

Finding the Perfect Point of View and Tense for Your Characters

With G.S. (Gabrielle) Prendergast

www.gsprendergast.com/www.zerorepeatforever.com

Twitter @gabriellesarap
Instagram @gsprendergast

Reading List

Zero Repeat Forever	G.S. Prendergast	1 st person, present tense, dual POV
Pandas on the Eastside	Gabrielle Prendergast	1 st person, past tense
Wicket Season	Gabrielle Prendergast	3 rd person (limited), past tense
Pinch Me	Gabrielle Prendergast	1 st person (subjective), past tense
Hildegarde	Gabrielle Prendergast	3 rd person (omniscient), past tense
Who I Was	Meg Rosoff	1 st person (detached), past tense (distant)
The Book Thief	Markus Zusak	1 st person detached narrator (not the protagonist) past tense
The Hunger Games	Suzanne Collins	1 st person, present tense
Harry Potter Series	J.K Rowling	3 rd person (limited), past tense
Stolen	Lucy Christopher	2 nd person, past tense
You	Charles Benoit	2 nd person, present tense
<i>Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience</i> (short story)	Rebecca Roanhorse	2 nd person, present tense
Lord of the Rings	J RR Tolkien	3 rd person (omniscient), past tense, multi POV
Cat's Eye	Margaret Atwood	1 st person, present tense, multi POV
Holes	Louis Sachar	3 rd person, past tense, multi POV, multi timeline
Hold Me Closer, Necromancer	Lish McBride	1 st person and 3 rd person, multi POV, multi subplot past tense
Across the Universe	Beth Revis	1 st person, present tense, Dual POV
Unwind	Neal Shusterman	3 rd person, multi POV, multi subplot, present tense
Cat's Eye	Margaret Atwood	1 st person, dual timeline, single narrator, present tense

Perfecting POINT OF VIEW

Point of view is about who is telling the story. A specific point of view will assist you to make your writing more lifelike.

I. First Person

- A. **Subjective** - The narrator is telling the story and the reader is given only the facts that the narrator knows about. The reader is drawn into the story because he or she must try to understand what is happening with limited information. Pronouns I, me etc.

Examples: **The Lightning Thief**, by Rick Riordan
The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time, by Haddon, Mark.
???

- B. **Detached** - This is an observer, in the first person, who tells the story and gives the facts as they become or have become apparent to them. Someone telling the story who is not now involved with the story. An example would be someone telling a story now, with the perspective that age would give them, that happened to them a long time ago. Pronouns I, me etc

Examples: **The Name of the Rose**, by Umberto Eco
Moby Dick, by Herman Melville
???

II. Third Person

- A. **Limited** - Knows everything that is happening, but only from one character's viewpoint. Therefore, the reader still is drawn into the story to determine understanding of happenings and facts as other characters perceive them. Pronouns he, she, they etc.

Examples: **Harry Potter**, by J.K. Rowling (with few diversions into other characters)
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- B. **Objective** - 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 detached observer. Pronouns he, she, they etc.

Examples: Difficult to use in fiction but used in journalism and academic writing

- C. **Omniscient** - Knows everything that is happening, from all points of view. This way, the reader has all of the information and knows everything. Therefore, it involves the reader in the story the least because there is no need to try to figure anything out. Everything is already made clear. Pronouns he, she, they etc.

Examples: **Magyk**, By Angie Sage
Lord of the Rings, By J R R Tolkien
???

Note: **Second Person** point of view is seldom discussed although it is occasionally used. It's common in children's books and rhymes but also sometimes found in narrative fiction. Pronouns you, your etc.

Examples: "If YOU go down to the woods today. . ." (**Teddy Bears Picnic**)

STOLEN by Lucy Christopher, "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™" by Rebecca Roanhorse in **Apex Magazine**, Aug 2017

Exercise/Assignment

Write a few sentences in each point of view to describe what's happening in this picture:

1. **First Person Subjective**

2. **First Person Detached**

3. **Third Person Limited**

4. **Third Person Omniscient**



Thoughts: What effects did the different points of view have on the impression given of the characters? Who is the antagonist in each POV? Does that change depending on the POV. Did the verb tense you used make a difference? What happens to the *tone or mood*? Try writing in second person.