THE PRENTICE HALL READER

CHAPTER 2: NARRATION
SUBJECTIVE VS. OBJECTIVE NARRATION

- Subjective Narration focuses on personal impressions, thoughts, insights, and feelings.
  - “personal experience narratives”
  - the author recounts an experience in order to share with the reader an insight
  - **Tone** can be funny or serious, but it should be about something that is *universal* - a realization, a sudden understanding, an awareness the experience brought you
Objective Narration is usually stated in the third-person to give a writer’s view a sense of neutrality

- Author is not a participant or character, but simply a presenter of the facts
- “here-is-what-happened narratives”
- Stories in newspapers or history textbooks are good examples
- Intended to inform the reader, not to show emotion or feelings about the topic
EITHER/OR

• “Entertaining Narrative”
  • Can be either subjective or objective
  • Examples are short stories, jokes, tall tales, or myths
  • May be intended to scare us, to puzzle us, or to get us to think about a situation or a course of action
  • Typically fictionalized
• Remember that all narratives are driven by time, but not all follow a strict chronological timeline
LINEAR TIMELINE:
BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING

• Creates an open-ended narrative
• Can build suspense about what’s to come
• Can provide foreshadowing and hints of what’s to come
• Can bring more than one subplot together at the end to see how characters and stories are related
• Most traditional method
• Must provide background info (exposition) before starting story
BEGINNING AT THE MIDDLE OR AT A TURNING POINT

• Can arouse reader’s interest by opening at a dramatic scene
• Can focus on a chain of events, or a series of subplots, so reader must concentrate to follow more stories than one at a time
• Uses flash-backs and flash-forwards to reveal important themes, facts, or revelations
• Must be cautious not to switch between different times and events too much, or reader may lose interest
• Must give definite boundaries between subplots and times, so reader doesn’t get lost in the story
BEGINNING AT THE END

• Starts with the most dramatic or revealing scene, then flashes back to show what led to that one climatic scene

• Less suspenseful as story progresses, but a stronger sense of what caused the climatic event

• Answers the questions “How could this happen?” or “why would someone let this happen?”

• Often reveals several plotlines or sub-plots that seem unrelated, but come together in the end to reveal how the climatic beginning was possible
POINT OF VIEW

• First or Third Person Limited (Subjective Narration)
  • In Subjective or Limited point of view, the reader can only see and know the thoughts and inner emotions of the point of view character (narrator)
  • The reader is “limited” to the thoughts of just one character
  • For all other characters in the scene, the reader can only see what they say or do and doesn’t know the other characters’ inner thoughts
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD
IN LIMITED POINT OF VIEW

• Little Red Riding Hood opened the door to Grandma’s room and stepped inside. She sniffed lightly. There was a strange smell in the room that she didn’t like. She squinted at Grandma. Why was the room so dark?

• “Hello, my dear. Come closer.” Grandma patted the bedspread beside her.

• Grandma’s voice was huskier than normal. Well, she was sick, after all.

• Little Red moved closer to the bed until she could see Grandma. What was wrong with Grandma’s eyes?

• “What big eyes you have today, Grandma.”

• “All the better to see you with, my dear.”
IN LIMITED POINT OF VIEW YOU ONLY SEE ONE CHARACTER’S THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS. FOR ALL OTHER CHARACTERS, YOU ONLY OBSERVE THEIR OUTER ACTIONS AND WORDS.

- In this scene, the reader gets several inner thoughts from Red Riding Hood —
  - she doesn’t like the smell in the room
  - she wonders why it is dark
  - she thinks there is something wrong with Grandma’s eyes

- In contrast, you don’t get any of Grandma’s/The Wolf’s thoughts; all you see and hear from Grandma Wolf are the things that he says or does.
FIRST OR THIRD PERSON OBJECTIVE

• Objective point of view means that the reader doesn’t see any character’s inner thoughts and feelings, not even those of the point of view character
  • The reader is only witness to outer actions and dialogue
    • Think of this as using a movie camera to record an event. A camera can’t record the thoughts or feelings of a person, only what they say, do or display with expressions on their face or body language.
LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

• Little Red Riding Hood opened the door to Grandma’s room and stepped inside. She sniffed lightly. She squinted at Grandma.

• “Hello, my dear. Come closer.” Grandma patted the bedspread beside her.

• Little Red moved closer to the bed. “What big eyes you have today, Grandma.”

• “All the better to see you with, my dear.”

In this example, we’ve lost all of Red’s thoughts and observations about the room and her Grandma. We can only see what physically happens and hear what is actually said.
FIRST OR THIRD PERSON OMNISCIENT

• Omniscient point of view means that the reader is privy to every character’s inner thoughts and feelings
LITTLE RED...AGAIN

• Little Red Riding Hood opened the door to Grandma’s room and stepped inside. She sniffed lightly. There was a strange smell in the room that she didn’t like. She squinted at Grandma. Why was the room so dark?

• “Hello, my dear. Come closer.” The Wolf patted the bedspread beside him. The girl needed to be closer so she couldn’t avoid the attack. The wolf’s mouth watered in anticipation of this juicy snack.

• Grandma’s voice was huskier than normal. Well, she was sick, after all.

• Little Red moved closer to the bed until she could see Grandma. What was wrong with Grandma’s eyes?

• “What big eyes you have today, Grandma.”

• Drat, the girl sounded suspicious. He would have to quickly reassure her so she didn’t leave. “All the better to see you with, my dear.”
Omniscient point of view allows the reader to dip in and out of each character’s thoughts

• In Omniscient point of view, the reader gets the thoughts and feelings of both characters in the scene. In addition to Red’s uneasiness about the smell and the darkness, the reader learns about the wolf’s anticipation of the attack and his desire to calm the fears of Little Red so he can attack and eat her.