park View Apartments and started playing soulfully on his sax. He wanted an audience and needed money. After one song, he spotted a cute girl at a window, applauding madly. A dog howled with the music, but the sax player let him stay, hoping the dog might attract some donations. Then he heard a man yelling about calling the police—clearly not a music lover.

How can you tell this is a third-person-limited narrator?

Answer

What is this narrator's reaction to the dog? to the yelling man?

Answer

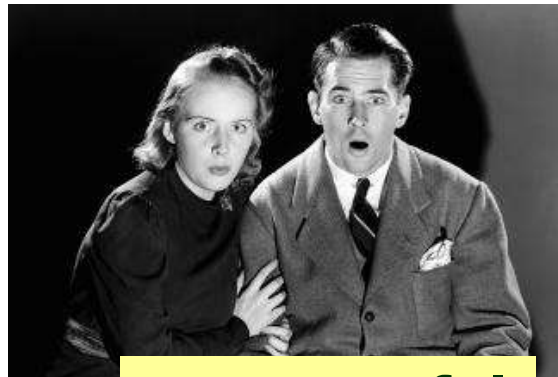
[End of Section]

Tone

Tone is the attitude a speaker or writer takes toward a subject, character, or audience. A story's tone can be ▼



humorous



suspenseful



gloomy

[End of Section]

Voice

Voice is the writer's distinctive use of language and his or her overall style. ▼

- The writer's tone and choice of words (**diction**) help create the voice. ▼

In fiction, narrators can also be said to have a voice. ▼

- A narrator's voice can affect our view of characters and events.

Voice

Notice how a distinctive voice can influence our views of certain characters. ▼

- What impression do you get of the saxophone player? Which words contribute to this effect? ▼

Oh, man! Just as I was finally dozing off, he starts playing that stupid saxophone. I've already been fired from one job because I fell asleep on the night shift. Now it's going to happen again. I don't know which sounds worse, that tone-deaf saxophonist or that yowling dog. I'm going to call the police.

[End of Section]

Practice

PRACTICE Write a paragraph telling the saxophone story from the point of view of the young woman or the big brown dog. Use either the first-person or the third-person-limited point of view, and try to create a distinctive voice. Remember to show what the character is thinking and feeling.

[End of Section]

The End

