

Point of view

- ◆ the outlook or standpoint from which a text is written
- ◆ pl.: points of view
- ◆ sometimes called **narrative perspective**
- ◆ author ≠ narrator
- ◆ the point of view may shift within the story
- ◆ phrases:
 - The story is written/told from an omniscient point of view / from the third-person limited perspective.
 - The author employs/chose/selected/makes use of ... point of view.
- ◆ There are two general narrative points of view, **first** person and **third** person.

First-person narrator (“I”)

The narrator is a figure inside the story.

first-person protagonist	⇒ telling his own story
first-person observer	⇒ telling someone else’s story as a witness

Advantages of employing a first-person point of view:

- ▶ credibility: A strange or fantastic story is easier to believe if told by someone who is supposedly relating a firsthand experience.
- ▶ easier access to character: It is far more natural for a character to reveal his own thoughts than it is for the author to tell us what he is thinking and feeling.
- ▶ intimacy: The “I” narrator seems to address the reader directly and from the heart, sharing his personal observations and insights with an interested listener.

Disadvantages:

- ▶ restriction: The reader can see, hear and know only what the narrator sees, hears and knows.
- ▶ biased position: The reader’s perceptions of other characters are coloured by the narrator’s predispositions, prejudices and personal limitations.

If the first-person narration presents only the unspoken thoughts of the protagonist, the result is an interior monologue.

Third-person narrator (“he, she, they”)

The narrator is a figure outside the story.

third-person observer	⇒ <u>no</u> access to thoughts and feelings of any character
third-person limited	⇒ limited to thoughts and feelings of <u>one</u> person
omniscient author	⇒ able to look into the minds of <u>all</u> the characters; all-knowing storyteller, moving about freely in time and space, revealing the thoughts and motives of all the characters, knowing the present, past and future

Major advantage: its obvious freedom and unlimited scope
Major disadvantage: a relative loss of vividness, involvement and intimacy