

# Boost Free Lessons - Year 8 English

## Lesson 14: Reading Narrative: Voice and Perspective

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the extract below carefully. The line numbers will help you refer to specific parts of the text in your answers.

### What I Told the Coach

- 1 I want to be clear that I did not lie. I said I had not seen Dev at  
2 training, and I had not, because I had left before he arrived. That is a  
3 fact, and facts are what people ask for.  
4  
5 The coach wrote something down. He has a way of writing that makes you  
6 want to keep talking, so I kept talking. I said Dev had been off all  
7 season. I said the team had noticed. I did not say who had first said it,  
8 or where, or that I had been the one to say it.  
9  
10 Outside, the sprinklers came on over the empty oval. Dev's bag was still  
11 propped against the fence where he always left it, and nobody had moved  
12 it, which I remember thinking was strange.  
13  
14 "Anything else?" the coach said.  
15  
16 There was a great deal else. I told him no.  
17  
18 On the walk home I worked out that what I had said was true in every part.  
19 I had not seen Dev. Dev had been off all season. The team had noticed. I  
20 went through it three times and it held together each time, which was a  
21 relief, and I stopped going through it after that.  
22  
23 Dev's bag was gone the next morning. Somebody had moved it after all.



### Worked Example 1

**How does the writer show that the narrator is unreliable, without ever stating it?**

1. An unreliable narrator is revealed through **gaps** between what they say and what the reader works out.
2. Look for what the narrator insists on. Opening with *I did not lie* raises the question before anyone asks it.
3. Look for what they omit. In lines 7 to 8 they list what they did **not** say, which tells the reader exactly what was hidden.
4. Look at how they reassure themselves. Checking the story *three times* (line 20) is the behaviour of someone who knows it is misleading.

**Model: The narrator defends himself before being accused, saying “I did not lie” (line 1). He then lists what he did not say (lines 7 to 8), which reveals the omission to the reader while insisting on his honesty.**

**Remember:** With an unreliable narrator, look for the **gap** between what is said and what the reader works out. Pay attention to what is insisted upon, what is omitted, and what the narrator repeats to himself.



**Question 1:** Answer the following questions. Give the line numbers you used in your answers.

1. What does the narrator say he told the coach about seeing Dev?

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2. Where was Dev's bag?

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3. What does the narrator say when asked if there is anything else?

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4. How many times does he go through his story?

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5. What has changed by the final line?

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6. What narrative voice is the extract written in?

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**Question 2:** Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. Explain the effect of opening with *I want to be clear that I did not lie*.

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2. What does the narrator reveal that he does not intend to reveal?

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3. Explain the effect of the short sentence *I told him no.*

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4. What is the significance of Dev's bag, and why does the writer mention it twice?

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5. How would this extract change if it were written in third person omniscient?

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

1. That he had not seen Dev at training, because he had left before Dev arrived.
2. Propped against the fence where he always left it.
3. *No*.
4. Three times.
5. Dev's bag has gone, and somebody has moved it.
6. First person.

**Question 2**

1. Model: Nobody has accused him, so defending himself immediately suggests he feels guilty. It signals to the reader that his account should be questioned.
2. Model: By listing what he did not say, he shows he was the original source of the rumour about Dev. He presents this as careful honesty, but it reveals a deliberate omission.
3. Model: After a sentence admitting there was *a great deal else*, the four blunt words show how easily he chooses to withhold it. The contrast between the two sentences carries the guilt.
4. Model: The bag stands for Dev himself, present and then absent. The first mention shows Dev is expected back; the second shows he is not. The narrator notices the bag both times but never asks what has happened to Dev, which shows he is more concerned with his own story than with the person it affected.
5. Model: An omniscient narrator could tell the reader what the coach wrote, what Dev did, and what the narrator was actually thinking. The reader would learn the truth directly, but the tension of working it out through the narrator's evasions would be lost.

