

About Viewpoint



Another crucial decision to make for your story (ok, every decision is crucial), is through whose eyes and heart should you tell it? You must choose a character as a lens to filter descriptions, opinions and emotions. Viewpoint can change the essence and strength of your story, so choose carefully.

A story may be told by more than one character. Have you read a story like this? One character may tell one section or chapter, and another character is used to tell another section or chapter. This is a technique that can create suspense and interest for the reader *if* it is done well. If you are a beginner, stick to a single character's viewpoint. Master it before moving on.

The most popular viewpoints are first person and third person subjective using the main character. In first person the writer uses the pronoun I. The character is the storyteller. *"I saw her from across the room and said to my date, 'That's the girl I'm going to marry.'"*

Third person subjective uses the pronouns he/she. *"He left the keys on the table and locked the door behind him. It was going to feel good to get home."*

The author never leaves the mind of the main character. Other characters show their thoughts and feelings through action and dialogue but for the most part are seen and experienced through the eyes and thoughts of the main character.

Example:

Jack drained the last of his Coke and took a deep breath. "Ready?" He tossed the can into the back of the pick-up.

Dan squinted into the sun and shouldered his pack. It was an endless stretch of long and hot. He tugged the brim of his hat. "Yeah."

Which character is eager to get going? Through which character do you know that?

First person provides a sense of intimacy as if the storyteller is your best friend. But it does limit the author to only what the author knows, thinks and feels. Third person subjective is as effective in creating a connection with the reader and allows the author more choices.

Third Person Omniscient is the all knowing viewpoint. The reader knows everyone's thoughts, emotions because he is in everyone's head. This type of multiple viewpoint can make the reader feel like a spectator. That is not usually the goal in fiction. We want the reader pondering, guessing and turning the page to discover.

Think reader connection. Whose voice will tell the story with the most impact? That voice is the viewpoint to use.