

3rd Person Narrative

Stories are told through the eyes of the **narrator**. A *narrator* is the person who tells the story and from what **point of view** the story will be read. *Point of view* is the view from which the story is told. There are four basic points of view: **first person, third-person limited, third-person omniscient, and third-person objective**. Let's explore these points of view:

First person point of view is when the narrator is one of the characters in the story. Through *first person point of view* we only find out what this character knows, thinks, and witnesses. You will see first person pronouns such as *I, me, my, and mine* used in telling the story.

Example: *I knew I shouldn't have let Pedro walk home from school alone. He's too little. He must be so scared. We've walked to and from school so many times, I thought he would know his way. Now, he's lost. I'm his big sister; I should have been more responsible!*

In this example, the narrator is Pedro's older sister. We only find out what she knows and thinks. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in first person are:

- ✓ The narrator is a character in the story.
- ✓ The narrator uses words like *I*.
- ✓ The narrator presents her thoughts and feelings, but not the thoughts and feelings of other characters.

Third-person limited point of view is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but tells the story from the viewpoint of one character. Through *third-person limited point of view* we can only find out what this character does, knows, thinks, and sees. You will see third person pronouns such as *he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them* used in telling the story.

Example: *Mrs. Thompson spotted Maria walking on the sidewalk calling out Pedro's name. She knew she shouldn't have let Pedro leave the schoolyard alone. Even though she was just his first grade teacher, Mrs. Thompson always felt a special bond with Pedro. Her heart sank. She pulled her car over and told Maria to get in; they would look for Pedro together. She noticed tears forming in Maria's eyes. She reached over and patted Maria's knee, "We will find him, Maria." She hoped that comforted Maria a little.*

In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. The story is being told by the narrator from the viewpoint of Mrs. Thompson, Pedro's first grade teacher. As readers, we can only find out what Mrs. Thompson does, knows, thinks, and sees. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person limited are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The story focuses on the thoughts and feelings of one character.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he* or *she*.

Third-person omniscient (om-ni-shent) **point of view** is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but can see into the minds of *all* characters and can report what is said and done. Through *third-person omniscient point of view* we can find out what all the characters do, think, feel and see. You will see third-person pronouns such as *he, his, hers, it, its, they,* and *them* used in telling the story.

Example: *Mrs. Thompson watched Pedro walk away from the schoolyard alone. There was a small voice inside her that told her to stop him. "He's just a little boy. He's far too small to walk home alone," she thought.*

Pedro walked by the white picket fence that he walked by every day on his way to and from school. He stopped at the next street. "Which way do I turn?" he thought to himself. He stood there and looked up and down the street trying to remember if he needed to turn left or right. He turned right and looked desperately for something that looked familiar to him. Nothing did. He started to panic, "Where am I? Should I turn around and go back? I wish my sister was with me!"

Maria looked at her watch, again. "Where is he?" she thought, with a slight sense of panic. She began walking towards the school. "Have you seen Pedro?" she asked a neighbor as she hurried by.

In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. As readers, we are able to find out what all the characters think, feel, do, and see. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person omniscient are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The actions, thoughts, and feelings of all characters are revealed.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he* or *she*.

Third-person objective point of view is when the narrator is not a character in the story, but is an observer who can only tell what is said and done and cannot see into the minds of any of the characters in the story. Through *third-person objective point of view* we can only find out what the characters say and do. You will see third person pronouns such as *he, his, she, hers, it, its, they, and them* used in telling the story.

Example: *Pedro began to cry. He stopped walking and sat down on the sidewalk. Mrs. Trewer noticed the boy as she hung her coat up on the hook next to the window. She opened the door and rushed over to him. "Are you lost, Sweetheart?" she asked. Pedro nodded and sniffed. Mrs. Trewer wiped the tears off his cheeks with the end of her scarf.*

In this example, the narrator is not a character in the story. As readers, we are able to find out only what the characters do and say. Some clues in this passage that tell us it is written in third-person omniscient are:

- ✓ The narrator is not a character in the story.
- ✓ The reader only finds out what is said and done.
- ✓ The narrator refers to characters in the story as *he, she, her,* and *him*.

