

Point of View - The Lightning Thief

Model

Identification and Application:

- To determine the narrative point of view in a work of fiction:
 - Look for pronouns that reveal how the narrator is referring to characters in the story.
 - When a narrator uses pronouns such as *I* and *me*, they indicate a first-person point of view. This narrator is a character who is involved in the story's plot.
 - If the narrator addresses the reader as *you*, this is called second-person point of view.
 - If the narrator never refers to himself or herself, and refers to all the characters as *he* and *she*, *him* and *her*, the narrator is probably not a character and not involved in the story's plot. The story is probably written from the third-person point of view.
 - Determine whether the narrator is "all-seeing" and "all-knowing," reveals the thoughts and feelings of some (but not all) of the characters, or describes only the actions (not thoughts and feelings) of the characters. This will help you to determine whether the narrative, or storytelling, point of view is third-person omniscient, limited omniscient, or objective.

Model:

When telling any story, an author must first decide which narrative **point of view** to use. In *The Lightning Thief*, author Rick Riordan tells the story of young Percy Jackson, a twelve-year-old with a unique family history. Within the first few paragraphs of this excerpt from Chapter 3, readers can determine this story's point of view:

Our rental cabin was on the south shore, way out at the tip of Long Island. It was a little pastel box with faded curtains, half sunken into the dunes. There was always sand in the sheets and spiders in the cabinets, and most of the time the sea was too cold to swim in.

I loved the place.

We'd been going there since **I** was a baby. **My mom** had been going even longer. She never exactly said, but **I** knew why the beach was special to her. It was the place where she'd met **my dad**.

In a work of fiction, readers can easily determine the narrator's point of view by looking at the **pronouns**. Since the narrator uses the pronouns *I*, *my*, and *our*, the reader knows that Riordan tells *The Lightning Thief* from a **first-person point of view**. If the narrator refers to himself or herself as a participant in the action, the story has this character's point of view.

But who is the narrator in *The Lightning Thief*? When looking at stories told in the first person, the narrator is often the **protagonist** of the story—though not always. The passage above tells us that the narrator is heading to a cabin on Long Island, the place where his mother and father met. The narrator refers to his youth and his absent father. Since readers know that this story is about twelve-year-old Percy Jackson, they can **infer** that the narrator is Percy Jackson himself.

Authors frequently choose the first-person point of view to deepen readers' understanding of the **main character**. In this case, the first-person perspective allows readers to sympathize with Percy Jackson and understand his feelings of insecurity when he says: "What was so great about me? A dyslexic, hyperactive boy with a D+ report card, kicked out of school for the sixth time in six years."

A narrator's limited knowledge in a first-person point of view may also create **suspense**. In this excerpt, Percy asks his mother about his father, who is still a mysterious person to him:

Eventually **I got the nerve to ask about what was always on my mind whenever we came to Montauk**— my father. Mom's eyes went all misty. I figured she would tell me the same things she always did, but I never got tired of hearing them.

"He was kind, Percy," she said. "Tall, handsome, and powerful. But gentle, too. You have his black hair, you know, and his green eyes."

Since Percy's mother knows everything about the situation, *The Lightning Thief* would be a different story if told from her point of view. Because of the book's first-person perspective, at this point in the story, Percy does not know his father's true identity. His limited knowledge builds suspense and anticipation.

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