

NaNoWriMo 2015: Narrators and Narrative Voice

Who is telling the story?

The **Narrative Point of View** is the viewpoint from which the events in a story are observed and recounted. In order to determine this, you need to identify who is telling the story, i.e. who is the narrator? To work this out, you need to consider:

- Pronouns e.g. first (I, We), second (You), third person narrator (He, She, It, They)
- The narrator's degree of objectivity [Complete, None, Some (Editorial?), Ironic]*
- The narrator's "Un/Reliability"
- The narrator's degree of omniscience [Full, Limited, Partial, None]*

The classic narrative point of view used is a third person (therefore, apparently objective) omniscient (fly-on-the-wall) narrator. This disembodied narrator recounts the events (though doesn't partake in them), introduces characters, reports dialogue and thoughts, and all other details.

NB: the narrator is never the author

Types of Narrative Voice

Omniscient - told in the third person; the narrator's knowledge, control, and intentions are unlimited, giving them "authorial" subjectivity.

Limited Omniscient - again told in the third person, but this narrative voice is associated with a character who is not able to "see/know" everything. They may be able to relate to the thoughts of one or some characters but not others and/or they may not know what happened in the past or outside of their day to day reality.

Objective - the opposite of the omniscient; displays an objectivity; compared to a roving camera with sound. Very little of the past or the future is given; the story is set in the present. It has the most speed and the most action; it relies heavily on external action and dialogue, and it offers no opportunities for interpretation by the narrator.

First Person - told in the first person "I", usually by the protagonist.

Interior Monologue – first-person, train of thought "overheard" by the reader (NOT spoken out loud), or "overheard" and reported by an omniscient narrator; or a stream of consciousness

Subjective Narration - first person, narrator seems unreliable, tries to get readers to share his/her side or to assume values or views not usually presumed by the reader.

Detached Autobiography - first person, reliable narrator that guides the reader. The narrator is main character, often reflecting on their past

Memoir or Observer Narration - first person, narrator who is an observer rather than the main participant; they may be an eyewitness and can be reliable or unreliable.

Framed Narrative – some narratives, usually collections, involve a frame narrative gives a perspective on, the main narrative or narratives that follow. Some stories have several narrative frames that guide the reader away from the initial setting through a narrative maze to a core event that is very different from the first narrative encounter, e.g., "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James