

First Person and Third Person Narration in “The Bingo Palace”



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LEARNING BIRD AND
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Learning Bird



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Objective

These slides will walk you through an activity to practice transforming **First Person** narration into **Third Person** narration.



A Matter of Perspective

Narration is a word that describes how books tell a story.

Many of the chapters in “The Bingo Palace” tell the story by showing us what Lipsha and all the other characters do and say. But in other chapters, Lipsha talks to the reader directly. He tells the story by letting us know what he sees and feels.

These two different kinds of narration are called the **Third Person** and **First Person** perspectives.



First Person Narration

Authors use First Person narration to show us what a character sees, thinks, and feels. First Person perspective helps us understand how they see the world and are affected by the plot.

This narration can have some **bias**, so the author might let you decide whether you believe their version of the story or not.





First Person Narration (cont'd.)

First Person narration is written in the character's voice. The language is usually more informal.

It uses pronouns like: **"I"**, **"Me"**, **"Mine"**, and **"My"**.





Third Person Narration

Authors use Third Person narration to show us what characters do and say from a distance.

In some books, authors can tell us what these characters see, think, and feel. But in other books, authors may only show us what we can see from the outside.





Third Person Narration (cont'd.)

Third Person narration is written in the author's voice or in the voice of an unidentified observer.

The language is usually more formal. It uses pronouns like **“He”**, **“She”**, **“They”**, and never uses **“I”**.



First Person ➔ Third Person

To switch First Person narration to a Third Person perspective:

- Change pronouns like “I”, “Me”, “Mine”, and “My” to pronouns like “He”, “She”, or “They”. You can also refer to the character by name.
- Consider removing contractions (“can’t” or “didn’t”) or slang.
- When the character describes their feelings, try to show the reader how they might see these feelings from the outside instead.

First Person ➔ Third Person

Example:

First Person: *“It was the first day of school and I literally couldn’t deal. I sat in class and **felt like I was having an anxiety attack.**”*



Third Person: *“It was the first day of school and and **Liz** could not deal. **She** sat in class, **pale, sweating, and shaking.**”*

Third Person ➔ First Person

To switch Third Person narration to a First Person perspective:

- Change pronouns like “He”, “She”, and “They” to pronouns like “I”, “Me”, “Mine”.
- Consider adding language that the character would use in everyday conversation. How would their voice sound when talking?
- Imagine how the character would feel in this situation and what they would be thinking about. Try sharing this with the reader.

Third Person → First Person

Example:

Third Person: “*Sam sat at the dinner table, pushing potatoes around **his** plate with a fork. **He** looked lost in thought.*”



First Person: “*I sat at the dinner table, pushing potatoes around **my** plate with **my** fork. **I just couldn't stop thinking** about that guy and what he told me.*”



“The Bingo Palace”

The next slide will show you a section from a Lipsha chapter in “The Bingo Palace”.



On a sheet of paper, re-write this **First Person** narration in a **Third Person** perspective.

How would someone in the community describe Lipsha’s actions and feelings if they were watching him from a distance?



Practice:



“The Bingo Palace”

“Thanks to the insulation cash, I get my van fixed and then I start lying in wait for Shawnee Ray. I want to talk to her, see her face, put my hand on her knee. The money buys me gas so that I can idle my van in place. I sit outside the grocery store, or on the road to the Kashpaw place, or at the junior college - anywhere that my own Little Miss Shell might pass.

It isn't long before I catch her at the entrance to the post office and wave her over to me. She comes eagerly, walking light on her feet, swinging a pack full of schoolbooks. She jumps into the seat next to me and for a minute we don't breathe, just stare into each other's eyes, feasting on the surprising nearness of each other”. (p.97)



Self-Check

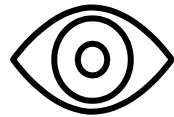
When deciding between First Person and Third Person narration for your own creative writing, discuss with your teacher – or try asking these questions:

- What pronouns would I use?
- What kind of voice do I want to use? Will it sound excited? Will it use slang?
- How much information do I want to give about the characters' thoughts and feelings?
- Would the character's First Person perspective affect how they tell the story? Would this be interesting or confusing?

Sharing Perspectives

When you're finished: compare your paragraphs with other people in the class!

Did they make other choices than you? How different are your writing styles and vocabularies?





Credits

- Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- “The Bingo Palace” by Louise Erdrich, 1994, Harper Perennial. Cover photograph by Greg Harlin / Wood Ronsaville Harlin, Inc.