

Narrator and Point of View [http://www.jochenenglish.de/misc/narrator_perspective.doc]

Narrator: The "voice" that tells a story. Unless it is an autobiography, the narrator is *not* identical with the author/writer.

Point of view: The perspective from which characters, events, etc. are presented in a fictional text. The chosen point of view has a strong effect on the reader; for example, we tend to respond (*reagieren*) more sympathetically to a character whose mind we "enter", as we experience for ourselves what the character goes through. In the course of many stories the point of view changes to make reading more interesting.

First person narrator / limited point of view: The narrator is a character in the story and uses the first person singular ("I"). This narrator may be either the protagonist or a minor character, who is just a kind of observer. As first person narration presents the action through the eyes of only one character, the narrator has a limited point of view. The reader tends to identify with the narrator.

Interior monologue: A particular form of first person narration which presents a character's thoughts, associations and memories. Interior monologues often do not follow chronological order, since, when people think, their thoughts jump from one subject to another.

Third person narrator / limited point of view: The narrator stands outside the story and uses the third person ("he", "she" or "they") to refer to the characters but presents the events mainly from the perspective of only one character, i.e. he "limits" himself to the perspective of this character.

Third person narrator / unlimited point of view, often called omniscient narrator: The narrator can (at least theoretically) look into the minds of all characters and tell us about their thoughts and feelings. He can look into the past, tell about the present and also anticipate the future.

Reported thought: Thoughts, memories, associations, etc., are presented as reported speech (third person, past tense) but without common phrases like "she thought", "he wondered", "she asked herself" etc. This technique creates the illusion of intimate access to a character's mind.

Stream of consciousness: An attempt to convey the continuous, often unstructured or even chaotic flow of thoughts and emotions in the human mind. Typical characteristics of this technique are incomplete sentences, sudden jumps or even complete lack of any traditional syntactical structure and punctuation.

Intrusive narrator: The narrator makes e.g. comments on the story, may reflect about the process of writing and may try to influence the reader. He sort of "intrudes" (*stören, eindringen*) on the reader and the reading process.

Mode of presentation: The way a writer narrates events. The author can either *tell* the readers about events and their significance or *show* the reader what is happening. Most stories use a combination of both techniques.

Scenic presentation: An event is presented in detail as it occurred, i.e. a *scene* is described (= showing).

Panoramic presentation: The narrator tells the story as a condensed series of events, summarizing in a few sentences what happened over a longer period of time (= telling).

Point of view and Narrative technique [<http://www.tolearnenglish.com/free/news/explaining.php>]

Point of view can be defined as the angle from which the story is seen and recounted.

Narrative technique refers to the medium used to tell the story.

I) Third-person point-of-view

- The **omniscient narrator** assumes that the author knows everything about the story and the characters. He controls the story and sometimes breaks into the narrative to address the reader directly. The writer thus establishes complicity with the reader but the narrative lacks the immediacy of immediate point of view.

Multiple character focus: the **concealed narrator** is given access to the consciousness of various characters and participates in their thoughts. He does not call attention to his presence by intrusive comment and creates the illusion that the characters are free to speak for themselves.

- **Single character focus:** the narrator is effaced and the narration is shifted to a major character who registers and evaluates what happens around him and within himself. This point of view approaches the immediacy of the first person.

No specific character focus: when the author presents his story without penetrating the feelings or thoughts of any character. He plays the part of a simple informer. objective fiction is common in modern fiction.

> **Third-person narrative techniques:** narration / indirect speech / semi-indirect speech / direct speech...

II) First-person points of view.

- **Objective autobiography:** the I narrator is the central character grown older and more mature. Distance in time detaches him from the past events he recounts. This splitting of the character into "I now/narrator" and "I then/subject" permits objectivity (cf. Dickens - Great Expectations)

- **Subjective autobiography:** the central character tells the story as it happens and is deeply involved in the events and their consequences. Subjectivity often results from the absence of time gap between telling and happening: the narrator tends to distort facts to defend his side of the story. (cf. Huckleberry Finn)

Observer narration: a minor character may be used to relate the experience of the major character. He may be an inner observer who plays a role in the action or an outer observer. He may be the confidant of one of the protagonists or an eyewitness to the action (cf Nick in The Great Gatsby).

> **First-person narrative techniques:** the narrator may present events and thoughts as a diary or as a straight autobiography. He may resort to interior monologue in which he reviews past events associated with present commentary. The stream of consciousness depicts the impressions and thoughts which flow freely through the mind of a character with no apparent logic.

III) Time-sequence

The **time-sequence** of a story is important. The traditional mode is the chronological order, but the time-sequence may be broken. The reader is confronted with flashbacks or anticipations (foreshadowing).

One may be struck by the frequency of certain happenings or recurring keywords. There may be a shift of focus from one character to another.