

Understanding Point of View

Point of view is like the “camera angle” that a story is shown from. Some angles let you see every detail, but others hide some details from you. The point of view can affect how you understand and respond to a text.

First Person Point of View

The narrator is referred to as (or something similar) “I” or “we.” Only things that the narrator hears, sees, thinks or knows are shared with the reader. It is as if one person is telling you his or her story.



So, I was walking down the street – wondering what all the fuss was about – when all of a sudden ...

You are eating breakfast when someone knocks on the door. You feel a little annoyed, but you get up to answer it ...

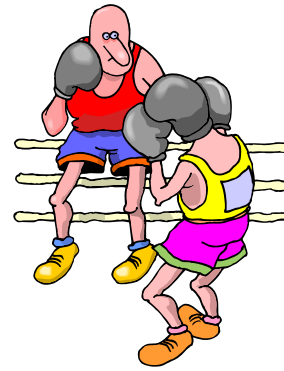


Second Person Point of View

The narrator talks to the reader directly, so that “you” become a character in the story. This type of narration is sometimes used in role-playing video games and “choose your own adventure” books.

Third Person Point of View, Panoramic

The narrator sees all the action, but does not read minds. Anything that can be seen or heard is described, but we do not know the characters' thoughts. It is as if an observer is describing what he or she sees.



The boxers danced around the ring, neither one taking the first punch. The crowd watched silently ...

Third Person Point of View, Limited



Like first person point of view, all the action is seen through the eyes of one character (the “viewpoint” character) and we can only see what that character sees and know what that character thinks. The difference is that the character whose point of view is shaping the story is referred to as “he” or “she” or by their name instead of as “I” or “we.”

Jenny was pretty sure the kids knew which way to go, but she went through the instructions one more time.

Third Person Point of View, Omniscient

The narrator sees and knows everything, including what goes on in all his characters' minds. The narrator can see into the future and can also see things that the characters cannot. This knowledge is shared with the reader so the reader gets the “big picture” of what is happening. It is as if an observer is describing the experiences and thoughts of all the characters and has the power to jump through time.



Mike Jones sat down to help his daughter with her homework, wondering how much of it he could possibly remember how to do. Cassandra was happy that her dad was helping her. She understood more than when her brother Toby tried to explain things.