

# Perspective

## Definition of Perspective

While reading a [fiction](#) or non-fiction book, readers see and experience the events and feelings about the characters through a certain [point of view](#), which is called a “perspective.” A perspective is a literary tool, which serves as a lens through which readers observe characters, events, and happenings. A writer may narrate the story from his perspective, or from a [character](#)’s perspective. Its purpose is to make the [voice](#) of a writer distinctive from other writers.

## Types of Perspective

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### First Person Perspective

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First person perspective means writing from the perspective of the author or main character. Such types of perspectives are mostly found in narratives and autobiographical writings. In these writings, the main character narrates his/her story, and uses first person pronouns, such as “I” and “we.” The readers see everything through this person’s eyes.

### Examples of First Person Perspective in Literature

#### Example #1: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (By Harper Lee)

“It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived.”

#### Example #2: *Jane Eyre* (By Charlotte Bronte)

“I could not unlove him now, merely because I found that he had ceased to notice me.”

### **Example #3: *Gulliver's Travels* (By Jonathan Swift)**

“I cannot but conclude that the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth.”

In these examples, the authors have used first person personal pronouns to express themselves. This perspective shows the inner feelings and thinking of the individuals.

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### **Second Person Perspective**

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Second person perspective uses “you” perspective or a writer tells the story by using second person personal pronouns, like “you” and “your.”

### **Examples of Second Person Perspective in Literature**

#### **Example #4: *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (By Annie Dillard)**

“*You* are a sculptor. *You* climb a great ladder; *you* pour grease all over a growing longleaf pine. Next, *you* build a hollow cylinder like a cofferdam around the entire pine, and grease its inside walls. You climb *your* ladder and spend the next week pouring wet plaster into the cofferdam... Now open the walls of the dam, split the plaster, saw down the tree, remove it, discard, and *your* intricate sculpture is ready: this is the shape of part of the air.”

This expression is not very common in writing. However, here you can see how the “you” perspective captures readers’ attention right from the beginning of the excerpt, giving an impression of a [dialogue](#) between the [speaker](#) and readers.

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### **Third Person Perspective**

The third person perspective uses he, she, it and they personal pronouns. It is a very common method of narration.

## Examples of Third Person Perspective in Literature

### Example #5: *1984* (By Annie Dillard)

“It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.”

### Example #6: *Pride and Prejudice* (By Jane Austen)

“He is just what a young man ought to be,” said she, “sensible, good humored, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! — so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!”

### Example #7: *Paul Clifford* (By Edward George Bulwer-Lytton)

“It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets.”

In each of these examples, readers can only know what is happening but cannot know the feelings and thoughts of the characters.

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## Types of Third Person Perspective

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Third Person Perspective has three major types, including:

**Third Person Objective** – An impersonal recorder or neutral observer narrates the facts or details to the readers.

**Third Person Omniscient** – In third person omniscient, a narrator reports the facts, as well as interpreting and relating the thoughts of a character. It is a very popular technique of storytelling, such as in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, and E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web*.

**Third Person Limited** – In this type of perspective, a narrator reports and interprets the facts and events from a single character’s perspective. For instance, Katherine Mansfield has used the same perspective in her short story *Miss Brill*.

## **Function of Perspective**

Perspective is the most important literary tool for writers. Choosing an effective perspective helps them create the right voice for their narratives. When readers can identify with their narrators, they can get detailed information about everything. Perspective also adds dimension to literary works. Furthermore, the writers often mix different viewpoints between alternating characters, scenes and events.