

How to Point of View: The Ins and Outs of First Person vs. Third Person Narratives

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Greetings. Welcome to How To point of view. My name is Kessia Robinson, and we're going to go over the ins and outs of first-person versus third-person narratives today.

So to begin with, I want to tell a story. A few years ago, while I was going to BYU for my undergrad, I was working on a novel with Carol Lynch Williams was my professor. And I had written several drafts of this novel already, and I'd worked on it for a number of years. So I'd done a lot on this novel up to that point. And it was written in third-person point of view. And I remember that Carol told me at one point, she said, "You know what I think would really make this a lot better, would be to change this novel to first-person instead." Now, you could imagine that that is a big thing to hear to have to change about your novel, right? Change the complete and total point of view of the entire thing. Changing it to first-person was going to be a huge endeavor. And so I had to think about that.

And the other thing that was different was that I had always written up 'til that point in third-person. I've written several novels before that—all of them had been in third-person point of view, and so thinking about changing this novel, it wasn't just changing one novel, but it was a complete departure from the style that I had known before.

But in the end, I decided to give it a try, and I ended up changing my entire novel to first-person point of view. And the novel worked a lot better. Carol was completely right. And I want to talk about that a little bit today.

Because I think sometimes we get stuck in the style that we're used to—write the point of view that we feel the most comfortable in. Maybe we like to write in first-person because that's just

what we like. That's what we know. That's what we started writing in. Maybe we like third-person, excuse me, because that's what we started writing in, you know. Like me, that's just what I had written in the whole time.

But we're not always thinking about what's going to be the best point of view for the story that I'm trying to tell. We're not always thinking of point of view as a strategic move for the story type that we're doing. And that's what this presentation is really about. It's about taking a look at what point of view is going to work for which story and how to make that decision.

So in order to do that, what we're going to do is we're going to go over the different points of view that are out there. We're going to talk about the pros and cons of each one. So, you know, what types of stories do they work really well for? What strengths does each one have and what limitations do they have? And the hope with this is that by the end, we're thinking more about point of view as a tool instead of just, as you know, the natural way that we tell a story. So to do this, I've got a PowerPoint presentation that I'm going to pull up here. Let me just pull this up for you.

So we're going to get started by going over single first-person narrative. Now I'm thinking that many of you might know definitions of each of these point of view. You probably already know these definitions, but they're here just in case.

We're going to talk about each one and then we're going to go over the pros and cons. At the end of this presentation if we have time, we are going to talk about how to make our first-person narratives feel more authentic. And if we have time after that, we'll talk a little bit more about making our third-person narratives more lyrical if we have time, which we might not get to that, but let's just start with this.

Single first person narrative: the novel's told from the point of view of one main character using pronouns like "I" "me" and "my," right. Examples. There's so many examples out there, right—"The Hate You Give," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "The Cruel Prince." Probably one of the most famous classics in first-person point of view is "Catcher in the Rye," right. We're really in Holden Caulfield's head for that novel.

Let's talk about the pros and cons of this. Okay, pros. It's an extremely powerful characterization tool, especially for voice. That's probably the strongest thing about the first person point of view, right? As you read "Catcher in the Rye," you're not forgetting Holden Caulfield voice anytime soon, right. You really know him as a character, and you are really in his head.

Because you are in the main character's head, it also makes flashbacks really simple and fluid, because you're just in that character's head. So having them remember something feels really natural in a way that is unique to a first-person narrative. Emotional responses to things are also really fluid because you're seeing everything through your main character's eyes. So that's a huge pro as well, right, because that's going to make the characterization really a lot more natural. This can also make a work feel deeply personal, and it can also show the psychology of the character really well. There's nothing that can be as potent for characterization as the first-person narrative.

This is the reason why changing my particular novel that I was working on at the time from third-person to first-person was so effective— because I was writing a novel where the journey that the main character was going through was, you know, one of those journeys from hating who she was to coming to appreciate and love who she was. And so being able to see that happening firsthand in that character's head, you know, having a struggle that deeply psychological and personal being key to the novel, first-person really allowed that to shine. But there are some limitations to the first-person narrative.

So, for one thing, you are limited to a single style and voice. I don't know about you, but I don't know if I would want to write a novel in Holden Caulfield's voice. I don't know if I would want to do that. Right. I don't know if I would want to be limited to that character's voice. But you're really writing through that character and not through yourself when you write a novel in first-person. And so what you say and how you say it is limited to what that character knows and how that character expresses themselves. And that really can be a limitation when it comes to writing your novel.

It's also you're limited to a single perspective, a single character arc too. This can get tricky. I've done, I've taught creative writing at BYU—I've taught 218—and I've taught creative writing at the high school and junior high level. I've taught a few novel writing classes. So I've seen a lot of beginning novelists, and I've seen some of them get into trouble with the first-person narrative because they're writing and writing and writing, and then they get to a point halfway through the book where they're like, wait, the reader needs to know something that my character doesn't know. How is that possible? And the answer is it's really not possible, right, because you can't jump ship halfway through your novel and change it to a different point of view.

So I've seen people work themselves into corners with first-person because of that. Another thing that can be awkward in first-person narrative is world building, establishing the rules of the world. Because you're in a character's head. Maybe they're describing their day, right. They're going about their day, they're doing this and that.

You're seeing everything through their eyes, and suddenly they pause what they're doing, and they're like, "By the way, here's the rules of the world. This isn't okay. This is okay. This is possible, and magic is like this," right. That can be really awkward because it stalls the flow of what the character is thinking in a way that's less awkward in a different point of view. So first-person. It can be done really well in first-person, but I've seen it also really be a struggle too.

Another con is that the focus is usually on a single character's growth and development. So if you have a number of characters who all go through large changes, right, and you have multiple character arcs, that's not going to show very well in a single first-person narrative. We get a really in depth look at one person, but just the one. So those other characters, we can see maybe see their arcs from a distance, but we don't see them up close and personal the same way that we are going to with our main character. So those are some of the pros and cons.

I want to take a look at an example as well, why first-person is so potent and so powerful and such a good choice in a lot of situations. This is from "The Lost Sisters: by Holly Black. this is, she wrote the Cruel Prince series. This is actually the second book in that series. It's actually a novella between the first and second book. But if you haven't read the Cruel Prince, it is a story that, it's fantasy. It's about Jude, who is a girl who has a twin sister named Taryn. And it's from Jude's point of view. She tells the story, and she and her twin sister Taryn have this huge conflict in the book and kind of get really angry at each other, and they have a really hard time.

So "The Lost Sisters" is a novella that's kind of an answer to the Cruel Prince, where it's from, Taryn's point of view instead, so she kind of tells her side of the story. And that's what this is from. This is from the beginning of "The Lost Sisters," right after Taryn tells the story, a version of the story of Bluebeard, so I'm just going to read this for you.

"I think about that story a lot. I think about it all the time. It's the kind of thing you like: the wicked are slain, with swords no less. Vengeance is had. Boldness is rewarded." So here, when she says, "It's the kind of thing you like," she's talking to her sister, Jude.

"But what about all those girls? All those obedient girls who trusted, and loved, and wed, and died? Weren't they bold, too. I bet you don't think so. I bet you think they were just stupid. That's your problem in a nutshell: you're judgmental.

Everyone makes mistakes. They trust the wrong people. They fall in love. Not you, though. And that's why it's so hard to ask for forgiveness. But I am. Asking. I mean, I am going to ask. I am going to try to explain how it happened and how sorry I am." So what I love about this is you

really get into Taryn's head here. You see this wonderful portrayal of kind of what she's feeling and what she's thinking.

You see this comparison between herself and her sister, Jude, and this comparison between the girls of the story that she just told. It's really potent. You get a strong image of who Taryn is right here in the beginning of the novel before she's even jumped into the story. And that is really a powerful tool. Okay, let's move on to multiple first-person narrative.

So in this case, the novel's told from the direct point of view of multiple main characters usually told through alternating chapters using pronouns like "I," "me," and "my," right. So it's like, you know, a single first-person narrative. But in this case, you've got more characters who are telling the story, and usually you know, it's alternating chapters. So you'll see this in "A Curse so Dark and Lonely" as an example. It's a retelling of Beauty and the Beast, and you've got Two main characters. You've got Ren, who is the beast. Right. And you've got Harper, who's the beauty here, and they kind of alternate back and forth there telling the story.

You see this a lot in romance novels because you can see the love story happening from both sides. But you see it a lot, and a lot of my examples are YA fantasy because that's what I do. So "A Curse so Dark and Lonely" is an example. "An Ember in the Ashes, as an example. "Children of Blood and Bone" is another example of this.

So let's talk about pros and cons again. A lot of the pros are going to be similar. It's very powerful tool for voice. You just get more voice in there. Right. I think it is a little bit diluted; you're not as in depth, you don't follow one person throughout the story. So by nature of that can you dilute the power of that voice a little bit, but it's still a powerful tool for voice. It still makes flashbacks and emotional responses feel fluid.

And it still makes the work feel deeply personal. But on top of that now it shows several character arcs instead of just one. So if you have multiple characters who make big changes throughout the novel, this could be a powerful choice for you.

Furthermore, character opinions of each other can be really illuminating. One of my favorite things about multiple first-person narrative is that you see the character inside and out. So you're inside the character's head. So you see how they see themselves. Right. And you see how they think. But you also see how the other characters perceive them, and that is a really interesting multi-dimensional look at a character that can have some interesting discrepancies and that can be really illuminating. One of my favorite things about multiple first-person narrative, though, is that the dramatic irony can be suspenseful and delicious.

One of the things I love the most in a multiple first-person narrative is when character A know something that character B doesn't know, right. But character B really needs to know that thing. It's imperative that character B finds out what character A knows. But, you know, you don't know when or if that's going to happen. That creates some really delicious suspense and pulls you into a story in a way that's really powerful.

There are some cons to this: you are still limited to a couple of voices or styles. So you're still gonna be writing through your character's voice. And that can limit how you say what you say and what you can say, right, because you can only speak in the voice of your character. You can only say things according to what they see. Their expressions, their vocabulary—all of that. World building can be tricky the same way that it can be for a single first-person narrative.

Another problem is that sometimes readers prefer one character over another. So, you know, they might not want to hear from character B and that could slow down their reading, for instance. And this is especially true of the beginning of a novel, right in the beginning of a novel. You have so much work to do to get your reader to be invested in your character, right.

So I'll give you an example. When I read "Children of Blood and Bone," you start off reading about the character Zélie. And so the author does a lot of work to pull you into Zélie's world and to really get you to care about her and see the problems that she's facing.

And so after the first few chapters with Zélie, I was rooting for her. I was like, wow, I love this character. I can't wait to see what she does, right. There's a lot of complexity here. I was rooting for her, and then boom, now it's Amari, right. So, I just been pulled into the story. But the momentum stopped right there for me because now I was supposed to care about somebody else that I had never met. Right, it's the beginning of the book all over again. And you have to do that for every character you have, so you almost have to work harder for your second character to pull the reader into the story again so they care about a new character and a new perspective, but they didn't before. And that can be really tricky. It can slow your reader down or even halt their progress entirely in your book.

Another thing is that having two or more voices sound distinct can be difficult. It's easy to confuse the reader. It's really important that the voices that you're using don't sound the same, because even if you label your chapters, like let's say in "A Curse so Dark and Lonely," you have Ren and Harper talking. Every chapter is labeled either Ren or Harper. That's the title of the chapter. So you know when you go into it, you know who is speaking. You know who the "I" is in the first person. But even then it can still be confusing. If you're reading, you can still get

lost a little bit, you know, you can have a moment where you're like, "Wait. Who's talking right now? I've had that happen when I've been reading, and it's pretty common. And that's true. The more characters that you have in a multiple first-person narrative, the more confusing it can get.

So, usually a multiple first-person narrative will have two, maybe three characters. Sometimes there will be more. But the more you have, the more of a risk it is that you're going to confuse your reader.

It's also true that that gets complicated really fast, because the more character arcs you have, the trickier it is to fit them all together into one cohesive novel, right. Sometimes the arcs don't meet up the way that they need to. And that is very tricky as a writer to do.

So those are some of the cons of it. I don't have an example for multiple first-person narrative because I couldn't think of a way to show some of my favorite things about it without spoiling some of the novels.

But there are a lot of really good examples out there, and I encourage you to read those. What I would show would be a lot like the first-person I showed, but it would be two different voices, two different points of view. So we're going to go ahead and move on to single third-person narrative limited. So in this case, the novel's told from the point of view of an outside narrator—someone not in the story who has access to only one character's thoughts using pronouns like "he," "she," "they," "her," "his," so on. So there's a lot of examples of this. One is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. For most of the novel, though, at the beginning, it's not really told through one character's experience. Also *Sorcery of Thorns* is an example. *"Fahrenheit 451"* is an example of this. There's a lot of examples of this out there.

This is what I was writing in most of the time before I changed that novel that I told you about to first-person. I was writing in single third-person narrative limited or sometimes multiple third-person narrative limited. That's what I knew. And there's a lot of really good things about this style.

Pros, you're not limited to the character's voice vocabulary and expressions. So if you have a character like Holden Caulfield, guess what, you don't have to write in his voice.

You pick your own style that you want to do. You pick your own voice. Right. You still have to pick a style when you're, you know, choosing how your narrator is going to sound, but that is, you know, a lot more up to what you want to do as the author than it is controlled by the type of character you have.

Because of this, one of my very favorite things about the third-person narrative style is that the language can be really lyrical and lovely because you're not limited to what your character knows and how your character speaks. So that frees you up as a writer to to really develop a beautiful style of your own.

Third-person is easier to add world building explanations or setting. So we talked about how in first-person that can be really awkward. In third-person, it's a little bit easier because you're not automatically in someone's head. And so You're not limited to that. So a lot of fantasy novels are written in third person. And part of the reason for that is because it is a little bit easier to add world building explanations in a way that's a little bit more fluid.

Cons. The cons are a lot of the opposite of the pros for first-person: internal reactions can be more difficult. That's the part that maybe feels less fluid. Flashbacks can be trickier. The voice can be weaker of your characters. You really see how your character speaks from an outside perspective, and so you're going to have to do a lot more work with dialogue. You're going to have to do a lot more work to get those internal reactions to be seen.

You're also limited to one character and one character arc or a single third-person narrative. So if you have multiple characters, who go through a developmental arc, that's not going to show as clearly in a single third-person narrative. Right.

So the example from this comes from "Sorcery of Thorns." This is from the beginning. "Sorcery of Thorns" is a young adult fantasy novel about a girl who lives in a magical library, filled memoirs, which are these magical books with, they're kind of lifelike, right. They act like they're alive. And if they get damaged, they turn into these monsters and can cause havoc. So this is just a very brief scene from the very beginning when you see the first grimoire being taken into the library to be locked up. They're taking this dangerous, one of the most dangerous grimoires into the basement to be locked away.

The Director set off across the courtyard, and Elizabeth followed. Gravel crunched beneath their heels. A foul stench clotted the air as she drew nearer, like waterlogged leather left to rot on the seashore. Elizabeth had grown up in the Great Library, surrounded by the ink-and-parchments smell of magical tones, but this was far from what she was used to. Stench stung her eyes and stippled her arms with goosebumps.

So what I love about this is, I love the active verbs that are being used here. I like the style of the writing, right. The foul stench clotted the air, right? The stench stung her eyes and stippled her arms with goosebumps. Right. It's a really beautiful way of writing.

And it flows really well for telling what's happening to giving you this fact about Elizabeth, right. That she grew up in the library, right. That she, you know, knows how this works but even then, is surprised. Third-person can be really good for things like that.

So that's an example. Let's go for multiple third-person narrative limited. So in this case, the novel is told from the point of view of an outside narrator, someone not in the story again, who has access to multiple characters' thoughts, though only one character at a time, usually told through alternating chapters but not always. Using pronouns like "he," "she," "they," "hers," "his," and so on. So, you see this in "Strange the Dreamer," which is one of my favorite books, "Six of Crows," "The Stormlight Archive Series." You'll see this a lot in high fantasy. And I think this is probably one of the preferred styles for a high fantasy novel. So another example would be "Game of Thrones" uses this point of view style, and there's a reason for that. We're going to talk about that right now.

There's pros and cons. So again, with third-person narrative, you're not limited to the character's voice, vocabulary, and expressions. You can have a lot of characters in a multiple third-person narrative. You are not limited to just a few like you are for multiple first-person narrative because your reader's not going to get confused as to which character you're talking about because you're constantly saying their name, right. You're not using "I," "me," and "my" for every character that you're talking about here. So, you can have a very complex array of characters in a multiple third-person narrative. Right. You can have a lot of different characters speaking.

But you're not limited to their voice or vocabulary. You could you have a consistent voice that can be a lot more lyrical and lovely than it might otherwise be. Again, it's easier to add world building or explanations of setting. That's one of the reasons why this is such a popular style for those who write high fantasy, because it's a lot easier to talk about the rules of the world and where this is taking place, which tends to be really important.

Another pro is you have access to multiple characters' thoughts that can really enrich the text. So you have multiple character arcs as well. This allows for complicated plot and subplots, and this is the main reason why high fantasy uses this a lot, is because a lot of high fantasy novels have really complicated plots and subplots, really complex story. And so what you need to be able to tell a story like that is you need to be able to jump from one character to another to see

all the different sides of this really complex story and to have it get woven together into this one thing.

So for instance, a common trope of high fantasy will be to have a prologue where you meet some characters you never see again. Right. You're in that character's head through third-person, right, but that character may not even be an important character. You meet them, you see something happened that you need to know as a reader, and then you move on and never come back.

You will have main characters who come back again and again. But you might have, you know, brief glimpses into other characters, where you see something important about the plot that has more to do again with the plotline than with the character themselves. So this is, it's a really complex way of telling a story. It can be really rewarding. But it really allows for a really in-depth storyline, right. A lot of complexity. Cons. Some of them are similar to third-person, what we talked about before. Internal reactions can be trickier. Flashbacks can be trickier. Voice can be weaker.

And then there's some similar to multiple first-person narrative sometimes readers prefer one character over another. So they might not want to hear from character B. And that might slow down the reading. This is true for, I read Brandon Sanderson "Stormlight Archives." So when I was first reading "The Way of Kings," I really liked the character Kaladin a lot more than I liked the character Shallan, for instance.

So when I got to Shallan's chapters after reading Kaladin's chapters, I did not want to switch over. I either wanted to skip her chapters entirely, or I wanted to, you know, just stop reading. Because I didn't, you know, I didn't want to hear about her storyline, and that slowed down my reading considerably. And that is a risk that you take with this particular type of narrative.

Um. This last con, I think instead of saying that I think that this is less true—having two more voices sound distinct can be difficult. That's less true for this because you don't have to have their voices sound distinct, right. You are writing in a different style. So you're less likely to confuse your reader by switching from character to character.

But instead of that, what I'll say is this, when you have such a complicated plot, it can be really tricky to get all the cogs to line up the way you want them to as a writer. It's a very complicated style.

And that can make it tricky for you when you're writing to get all the characters, where you want them, all the information where you want it and when you want it. To have a story to not give away too much, but not to give away too little. Right. There's a lot of, it's a tightrope to walk there. So that can be really difficult in this type of story.

So the example that I want to use is from "Strange the Dreamer," which is one of my very favorite books. And it's written in third-person, multiple third-person narrative limited. I would say, though, sometimes it borders on being very first-person omniscient. So, this this book breaks a lot of rules, but what I love about "Strange the Dreamer." One of the things that I love is that you get portrayals of a lot of different characters but this consistent beautiful lyrical style as you go about doing that. So we're going to take a look at just a few passages from "Strange the Dreamer." This is about Lazlo Strange, who is, I would say the main character, and this really isn't an internal look at him. This is how other people see him. But this is a characterization of him. That's where the beginning, when he first gets to the library. He gets to this library in the, you know, City of Zosma, and he starts working there when he's a teenager.

So this is about Laszlo Strange. "Laszlo couldn't have belonged to the library more truly if you were a book himself. In the days that followed, and in the months and years as he grew into a man, he was rarely to be seen without one open in front of his face. He read while he walked, he read while he ate. The other librarians suspected that somehow he read while he slept, or perhaps didn't sleep at all. On the occasions that he did look up from the page, he would seem as though he were awakening from the dream. Strange the dreamer, they called him. That dreamer, strange.

And it didn't help that he sometimes walked into walls while reading, or that his favorite books hailed from that dusty sublevel where no one else care to go. He drifted about with his head full of myths, always at least half lost in some other land of story. Demons and wing smiths, seraphim and spirits —he loved it all.

He believed in magic like a child, and in ghosts like a peasant. His nose was broken by a falling volume of fairy tales his first day on the job, and that, they said told you everything you needed to know about strange Lazlo Strange." Isn't that just a lovely depiction of the character? Really beautifully done. And this lyrical style is throughout the novel, even as we go into kind of the point of view of other characters. Right. So here is a look at the other main characters Sarai. This is her, a moment in her thoughts.

“The function of hate, as Sarai saw it, was to stamp out compassion, to close a door in one’s own self and forget it was over there. If you had hate, then you could see suffering, and cause it, and feel nothing except perhaps a sordid vindication.

But at some point, here in this room, Sarai thought, she had lost that capacity. Hate had failed her, and it was like losing a shield in battle. Once it was gone, all the suffering had risen up to overwhelm her. It was too much. It was then that her nightmares had turned against her.” So you see the same lyrical style being used here, but now we’re in Sarai’s thoughts. There’s one more that I want to show you. And the reason for that is because Lazlo and Sarai are main characters. Right. So, being in their thoughts maybe isn’t so different, but this third character Thyon Nero is not a main character. He’s not and so to be in his thoughts is a real privilege of the multiple third-person narrative limited, where you can jump into this other minor character’s thoughts. You can show this richness and depth to multiple characters, even some of the characters that aren’t playing the biggest roles. So here’s just some of the thoughts of Thyon Nero: “He had stumbled onto something that refused to be believed. His mind was at war with itself. Alchemy and magic, the mystical and material, demons and angels, gods and men.

What was the world? What was the cosmos? Up in the black, were there roads to the stars traveled by impossible beings? What had he entered into by coming across the world?” Right. So again, the same lyrical style, but now we’re in Thyon Nero’s thoughts instead. So, this can be a really powerful tool because the style—the writing style—the narration is consistent. But you get to see a lot of depth of character for many characters instead of just a few. And that’s one of my favorite things about the novel and about that particular style.

Okay, the last one we’re going to talk about is third-person narrative omniscient. This is a lot less common. Currently it’s more often found in older books. But it’s told from the outside narrators point of view, someone who’s not in the story who has access to everyone’s thoughts at once, using pronouns like “he,” “she,” “they,” “his,” “hers,” and so on.

So instead of alternating between chapters, or, you know, alternating whose thoughts we’re looking at, you know, you really can just— there’s access to all the thoughts at once and access to all the time periods. Every point of the story is present to the narrator at the same time. Right, so they have access to things that, you know, most narrator styles don’t have. Some examples are “Emma,” “Les Mis,” “A Christmas Carol,” “Matilda,” and the “The Tale of Despereaux.” The last two are more recent, Right. And our classics of yore, right. But so we’re going to take a look at an example from “The Tale of Despereaux.” This is a children’s story about a heroic mouse. Oh, before we do that, we’re going to talk about pros and cons, okay. Then we’ll take a look at “The Tale of Despereaux.” Pros. Some of these are really similar to the pros for third-person,

you're not limited to the character's voice, vocabulary, or expressions. So the language can be more lyrical and lovely than it might otherwise be. It's easier to add world building or explanations of setting. You also have access to multiple characters' thoughts in this style, and you can jump between them as often as you want. This allows for complicated plots and subplots.

There's also allowance for addressing the reader directly. So many third-person omniscient narratives will just say, "And reader, this is what happens next," right. They'll just talk to the reader directly. And I think the reason for that is because with an omniscient narrator, you're not tied down to a single character, the way you are for any of the others, right. For any of the other styles we've talked about, you are kind of stuck looking through a character's eyes.

Even if you're third-person limited, you're still kind of telling the story tied to a character. But an omniscient narrator, you're not tied to any character. So the tie that you have is more directly to the reader. Right, you're sitting down with the reader and you're saying, "Let me tell you a story, reader.

And we're going to jump back and forth everywhere. And I'm not tied down to any one thing, any one person in the story; who I'm tied to is you." Right. So that's kind of a really cool style that way because you have that interestingly direct link to the reader and what you're going to tell them about. You also can jump backwards and forwards in time. So really easily. You can even say, "So and so didn't know it, but soon they were going to have to face this," or they can say, "It made so and so consider," you know, "twenty or ten years ago, in this particular experience that the main character had forgotten about, they had done this." Right. And the main character doesn't even know they did it, but the narrator does.

There's also allowance for plenty of creativity and humor. I love the third-person omniscient narrator style because it can be hilarious if it's done well. It can be—the humor is, there's a lot of opportunity for that. There's a lot of cons: internal reactions can be more difficult, flashbacks can be trickier, voice can weaker. Those are all things we know from third-person already.

I think one of the biggest things with omniscient, though, is that you have access to all the characters' thoughts to the present, the past, and future. You have access to every aspect of the story right from the beginning. So it can be so difficult to know what to say when, when you know everything right up front, right. Telling a story that way can be all over the place a little bit, if you're not careful, okay. And now let's take a look at "The Tale of Despereaux." And. Okay, so we're just going to read through this. "Once upon a time, he [Despereaux] said aloud, relishing the sound.

And then, tracing each word with his paw, he read the story of a beautiful princess and the brave knight who serves and honors her. Despereaux did not know it, but he would need, very soon, to be brave himself. Have I mentioned that beneath the castle there was a dungeon? In the dungeon there were rats. Large rats. Mean rats. Despereaux was destined to meet those rats. Reader, you must know that an interesting fate (sometimes involving rats, sometimes not) always almost everyone, mouse or man, who does not conform.” So this is just a really delightful children’s book, and what’s interesting about this example is it’s really all over the place. You start in scene with Despereaux reading a story, then suddenly, we’re telling the future: “Despereaux did not know it, but he was going to have to be brave himself.” Then suddenly, we jumped to a setting that’s not the setting that we’re currently in: “Have I mentioned that”—and this is a direct address to the reader, right—“Have I mentioned that beneath the castle there was a dungeon.” Who are they talking to? It’s talking to the reader. Right.

We talked about rats. Despereaux doesn’t meet those rats until in the future, again. And then we have a direct address to the reader: “Reader, you must know.” And here, the narrator just basically states one of the themes of the book. Tada! Right there. Right. So there’s this really direct nature to third-person omniscient, and it kind of can feel a little bit all over the place, but it works, and it’s also kind of just a delightful, funny story here.

Okay. We are running out of time, so I want to end by talking about, you know, how do you know which point of view you should use, when? And I have just a few examples of this, right.

Example one, I’m writing a novel that delves deeply into the psychology of a single character and charts their growth, right. This is the situation that I was in, and I had written it in third-person, but considering a single first-person narrative might be a good option for this type of story. So you get that in depth, emotional, and psychological book, right? And so is that to say that you couldn’t write a third-person narrative that delves deeply into the psychology of a single character in terms of their growth. No, of course not, you still could do that. And it’s been done really successfully, right. But these are just things to think about as we’re making that decision. How to strategically use this information that we’ve talked about.

What about this one: I’m writing a fantasy novel with an intricate world with lots of new information and rules. Well, for that, right, fantasy, world building is really strong with a third-person narrative. So you might want to consider third-person. Is that to say you couldn’t consider a first-person narrative. No, there are many fantasy novels that are written in first-person that are done extremely well. But you might want to consider the pros and cons of that a third-person narrative.

The novel I'm writing has a complicated plot with lots of moving cogs. If you have a really complex plot, you might want to consider multiple narrative format, either first-person or third-person. If it's an extremely complex plot, you might want to consider a third-person multiple narrative, because then you can jump back and forth between many different characters. See the story from lots of different sides.

But again, these are just some examples. And you have to consider, right, you might have a fantasy novel that still is extremely focused on characterization. If that's the case, you might want to consider, you know, maybe you'll still consider first-person, or maybe you'll want to use multiple third-person limited, right. Like "Strange the Dreamer" does, and does great characterization there. Right. But these are just some things to think about and how to think about it as you're going about working your particular novel. So we are out of time, but what I'm hoping that you got out of this, I'm really hoping that you kind of see how these different points of view can be used strategically in the story that you're trying to tell, and we don't get bogged down just using the one that we're used to, but we really try to experiment with this and see what's going to work best for us as writers and for the stories that we're trying to tell. So, thank you very much for your time. That's all.