

Writing on Point of View

Using “The Clumsy One” by Ernest Buckler

Definition

Point of view refers to speaker, narrator, persona, or voice *created by authors* to tell the story. Because it tells the story from the narrator’s perspective, it involves not only the speaker’s physical position as an observer and recorder, but also the ways in which his social, political, and mental biases affect the narrative.

Writing about Point of View- Prewriting

The ultimate goal is to explain *how* point of view contributes to the story.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who is the narrator? What is his relationship to the characters and the action?
2. Are the actions and speeches reported authentically, as they might be seen and reported in life?
3. How much is witnessed directly by the narrator? Is he omniscient or limited?
4. What is his involvement in the action?
5. How much of the story stems from the imaginative or creative powers of the narrator?
6. Is the narrator biased?
7. Does this point of view allow for maximum revelation of character and/or plot?
8. Why did the author choose this particular point of view?

Organization

The goal in your writing is to show how the point of view impacts the story.

1. Begin by identifying the particular point of view (first person, omniscient, limited omniscient, objective or a mixed point of view).
2. How does the point of view make the work interesting, effective, or significant?
3. How will your analysis support your central idea?
4. Explain the effects created by this point of view. Perhaps there are limitations. How are these significant?
5. Why was this point of view chosen?
6. Evaluate the success/impact of the point of view.

Sample Paragraphs

1.

In the story “A Clumsy One” by Ernest Buckler the narrator, Danny Redmond, is the protagonist in the story, and he tells the story in the first person narrative about a time in his past when he and his older brother did something mean to one another. Danny tells the story from his view so we get to see what he is thinking and we only know what his brother is thinking and doing from what Danny tells us. The narrator is directly involved in the story and tells us not only what happened, but also how we are to understand the meaning of the action. For example, on page 142 Danny tells about a time when he cried because he wanted to go with his brother to get the cows, but says his brother “felt so badly he’s gone out and broken the handle of my cart-so I’d hate him and wouldn’t *want* to go.” Although Danny says he was angry at his brother a lot, he also describes him as having “the magic slight for anything that could be manoeuvred with his hands” (page 138) and when David died Danny says that he would have changed places and died in place of David. . He tells the reader that he was always angry because then he was “as strong as the others” (page 143) and Danny was always trying to prove himself good at farm work, but he wasn’t by comparison with his older, stronger brother. So this is useful for telling us about how Danny feels and that is important because Danny is the protagonist and he changes. The plot really focuses on a mean thing Danny did to David and then David’s equally mean response. When Danny’s friends from college came unexpectedly to the farm, Danny ignored David and made sure that he wasn’t included in their conversation. He tried to make his brother feel like an outsider. Then to get even David makes Danny work very hard until he can’t work any longer and has to say he can’t. David, to make things worse, announces to the others that Danny cannot help them finish the job, so that they must do it themselves. After this, Danny feels that David hates him, although David never really says so. In the end Danny tells us that David always looked out for him and took care of him, and that the revenge David had was only a way for Danny to forgive himself for being mean to David. Danny is never convinced that David understood how much he loved his brother until he was about to die. But the reader wasn’t there so we have to take Danny’s word for it. In the end Danny changed and realized that he didn’t need to be mean to or angry at his brother when he was younger and that he only acted that way when he was young because he was immature. He hoped his brother understood that before he died.

2.

In the story “A Clumsy One” by Ernest Buckler the narrator, Danny Redmond, relates two significant events from his youth from the perspective of a mature adult looking back from his own, the first person, point of view. This technique makes the reader directly involved in the story as the reader endures and understands the pain of Danny’s anguish in controlling his anger and not hurting his beloved brother’s feelings. Therefore, the reader fully understands his conflict and the motivation behind it. Without the narrator’s explanation of his own behaviour, for instance, Danny’s motivation for his actions might be misunderstood. For example, Danny didn’t “strike” his brother with his anger because he is insensitive, but explains it from the perspective of a mature adult looking back on the immaturity of childhood sibling rivalry. “Sometimes there is a cruel persuasion you can’t resist in the hurting of the one who understands you best, even as it hurts you more.” (page 139) Because Danny admits his own character flaws, and fully blames his own character short-comings for the cruelty which the brothers inflicted on one another and which Danny instigated, his description of the events is believable. Of course, there is nothing in the story to suggest otherwise, for that is the advantage of using this one-sided point of view. For instance, Danny interprets David’s motivation in all their interactions and it is always very favourable. For example, Danny states that David would permit Danny to fight his own battles if his opponent was someone his own size, “but, if any of the older ones so much as laid a finger on me he’d go into the only rages I’d ever seen him show.” (page 143) In addition, because the events unfold as they occur, surprise and suspense is shared with the narrator. For example, we may be surprised to discover that there is no jealousy on David’s part for the favouritism shown Danny at Christmas or on being able to attend college rather than be confined to a life on the farm or that his motivation for humiliating him by making him work until he couldn’t stand any longer was not out of revenge, but to allow Danny to forgive himself for the cruelty he showed to David the day prior. However, that is appropriate to the story for it is just one example showing that from Danny’s point of view his brother is entitled to the deepest respect and admiration for the unconditional love and sacrifice he made to ensure Danny was safe and allowed to develop his potential. Ironically, perhaps but significant is the fact that Danny returned to the farm after the death of his brother to be a farmer. This shows the greater impact of the lessons learned from his brother over school instruction. In fact the story seems to be an homage to his brother, for the desire to understand and be understood by his brother is the purpose of the story. “I felt the shame of my action that day heavy in me ... but I couldn’t seem to help what I did” (page 139) and when David died “and in that last minute when all things are without falseness of any kind, he knew at last that I had been sick for what I had done to him. He knew that I wished we might change places. That the quickness of my mind would be nothing to part with, if it could save *him*. That I was never proud of it, myself, if it stood between us.” (page 143). At the end of the story, Danny as narrator and protagonist states that he himself was “the clumsy one” for David had grace and wisdom and for all Danny’s advantages, ironically, David was the superior human being.

Quick Scale: Grade 10 Writing About Literature

This Quick Scale is a summary of the Rating Scale that follows. Writing is usually required to be carefully revised, edited, and proofread.

Aspect	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations (Minimal Level)	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
<i>SNAPSHOT</i>	<i>The writing features problems with style, form, and mechanics that make it difficult to determine the purpose and meaning. Reflects little knowledge of literary topic and writing conventions and techniques.</i>	<i>The writing is generally clear, with a beginning, middle, and end. Development may seem uneven. The writer has difficulty controlling the form and style. Tends to talk about literary element rather than identify it.</i>	<i>The writing is clear and carefully developed, with some sense of audience and purpose. Some variety and engaging features. May overexplain in places, telling rather than showing."</i>	<i>The writing creates an impact, with a sense of vitality, economy, and finesse. Features some complex, engaging ideas, language, structures, and techniques. Relies on "showing," not telling.</i>
MEANING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sense of audience understanding of the topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> plot character theme point of view irony literary devices development support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little sense of audience or purpose (unfocussed) may be too short with few examples and details no clear thesis statement inadequate material and understanding of literary topic details, examples, or quotes not clearly linked to topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some sense of audience; little impact includes basic understanding of literary element easy-to-follow development simple details, examples, or quotes sometimes linked to support topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sense of audience; some impact clear, focused thesis statement clearly and logically developed demonstrating good understanding of topic relevant details and examples support topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong sense of audience; engaging clear if not provocative thesis; strong sense of direction efficiently developed around relatively mature understanding of elements of literature; attempts to interpret well-chosen details, examples, and quotations
STYLE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> voice and tone syntax word choice techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little awareness of audience simple sentences and coordination; limited range basic vocabulary; may make errors; repetitive as well as colloquial immature style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> voice and tone may be inconsistent some sentence variety; often problems with subordination some variety in word choice; not concise direct, conversational; difficulty expressing abstract ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate voice and tone varies sentences varied word choice; some complex vocabulary some risk-taking to create effects; uses a variety of stylistic or rhetorical techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creates and sustains effective voice and tone; may use humour or irony syntactic maturity effective, economical word choice takes risks, often showing originality and inventiveness
FORM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning structure and sequence transitions paragraphing ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning unclear sequencing is often confusing few transitions; may seem disjointed paragraphing illogical or missing weak ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organization adequate but ineffective connections among ideas often unclear transitions awkward; paragraphs not well developed conclusions often short or formulaic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organization carefully and logically structure transitions make connections clear competently developed paragraphing explicit, logical conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> structure appears natural and spontaneous well-chosen transitions create unity effective paragraphing creates continuity ending has some "punch"
CONVENTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spelling sentence structure and punctuation usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> frequent noticeable errors in basic sentence structure, spelling, and usage that distract the reader and may interfere with meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> noticeable errors that may cause the reader to pause or reread; often surface errors could be fixed by careful proofreading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> few errors; these do not affect meaning; appears to have been carefully edited and proofread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> few errors; these do not distract the reader (may only be noticeable when the reader looks for them)