

Point of View

In fiction, an author intentionally decides who tells the story and how it will be told. The atmosphere, the tone, and even the meaning of the story, can be entirely changed depending on who is telling the story. In short, the author has to carefully control what information gets released in the story. The author is able to do this through his/her choice of **narrator** and **point of view**.

Narrator: who tells the story (Anyone who recounts a narrative.)

Point of View: how the story is told

Determined by

1. who tells the story
2. how much is the narrator allowed to know
3. to what extent does the reader understand the character's thoughts and feelings



Why is it important when reading short stories?

1. for understanding of the story
2. for evaluating the short story



A writer can choose one of several different points of view (POV) in telling a story. To understand the names usually given to these different points of view, it would help to think of the meaning of person as it is applied in grammar to the various pronouns. In grammar, a pronoun is in the first person when it refers to the person speaking (I, we). A pronoun in the second person occurs when it refers to the person spoken to (you). A pronoun is in the third person when it refers to someone or something other than the speaker or the person spoken to (he, she, it, they).

Types of Pronouns		Correspondent Point of View
First Person	I, we, me, us, etc	First-Person Point of View
Second Person	You	[Does not exist]
Third Person	He, she, it, they, his, their, etc	Objective Point of View Limited Omniscient Point of View Omniscient Point of View

When a story is told by a character in the story, it is said to be told from the **first-person point of view**. When writers choose a point of view they are limited in what they can tell the reader. The whole story must be told from the narrator's point of view. The narrator can only tell what he himself thinks, feels, or sees. He can not look into the minds of other characters explaining their thoughts or

feelings, although he may guess at them. Nor can the first-person narrator describe what is happening elsewhere in the story. Furthermore, when reading a story in first person, the reader needs to realize that what the narrator is recounting might not be the objective truth.

When a story is told not by a character in the story, but by the writer as an outsider, it is told from the **third-person point of view**. This is the most commonly used method of storytelling and it occurs in three formats:

1. **Objective Point of View**

With the objective point of view, the writer tells what happens without stating more than can be inferred from the story's action and dialogue. The narrator never discloses anything about what the characters think or feel, remaining a neutral observer, like a fly on the wall.

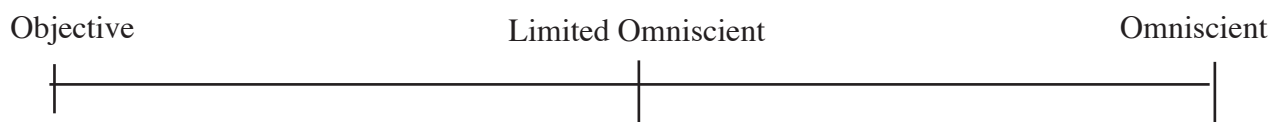
2. **Limited Omniscient Point of View**

A narrator whose knowledge is limited to one character, either major or minor, has a limited omniscient point of view.

3. **Omniscient Point of View**

A narrator who knows everything about all the characters is all knowing, or omniscient. Writers using this point of view have complete freedom. They see all and know all. They know what their characters are thinking and feeling at all times. They can record events that happen anywhere and at any time.

Third-person point of view can be seen as on a sliding scale where most short stories land somewhere in the middle.



Evaluation of Point of View

1. Know whether the events of the story are being interpreted by the author or by one of the characters.
2. Ask whether the writer has chosen point of view for maximum revelation of his material or for another reason.

Type of Point of View (traditional)	Narrator Used	Knowledge of the Narrator	Extent we understand feelings, etc.
1. Omniscient -permits wide scope -difficult to use -creates breadth and depth	author 3rd person	unlimited	unlimited -into the minds of two or more characters
2. Limited Omniscient -allows for considerable development of character -must rely upon influence of others' motives and attitudes -most common -highly unified but limited range	author 3rd person as observer	from the viewpoint of one character	-limited through actions and thoughts of one character
3. First Person -offers not direct interpretation by author but provides only opinion of narrator -good for suspense or surprise -good opportunity for use of dramatic irony and different perceptions	Narrator is one of the characters or is an observer in the story	limited	-limited
4. Objective Point of View -can not comment, interpret discuss but only observe like a fly on the wall -relies heavily on action/dialogue	Role of roving camera	only see what is happening in front of camera	-only infer

Terms Related to Point of View

narrator
point of view
first person point of view
objective point of view
limited omniscient point of view
omniscient point of view

