Omniscient

Definition of Omniscient

Omniscient is a literary technique of writing a [narrative](#) in third person, in which the narrator knows the feelings and thoughts of every [character](#) in the story. Through omniscient narrative, the author brings an entire world of his characters to life, and moves from character to character, allowing different voices to interpret the events, and maintaining omniscient form — that is keeping a distance. Omniscient narrative tells the story of every character by demonstrating that only the narrator possesses information.

Types of Omniscient

Omniscient has two basic types:

> Omniscient [Point of View](#) – When a narrator has knowledge about all the characters in a narrative, it is an omniscient, or all-knowing, point of view.
> Limited Omniscient Point of View – In limited omniscient point of view, a narrator has limited knowledge of just one character, leaving other major or minor characters.

Examples of Omniscient in Literature

Example #1: *The Scarlet Letter* (By Nathaniel Hawthorne)

The narrator in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter,* is an omniscient one, who scrutinizes the characters, and narrates the story in a way that shows the readers that he has more knowledge about the characters than they have about themselves. Though the narrator is an omniscient one, he is also a [subjective](#) narrator, meaning the readers form their own opinions about the things that take place.

Example #2: *Da Vinci Code* (By Dan Brown)

Dan Brown, in his novel *Da Vinci Code*, uses omniscient narrative, and employs several characters to speak in front of the [audience](), demonstrating what each character thinks and sees. Also the narrator provides information about background and related knowledge that characters are unaware of.

Example #3: *Little Women* (By Louisa May Alcott)

> "Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain. Fifteen-year-old Jo was very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt … Elizabeth, or Beth, as everyone called her, was a rosy, smooth-haired, bright-eyed girl of thirteen, with a shy manner, a timid [voice](), and a peaceful expression, which was seldom disturbed … "

Alcott uses an omniscient narrator, as we hear a disembodied voice knowing everyone's feelings and thoughts, exploring all characters from inside and out. Here, the narrator gives a description of the March sisters.

Example #4: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (By J.K. Rowling)

> "Harry had taken up his place at wizard school, where he and his scar were famous … but now the school year was over, and he was back with the Dursleys for the summer, back to being treated like a dog that had rolled in something smelly … The Dursleys hadn't even remembered that today happened to be Harry's twelfth birthday. Of course, his hopes hadn't been high?"

Rowling employs omniscient limited narrator voice, in which readers see what Harry observes, and know what he feels and thinks. They are, however, unable to follow what the Dursleys feel or think about Harry.

Example #5: *The Jilting of Granny Weatherall* (By Katherine Anne Porter)

Another perfect example of omniscient limited voice is Katherine Anne Porter's short story *The Jilting of Granny Weatherall*. In this narrative, readers follow the main character very closely. They know the feelings and thoughts of Granny Weatherall. Porter begins this novel by showing Granny lying sick on the bed. Readers proceed through her perspective.

Function of Omniscient

The purpose of using omniscient technique is to allow the audience to know everything about the characters. This is how they can gain an insight into characters' minds, and create a bond with them. Readers also see and observe the responses of multiple characters, which helps them understand the plot of the narrative.

It also allows authors to make use of multiple voices in a story. By experiencing a narrative through multiple voices, readers can look into the depths of the story. In addition, readers can have an objective interpretation of the characters and events, in contrast to more personal or subjective interpretations. Finally, an omniscient narrator allows for a better storytelling, as it involves multiple characters, and several plot lines with different interpretations of the same event. Thus, a story could be more interesting when the plot moves from character to character.