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Skip Navigation ☰ © The Novel Smithy, LLC | All rights reserved. Skip Navigation ☰ © The Novel Smithy, LLC | All rights reserved. Skip Navigation ☰ © The Novel Smithy, LLC | All rights reserved. Hello, fellow storytellers!Let's chat about one of the most powerful (and sometimes confusing) tools in a fiction writer's arsenal: point of view, or POV for short.Choosing the right point of view can seriously make or break your story. It's like picking the right camera lens—you'll either zoom right into your character's head or hover above like a storytelling drone. And yes, getting it right can feel a little overwhelming at first, but once you get the hang of it, you'll wonder how you ever wrote without thinking about it.Today, I'll explain it in plain English, sprinkle in a little humour, and provide examples to make everything click. Let's dive in! What Is Point of View (POV) in Writing?In simple terms, point of view is the perspective from which your story is told. It's the lens through which readers experience your characters, setting, and plot.Think of it like this:Who's telling the story?What do they know?How close are they to the action? Your choice of POV influences everything from how much your readers know to how emotionally connected they feel to your characters. The Main Types of Point of View (With Examples)1. First Person POV ("I" Voice)Definition:The story is narrated by one character at a time. You're inside their head, hearing their thoughts, feeling their emotions, and seeing their world.Example:I shuffled into the room, my heart hammering against my ribs. Today was the day everything would change.Pros: Super personal and emotional Readers experience events firsthand Great for character-driven storiesCons: You're stuck with only what the narrator knows Limited ability to show other perspectivesPersonal Tip:Writing in first person is like giving readers VIP backstage passes into your character's brain—just make sure it's a brain they'll want to spend 300 pages with!2. Third Person Limited POV ("He/She" Voice)Definition:The story is told from the perspective of one character at a time, but using "he," "she," or "they" instead of "I."Example:Marcus shuffled into the room, his heart hammering against his ribs. Today was the day everything would change.Pros: Emotional connection with the character A little more flexibility than first-person Easy to weave in internal thoughts and feelingsCons: Still limited to one character's experiences unless you switch viewpoints (carefully!)3. Third Person Omniscient POV (The "All-Knowing" Narrator)Definition:The narrator knows everything about everyone, including thoughts, feelings, backstory, and even what's happening in different places at once.Example:Marcus shuffled into the room, unaware that Claire, across town, was already putting the second phase of her plan into action.Pros: Broader storytelling canvas Great for epic tales with many moving partsCons: Risk of confusing readers if you hop heads too often Can feel distant if not handled carefullyFun Note:Omniscient used to be the standard (hello, Charles Dickens!). Today, readers often prefer a deeper emotional dive with limited POV.4. Second Person POV ("You" Voice)Definition:The story is told as if the reader is the protagonist.Example:You shuffle into the room, heart hammering. Today is the day everything changes.Pros: Super immersive (feels like a video game or choose-your-own-adventure!) Can be really powerful for short fiction or experimental stylesCons: Hard to maintain for an entire novel Some readers find it jarring or gimmicky How to Choose the Right POV for Your StoryAsk yourself:How close do I want readers to feel to my main character?Do I need to show multiple perspectives?Do I want readers to know things my character doesn't? Quick Guide:✔ First Person = Deep character immersion✔ Third Person Limited = Character-focused but slightly broader✔ Third Person Omniscient = Big, sprawling storytelling✔ Second Person = Intimate and experimental storytellingPersonal Anecdote:When I wrote my first novel, I started in third person omniscient because I thought it sounded "literary." Spoiler alert: it was a hot mess. Once I switched to third-person limited, focusing on my heroine's point of view, the story immediately tightened up, and readers connected way better with her struggles.⚡ Common POV Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)Head-hopping: Jumping between characters' thoughts too quickly can confuse readers. Stick to one character's perspective per scene or chapter.Inconsistent POV: If you start with one POV, don't randomly switch halfway through unless there's a very good reason (and a clear transition).Telling too much: Especially in omniscient, don't drown readers in information they don't need yet. Wrapping It UpChoosing the right point of view is like picking the perfect pair of shoes for a long journey—you want it to fit your story's tone, character depth, and emotional impact. Whether you're whispering secrets in first person or weaving grand sagas through omniscient narration, make sure your POV serves your story, not vice versa.Key Takeaways: Pick a POV that fits your story's needs Stick to your chosen perspective consistently Let your narrator's "voice" shine throughNow, over to you! What's your favourite POV to write in? Ever struggled with choosing the right one for a story? Drop a comment below—I'd love to hear your thoughts and tips! In my experience as an editor, point of view problems are among the top mistakes I see new writers make, and they instantly erode credibility and reader trust. Point of view isn't easy though, since there are so many to choose from: first person point of view, third person limited, third person omniscient, and second person. What do those even mean? And how do you choose the right one for your story? All stories are written from a point of view. However, when point of view goes wrong—and believe me, it goes wrong often—you threaten whatever trust you have with your reader. You also fracture their suspension of disbelief. However, point of view is simple to master if you use common sense. This post will define point of view, go over each of the major POVs, explain a few of the POV rules, and then point out the major pitfalls writers make when dealing with that point of view. Need help with point of view? To get a cheatsheet of the two most common POVs used in fiction, click here. Point of View Definition The point of view, or POV, in a story is the narrator's position in the description of events, and comes from the Latin word, punctum visus, which literally means point sight. The point of view is where a writer points the sight of the reader. Note that point of view also has a second definition. In a discussion, an argument, or nonfiction writing, a point of view is an opinion about a subject. This is not the type of point of view we're going to focus on in this article (although it is helpful for nonfiction writers, and for more information, I recommend checking out Wikipedia's neutral point of view policy). I especially like the German word for POV, which is Gesichtspunkt, translated “face point,” or where your face is pointed. Isn't that a good visual for what's involved in point of view? It's the limited perspective of what you show your reader. Note, too, that point of view is sometimes called narrative mode or narrative perspective. Why Point of View Is So Important Why does point of view matter so much? For a fiction writer, point of view filters everything in your story. Everything in your story must come from a point of view. Which means if you get it wrong, your entire story is damaged. For example, I've personally read and judged thousands of stories for literary contests, and I've found point of view mistakes in about twenty percent of them. Many of these stories would have placed much higher if only the writers hadn't made the mistakes we're going to talk about soon. The worst part is these mistakes are easily avoidable if you're aware of them. But before we get into the common point of view mistakes, let's go over each of the four types of narrative perspective. The Four Types of Point of View Here are the four primary types of narration in fiction: First person point of view. First person perspective is when “I” am telling the story. The first person POV character is in the story, relating his or her experiences directly. Second person point of view. The story is told to “you.” This POV is not common in fiction, but it's still good to know (it is common in nonfiction). Third person point of view, limited. The story is about “he” or “she.” This is the most common point of view in commercial fiction. The narrator is outside of the story and relating the experiences of a character. Third person point of view, omniscient. The story is still about “he” or “she,” but the narrator has full access to the thoughts and experiences of all characters in the story. This is a much broader perspective. I know you've seen and probably even used most of these point of views. While these are the only types of POV, there are additional narrative techniques you can use to tell an interesting story. To learn how to use devices like epistolary and framing stories, check out our full narrative devices guide here. Let's discuss each of the four types, using examples to see how they affect your story. We'll also go over the rules for each type, but first let me explain the big mistake you don't want to make with point of view. The #1 POV Mistake Do not begin your story with a first person narrator and then switch to a third person narrator. Do not start with third person limited point of view and then abruptly give your narrator full omniscience. This is the most common type of error I see writers make with point of view. The guideline I learned in my first creative writing class in college is a good one: Establish the point of view within the first two paragraphs of your story. And above all, don't change your point of view. If you do, it creates a jarring experience for the reader and you'll threaten your reader's trust. You could even fracture the architecture of your story. That being said, as long as you're consistent, you can sometimes get away with using multiple POV types. This isn't easy and isn't recommended, but for example, one of my favorite stories, a 7,000 page web serial called Worm, uses two point of views—first person with interludes of third-person limited—very effectively. (By the way, if you're looking for a novel to read over the next two to six months, I highly recommend it—here's the link to read for free online.) The first time the author switched point of views, he nearly lost my trust. However, he kept this dual-POV consistent over 7,000 pages and made it work. Whatever point of view choices you make, be consistent. Your readers will thank you! Now, let's go into detail on each of the four narrative perspective types, their best practices, and mistakes to avoid. First Person Point of View In first person point of view, the narrator is in the story and telling the events he or she is personally experiencing. The simplest way to understand first person is that the narrative will use first-person pronouns, like I, me, and my. Here's a first person point of view example from Herman Melville's Moby Dick: Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world First person narrative perspective is one of the most common POVs in fiction. If you haven't read a book in first person point of view, you haven't been reading. What makes this point of view interesting, and challenging, is that all of the events in the story are filtered through the narrator and explained in his or her own unique narrative voice. This means first person narrative is both biased and incomplete, but it can also deliver a level of intimacy other POVs can't. Other first person point of view examples can be found in these popular novels: The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway Twilight by Stephenie Meyer Ready Player One by Ernest Cline The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brönte First Person Narrative is Unique to Writing There's no such thing as first person in film or theater—although voiceovers and mockumentary interviews like the ones in The Office and Modern Family provide a level of first person narrative in third person perspective film and television. In fact, the very first novels were written in first person, modeled after popular journals and autobiographies which were first-person stories of nonfiction. First Person Point of View is Limited First person narrators are narrated from a single character's perspective at a time. They cannot be everywhere at once and thus cannot get all sides of the story. They are telling their story, not necessarily the story. First Person Point of View is Biased In first person novels, the reader almost always sympathizes with a first person narrator, even if the narrator is an anti-hero with major flaws. Of course, this is why we love first person narrative, because it's imbued with the central character's personality and their unique perspective on the world. The most extreme use of this bias is called an unreliable narrator. Unreliable narration is a technique used by novelists to surprise the reader by capitalizing on the limitations of first person narration to make the narrator's version of events extremely prejudicial to their side and/or highly separated from reality. You'll notice this form of narration being used when you, as the reader or audience, discover that you can't trust the narrator. For example, Gillian Flynn's Gone Girl pits two unreliable narrators against one another. Each relates their conflicting version of events, one through typical narration and the other through journal entries. Another example is Fight Club, in which *SPOILER* the narrator has a split personality and imagines another character who drives the plot. Other Interesting Uses of First Person Narrative: The classic novel Heart of Darkness is actually a first person narrative within a first person narrative. The narrator recounts verbatim the story Charles Marlow tells about his trip up the Congo river while they sit at port in England. William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! is told from the first person point of view of Quentin Compson; however, most of the story is a third person account of Thomas Sutpen, his grandfather, as told to Quentin by Rosa Coldfield. Yes, it's just as complicated as it sounds! Salman Rushdie's award-winning Midnight's Children is told in first person, but spends most of the first several hundred pages giving a precise third person account of the narrator's ancestors. It's still first person, just a first person narrator telling a story about someone else. Two Big Mistakes Writers Make with First Person Point of View When writing in first person, there are two major mistakes writers make: 1. The narrator isn't likable. Your protagonist doesn't have to be a cliché hero. She doesn't even need to be good. However, she must be interesting. The audience will not stick around for 300 pages listening to a character they don't enjoy. This is one reason why anti-heroes make great first person narrators. They may not be morally perfect, but they're almost always interesting. (Remember Holden Caulfield in The Catcher in the Rye?) 2. The narrator tells but doesn't show. The danger with first person is that you could spend too much time in your character's head, explaining what he's thinking and how he feels about the situation. You're allowed to mention the character's mood, but don't forget that your reader's trust and attention relies on what your character does, not what he thinks about doing. Second Person Point of View While not used often in fiction—it is used regularly in nonfiction, song lyrics, and even video games—second person POV is still helpful to understand. In this point of view, the narrator relates the experiences using second person pronouns, like you and your. Thus, you become the protagonist, you carry the plot, and your fate determines the story. We've written elsewhere about why you should try writing in second person, but in short we like second person narration because it: Pulls the reader into the action of the story Makes the story personal Surprises the reader Stretches your skills as a writer Here's an example from the breakout bestseller Bright Lights, Big City by Jay Mclnerney (probably the most popular example that uses second person point of view): You have friends who actually care about you and speak the language of the inner self. You have avoided them of late. Your soul is as disheveled as your apartment, and until you can clean it up a little you don't want to invite anyone inside. Second person narration isn't used frequently, however there are some notable examples of it. Some other novels that use second person point of view are: Remember the Choose Your Own Adventure series? If you've ever read one of these novels where you get to decide the fate of the character (I always killed my character, unfortunately), you've read second person narrative. The Fifth Season by N.K. Jemison The opening of The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern There are also many experimental novels and short stories that use second person, and writers such as William Faulkner, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Albert Camus played with the style. Breaking the Fourth Wall In the plays of William Shakespeare, a character will sometimes turn toward the audience and speak directly to them. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Puck says: If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended, that you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear. This narrative device of speaking directly to the audience or the reader is called breaking the fourth wall (the other three walls being the setting of the story). To think of it another way, it's a way the writer can briefly use second person in a first or third person narrative. It's a lot of fun! You should try it. Third Person Point of View In third person narration, the narrator is outside of the story and relating the experiences of a character. The central character is not the narrator. In fact, the narrator is not present in the story at all. The simplest way to understand third person narration is that it uses third-person pronouns, like he/she, his/hers, and they/theirs. There are two types of third person point of view: Third Person Omniscient The all-knowing narrator has full access to all the thoughts and experiences of all the characters in the story. Examples of Third Person Omniscient: While much less common today, third person omniscient narration was once the predominant type, used by most classic authors. Here are some of the novels using omniscient perspective today. War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy Middlemarch by George Eliot Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway Still Life by Louise Penny (and all the Inspector Gamache series, which is amazing, by the way) Gossip Girl by Cecily von Ziegesar Strange the Dreamer by Laini Taylor Little Women by Louisa May Alcott Crazy Rich Asians by Kevin Kwan (one of my favorites!) A Wizard of Earthsea by Ursula Le Guin Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen More third person omniscient examples can be found here Third Person Limited The narrator has only some, if any, access to the thoughts and experiences of the characters in the story, often just to one character. Examples of Third Person Limited Here's an example of a third person limited narrator from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling: A breeze ruffled the neat hedges of Privet Drive, which lay silent and tidy under the inky sky, the very last place you would expect astonishing things to happen. Harry Potter rolled over inside his blankets without waking up. One small hand closed on the letter beside him and he slept on, not knowing he was special, not knowing he was famous…. He couldn't know that at this very moment, people meeting in secret all over the country were holding up their glasses and saying in hushed voices: “To Harry Potter—the boy who lived!” Some other well-known examples of third person limited narration include: Game of Thrones series by George R.R. Martin (this has an ensemble cast, but Martin stays in one character's point of view at a time, making it a clear example of limited POV with multiple viewpoint characters, which we'll talk about in just a moment) For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway The Way of Kings by Brandon Sanderson The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson Ulysses by James Joyce Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel Garcia Marquez 1984 by George Orwell Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline Fates and Furies by Lauren Groff Should You Use Multiple Viewpoint Characters vs. a Single Perspective? One feature of third person limited and first person narrative is that you have the option of having multiple viewpoint characters. A viewpoint character is simply the character whose thoughts the reader has access to. This character becomes the focus of the perspective during the section of story or the story as a whole. While it increases the difficulty, you can have multiple viewpoint characters for each narrative. For example, Game of Thrones has more than a dozen viewpoint characters throughout the series. Fifth Season has three viewpoint characters. Most romance novels have at least two viewpoint characters. The rule is to only focus on one viewpoint character at a time (or else it changes to third person omniscient). Usually authors with multiple viewpoint characters will change viewpoints every chapter. Some will change after section breaks. However, make sure there is some kind of break before changing so as to prepare the reader for the shift. Should You Use Third Person Omniscient or Third Person Limited The distinction between third persons limited and omniscient is messy and somewhat artificial. Full omniscience in novels is rare—it's almost always limited in some way—if only because the human mind isn't comfortable handling all the thoughts and emotions of multiple people at once. The most important consideration in third person point of view is this: How omniscient are you going to be? How deep are you going to go into your character's mind? Will you read their thoughts frequently and deeply at any chance? Or will you rarely, if ever, delve into their emotions? To see this question in action, imagine a couple having an argument. Tina wants Fred to go to the store to pick up the cilantro she forgot she needed for the meal she's cooking. Fred is frustrated that she didn't ask him to pick up the cilantro on the way home from the office, before he had changed into his “homey” clothes (AKA boxer shorts). If you have a fully omniscient narrator, do you parse both Fred and Tina's emotions during each back and forth? “Do you want to eat? If you do, then you need to get cilantro instead of acting like a lazy pig,” Tina said, thinking, I can't believe I married this jerk. At least back then he had a six pack, not this hairy potbelly. “Figure it out, Tina. I'm sick of rushing to the store every time you forget something,” said Fred. He felt the anger pulsing through his large belly. Going back and forth between multiple characters' emotions like this can give a reader whiplash, especially if this pattern continues over several pages and with more than two characters. This is an example of an omniscient narrator who perhaps is a little too comfortable explaining the characters' inner workings. “Show, don't tell,” we're told. Sharing all the emotions of all your characters can become distraction. It can even destroy any tension you've built. Drama requires mystery. If the reader knows each character's emotions all the time, there will be no space for drama. How do You Handle Third Person Omniscient Well? The way many editors and many famous authors handle this is to show the thoughts and emotions of only one character per scene (or per chapter). George R.R. Martin, for example, uses “point of view characters,” characters whom he always has full access to understanding. He will write a full chapter from their perspective before switching to the next point of view character. For the rest of the cast, he stays out of their heads. This is an effective guideline, if not a strict rule, and it's one I would suggest to any first-time author experimenting with third person POV. Overall, though, the principle of show, don't tell should be your guide. The Biggest Third Person Omniscient Point of View Mistake The biggest mistake I see writers make constantly in third person is head hopping. When you switch point of view characters too quickly, or dive into the heads of too many characters at once, you could be in danger of what editors call “head hopping.” When the narrator switches from one character’s thoughts to another’s too quickly, it can jar the reader and break the intimacy with the scene’s main character. We've written about how you can get away with head hopping elsewhere, but it's a good idea to try to avoid going into more than one character's thoughts per scene or per chapter. Can You Change POV Between Books In a Series? What if you're writing a novel series? Can you change point of view or even POV characters between books? The answer is yes, you can, but whether you should or not is the big question. In general, it's best to keep your POV consistent within the same series. However, there are many examples of series that have altered perspectives or POV characters between series, either because the character in the previous books has died, for other plot reasons, or simply because of author choice. For more on this, watch this coaching video where we get into how and why to change POV characters between books in a series: Which Point of View Will You Use? Here's a helpful point of view infographic to help you decide which POV to use in your writing: Note that these distances should be thought of as ranges, not precise calculations. A third person narrator could conceivably draw closer to the reader than a first person narrator. Most importantly, there is no best point of view. All of these points of view are effective in various types of stories. If you're just getting started, I would encourage you to use either first person or third person limited point of view because they're easy to understand. However, that shouldn't stop you from experimenting. After all, you'll only get comfortable with other points of view by trying them! Whatever you choose, be consistent. Avoid the mistakes I mentioned under each point of view. And above all, have fun! Need help with point of view? To get a cheatsheet of the two most common POVs used in fiction, click here. How about you? Which of the four points of view have you used in your writing? Why did you use it, and what did you like about it? Let us know in the comments! Using a point of view you've never used before, write a brief story about a teenager who has just discovered he or she has superpowers. Make sure to avoid the POV mistakes listed in the article above. Write for fifteen minutes. When your time is up, post your practice in the Pro Practice Workshop (if you’re not a member yet, you can join here). And if you post, please be sure to give feedback to your fellow writers. We can gain just as much value giving feedback as we can writing our own books! Happy writing! About the author Joe Bunting One of the best ways to prepare for the AP Literature exam is to learn about different literary devices and how you can use them to analyze everything from poetry to novels. Not only will this help you on the multiple choice section of the test, it’s critical for earning perfect scores on your essays, too! Today, we’re going to take a closer look at one specific device: point of view. First, we’ll give you the point of view definition, then we’ll explain how the work’s narrator affects its point of view. Then we’ll explain the four types of point of view and provide examples and analysis for each one. By the end of this article, you’ll be a point of view expert! So let’s get started. Point of View: Definition and Meaning In literature and poetry, point of view is defined as the perspective from which a story is told. Put another way, a story’s point of view is a way to articulate and analyze the position of the narrator in relation to the story they’re telling. Is the narrator a participant in the story they’re telling? Or are they describing events that happened to someone else? Both of these perspectives are different types of point of view (which we’ll talk about in a lot more depth later in this article, so hang tight)! So how do you figure out the point of view in a text? In order to find the point of view of a story, you first have to identify whose perspective the story is told from. That’s because the perspective of the story determines a piece of literature’s point of view! That means that in order to establish a text’s point of view, you have to figure out the narrator of the text first. What Is a Narrator? Okay...so obviously figuring out the narrator of a piece of literature is important. But what’s a narrator, exactly? No matter what type of text you’re reading—whether it’s a newspaper article, a textbook, a poem, or a best-selling novel—someone is communicating the story to the reader. In literary terms, we call that someone the text’s narrator. In other words, the narrator of a piece of literature is the person telling the story. And you know what’s even more helpful than that? Almost all written texts—whether they’re fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or otherwise—have a narrator. And since a narrator and point of view go hand in hand, that means that almost all texts have a point of view, too! Finding the Narrator So how do you figure out the narrator of a text? Sometimes the narrator of a text is pretty easy to determine. For example, for a newspaper article, the narrator of the story is obviously the reporter who’s written the piece to report the facts. They’re the person who followed the story’s trail, and now they’re sharing the story with you! Another good example of an “easy to find” comes from Herman Melville’s Moby Dick. The very first sentence of the book reads, “Call me Ishmael.” Because that’s a line in the text rather than a piece of dialogue that uses quotation marks, you know it’s the narrator speaking to the audience. In other words, the narrator of Moby Dick identifies himself and tells you his name in the very first line of the book! But figuring out the narrator of the text isn’t always that easy. For example, the Harry Potter books by J.K Rowling don’t have an easily identifiable narrator. Neither do some classic works, like The Giver by Lois Lowry or Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. What do you do in those situations? Well, just hang tight: we’ll walk you through how point of view can help you figure out the narrator in these tricky situations! Narrator vs. Point of View: What’s the Difference? Before we start really digging into point of view, it’s worth pausing a minute to talk about the differences between point of view and narration. Because narration and point of view are closely linked, it’s tempting to think of them as interchangeable terms. But the narrator of a text and the point of view of a text are two different things. The narrator is who is telling the story. In contrast, a text’s point of view is the perspective the story is being told from. If you think of the narrator as a person, their point of view is the angle they’re taking on the story. Think of it this way: in literature, point of view and narrators go together like...well, like thunder and lightning. You can’t have one without the other, but they’re definitely not the same thing. The 4 Types of Point of View Okay, let’s look more closely at the four different types of point of view found in literature. In the following sections, we’ll explain each type of point of view, give you tips for figuring out if something is written in that perspective, and then walk you through a real-life example of that point of view in literature. In first person point of view, you see the story through the narrator's eyes First Person Point of View In first person point of view, the story is told from the narrator’s perspective. This allows the narrator to give readers their first-hand experience, including what they saw, felt, thought, heard, said, and did. Think of it kind of like The Blair Witch Project: in first person point of view, it’s like the narrator is wearing a GoPro camera strapped to their forehead. The reader sees exactly what the narrator sees and gets their singular perspective on the events that unfold. In other words, a first person point of view makes the narrator the eyewitness to the plot of the story. Using a first person point of view allows an author to dive much more deeply into the narrator’s character, since the reader gets to hear the narrator’s inner thoughts and experience the narrator’s emotions. Additionally, it makes the narrator the main character, or protagonist, of the story. If something is written in first person, it’s a pretty big indicator that the narrator is going to play a pivotal role in communicating the text’s messages or themes. But there are also some pretty major limitations to a first person point of view, too. Just like real life, readers won’t be able to get the thoughts and feelings of other characters in the novel. Also, the narrator’s observations might be skewed depending on how they feel about other people. Because of that, first person narrators can be unreliable, meaning that their perspective skews the accuracy of the story they’re telling. That means it's up to the reader to determine whether they believe the narrator is being truthful or not. Tips for Identifying First Person Point of View In many ways, a first person point of view is one of the easiest to pick out because it uses first person pronouns, like I, we, me, my, our, and us. If the book is written using these terms, then you can pretty much guarantee that the author is using first person! Keep in mind that not all first person narrators are the book’s main character, like Moby Dick’s Ishmael or The Hunger Games’ Katniss Everdeen. That’s because first person narrators aren’t always the main characters in the work. Take, for instance, the Sherlock Holmes stories, where Dr. John Watson is the narrator. While he’s an important character in the story, he’s definitely not the main character--Sherlock Holmes is! Additionally, sometimes first person narrators are anonymous, like third person narrators often are. (Don’t worry: we’ll get into third person narration in just a minute.) That’s why it’s best to look for pronouns when trying to figure out a work’s point of view! If you’re trying to find the narrator’s name, it might not always be there. A good example of this is Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 130,” where the narrator is describing the woman he loves. The narrator of the poem is never named, but because he uses pronouns like “I” and “my,” you know it’s written in first person. Example of First Person Point of View: Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 29” Many of Shakespeare’s sonnets are written in first person, and “Sonnet 29” is no different. Let’s look at the full poem and see why it qualifies as being written in first person: When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes, I all alone beweep my outcast state,And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,And look upon myself and curse my fate,Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope,With what I most enjoy contented least;Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,Haply I think on thee, and then my state,(Like to the lark at break of day arisingFrom sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven’s gate; For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings That then I scorn to change my state with kings. Remember, we can tell that something’s written in first person if it uses first person pronouns outside of dialogue. Since there’s no dialogue in this poem at all, we can look at the entire text to find evidence of the first person point of view. Notice that the narrator (or speaker, as the narrator is often referred to in poetry) uses words like “I,” “me,” and “myself” throughout the poem. This is a clear indicator that this poem is written in a first person point of view! Actually, “Sonnet 29” is a good example of something written in first person where the narrator isn’t named. But we can still learn quite a bit about them through the poem itself! For example, we learn that he’s an outcast (line 2) who is unhappy with his current status (line 4). Despite his all-encompassing misery (line 9), when he thinks upon his love, his spirits are lifted (lines 10, 11, and 12). As we start piecing the evidence together, we begin to get a clearer picture of who the narrator of the poem is, and the power love has to lift us out of even the bleakest circumstance. Other Works Written in First Person Point of View First person is a really popular writing technique, so it’s no surprise that there are tons of books written in this point of view! Here are a few other poems, books, and book series that you might be familiar with that use first person point of view: Second person point of view uses pronouns like "you" and "your" to tell the story. Second Person Point of View In second person point of view, the story is told from the perspective of another character. Sometimes this character is another person in the book, but it can also be the reader themselves! More importantly, when a writer uses second person, they want readers to connect emotionally with the topic they’re writing about! Here’s an example of what we mean. Say you’re reading an article about the amount of plastic pollution in the ocean. If the writer wants to pull on your heartstrings and make you take the issue they’re writing about seriously, they might use a second person point of view and write something like this: “Imagine you’re on the vacation of your dreams sailing across the Caribbean. You can’t wait to get out into the open water, where everything will be calm, peaceful, and gorgeous. You take a nap as the captain sets sail, and when you return to the deck, you’re shocked by what you see. Instead of a vast expanse of sparkling blue water, you see a huge, bobbing mound of trash. Fast food containers, plastic bags, and discarded water bottles bob along the surface as far as you can see. It looks like you’re sailing through a garbage dump, and you feel equal parts disgust and despair.” Using the second person point of view in a passage puts the reader into the story—in this case, it’s a story about pollution. Second person makes the reader feel like they’re making every move...from the joy of going on vacation, to the shock of seeing so much plastic in the water, to the “disgust and despair” of realizing what pollution is doing to the sea. Suddenly, the reader becomes more invested in what the author has to say about the problem, since the second person point of view makes them feel like they’ve experienced it first-hand! While it’s very rare to find a text that’s written completely in second person, many authors will switch to this perspective when they want readers to feel connected to the topic they’re writing about. Tips for Identifying Second Person Point of View Like first person point of view, it’s pretty easy to spot the second person point of view...when you know what you’re looking for, that is. When something is written in second person, the writer uses second person pronouns (like “you,” “yourself,” and “your”) in the text that falls outside of dialogue, too. Like we just mentioned, it’s pretty rare to find a whole text that’s written this way. More than likely, you’ll find a few paragraphs written in second person, rather than an entire work. The one exception to this rule is the classic Choose Your Own Adventure book! You probably remember these from when you were a kid: each book had a topic, and at the bottom of each page, you were given decisions to make. Depending on what you chose, you’d flip to a different page in the book, and your decisions would affect the story! Example of Second Person Point of View: Bright Lights, Big City by Jay McInerny Jay McInerny uses second person to open his book, Bright Lights, Big City, which tells the story of life in the fast lane in 1980s New York. Let’s look at the first paragraph to see the second person point of view in action: You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. How did you get here? It was your friend Tad Allagash. Your brain is rushing with Brazilian marching powder. You are talking to a girl with a shaved head. You want to meet the kind of girl who isn't going to be here. You want to read the kind of fiction this isn't. You give the girl some powder. She still doesn't want you. Things were fine once. Then you got married. Notice that all the pronouns in this section are either “you” or “your,” which is a clear indicator that this is written in second person! It’s also a good example of how using second person can immediately pull someone into a narrative by making the reader and the main character one in the same. In this case, McInerny is creating a whole backstory for your character—from giving you friends like Tad to hinting at your dysfunctional marriage. Other Works Written in Second Person Point of View Second person is probably the rarest of the points of view. Usually writers will use second person in sections of their work to emphasize a point, rather than throughout their entire work. Here are some pieces of literature that use a second person point of view (at least in part): In third person omniscient point of view, the narrator is god-like and tells the reader everything! Third Person Omniscient Point of View The third type of perspective you can find in literature is a third person omniscient point of view. In third person omniscient, the narrator uses third person pronouns like “he,” “she,” “they,” and “their” to refer to all the characters in the work. As a result, the narrator removes themselves as a critical character in the work (unlike the narrators that use a first or second person point of view). Additionally, because this is a third person omniscient perspective, the narrator is given god-like qualities over the story. (Merriam-Webster defines an “omniscient” person as someone who has “universal or complete knowledge”!) That means the narrator can dive into any character’s head and share their thoughts and emotions with the reader. Additionally, the narrator can move around in time and place to show the reader events that the characters themselves may not be aware of! That includes jumping around from location to location, or even moving backward and forward in time. Using a third person omniscient narrator lets an author show the reader the whole gameboard, so to speak. There’s no real limit to what a narrator can show the readers! Consequently, it allows the author to build a robust world full of well-developed characters, since the author no longer has to contend with the single-character limits of a first or second person point of view. It’s also a particularly useful technique in works with large casts of characters, since the narrator can introduce the reader to each character more quickly—and with more detail—than other points of view would allow! Example of Third Person Omniscient Point of View: Middlemarch by George Eliot The narrator of George Eliot’s Victorian novel, Middlemarch, is an excellent example of how a third person omniscient narrator can give readers a comprehensive view of a text. Let’s take a look at the book’s opening paragraph to see this type of point of view in action: Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible,—or from one of our elder poets,—in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good:" if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers—anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlor, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter. Remember: omniscient narrators are god-like in that they can give you more information than a single character could provide from their limited perspective. In this case, Eliot’s omniscient narrator gives us tons of information about Miss Brooke. We know that she’s beautiful but not financially well off (the narrator calls this living in “mixed conditions”), which is reflected in her “plain garments.” Regardless, Miss Brooke is also “remarkably clever.” Beyond that, the narrator tells us about Miss Brooke’s family by looking into her past—which is easy given that the narrator is omniscient! We learn that she and her sister, Celia, aren’t aristocratic, but they come from a good family that includes admirals, clergymen, and politicians. This helps Eliot develop characters and situations quickly, which is important in a book with a large cast of characters like Middlemarch. Other Works Written in Third Person Omniscient Point of View Third person omniscient is a common point of view, especially in longer texts. Here are some examples of other works that feature an omniscient point of view: In third person limited point of view, it's as if the narrator is standing behind one character's shoulder. Third Person Limited Point of View The last point of view an author can use is the third person limited point of view. Just like the omniscient perspective we talked about earlier, texts written in a third person limited point of view use third person pronouns to discuss characters outside of dialogue. The difference between the two is in how much information the narrator shares with the reader. With a third person limited perspective, the narrator is limited to giving you the perspective of a single character. The narrator can peek inside the character’s head to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, similar to a first person point of view. Unlike first person, however, a narrator using a third person limited point of view can also zoom out to give readers a better understanding of how the character they’re following fits into the text’s plot, setting, or situation! Here’s an easy way of understanding the difference between a first person, third person omniscient, and a third person limited point of view. Think of the narrator as a person holding a camera. You, as the reader, get to see everything the camera sees. With first person point of view, it’s like the character has had the camera implanted in their brain. You can see whatever the character looks at and nothing more.With a third person limited point of view, on the other hand, it’s like the narrator is standing behind one character and filming over his shoulder. Not only can you get a sense of what the character is seeing, the narrator can also step back a little bit to show readers what’s going on around the character...as long as the character stays in the frame. Third person omniscient is the most comprehensive view. It’s as if the narrator is filming from the rafters of the building. They can zoom out to show everyone for a global perspective, or they can zoom in on different events to give you a better idea of what’s happening in specific situations.So why would a writer use a third person limited point of view? Well, it’s great for situations where knowing every single detail of a story would spoil the plot. Mystery novels, for instance, often use third person limited point of view. It allows the narrator to give you the detective’s thoughts and feelings while not spoiling the whodunit! It also allows the writer to focus on developing a single character while giving readers a better view of what’s going on around that character. Example of Third Person Limited Point of View: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone by J.K. Rowling Like we mentioned earlier, all texts have a point of view...which means that the Harry Potter stories do, too! Let’s look at a passage from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone to get a better idea of how a third person limited point of view works. In this scene, Harry and his friends, Hermione and Ron, are looking through the library to learn more about the sorcerer’s stone: Hermione took out a list of subjects and titles she had decided to search while Ron strode off down a row of books and started pulling them off the shelves at random. Harry wandered over to the Restricted Section. He had been wondering for a while if Flamel wasn’t somewhere in there. Unfortunately, you needed a specially signed note from one of the teachers to look in any of the restricted books, and he knew he’d never get one. These were the books containing powerful Dark Magic never taught at Hogwarts, and only read by older students studying advanced Defense Against the Dark Arts. It’s clear that this passage is written in third person: the narrator uses pronouns like “he,” “she,” and “them,” instead of first person pronouns like “I” or second person pronouns like “you.” But how do we know it’s third person limited? Well, we get Harry’s thoughts and feelings—like his curiosity about Nicholas Flamel—but no one else’s. We don’t know what Hermione and Ron are reading, or if they’re excited, nervous, or scared. Rowling wrote all seven Harry Potter books using a third person limited point of view that made Harry the focal point. The narrator can tell us what Harry’s thinking, feeling, and seeing—as well as zoom out to tell us more about the precarious situations he finds himself in. But because the narrator is tied to Harry, they can’t give us a glimpse into other characters’ minds, nor can it show readers what’s happening in other parts of Hogwarts (where Harry isn’t). That helps readers get to know Harry, even as it helps Rowling maintain the mystery around the sorcerer’s stone (or the chamber of secrets, or the half-blood prince, etc.). Other Works Written in Third Person Limited Point of ViewThe third person limited point of view is a popular perspective for writers to use, so there’s no shortage of examples! Here are a few works you might be familiar with that feature a third person limited point of view: What’s Next? If you’re studying for the AP Literature exam, you’ll need to know about more literary devices than point of view. Why not check out our other comprehensive guides, like this one on personification? The more familiar you are with literary terms, what they mean, and how to use

the story, giving them the feeling of being a character within the narrative. It is often used in choose-your-own-adventure stories or interactive fiction.Third Person POVThird person point of view is when the narrator is not a character in the story and tells the tale from an outside perspective. This point of view can be further divided into two subcategories: limited and omniscient. In third person limited, the narrator focuses on the thoughts and feelings of a single character, while in third person omniscient, the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all characters. Pronouns such as "he," "she," and "they" are used in this point of view, providing a more objective and detached perspective on the story.Now that we have a basic understanding of the different types of point of view, let's learn how to identify them in a piece of literature and interpret the author's intentions behind them.Recognizing the author's point of view is an essential step in analyzing a literary work. Here are some tips to help you identify the point of view and better understand the author's intentions.Pay Attention to PronounsAs mentioned earlier, pronouns can be a clear indicator of the point of view. Look for "I," "me," and "my" for first person; "you" for second person; and "he," "she," and "they" for third person. By identifying the pronouns, you can quickly determine the author's point of view and start analyzing its impact on the story.Analyze Character PerspectiveConsider whose thoughts and feelings are being shared with the reader. This can help you determine if the point of view is first person, third person limited, or third person omniscient. For example, if you only gain insight into one character's emotions, it's likely third person limited. If you can see the thoughts and feelings of multiple characters, it might be third person omniscient.Examine Narrative VoiceIs the narrator's voice consistent throughout the story, or does it change? Sometimes authors switch the point of view between characters or chapters to provide different perspectives on the events. By examining the narrative voice, you can gain a better understanding of the author's intentions and how the point of view shapes the story.Once you've identified the author's point of view, you can begin to interpret its significance and how it impacts the overall narrative.After identifying the author's point of view, it's time to dig deeper and interpret its significance. Here are some aspects to consider when interpreting the author's point of view in a literary work.The author's choice of point of view can greatly impact the tone and style of the story. For example, a first-person narrative may create a more personal and intimate tone, while a third-person omniscient point of view may feel more distant and all-knowing. Think about how the tone and style create a unique atmosphere and influence your understanding of the story.Evaluate Bias and ObjectivityEach point of view comes with its own level of subjectivity. First-person narrators can be biased and unreliable, as they share their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences. On the other hand, third-person narrators may be more objective, but they can still show bias by favoring certain characters or perspectives. Consider how the author's point of view might reveal or conceal biases and affect your interpretation of the story.Analyze Imagery and SymbolismThe author's point of view can shape the way imagery and symbolism are presented in the story. For example, first-person narrators might use more vivid and personal imagery, while third-person narrators might focus on broader, more symbolic descriptions. Analyzing how the point of view influences the use of imagery and symbolism can help you uncover deeper meanings and themes within the story.By interpreting the author's point of view, you'll gain a better understanding of how it impacts the story and contributes to the overall message of the work.Applying POV to Literary AnalysisUnderstanding the author's point of view is essential for any literary analysis. It can help you uncover themes, motifs, and character development within the story. Here are some ways to apply the author's point of view to your analysis.Explore Themes and MotifsConsider how the author's point of view contributes to the development of themes and motifs in the story. For example, a first-person narrative might explore themes of personal identity and self-discovery, while a third-person omniscient perspective might delve into themes of fate and societal influence. Identifying the connection between the point of view and the themes of the story can enrich your analysis and understanding of the work.Compare and Contrast POV'sComparing and contrasting different points of view within a single work or across multiple works can provide valuable insights. For example, you might analyze how different narrators in a multi-perspective novel offer contrasting viewpoints on the same events, or how changing from a first-person to a third-person point of view affects the tone and style of a story. These comparisons can help you better understand the author's intentions and the overall impact of the chosen point of view.Understand Character DevelopmentThe author's point of view plays a significant role in character development. A first-person narrative can offer deep insight into a character's thoughts and emotions, while a third-person perspective might focus more on the character's actions and relationships with others. By examining how the point of view shapes the portrayal of characters, you can gain a more nuanced understanding of their motivations, growth, and role within the story.Applying the author's point of view to your literary analysis will help you uncover the unique aspects of the work and lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the story and its themes.Studying Examples in LiteratureExamining specific examples of point of view in literature can help you better understand how authors use this narrative technique to shape their stories. Here are three classic novels and their respective points of view:To Kill a MockingbirdTo Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is narrated in the first person by Scout Finch, a young girl living in a small Southern town. Through Scout's perspective, we see the world around her with childlike innocence and curiosity. This point of view allows the reader to experience the story's events and themes, such as racism and social injustice, through the eyes of a child who is still learning about the complexities of the world.Catcher in the RyeIn J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, the story is told from the first-person perspective of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. This point of view provides an intimate look into Holden's thoughts and feelings, giving the reader insight into his struggles with alienation, identity, and the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The use of a first-person point of view helps create a strong connection between the reader and Holden, making his experiences and emotions feel more real and relatable.The Great GatsbyThe Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald is narrated in the first person by Nick Carraway, a character who is both an observer and a participant in the story. This point of view allows the reader to see the events and characters through Nick's eyes, giving us a more objective perspective on the glamorous yet tragic world of Jay Gatsby and his acquaintances. The author's choice to use Nick as the narrator also adds an element of mystery and intrigue, as we learn about Gatsby's life and secrets along with Nick.By studying these examples of author's point of view in literature, you can gain a deeper understanding of how this narrative technique influences the story, its themes, and its characters. This knowledge will be invaluable as you continue to explore and analyze other literary works.If you're looking to improve your understanding of perspective in art and design, don't miss the workshop titled 'A New Perspective on Perspective' by Roberto Bernal. This workshop will not only deepen your knowledge of perspective but also provide you with innovative techniques and approaches that can elevate your creative projects to new heights. Point of view is utilized as a literary device to indicate the angle or perspective from which a story is told. Essentially, point of view refers to the “eyes” of the narrative voice that determine the position or angle of vision from which the story is being relayed. Point of view is one of the most crucial choices made by fiction writers since it governs the reader’s access to the story and determines how much the reader is able to know at any given moment with regard to what is taking place in the narrative.For example, Gregory Maguire is well-known for his novels that re-tell famous stories using a different point of view. In his work Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister, the story of Cinderella is told by one of the “ugly stepsisters” herself, rather than a removed fairy tale narrator.In the lives of children, pumpkins turn into coaches, mice and rats turn into men. When we grow up, we realize it is far more common for men to turn into rats.By shifting the viewpoint of the narrative voice, the reader is given an entirely different perspective and version of the famous story. This not only makes for an engaging and innovative experience for the reader, but the change in point of view also changes the story itself by presenting otherwise “unseen” information and opinions.Examples of Commonly Used Points of ViewAs a literary device, point of view is generally expressed through the use of pronouns. Each has its advantages and limitations. First and third person points of view are far more common than second person point of view in literature. First person narrative allows the writer to establish intimacy with the reader by allowing access to the narrator’s inner thoughts. Third person narrative is flexible in that the writer can focus on more than one character’s actions and thoughts.Here are some examples of commonly used points of view:First PersonIn first person point of view, one of the story’s characters is narrating the literary work. This viewpoint is indicated by the use of first person pronouns, including “I,” and the reader assumes that the character is close to the story’s action. First person narrative voice provides the reader an intimate and close look into a character’s thoughts, but the perspective of the story is limited by what the character is able to see and know.Here are some well-known examples of literary works with first person point of view:Third PersonWith third person point of view, there is a narrative presence telling the story and referring to the characters in the third person, as “he” or “she.” Third person point of view can be omniscient, meaning the narrator can see and know everything within the story, or limited, meaning the narrator is restricted in what they see and know of the story.Here are some well-known examples of literary works with third person point of view:BelovedLord of the FliesLittle WomenFahrenheit 451The LowlandSecond PersonSecond person point of view utilizes the pronoun “you” to address the reader and bring them into the action of the story. However, second person point of view is problematic in a couple of ways. First, it is a stylistic choice that is uncommon, especially in novel-length works. In addition, second person point of view can overwhelm the writer and confuse and/or alienate the reader. Most writers avoid constructing a narrative voice through second person point of view.Difference Between Omniscient and Third Person Limited Point of ViewThird person point of view is flexible as a literary device in that a writer can choose between omniscient or limited perspectives for the narrator. An omniscient narrator is aware of and knows everything about the story and its characters. There are no limitations for this narrator in terms of expressing any character’s thoughts, and this includes their own opinions and observations. An omniscient point of view features a narrator who knows more than the characters of a story.A third person limited narrator utilizes third person storytelling, but is closely “assigned” to one character. Therefore, this limited narrator shares access with the reader to a character’s thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc., but is limited in doing so with other characters in the story. Writers choose third person limited point of view to create a deeper bond between a specific character and the reader.Writing with Point of ViewWriters decide who tells a story and the intended audience for it. When determining point of view as a literary device, the story can be told from the viewpoint of a character who is part of the story or from a narrative perspective that “sees” and knows the characters but is not one of them. It’s important for writers to consider benefits and limitations when deciding point of view, as it is essential for character development and the relationship between the narrative voice and the reader.In addition, it’s important for writers to establish point of view as soon as possible for the reader so they are aware of whose perspective they are following. Though some writers choose to change point of view, done most often within a novel, the narrative voice should be consistent throughout a particular scene. Otherwise, disrupting the narrative perspective in the middle of a story’s action can be confusing and jarring for the reader. Changing the point of view for a subplot, alternate section, or different chapter of a literary work can be valuable; however, there should be continuity of narrative throughout the course of a story’s scene in consideration of the reader.Alternating Point of ViewAlternating point of view is a complex type of observation or narration. While narrating, he/she can change their position from the first person to the third person or even second person. It depends on the setting, situation, and voice of the characters and their different perspectives. This technique was used very successfully by Kurt Vonnegut or Italo Calvino in their novels with authorial assertion and intervention, such as Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut. Also, the alternating point of view is used for long narration or a chapter-wise, to develop characters and story. It is not used for one sentence or a paragraph.First Person Point of View as a Protagonist and Common CharacterThe first person point of view uses first-person pronouns. I, me, mine, etc. The first-person point of view is mostly used in fiction, autobiographies, or semi-autobiographies. The person speaking becomes the center point of the narrative, thus becoming a protagonist of the story most of the time. However, sometimes this person is also a typical narrator when it comes to the big events or significant happenings in history. Such a first-person narrator takes part only as a commoner but describes all the major events and characters through him/her. Usually, they paint the picture of a person, presenting him/her as a protagonist and himself as an ordinary character. Fiction usually adapts this form of narration when they use great heroes from history as protagonists.Use of Point of View in SentencesHe loves to people from the window of his castle. But, such is his life; he is not allowed to step outside. (Third-person point of view)I heard a shrill cry followed by speeding footsteps. I wondered if someone was in trouble. Sadly when I reached the alley, there was no one. (First-person point of view)This is how you prepare a tasty lemonade. You juice the lemons, and you can get more juice by rolling the lemons on the counter using force. (Second-person point of view)Although Jay viewed the group with suspicion when he decided to meet them and said, “I do not suspect you in any way, but we still need to talk.” (Third-person objective point of view)As the children settled into their rooms, Lisa hoped they would sleep peacefully without fear. She silently wished them goodnight before closing the door.”I was never more hated than when I tried to be honest. Or when, even as just now I’ve tried to articulate exactly what I felt to be the truth. No one was satisfied.In Ellison’s novel, the protagonist tells his own story from a first-person point of view. This passage reflects both the power of this narrative perspective and its limitations. By telling his own story, the protagonist is able to have a close connection with the reader and directly express his true thoughts, feelings, and ideas. However, due to this restricted form of narration, the reader must rely solely on the viewpoint of the protagonist. This puts a level of responsibility on the reader to determine whether the protagonist is reliable in his narration and to fill in any gaps in the story that are ambiguous or unaddressed in a full manner by the narrator.Example 2: The Story of an Hour (Kate Chopin)She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.Chopin’s short story is told through a third-person limited point of view. The narrative perspective is that of Louise Mallard, the protagonist of the story, though she does not relay the narrative herself in the first person. Instead, the narrator relays to the reader Louise’s actions, thoughts, and feelings as she learns of her husband’s supposed death. This is a clever literary choice due to the fact that Louise spends much of her time in the story in a room alone, away from the other characters.Chopin establishes a relationship between the third-person narrator and the reader in terms of access to Louise’s mind. This is reflected in the passage as the narrator conveys to the reader that Louise feels “free” at the news of her husband’s death. This “freedom” is something that Louise would not have expressed to any character in the story, yet the narrative perspective allows the reader to know and understand her thoughts.Example 3: The Death of Ivan Ilych (Leo Tolstoy)In reality it was just what is usually seen in the houses of people of moderate means who want to appear rich, and therefore succeed only in resembling others like themselves: there are damasks, dark wood, plants, rugs, and dull and polished bronzes — all the things people of a certain class have in order to resemble other people of that class. His house was so like the others that it would never have been noticed, but to him it all seemed to be quite exceptional.Tolstoy’s well-known story of Ivan Ilych is told through an omniscient point of view. This passage reflects that the omniscient narrator governs the telling of the story through the information that is presented to the reader and the manner in which that information is relayed. For example, the omniscient narrator describes for the reader the setting of the character’s home by describing the objects inside. This creates an image that allows the reader to picture the scene.However, the omniscient narrator is also characterizing the setting of the home by inserting opinions about it with phrases such as “who want to appear rich.” This is important because the omniscient narrator’s description and the inserted characterization influences both the reader’s literal image of the scene and their perception of its meaning in terms of an emotional response. As a result, the omniscient narrator holds the power to influence all aspects of a story for a reader–not just the way things look or what events take place, but how the reader should feel about it, Therefore, in response to an omniscient narrator, the reader should be aware of this effect so as to approach this point of view with critical thinking.Synonyms of Point of ViewSome of the words close to the point of view in meanings are opinion, view, attitude, feeling, sentiment, thoughts, ideas, position, perspective, viewpoint, standpoint, outlook, stand, stance, side, or position. Skip Navigation ☰ © The Novel Smithy, LLC | All rights reserved. Written by January 26, 2023Fact-checked by Paul MazzolaIn English, the point of view is the narrator's position or perspective through which the story is being communicated. An author's point of view tells the reader who the person is experiencing the event or the topic of the writing.All types of writing — fiction, song lyrics, nonfiction — are written from a point of view.Get free estimates from english tutors near you.First, Second, And Third PersonFirst, second, and third person are the three main types of point of view.First person is the I / we perspectiveSecond person is the you perspectiveThird person is the she / he / they / it perspectiveThe author chooses a point of view to relate the story as if you were experiencing it, to force you into the story, or to allow the author to show different points of view. First Person POV (You are experiencing it) – "My heart leaped into my throat as I turned and saw a frightening shadow."Second Person POV (Force you into the story) – "You turn and see a frightening shadow."Third Person POV (Show different points of view) – "The children turned and saw the frightening shadow. They were unaware a cat had walked close to the low-hung lantern."How to identify point of viewIdentifying a point of view in a writer's work can sometimes be challenging. The best way to find the point of view is to skip the dialogue, go to the narration, and look at the pronouns used in the narrative:I, me, my, mine, myself, we, our, ours, ourselves — First personYou, your, yours, yourself — Second personShe, her, hers, herself, he, him, his, himself, they, them, themselves, their, theirs — Third personPoint of view pronouns 1st, 2nd, 3rd Person Subject Object Possessive Reflective det. Pron. Singular 1st I me my mine myself 2nd you you your yours yourself 3rd male he him his his himself female she her her hers herself neuter it it its its itself generic or 4th person one one one's – oneself Plural 1st we use our ours ourselves 2nd you you your yours yourselves 3rd they them their theirs themselves You skip the dialogue because a character in any voice can speak and will almost always speak in first person voice.Identifying a point of viewUsually, we speak in the first person when we talk about ourselves, our opinions, or our experiences.Anytime a writer wants to share another person's life, you will see the first-person perspective. With a first-person view, every person reading the passage sees into the character's life.First person povThe first-person point of view is identified by singular pronouns such as; me, my, I, mine, and myself or plural first person pronouns like we, us, our, and ourselves.First person Pronouns Singular Plural I Our Me Ourselves Mine We My Us Myself John Lennon and Paul McCartney wrote the song, “In My Life” in first person:There are places I'll remember All my life, though some have changed Some forever, not for better Some have gone and some remain All these places had their moments With lovers and friends, I still can recall Some are dead and some are living In my life, I've loved them allNew Yorker magazine writer and children's book author E.B. White often wrote in the first person, especially in his nonfiction essays. This excerpt is from "Goodbye to Forty-Eighth Street":One day a couple of weeks ago, I sat for a while staring moodily at a plaque that had entered my life largely as a result of some company's zest for promotion.Choose first person when you want the reader to go along for the ride with you. You direct the action, sure, but the reader feels it. Consider these famous first-person plural words:We the People of the United States in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.Preamble of us constitution - first person exampleNovels from around 1900 to the present usually show this active, engaged point of view. Tasks ideal for the first person (singular or plural) include:AutobiographiesJournals or diariesFictionEssaysBlogsReading recordsSong lyricsPoemsLetters (formal or friendly)Places to avoid the first person:Academic workInstructionsTypes of first personFirst person narration can take different forms:Reliable – the writer's character speaks the truthUnreliable – the writer's character is hiding something; they are an unreliable narratorFirst-person central – the narrator is the main character and central to the plotFirst-person peripheral – the narrator is a witness, but not the main characterTo read a gripping first-person narrative, revisit Suzanne Collins' "Hunger Games" trilogy.Second person point of viewSecond person point of view is known as the “you” perspective. It is the perspective of the person or persons that the narrator is addressing. The second person perspective is identifiable by the author's use of second-person pronouns: you, yourself, your, yours, or yourselves.Second person pronouns Singular Plural You You Your Your Yours Yours Yourself Yourselves You all (y'all) Many second-person pronouns are both singular and plural, depending on the context.Second person povThe second person point of view attempts to turn the reader into the character. It is seldom used in novels but does give an immediate jolt.Second person point of view examplesThe use of second-person perspective in novels or stories is rare, but it does exist. Consider this example from fiction, "Earth and Ashes" by Atiq Rahimi and Erdag Goknar:With your back to the autumn sun, you are squatting against the iron railings of the bridge that links the two banks of the dry riverbed north of Pul-i-Khumri.Second person helps to deeply immerse new readers in many children's books. The entirety of "How to Babysit a Grandpa" is written as a second-person book of instructions:As soon as your grandpa says, “I give up,” jump out and shout, “Here I am!”The second person point of view is perfectly natural for recipes and directions. Here is a way to make lemonade, written in the second person:You need six lemons, six cups of cold water, and one cup of sugar.You'll need a large pitcher for mixing everything and a juicer.Before you juice the lemons, you can make your work easier by rolling the lemons on the counter, hard.Then you just juice them normally.You combine the fresh lemon juice, water, and sugar in the pitcher.Stir; you may want to adjust sweetness or water to taste.Using second person point of viewWith instructions and directions, second person can be an “understood” point of view:“Turn to page 178 and solve problems 6 through 10.”The understood but unwritten subject of that sentence is “You”, the pronoun is just left out.Get free estimates from english tutors near you.Never use the second person POV in academic writing.Third person point of viewThe third-person point of view belongs to the people or person the narrator is referring to. Third-person pronouns are she, he, her, him, hers, his, herself, himself, it, its, itself, they, their, theirs, them and themselves.Third person pronouns Singular Plural She They He Them Her Their Him Theirs Hers Themselves His Herself Himself It Its Itself For the writer who must tell several interwoven stories, provide psychological distance between the subject and the reader, or who needs to stay neutral, nothing beats the third-person viewpoint.All academic writing, most advertising, many novels, and most quotations or aphorisms are written in the third person.Third person point of viewThe third-person limited point of view is when the narrator only has some access to the experiences and thoughts of the characters. Many times, the third person limited perspective limits the narrators access to the thoughts and experiences of just one character.Third person omniscientThe third-person omniscient point of view is when the narrator has access to all the experiences and thoughts of all the characters in the story. An omniscient narrator knows the main character's thoughts and those of every other character in the novel or short story.Third person point of view examplesHere is a passage from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, showing the power of third person:Harry moved in front of the tank and looked intently at the snake. He wouldn't have been surprised if it had died of boredom itself...In fiction, third person allows a writer to put the reader into the heads of all the characters, explain important plot points, and present information in a seemingly neutral way.Speaking In Third PersonSpeaking in the third person is not typical, but people do it. It can be an excellent comedic effect or to grab someone's attention.Here is an example of Larry speaking in the third person:Fourth person point of viewGet free estimates from english tutors near you.The fourth person point of view is a term used for indefinite or generic referents. A common example in the English language is the word one as in “one would think that's how it works.” This example sentence is referring to a generic someone.You may also see the fourth person point of view called the third person generic.Choosing a point of viewWe all like to write in a natural way. As a writer, you have a duty to your reader to think carefully about your point of view. Many writers rewrite their work if the point of view seems awkward.That paragraph went from first person to second person to third person, all in just three sentences!Choosing a point of viewThe first-person point of view or a first-person narrator can fool a reader into trusting the narrator when the narrator is not a reliable reporter (great for mysteries, recounted tales, and fictional confessionals).Many great novels such as "The Great Gatsby" are written from a first-person perspective. Another classic in first person POV is Herman Melville's "Moby Dick." It is clear who is narrating with the line "Call me Ishmael."The second person is suitable for simple, direct storytelling (for children, recipes, assembly instructions, and the like).A third person narrator creates the most distance between events and the reader. It is almost always seen as a reliable, neutral viewpoint. With the third person, the author can select the point of view of a single character or be omniscient (all-knowing, all present) and move in and out of the minds of all the characters. Skip Navigation ☰ © The Novel Smithy, LLC | All rights reserved. I’ve been staring at my screen for ten minutes trying to come up with a hook that somehow, someway will lead off an article about literary point of view. I’ve come to a definite conclusion: you can’t. To do so would subvert the laws of man, physics and God. It’s impossible. I defy you to try it. Anyway, let’s talk about POV. If you’re a beginning writer you might not think much about point of view. But, you should. All writers should spend significant time considering what POV they’ll use for a story, and why. POV is as important to a story as is your plot, characters, setting, etc. Point of view tells your reader who is important in your story. It affects the relationship your reader builds with your characters. And, if done poorly, the point of view can ruin an otherwise perfect story. You’d like to avoid that, wouldn’t you? Of course! So, for your consideration, I bring to you the ultimate guide to point of view. (Is it really the ultimate guide to POV? Probably not, but it makes for a good title, right?) In this article I will explain every type of POV you could possibly use in your writing, and when to use each one. I’ll also answer all your burning questions about POV. You know the ones you’ve always wondered about but didn’t want to ask. More importantly, I’ll cover some of the common POV mistakes and how to avoid them. But first, let’s start with the basics- Point of view is the term used to describe who the author chooses to tell their story. But really, and more importantly, it’s who your reader is engaging with. When we talk about point of view we’re talking about the narrator. An author might have the main character or a secondary character speak directly to the reader as if you are reading that character’s journal. Or, the narrator might not be in the story at all, but a voice above the fray who can describe the action of a story. The narrator may also know certain characters’ thoughts and feelings about the events unfolding. While some POVs will insert the reader directly into the action of the story. The point is, point of view is an important consideration for any story, and mistakes in POV can ruin a story. So, it’s important to choose your POV carefully and avoid the common pitfalls. With that said, let’s discuss the different types of POV, why they are used, and the common POV mistakes that you need to avoid. Point of view tells your reader who is important in your story. It affects the relationship your reader builds with your characters. And, if done poorly, the point of view can ruin an otherwise perfect story. Share on X Point of view can be divided into three categories- first person, second person, and third person. Third person point of view can be broken down further into limited, omniscient, and objective. All POVs can be written either in the past or present tense. Let’s take a look at each of these individually. You’re the reader and the character is telling you the story. You and the character are like old friends; they’re very open with you about their thoughts and feelings. It’s as if you’re reading their journal. Usually, the perspective character is the main character of the story, but not always. Take, for instance, The Great Gatsby which is written in the first person, but the perspective character is Nick Caraway. Nick takes part in the events of the story and relays them to the reader, but he is not the main character. However, this is an exception, not the rule. Your point of view character should be the protagonist unless you have a good reason for them not to be. You’ll know your reading a story in the first person when you see pronouns like I, me, or my. The character is the narrator, so they will be speaking directly to the reader. Writing from a first person point of view is a solid choice if your beginning writer. It’s a straightforward perspective that isn’t too difficult to work with. Choose a character, like your protagonist, and write the story as if they are retelling the events to the reader. If you choose the first person perspective you’ll need to know your character intimately. You want their personality to remain consistent throughout the narrative. That is unless they’re a dynamic character. Even then, changes in the character will need to have a cause that develops from your plot. Interview your point of view character. Know their background, what their fears are, and what motivates them. The challenge of the first-person perspective is keeping your character’s voice, actions, and reactions consistent and believable. In other words, don’t change your character’s personality for the needs of the plot. What does that mean? If your character has been even-keeled and calm throughout the story don’t force them to blow up in anger because you need to inject some tension into a scene. Know your perspective character, and don’t deviate from the personality that you’ve established, unless that change is earned through the narrative. Your reader will notice otherwise. There are times when using the first person perspective is axiomatic like when writing a memoir or a personal essay. The first person POV is a good choice for writers who are just starting out. The limited nature of first person will help beginning writers avoid some common POV mistakes such as head-hopping. But, more on that later. Because of its natural limits, the first person is a good choice if there are details of the plot that you want to hide from the reader. Take the example of an unreliable narrator who is lying about the events of the story. Discovering new information a narrator has kept hidden can be an exciting revelation for your reader. Or, because your writing from the perspective of one character, the reader can discover story details as your character does. This works to great effect in the genres of mystery, horror, and romance. These genres require the character, and reader to work through the details of an event slowly to discover startling truths. Lastly, the first person POV is a good choice if you’re writing a small, character-driven plot with a limited cast. However, it’s not the best choice for your epic, world-building fantasy. “I couldn’t forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.” — F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby Learn about first-person point of view here! You, the reader, are now in the story. You are the protagonist. You’re taking part in the action. Not literally, obviously. Not yet anyway. Until some advances in VR second person will remain figurative. The writer uses pronouns like you and your. In fiction, this is not a very common practice. But, you will find the second person POV a lot in non-fiction works. Instructional texts like cookbooks are written in second-person. Think, “You’ll need to preheat your oven to 450 degrees.” The limitation of the second person perspective is that you’re asking your readers to put themselves directly into the story. This takes considerable suspension of disbelief on their part. And, it may put your reader off as they’re not used to reading this kind of narrative. The second person point of view tells your reader that they are someone they’re not. That the events of the story are happening to them, the reader. It’s a funky style, let’s be honest. Reserved, mostly, for those “choose your adventure” books we read as children. However, when executed well, this funkiness is the secret strength of the second-person perspective. What better way to encourage your reader to empathize with a character and experience a new perspective. While not traditional, a story written in the second-person perspective could be a great way to set your work apart from the pack. But, only if you put in the effort to make it work. Know that an editor will ask the question- “Why did you choose second person POV?” If you don’t have an obvious answer, revealed in the text, this may be a weakness. When it comes to digital storytelling though, second person POV could be the dominant perspective. Maybe we should start practicing… “Things happen, people change,’ is what Amanda said. For her that covered it. You wanted an explanation, and ending that would assign blame and dish up justice. You considered violence and you considered reconciliation. But what you are left with is a premonition of the way your life will fade behind you, like a book you have read too quickly, leaving a dwindling trail of images and emotions, until all you can remember is a name.” — Jay McInerney, Bright Lights, Big City Take one step above the story. The narrator is no longer in the fray and action. They are on the outside looking in, commenting on the action. The narrator tells the reader what is happening, and what the perspective character is thinking and feeling. A third person limited perspective means that we are limited (get it?) to a single character at a time. So, it’s like the first person perspective, but rather than a character speaking directly to us, the narrator is telling us what the character is doing, thinking and feeling. The first thing you want to do is choose a character to limit yourself to. More than likely, this will be your protagonist. You may also switch to another perspective character in your story. However, don’t switch character perspectives within the confines of a single scene, or even a chapter. In truth, you may want to keep your perspective limited to the same character throughout the narrative. There are examples of rotating perspective when using third person limited. Authors who do this will change the perspective characters from one character to the next. For clarity, chapters are usually named after the point of view character in that chapter. This is a question that comes up when writing from a limited point of view. Character descriptions can be tricky because overtly describing a non-POV character’s emotions would count as a slip in POV. You don’t want that. Rely on the old adage- show, don’t tell. If a non-POV character is upset then have them slam a door, throw a punch, or break a window. Demonstrate emotion through action, not through adverbs. Remember that your narration is limited physically, as well. Your narration can’t describe anything the point of view character isn’t able to see, touch, taste, hear or smell directly. The character’s eyes are your window into the world of the story. Keep this in mind when describing the different aspects of your story. Much like first person point of view, the third person is used when you want to limit the reader’s perspective. Use this POV when you want your readers to spend time with, and become very familiar with a character or cast of characters. When you want your reader to become attached to your protagonist(s). Third person POV is perfect for your character-driven story arcs. Choose third person POV over first person when your story has several character arcs to explore. An example would be the Harry Potter series. Sure, Harry is important, but we care about Hermione and Ron too. Also, the third person limited POV works well in mysteries, horrors, and crime stories. This is because you can easily hide information from your reader like you can with first person POV. Because of its versatility, third person limited is the most popular POV in modern fiction. Readers and editors are used to reading in third person limited POV. In most cases, third person limited POV will be a good choice for your story. . “For the first time, he heard something that he knew to be music. He heard people singing. Behind him, across vast distances of space and time, from the place he had left, he thought he heard music too. But perhaps, it was only an echo.” — Lois Lowry, The Giver You’re the reader, and the narrator is God. They can give you access to every character’s thoughts and feelings, at the same time. Third person omniscient is like third person limited in that the narrator is separate from the story. However, the narrator is not limited to one character’s viewpoint when describing the story. The narrator has full knowledge of all the characters and has no preference for any single character. Common pronouns used with third person omniscient are “he,” and “she.” Third person omniscient can be challenging as you have a lot of characters to keep up with. Each major character will need the same attention from the narrator. It can also be difficult to keep your narrative focused with the POV spread out like this. Use this perspective to insert your own authorial voice into the narrative. As the narrator, you can comment on the action of the story, or the characters. But, beware that this is not a style of writing that is currently in vogue. The third person omniscient POV does provide a lot of creative freedom, though. Because of the “God-like” presence of the narrator, you’re not hemmed in by a lot of rules. The author can describe anything that a character is thinking, wearing, doing, seeing, etc. Never. Just kidding, but keep this in mind: The third person omniscient perspective, while once omnipresent, is not very popular anymore. It’s a good choice if you have a plethora of characters in your story. This is because this perspective gives you the ability to inhabit any character in the story. However, realize this will make developing any single character difficult. Choose the third person omniscient POV when you have a very strong voice, and you want the narrative commentary to take the center stage of your story. “A man’s at odds to know his mind cause his mind is aught he has to know it with. He can know his heart, but he don’t want to. Rightly so. Best not to look in there. It ain’t the heart of a creature that is bound in the way that God has set for it. You can find meanness in the least of creatures, but when God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything. Make a machine. And a machine to make the machine. And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it.” — Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West In the third person objective POV, the reader does not have access to any character’s thoughts or feelings. The narrator is completely objective. Again, show don’t tell. With third person objective, a writer will have to convey all the characters’ emotions through action alone. If you’re a beginning writer try and write at least one story in the third person objective POV. It’s good for practice. In order to master this POV, a writer must be a keen observer of people in the real world. How do people show their emotions- on their face, in their body language, with words? How does someone demonstrate they’re angry with their boss? A real person wouldn’t act out dramatically. They wouldn’t flip a table or punch a hole in the drywall (hopefully). Because acting like that would get them fired, probably arrested. They may, instead, make a snide remark, purse their lips, or cross their arms. The point is, people can be very subtle in how they display their inward feelings. Many people do their best to mask emotions. Others act out for attention. As a writer, you should be able to identify these subtle tells and insert them into your story. Especially if you plan on using the third person objective. Third person objective POV is also useful in non-fiction. A biographer can’t always comment on the thoughts of feelings of their subject. Especially if the subject has been dead for hundreds of years. In that case, they can only convey a sense of emotion through their subject’s words or actions. “When a friend of Abigail and John Adams was killed at Bunker Hill, Abigail’s response was to write a letter to her husband and include these words, “My bursting heart must find vent at my pen.” — David McCullough, John Adams Most authors choose the past tense when writing fiction. However, some writers choose present tense for their stories. Why? Immediacy is one reason. Like with second person POV, the use of the present tense can pull a reader into a story in a way that feels intimate. They are experiencing the story along with the narrator in real time. The downside of writing in the present tense is that you’ll be working against the grain. Most stories are told in the past tense, so unless you have a good narrative purpose for using the present tense you should probably avoid it. Without a clear purpose, using the present tense will come off as gimmicky. But, I’m no expert on this subject and you can find a very informative post on writing in the past tense here. “I can feel Peeta press his forehead into my temple and he asks, ‘So now that you’ve got me, what are you going to do with me?’ I turn into him. ‘Put you somewhere you can’t get hurt.” — Suzanne Collins, The Hunger Games Head-hopping is when a writer suddenly changes the viewpoint character without purpose. A story will be narrated from one character’s point of view then that point of view shifts to another character mid-paragraph, or worst mid-sentence. Head-hopping will leave readers feeling confused and frustrated. It’s a mistake that signals your in the hands of a careless writer. As such, head-hopping should be avoided at all costs. The obvious way to avoid this is to stay in one character’s point of view throughout a story. If you need to shift perspective wait until a logical point like a scene or chapter break. Think of your character’s viewpoint as a camera lens. The action is being recorded by that single lens. You cannot describe anything that isn’t within the view of that single lens. When shifting perspective, be sure to establish the change by mentioning the character’s name and something about the setting in your narration. Do this immediately to establish the shift in your reader’s mind. Here’s an example of how to open a scene that has shifted perspective to a new character: “Paul glanced at his watch and realized he’d been waiting in the coffee shop for over an hour.” Who’s the POV character? Paul. Where is he? A coffee shop. What is he doing? Waiting. Only shift the POV if it serves your narrative. And, establish any shift in POV at the opening of the scene or chapter. An inconsistent point of view means that the writer is switching point of view throughout the narrative. One scene may be told in the first person and the next scene’s narration switches to the third person omniscient. Like head-hopping, this will confuse your reader. Choose a point of view and stick to it. If your a first-time writer then the first person is the way to go. The first person point of view limits your opportunities to make mistakes like head-hopping. Third person limited is the most widely used perspective and one that the modern reader is very comfortable with. Again, like the first person, you’re limited to a single character, and this will ensure a consistent POV. Familiarize yourself with the rules of each of these POVs. Be mindful of what POV you’ve chosen. If your writing in the third person limited POV, don’t describe something that your POV character couldn’t possibly know. These mistakes will probably occur in your early drafts and that’s okay. But, planning and outlining is key. As well as purposely choosing your POV. And, most importantly, find good editors! Preferably, fiction writers who are more experienced than you. Also, don’t shift your point of view unless you have a very good narrative purpose behind the shift. I really can’t say that enough. Choosing the right point of view is vital in effective storytelling. Each POV has its pros and cons. Do you want to tell a story that is an intimate character study? Use the first person. Don’t use the third person omniscient. But, if your book is an epic fantasy that spans multiple worlds or realms, then the third person is the way to go. POV is also how you tell your reader who is important. If a writer is narrating from a single character’s point of view then the reader will assume that character is important. Using the POV of a character who is not essential to the plot will confuse your reader. The point is, spend a lot of time thinking about what point of view you’ll use and how it will affect your reader’s experience. This should be part of your pre-writing. POV is not a decision to be taken lightly. Using more than one POV character can help give your reader a broad view of your story. It can also be used as a way of slowly revealing important plot points. I once read a story where the author effectively used POV shifts to explain the same event four times. Each time the new character would have a different perspective on the event, like a game of telephone. It was a clever use of shifting POV. However, if you’re shifting the POV every chapter or scene for no apparent reason than your reader will get annoyed. POV should indicate an important character. And, shifts in POV should have a narrative purpose behind them. Choose POV characters for a reason. The reader will feel loyal to a POV character, intuitively. The POV character should have something at stake in the story, or a goal. They should be someone like, oh I don’t know, a protagonist! Or, someone equally important. Who could that be? Hmmm. Maybe, an antagonist! Don’t give the POV to any old, schlub, though. Bottom line- don’t waste time using the POV of a character who isn’t important to your narrative. And, make sure that any shifts in POV are done for a specific narrative purpose. An example would be retelling an event of the story from a new perspective that adds new information the reader didn’t already know. So, that’s everything I can think of when it comes to POV. Still, have questions? Drop them in the comments and I’ll do my best to answer them. Or check out some of these other great resources on POV! All About Point of View: Which One Should You Choose? How to Choose Your Novel’s Point of View Related What is point of view? Here’s a quick and simple definition: Point of view refers to the perspective that the narrator holds in relation to the events of the story. The three primary points of view are first person, in which the narrator tells a story from their own perspective ("I went to the store"); second person, in which the narrator tells a story about you, the reader or viewer ("You went to the store"); and third person, in which the narrator tells a story about other people ("He went to the store"). Each point of view creates a different experience for the reader, because, in each point of view, different types and amounts of information are available to the reader about the story's events and characters. Some additional key details about point of view: Each different