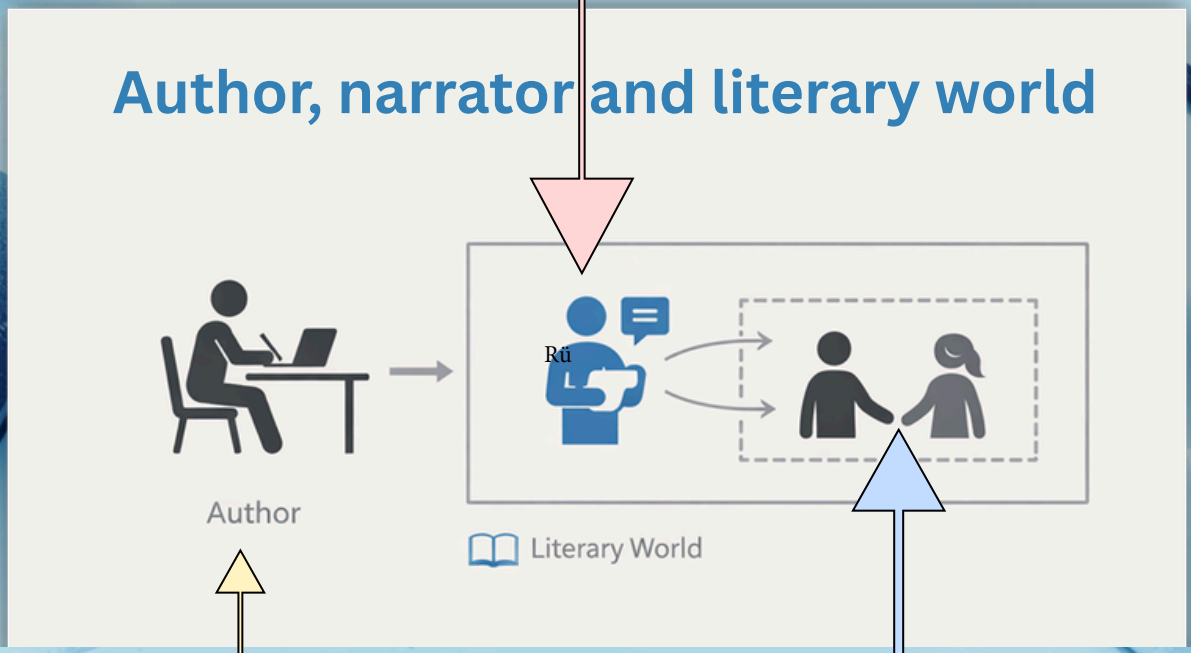
Narrative perspectives /point of view

Understanding the Literary World – The Basics

narrator
- exists inside the literary world
- tells the story
- controls what the reader knows
- is created by the author

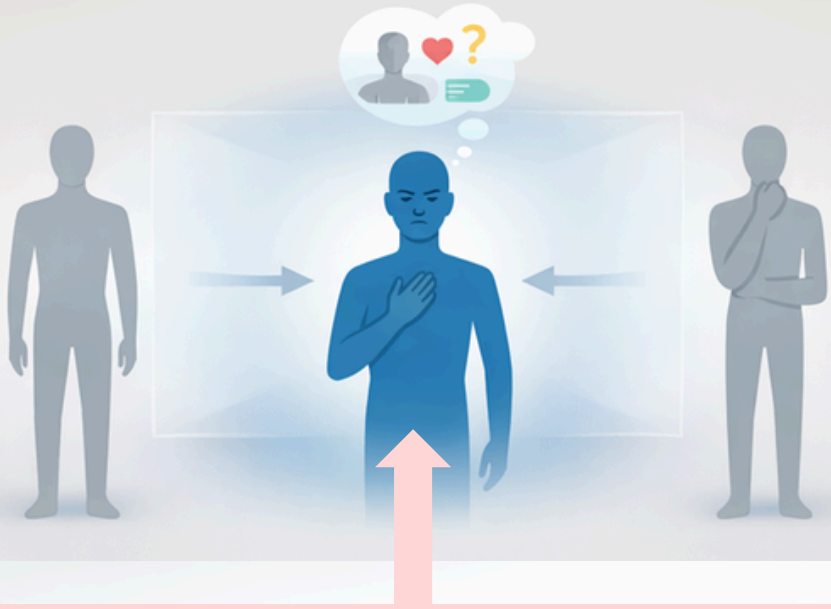


author
- a real person in the real world
- creates the literary world
- is not part of the story

characters
- live inside the literary world
- act and speak within the story
- do not know the author

Important Rule
- **author ≠ narrator**
- The narrator is a fictional voice inside the story.
- The author exists outside the story.

First-person narrator



A **character inside the story** tells the events.

- use of personal pronouns *I, me, my, we (first person)*
- The reader sees everything **through this character's eyes**.

Rü

What does the reader know?

- only this character's thoughts and feelings
- only what this character sees or experiences
- other characters' thoughts remain unknown



Effect on the reader

- strong emotional connection
- feels personal and direct
- can feel authentic and honest
- narrator may be **biased or unreliable**



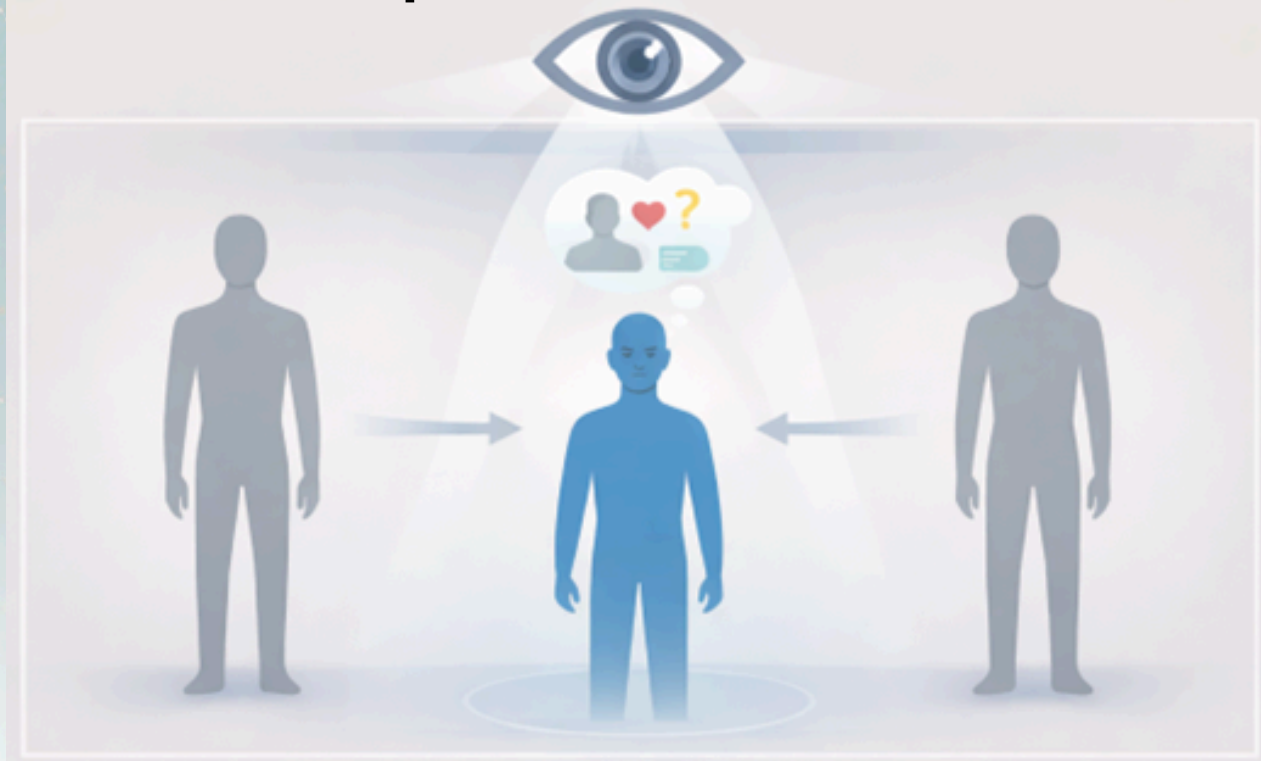
Example

"I couldn't breathe when the door slowly opened. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what."



👉 The reader feels the fear directly because we are **inside the narrator's mind**.

Third-person limited narrator



The narrator is outside the story.

- use of personal pronouns *he, she, they (third person)*
- focuses on **one main character**

What does the reader know?

- thoughts and feelings of **one** character
- events are described **from the outside**
- other characters' thoughts are not revealed



Effect on the reader

- emotional connection to one character
- a little more objective than first-person
- creates suspense (limited knowledge)
- allows some narrative distance



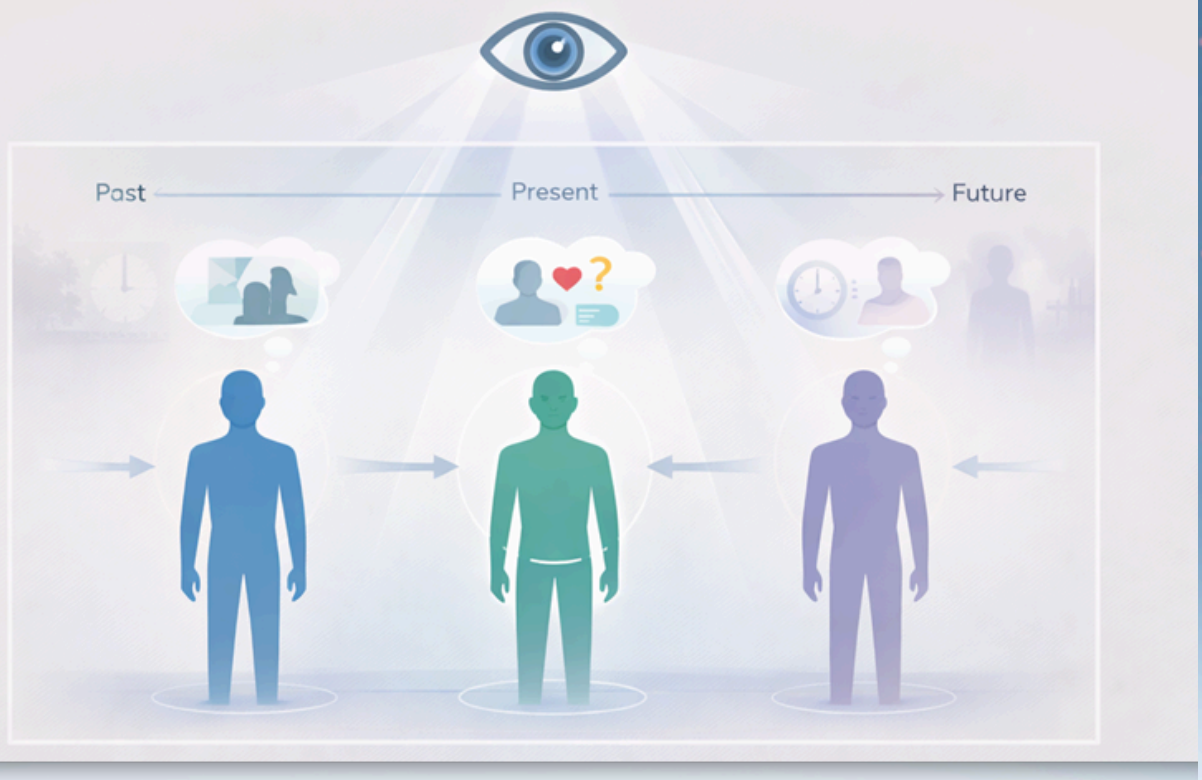
Example

"Emma felt her hands shaking as she opened the door. She tried to stay calm, but her heart was racing."



👉 We understand Emma's feelings, but we **do not know what other characters think**.

omniscient narrator



An all-knowing narrator outside the story.

- use of personal pronouns *he, she, they (third person)*
- knows **everything about all characters**
- can **move freely through time**

What does the reader know?

- thoughts and feelings of all characters
- background information
- past, present, and future events



Effect on the reader

- complete overview of the story
- deeper understanding of conflicts
- dramatic irony (reader knows more than characters)
- less emotional closeness to one single character



Example

"Emma was afraid as she opened the door. Across the street, her brother watched nervously, already knowing that this moment would change everything."



👉 The reader knows more than Emma, which **creates tension and dramatic irony**.

Comparison narrative perspectives / point of view

	First-person narrator	Third-person limited narrator	omniscient narrator
Pronouns	I, me, my	he, she, they	he, she, they
Who tells the story?	a character in the story	outside narrator	all-knowing narrator
Whose thoughts do we know?	one character (the narrator)	one character	all characters
Knowledge level	limited	limited to one mind	unlimited
Time knowledge	only what the narrator knows	only what the focused character knows	past, present, and future
Effect on the reader	very personal and emotional	close to one character	complete overview, dramatic irony possible

Rü

Memory Tip:

- **First-person** = “I tell the story.”
- **Limited** = “One mind only.”
- **Omniscient** = “All minds, all time.”

Rü

Ready to test yourself?

For each text, answer:

1. Whose thoughts and feelings do we know?
2. Does the narrator know more than one character's inner thoughts?
3. Does the narrator know future events?
4. Which narrative perspective is used?
5. How does the perspective influence tension?
6. Which text feels more distant? Why?
7. In which text does the narrator give the reader knowledge that the characters do not have?

Texts

Text A

The heat pressed down on me like a heavy blanket. I could see nothing but red dust and empty road ahead. For a moment, I wondered whether leaving the city had been a mistake, but I pushed the thought away. No one else needed to know how afraid I really was.

Text B

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Daniel kept his eyes on the cracked kitchen table. He told himself he didn't care about the argument, but his hands were clenched into fists. His mother, however, knew he was listening to every word. She could see the anger growing inside him, even if he refused to admit it.

Text C

Ava stood at the edge of the ocean, thinking about the speech she would give the next day. She felt proud, though she would not show it. Behind her, her brother was hoping she might finally leave their small coastal town. Years later, both of them would remember this evening differently.