

Voice

Definition of Voice

A voice in literature is the form or a format through which narrators tell their stories. It is prominent when a writer places himself herself into words, and provides a sense that the [character](#) is real person, conveying a specific message the writer intends to convey. In simple words, it is an author's individual writing [style](#) or [point of view](#).

When a writer engages personally with a topic, he imparts his personality to that piece of literature. This individual personality is different from other individual personalities, which other writers put into their own works. Thus, voice is a unique personality of a literary work. Depending upon the type of work, authors may use a single voice, or multiple voices.

Types of Voice

Though there are many types of voice, two are most commonly used:

Author's Voice – Author's voice is the writer's particular style, which he employs in a particular story, or piece of writing.

Character's Voice – A character's voice is the voice of the main character, how he views the world. It is a common [narrative](#) voice used with first and third person points of view. Here, the author uses a conscious person as a narrator in the story.

Examples of Voice in Literature

Example #1: *Various works* (By Multiple Authors)

[Stream of Consciousness](#) Voice

Stream of consciousness is a narrative voice that comprises the thought processes of the characters. James Joyce's novel, *Ulysses*, and William

Faulkner's novels, *As I Lay Dying*, and *The Sound and Fury*, are modes of stream of consciousness narrative.

Example #2: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (By Harper Lee)

Character Voice

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a very good example of a character's voice, in which the character Scout narrates the whole story. Though she is an adult, she tells her story from her childhood's point of view. When she grows older, her language becomes more sophisticated. Scout uses first-person narrative to create a realistic sense, enabling the [audience](#) to notice the child is growing up. Her [dialogue](#) allows readers to hear the language of younger Scout. Also, it enables the readers to feel the voice of an adult in her actions and thinking.

Example #3: *The Tell-Tale Heart* (By Edgar Allan Poe)

Unreliable Voice

Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* is an example of first-person unreliable narrative voice, which is significantly unknowledgeable, biased, childish, and ignorant, which purposefully tries to deceive the readers. As the story proceeds, readers notice the voice is unusual, characterized by starts and stops. The character directly talks to the readers, showing a highly exaggerated and wrought style. It is obvious that the effectiveness of this story relies on its style, voice, and structure, which reveal the diseased state of mind of the narrator.

Example #4: *Frankenstein* (By Mary Shelley)

[Epistolary](#) Voice

Epistolary narrative voice makes use of letters and documents to convey the message and reveal the story. It may use multiple persons' voices, or there could be no narrator at all, as the author may have gathered different documents into a single place to shape the story. For instance, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is an epistolary novel, which is a story told through letters and documents.

uses a sequence of letters to express the voice of her narrator – a scientific explorer, Captain Robert Walton. He attempts to reach the North Pole, where he meets Victor Frankenstein, and then records his experiences and confessions.

Example #5: *Old Man and the Sea* (By George R. R. Martin)

Third-person, [Subjective](#) Voice

Third person narrative voice employs a third-person point of view. In a third-person subjective voice, a narrator describes feelings, thoughts, and opinions of one or more characters. Hemingway's novel *Old Man and the Sea*, and George R. R. Martin's [fantasy](#) novel *A Song of Ice and Fire*, present examples of third person subjective voice.

Example #6: *Hills Like White Elephants* (By Ernest Hemingway)

Third-person Objective Voice

In a third person objective voice, a narrator narrates the story without showing the character's feelings and thoughts, and gives unbiased and objective points of view. A typical example of this voice is Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants*.

Function of Voice

While identifying the function of voice in literature, it is necessary to consider the narrator's degree of objectivity, reliability, and omniscience. Voice shows whose eyes readers see the narrative through, which gives a personality to a literary piece. Moreover, a strong voice helps make every word count, sets up consistency, and most importantly grabs the attention of the readers.