

Boost Free Lessons - Year 8 English

Lesson 8: Narrative Voice

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

Identify the narrative voice and explain what it allows.

I told them I had not seen the key. It was, I decided, close enough to the truth.

1. **First person** uses *I*, and the reader sees only what that character sees.
2. This narrator admits to shading the truth, which makes them **unreliable**.
3. The reader now has to judge everything else they say, which creates tension.
4. First person creates intimacy, but it also limits the reader to one partial view.

First person, and an unreliable narrator. The reader is drawn close but cannot fully trust what they are told.

Worked Example 2

Identify the narrative voice below and explain the difference.

Ravi told them he had not seen the key. Across the table, his sister knew exactly where it was.

1. **Third person** uses *he*, *she* or names, and stands outside the characters.
2. This narrator reports what two different characters know, so it is **omniscient**.
3. The reader now knows more than Ravi does, which creates dramatic irony.
4. Third person limited would stay inside one character; omniscient moves freely between them.

Third person omniscient. The reader knows more than one character does, which creates dramatic irony.

Remember: **First person** uses *I* and creates intimacy but limits knowledge. **Third person limited** follows one character. **Third person omniscient** knows everything. An **unreliable** narrator cannot be fully trusted.



Question 1: Name the narrative voice used in each sentence.

1. I could not tell whether she believed me.

2. Nadia locked the door and did not look back.

3. You step off the bus and the street is empty.

4. He never knew that she had waited an hour.

5. We agreed never to speak of it again.

6. The old man remembered a different river.

7. Unknown to either of them, the gate was already open.

8. I am certain I locked it. Almost certain.



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

I locked the side door at nine. I am fairly sure of it. The neighbour says she saw someone on the path at half past, but the neighbour says a great many things, and I had already gone up by then.

1. What narrative voice is used in the passage?

2. What does the reader know that the narrator does not?

3. Find one detail suggesting the narrator may be unreliable.

4. How would the passage change if written in third person omniscient?

5. Why might a writer choose an unreliable narrator?



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Rewrite this in first person: *She opened the letter and her hands began to shake.*

2. Rewrite the same sentence in second person.

3. Explain one advantage and one limitation of first person narration.

4. Explain what dramatic irony is and how narrative voice creates it.





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Answers and Model Responses: Narrative Voice**Question 1**

1. First person
2. Third person limited
3. Second person
4. Third person omniscient
5. First person (plural)
6. Third person limited
7. Third person omniscient
8. First person, and unreliable

Question 2

1. First person.
2. That the narrator's account of the evening does not match what the neighbour saw.
3. Model: *I am fairly sure*, which shows the narrator is not certain of their own account.
4. Model: The reader would be told directly what the neighbour saw and what the narrator was hiding, which would remove the doubt and the tension along with it.
5. It forces the reader to interpret rather than accept, and it creates suspense about what is really true.

Question 3

1. Model response: I opened the letter and my hands began to shake.
2. Model response: You open the letter and your hands begin to shake.
3. First person creates intimacy and lets the reader inside a character's thoughts, but it limits them to what that one character knows and notices.
4. Dramatic irony is when the reader knows something a character does not. An omniscient narrator creates it by showing the reader information one character is missing.

