

# The Narrator: Signs of the “I”

(There are many narratives where numerous signs representing the narrator and signifying its presence in the narrative are evident)

## Representations

1. **Indirect Presence of the signs of the ‘I’:** Any second person pronoun, not referring to a character, must designate someone a narrator is addressing. This forms the presence of the ‘I’ in this narrative.
2. **Direct Presence of the signs of the “I”:** such signs represent the narrator. The presence of the first person plural pronoun, which does not exclusively designate characters or narratees refers to the narrating activity.
3. **Presence of the “I” through deictic terms:** there is a class of deictic terms such as (now, here, yesterday, tomorrow) relating the narrator to its spatio-temporal situation or situating the utterance in its time and/or space.

## Examples

1. “All is true- so true that **you** may recognize its elements in **your** experience, and even find its seeds within **your** soul”. ( French: Le Pere Goriot by de Balzac in 1835)
2. “**We** will confess that, following the example of many serious author, **we** have started **our** hero’s story one year before his birth”. ( French: The Charterhouse of Parma by Stendhal in 1839)
3. -Mary went to **the beach yesterday, then** she went to the movies, **then** she went **home**.  
-“**Then**, some **sixty years ago**, a sudden change took place. The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers” (Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers)  
-John came **here**, he got drunk and he left.

# The Narrator: Signs of the “I” (Cont.)

## Representations

4. Class of **attitudinal adverbs** (perhaps, unfortunately, clearly, etc.) indicates the narrator’s position from what he/she says if such adverbs are not part of any character’s utterances.
5. His **knowledge of the worlds** other than that of the narrated or his **interpretation** of the events recounted and **evaluation** of their importance (adjectives) constitutes a sign of the “I”.

## Examples

4. John went to the movies. **Perhaps** he was lonely.  
John reacted very coldly. **Clearly**, this was the result of his having suffered too much and too often.
5. - **People are remarkable** (evaluation). John was poor and sick; he kept on trying to improve his lot and managed to become rich and healthy.  
- He was wearing one **of those flashy ties often seen on Broadway** (Knowledge of the world outside the narrated world)  
- **He must have been scared** (interpretation) since he was sweating profusely.

# The Narrator: Intrusiveness

(Intrusive narrator is a narrator commenting in his or her voice on the situations and events presented)

## Representations

1. The narrator's intrusion may be less obvious when he or she presents the narrated world knowledge.
1. The narrator's knowledge may be inserted through **evaluative adverbs**, **evaluative adjectives** or **logical connectors**

## Examples

1. **Emperor** Napoleon's birth was greeted with joy. (nobody in the world of the narrated could know the newborn baby's destiny).
2. -John walked **elegantly**.  
-John was **happy**.  
-John was happy **because** he had just seen Robert.

# Self-Conscious Narrator

**-A self-conscious narrator** is a narrator who is aware that he or she is narrating; a narrator who discusses and comments on his or her narrating chores. “The Black Cat” opens

“FOR the most wild yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them”

**-Other examples of self-conscious narrators include Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy, Barchester Towers, The Catcher in the Eye, Remembrance of things Past, Dr. Faustus.**

**-The Opposite** are those writers who rarely discuss their writing chores (Huckleberry Finn)

**- Some writers seem unaware that they are writing, thinking, speaking, or reflecting a literary work (Camus’s The Stranger, Lardner’s Haircut, Bellow’s The Victim).**

**Notes:** the self-conscious narrator is always intrusive and the opposite is not correct.

# Reliable Narrator

**Definition:** **a reliable narrator** convinces readers that he or she is reporting events, actions and conversations accurately and without prejudice.

Parts or all of the narrator's account may be more or less worthy of trust in terms of the narrative itself.

Aspects of unreliability

1. The narrator may constantly contradict himself.
2. There is no reason given to the validity of truth values or his account in relation to the world he narrates about.
3. Sometimes, the unreliable narrator's values and conclusions are attractive.

# The narrator: distance

Distance is a metaphorical space between the narrator, characters, situations and events narrated.

## Aspects of Distance

1. Temporal distance
2. Physical distance
3. Intellectual distance
4. Moral distance
5. Emotional distance
6. Moral and Intellectual
7. Moral, emotional and intellectual
8. Moral and Emotional
9. Distance between narrator and reader

## Examples

1. I narrate events that happened two hours or two years ago.
2. The narrator does not address some characters directly.
3. The narrator in “The Sound and the Fury” is more intelligent than Benjy.
4. Sade’s Justine is far more virtuous than the characters populating her story (written by Francois de Sade in 1791).
5. The narrator of “ A Simple Heart” is not as moved by Virginie’s death as Felicite is. At the end of Tom Jones, the narrator and the narratee are not emotionally closer than at the beginning. The black cat when he killed and buried his wife.

Vera was more alienated emotionally from Nuttel in Saki’s The Open Window.

6. Fowler the narrator and Pyle the American in Greene’s The Quiet American.

7. Fowler the narrator and Pyle the American in Greene’s The Quiet American. Great Expectations.

8. Maupassant’s The Necklace, Huxley’s Nuns at Luncheon.

9. Kafka’s The Metamorphosis (physically and emotionally), morally and emotionally (Pinkie in Brighton Rock)

# The Narrator as a Character

## Aspects

1. A 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator may narrate events and actions in which he takes part.
2. 3<sup>rd</sup> person narrator as a character
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> person narrator as a character. He may refer to himself as 'you' and it may be the protagonist.

If the narrator is a character, he may be a **protagonist** (Great Expectations) **important character** (All the King's men) or a **minor one** (A Study in Scarlet) or **merely an observer** (A Rose for Emily), he may be **a character in one part of his narrative, but not in another part** (Sarrasine), and finally, though **he plays no part in the events he himself recounts, he may be a character in the events recounted by another character** (Scheherazade in Arabian Nights)

## Examples

1. Moll Flanders, The Great Gatsby, Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Great Expectations
2. Thackeray's Henry Esmond (the protagonist tells his own story mostly in the third person). Camus' La Peste, Dr Rieux refers to himself as Dr. Rieux through most of the novel.
3. La Modification (French novel written by Michel Butor in published in 1957).

# Multiple Narrators

There are many narratives with more than one narrator (two, three, four, etc.).

## Representation

1. A narrator may introduce another who in turn introduces another narrator and so forth.
2. A narrator may introduce another narrator, then another one, then another one, and so on.
3. When there are more narrators, it is possible to establish a hierarchy among them (main narrator, secondary narrator, tertiary narrator, etc.)
4. One narrator may be at a greater or lesser distance from another one, and this distance could be physical, emotional, intellectual, or moral, and these parameters may vary within a given narrative.

## Example

1. I was having a cup of coffee in a dingy luncheonette when a stranger sat at my table and told me: “A few years ago-I was twenty at the time- I had a very strange experience. I was walking down the street... . A few years later, a beautiful woman came to see me and told me: “I was... .”
2. I was having a cup of coffee in a dingy luncheonette when John sat at my table and told me a story: “ A few years ago, I was ...”. Then Peter came and told me another story: “A few years ago, I was ... .” I kept drinking coffee... .
3. There are three narrators in L’Immortaliste.