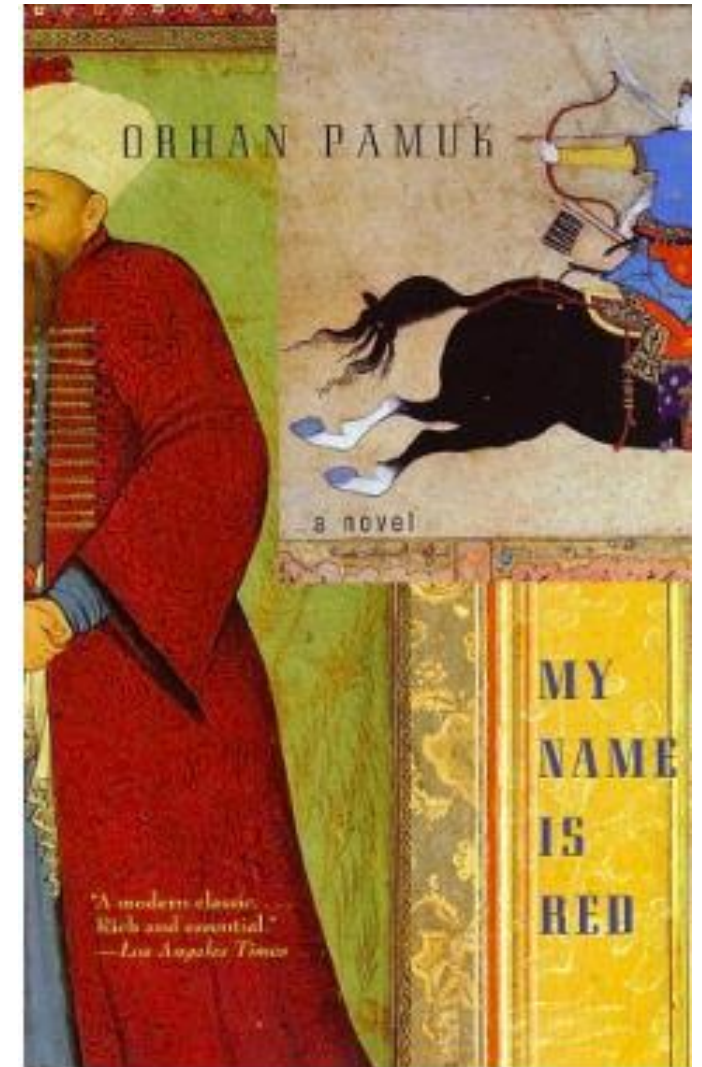


POINT OF VIEW

Introduction to Literature
September 2, 2025
IIIT Hyderabad

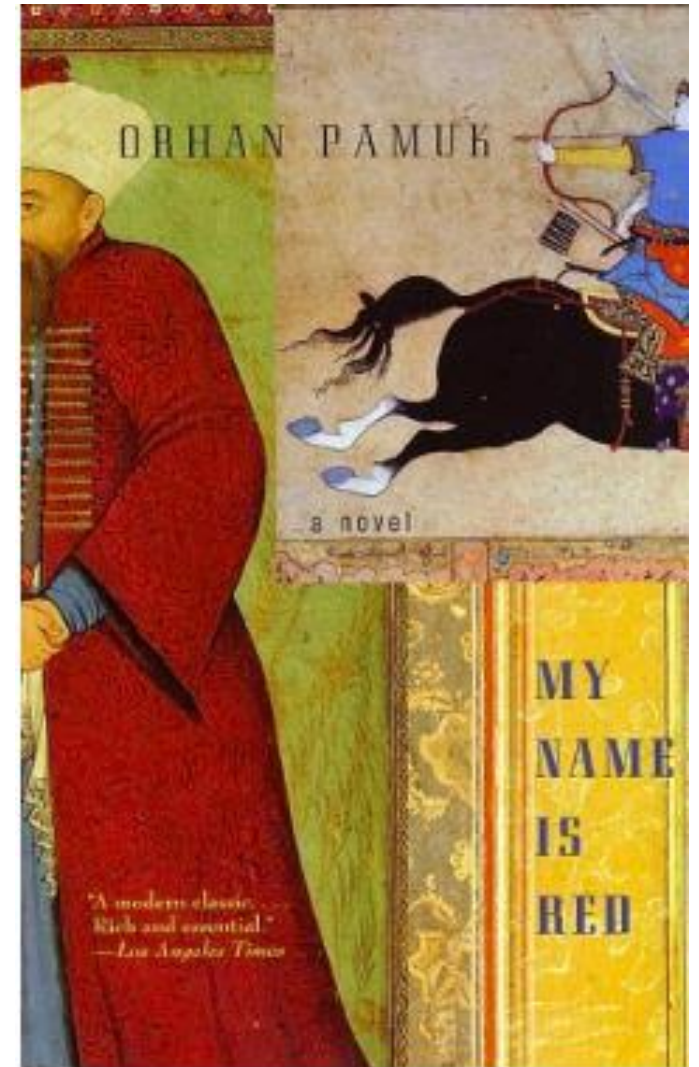
Point of View

- “the way a story gets told” (Abrams 231) – the voice that narrates the story to us in a piece of prose.



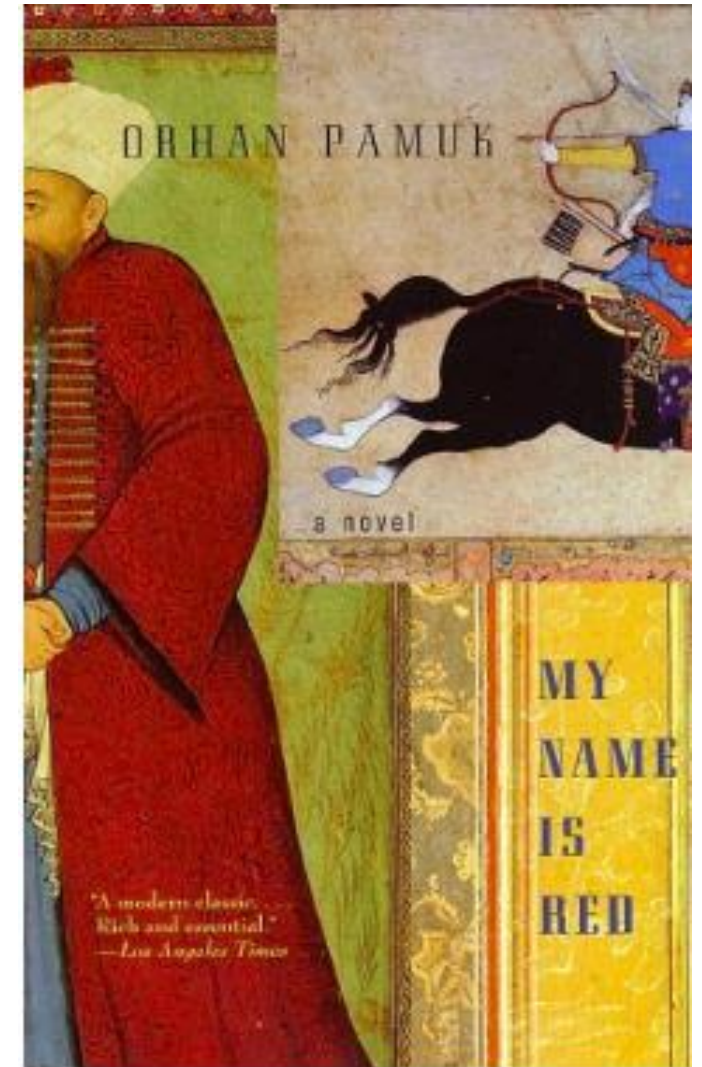
Point of View

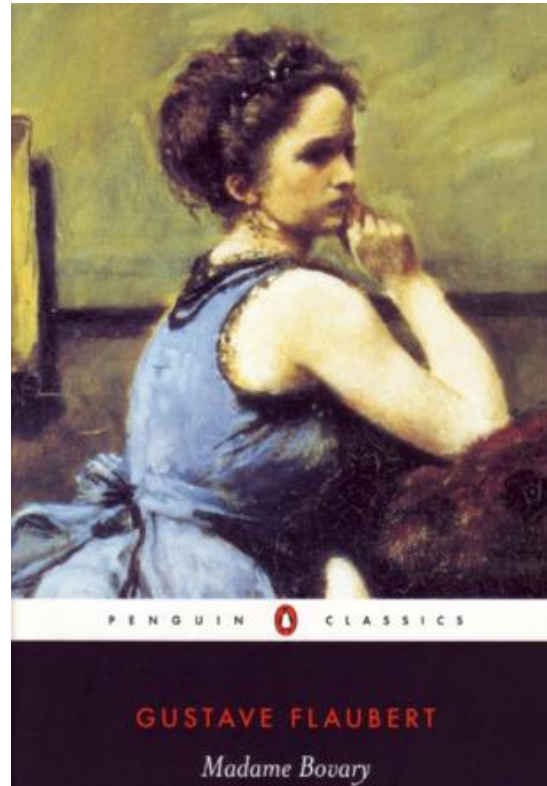
- Narrative voice
 - “the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, actions, setting, and events which constitute the *narrative* in a work of fiction” (ibid.).



Point of View

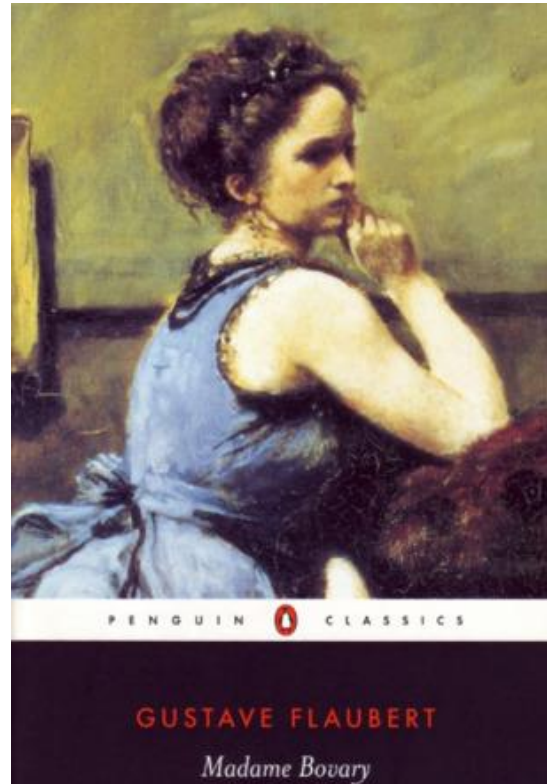
- Increasing importance of the narrator over the past two centuries.
- Writers today can use many points of view in one text, different combinations of first-, third-, and even second-person voice.





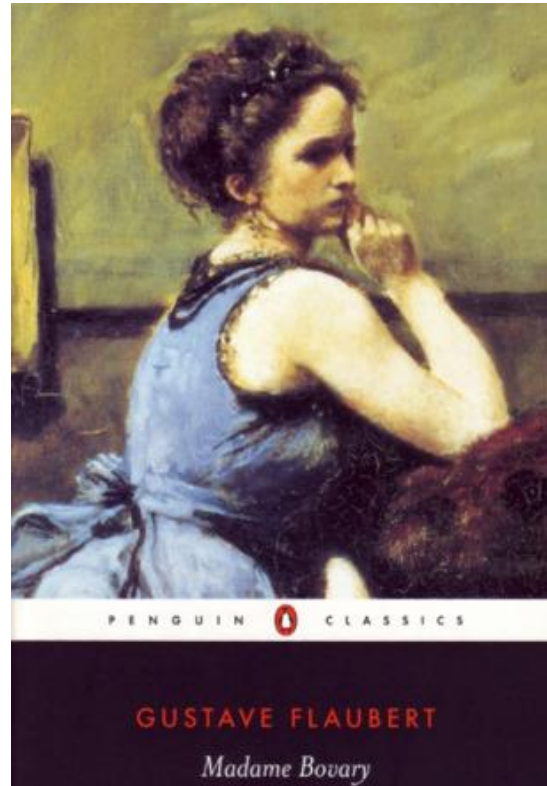
Third-Person Narration

- The third-person narrator is “someone outside the story proper who refers to all the characters in the story by name” (Abrams 231) or pronoun, e.g. “she said,” “the nurses went,” “he ate.”



Third-Person Narration

- Different kinds of third-person narrator:
- **Omniscient Narrator** – knows everything necessary about characters and stories and has total access to their thoughts, feelings, and actions; free to shift from one consciousness/character/time and space to another.



Third-Person Narration

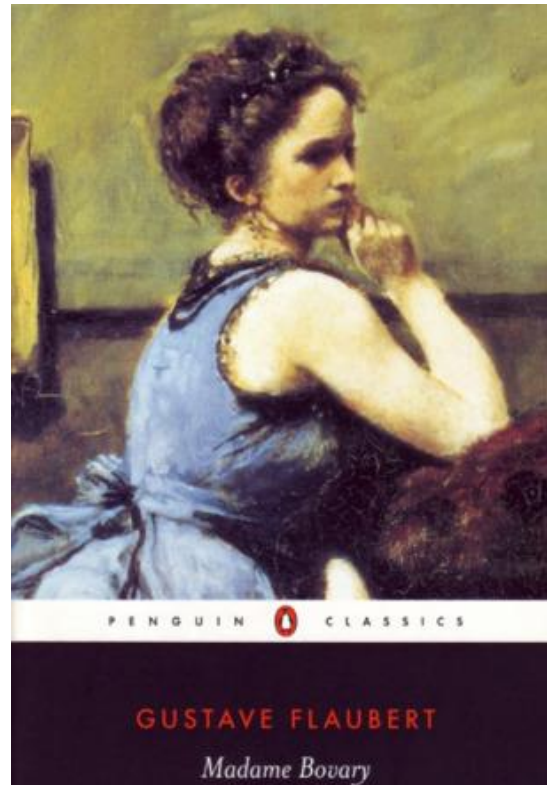
- **Omniscient Narrator**
 - **Intrusive Narrator** – not only reports but comments and evaluates the actions and thoughts of the characters, sometimes expressing personal opinions about them or the story in general.
 - **Unintrusive Narrator** – reports without commentary and opinion; sometimes refuses to access inner feelings or motives of characters.

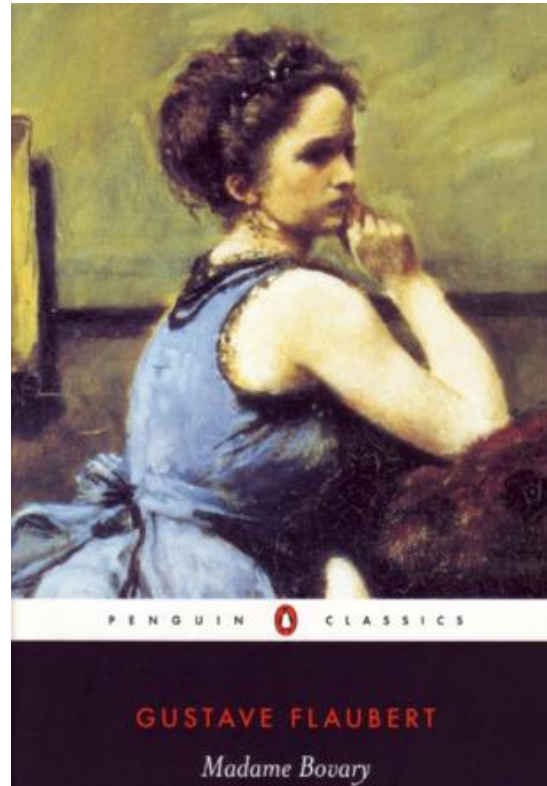


Third-Person Narration

Gérard Genette

- **“Focus of narration”**: who tells the story
- **“Focus of character”**: who perceives/experiences what is told us in any part of the story, whose perspective



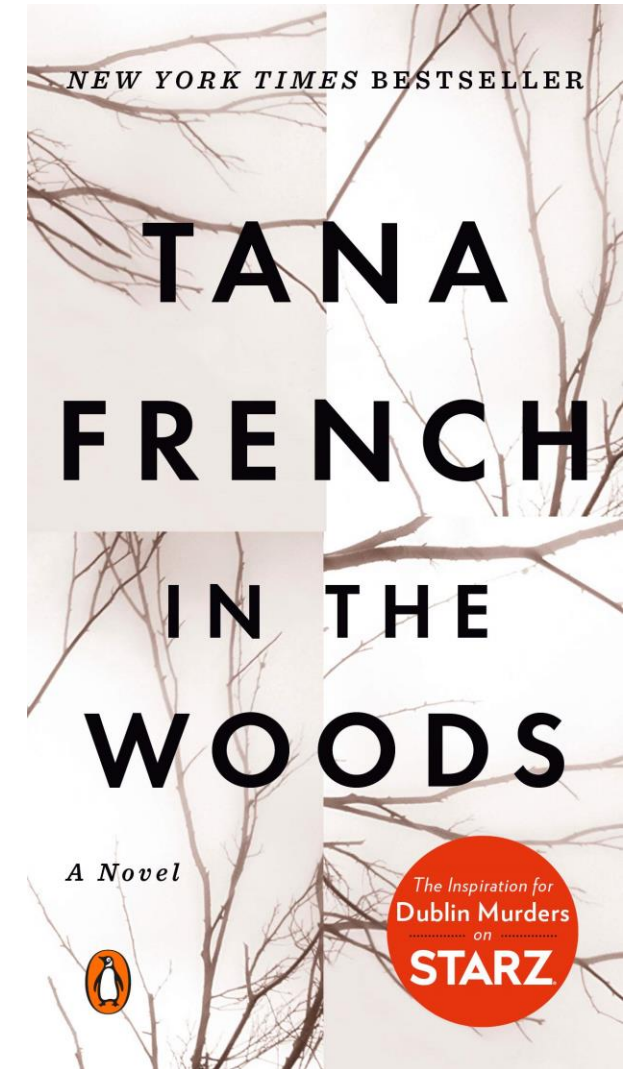


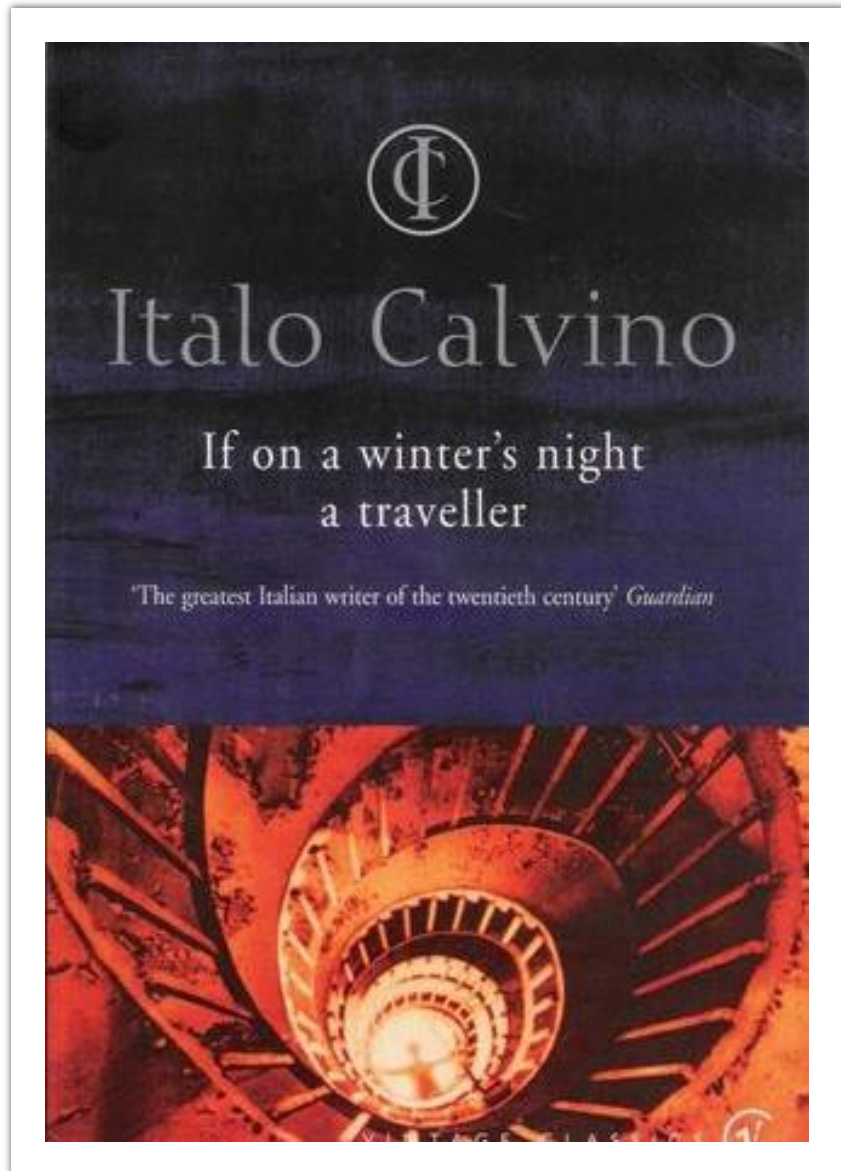
Third-Person Narration

- Limited Omniscience: “stays inside the confines of what is perceived, thought, remembered and felt by a single character (or at most by very few characters) within the story” (Abrams 232).
- Henry James called this selected character the “focus,” “mirror,” “centre of consciousness” (qtd in ibid.)

First-Person Narration

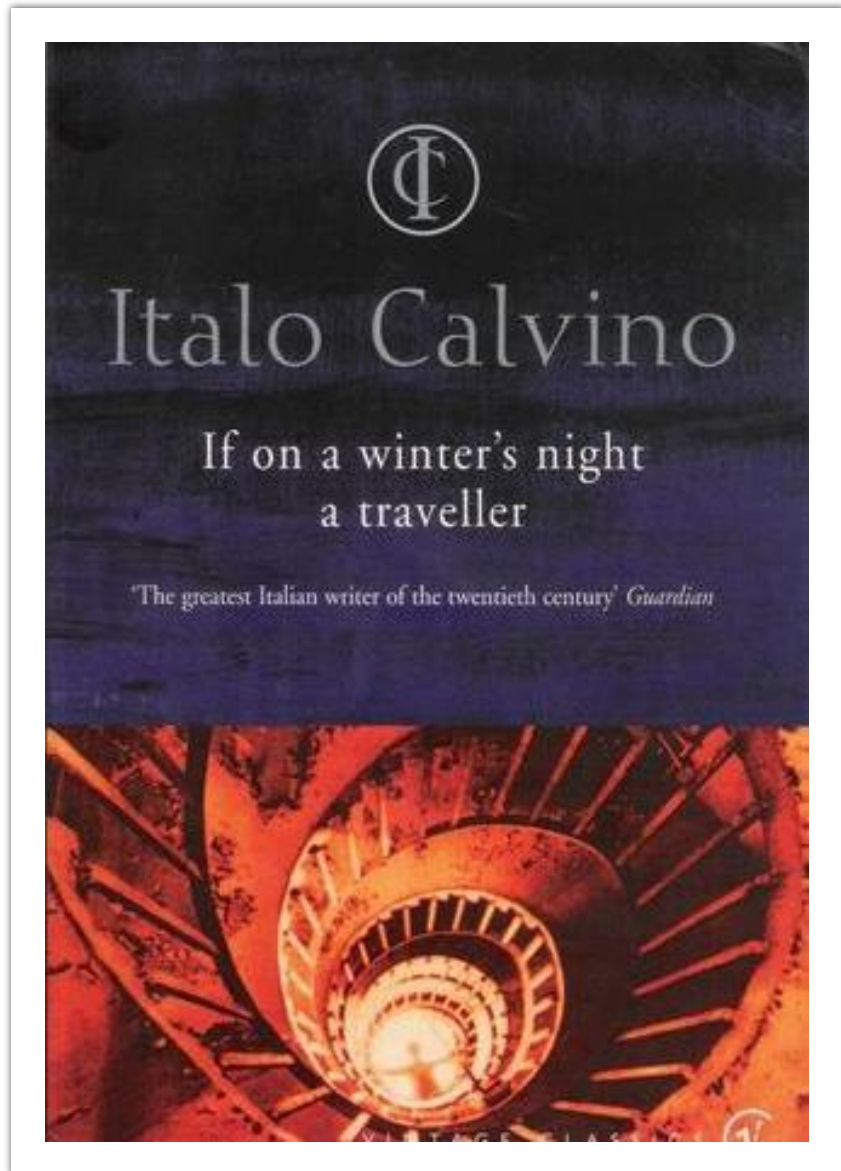
- The first-person narrator is “to a greater or lesser degree a participant in the story” (Abrams 231) and narrates using the first-person pronoun “I.”
- Narrative is limited by what the first-person narrator knows, has experienced, can infer, and/or can learn from other characters.
- Can be a central figure in the plot, a minor figure, or a peripheral one who just happens to be there to witness what happened and report it.





Second-Person Narration

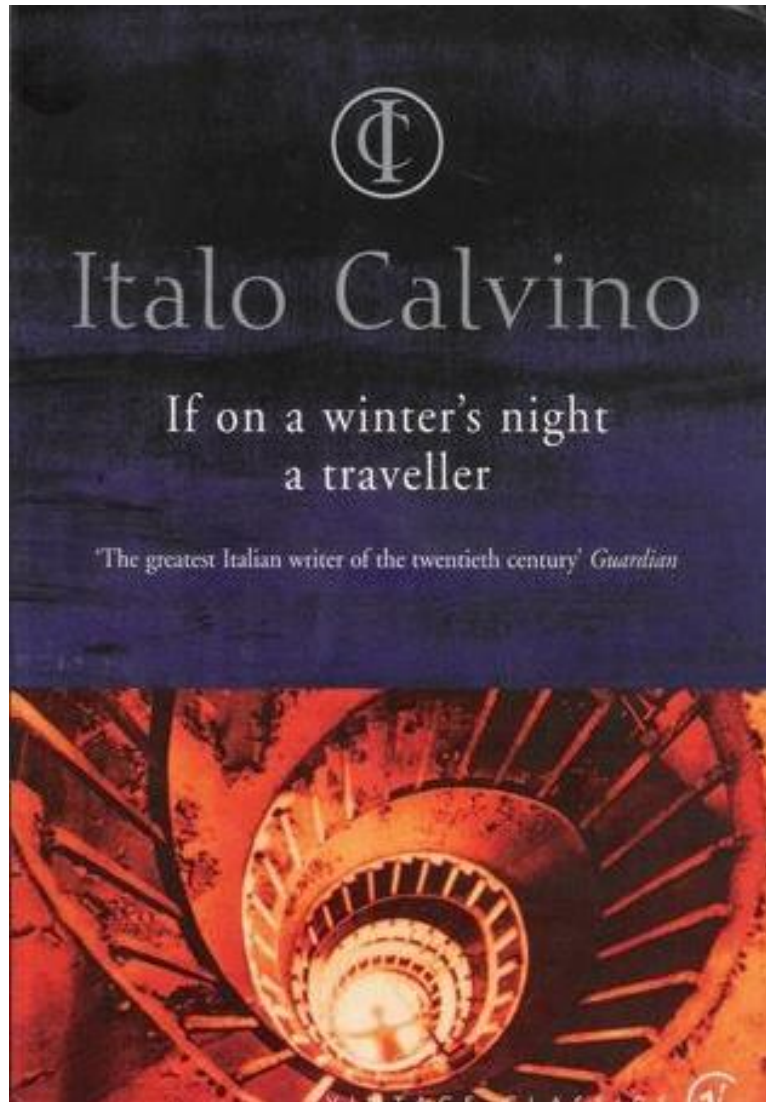
- The story is narrated by a narrator who is addressing another person as “you,” in the second-person voice.
- The addressee could be a character in the story or even the reader.



Second-Person Narration

“You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. Relax. Concentrate .. Best to close the door, the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, ‘No, I don't want to watch TV!’ . . . Or if you prefer, don't say anything; just hope they'll leave you alone.”

(qtd in Abrams 234)



Second-Person Narration

- Calvino involves the reader in the imagination and creation of his novel by addressing and including them in the story
- Self-reflexive or involuted novel, which incorporates into its narration reference to the process of composing the fictional story itself