First Person and Third Person Narration Explained

KS4 ENGLISH LITERATURE KS3 ENGLISH Ages 11-16 ⏰ 3 min read

What Is Narration?

Narration is the way a story is told. When you read a book, you're hearing the story from someone's perspective — that's the narrator. The narrator is the voice telling you what happens. Choosing whether to use **first person** or **third person** narration completely changes how readers experience the story.

First Person Narration

First person narration uses the pronouns **'I'** and **'we'**. The narrator is a character in the story telling it themselves. You see events exactly as that character sees them, feel what they feel, and know only what they know.

For example: *"I woke up late. I grabbed my bag and ran to school."* This makes the story feel personal and immediate. You're inside the character's head.

Think of it like having a friend call you and describe what happened to them that day. You only hear their side of the story, their feelings, their thoughts — nothing more.

Third Person Narration

Third person narration uses pronouns like **'he', 'she', 'it'**, and **'they'**. The narrator is not a character in the story — they're an outside observer telling you about other people's lives.

For example: *"She woke up late. She grabbed her bag and ran to school."* This creates distance between you and the characters. You can know things the character doesn't know.

Think of it like watching a film. You see what happens from the outside, and the camera can show you things happening in different places at the same time.

Why Does It Matter?

Authors choose **first person** when they want readers to feel close to a character and experience their confusion, secrets, and emotions directly. Books like ***The Diary of a Young Girl*** by Anne Frank use this powerfully.

Authors choose **third person** when they want readers to see the bigger picture — multiple characters, hidden secrets, and the truth about situations that confused characters don't understand yet. Most adventure and fantasy novels use this.

Neither is better — they just create different experiences. Understanding the difference helps you appreciate why an author made their choice and how it affects your feelings as you read.

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