

# **The Narratee**

## **(In terms of Gerald Prince's Views)**

**Key Concepts related to the narratee.**

**Direct and Indirect Signs of 'you'**

**Signs of 'you' in a question form**

**Signs of 'you' in a negative form**

**Signs of 'you' in a demonstrative form**

**Signs of 'you' in metalinguistic and metanarrative forms**

**Narratee as a character**

**Narratee and Knowledge**

**Narratee and Change**

**Individual and Group Narratee**

**Hierarchy of Narratees**

**The Textual Indications of Narratee**

# The Narratee, Narrative Audience, and Authorial Audience

**Narratee** is the one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text.

**Narrative audience** is the audience for which the narrator is narrating.

**Authorial audience** is the audience which understands the author's text perfectly.

In many narratives, the 'you' may constitute the only reference to a narrative audience (**You are very sick. You drink a glass of wine and you become very healthy**) in that we learn nothing explicit about the narratee as such, except that the events recounted to. We do not know what he thinks of these events towards the narrator. There are many narratives where numerous signs representing the narratee and signifying his presence in them are evident.

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You'

## Aspects

1. **Indirect signs of 'you'**: any 'you' designating a narratee implies a narrator and any 'I' designating a narrator implies a narratee. Some signs of 'you' may function more directly and represent the narratee and his situation. The two examples include "the reader and the one who is listening" refer to an audience.

## Examples

1. We could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to **the reader** (from the Scarlet Letter).

But let **the one who is listening** to this tale be patient. He will find out soon enough what fate waited John.

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You'

## Aspects

2. The first person pronoun (we) may exclude the narratee and designate the narrator only.

3. Other times, the use of 'we' include the person he is addressing.

## Examples

2. Besides, most often we did not stay home, we went for a walk.

3. In such perfect coincidences, should reality apply to what we have been dreaming for such a long time, it entirely conceals it from us.

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You' in a Question Shape

## Aspects

4. Parts of a narrative may take the shape of questions or pseudo-questions. They can be attributed to the narratee.

5. When questions or pseudo-questions emanate from the narrator, they are not addressed to himself or to any of the characters, rather to the narratee:

## Examples

4. In *Le Pere Goriot*, it is the narratee who asks about M. Poiret's career: What he had been? Well, possibly a clerk in the department of justice...."

5. But who has not seen very unpretentious royal princesses adopt spontaneously the language of old bores...?

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You' in a Negative Shape

## Aspects

6. Some passages take the shape of negations to include a reference to the presence of the narratee. Such negation may function as a contradiction to the narratee's beliefs.

7. Other negations may be used to correct the narratee's mistakes, or to end his questions.

## Examples

6. The narrator in the following example contradicts one of his narratee's inferences:

**"D'Artagnan awakened Planchet and ordered him to open it. From this phrase- 'D' Artagnan awakened Planchet'- the reader must not suppose it was night or that day was hardly come. No, it had just struck four"**

7. The narrator in the following example denies or corrects the theory constructed by his audience to explain Vincent's escapades:

**"No, it was not to see his mistress that Vincent Molinier went out every night"**

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You' in Demonstratives

## Aspects

8. **Temporal Demonstrative:** Such type of demonstrative reference can be employed to affirm (with , for example, 'yes') presented by the narrator for what the narratee believes.

9. Some demonstratives refer not to an anterior or posterior element in the text, but rather to another text, another world known to both the narrator and the narratee.

## Examples

8. I walk for whole nights, I dream, or I talk to myself interminably. Like tonight. Yes.

Yes, the days of the Lord are mysterious indeed.

9. He adjusted his collar and the black velvet waistcoat, which was crisscrossed by one of those large gold chains made in Genoa. (Gambara).

The escaped convict gave Eugene that glance of cold compelling fascination which very magnetic people have the power of giving. (Le Pere Goriot).

# The Narratee: Signs of 'You' in Metalinguistic and Metanarrative Explanations

Aspects	Examples
<p>10. Metalinguistic explanations are on behalf of the narratee such as the example ahead when the narrator explains the Spanish terms the narratee does not know about →</p> <p>11. Metanarrative explanations are produced for the narratee's benefit. Here the narrator's job is to explain what signifies some complicated issues. The narratee does not understand what wearing a yellow jacket signifies. →</p>	<p>10. "Aficion <b>means passion</b>. An aficionado <b>is one who is passionate about the bull-fights</b>" (The Sun also Rises)</p> <p>11. <b>He was wearing</b> a yellow jacket, which meant that he was a nobleman.</p>



# The Narratee as a Character

## Aspects

1. The narratee may be a participant in the events recounted to him.
2. The narratee may not be a participant in the events recounted to him.
3. If he is part of the story, we should distinguish between the second person as narratee and the second person as character.
4. The narratee may function as a narrator .
5. The narratee-character may be at the same time the narrator of the event accounts. Here the narrator addresses himself only.

## Examples

1. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
2. De Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet*, *Wuthering Heights*
3. "You ate the meat", the second person character is the one who ate the meat, and the second person narratee is the one told about the eating.
4. In Andre' Gide's *L'Immortaliste*, one of the Michel's three auditors writes his brother a very long letter in which he presents his friend's narrative as well as the circumstances which led him to listen to it, and he begs his brother to help the desperate Michel.
5. In Jean Paul Sartre's philosophical novel "*La Nause'e*", Roquentin intends to be the sole reader of his diary and constitutes his own narratee.

# The Narratee as a Character

## Aspects

6. The narratee-character may represent for the narrator someone who is more or less essential, more or less irreplaceable as an audience.

7. The narrator may be quite mistaken in his evaluation of the knowledge, personality, or the ability of the narratee-character. The narrator may describe him as not very bright and think that he can easily lie to him and mislead him, whereas another, more trustworthy narrator portrays him as intelligent and well-informed .

## Examples

6. In the Arabian Nights, Scheherazade would die if the Caliph refused to listen to her. He is the only narratee she can have.

In Heart of Darkness, it is not necessary for Marlow to have his mates on the 'Nellie' as narratees. He could tell his story to a totally different group.

In L'Immortaliste, Michel specifically needs to address his friends. Their presence in Algeria as listeners to his tale, constitutes a necessary help and hope for him.

7. Saki's The Open Window (Vera's lies to Nuttel and her family).

# The Narratee's Knowledge

## Aspects

1. The narratee may know the narrator more or less.
2. The narratee may not know the narratee at all.
3. The narratee may know him, but not recognize him.
4. The narratee may know several of the characters portrayed in the narrative or he may never heard of them.
5. The narratee may know some of the events and may even play a role in them.

## Examples

1. Heart of darkness and L'Immortaliste.
2. Le Pere Goriot, La Chartreuse de Parme, the Open Window. Chaucer's The Canterbury Tale, the Happy prince.
3. In Les Infortunes de la vertu, Justine and Juliette realize that they are sisters at the end of the novel.
4. The open window, Vera knows only her family, but not Nuttel. The swallow in the Happy Prince does not know anyone the prince is talking about.
5. In L'Immortaliste, Michel's friends are cognizant of what the protagonist recounts at the very beginning of his narrative:

The last time we saw each other, I remember, was in the neighborhood of Angers, in the little church in which I was married. There were few people... After we left the church, you joined us at my bride's house for a short meal... then she and I drove away in a carriage..."

# The Narratee's Change

## Aspects

1. The narratee may not be influenced by the narration addressed to him.
2. The narratee may be totally affected by the narration process.
3. The narratee may be more affected by the narrator's narration.
4. The narratee may be gradually and profoundly transformed by what is recounted.

## Examples

1. Marlow's companions in Heart of darkness are not affected by what he narrates.
2. In Saki's the Open Window, Nuttel is totally affected by Vera's narration.
3. In Wilde's The Happy Prince, the swallow is greatly influenced by the prince's past life narration.
4. The swallow is gradually affected by the prince's narrations of other poor people's conditions, till the bird decides to stay with the prince forever.

# Individual and Group Narratee

## Aspects

1. The narratee may be represented as a group addressed by the narrator.
2. The narrator may address only one narratee.
3. The narrator may address a group of narratees who are homogeneous (the members share the same attitude or condition).
4. The narrator may address heterogeneous narratees (the members do not share similar values and conditions).
5. The narrator addressing several categories of narratees takes advantage of this heterogeneity to clarify his/her message, score points or gain approval.
6. Sometimes, a narrator may address one narratee and other times addressing a group of narratees.

## Examples

1. Marlow's companions in Heart of darkness are addressed by Marlow since the beginning concerning the story of Kurtz.

In Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, each storyteller that wants to go on pilgrimage addresses the other pilgrims.

Vera, in the Open Window, narrates Nuttel's story to her family.

2. In Saki's the Open Window, Nuttel is telling his story to Vera about the purpose of his visit.

3. Fyodor Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground. Woolf's Professions for Women narrates situations and events to other women sharing the same suffering.

4. Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales.

5. The German Von Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther".

6. Vera in The Open Window narrates Mrs. Sappleton's tragedy to Nuttel, then she narrates Nuttel's reason of escape to her family.

# Hierarchy of Narratees

## Aspects

1. When there are two or more narratees, the one to whom all of the events recounted is referred to as main narratee. When there is a narratee, told only some of the events, that one is called secondary.
2. The narratees may be different from one another in terms of physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, or social distance.
3. The narratee may be more or less similar to the narrator, reader, or even the characters.

## Examples

1. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.
2. Saki's *The Open Window* and Wilde's "The Happy Prince".
3. In *Le Pere Goriot*, the narratee is different from some of the real readers of the novel.

# The Narratee: Other textual Indications

## Textual Indicators

1. Certain indications supplied by the text concerning a narratee are sometimes found in a section of the narrative that is not addressed to him.
2. Nonetheless, sometimes these indications contradict the narrative and emphasize certain differences between the narratee as conceived by the narrator and as revealed by another voice.

## Example

1. At the beginning of *L'Immortaliste*, for example, we learn that Michel has not seen his narratees for three years and the story he tells them quickly confirms this fact.
2. The few words spoken by Doctor Spiel Vogel at the end of Portnoy's Complaint reveal that he is not what the narrative has led us to believe.

# Other Textual Indications

We should mention all passages of a narrative in which the narrator refers directly to the narratee. We retain in this category statements in which the narrator designates the narratee by such words as **'reader'** or **'listener'** and by such expressions as **'my dear'** or **'my friend.'** In the event that the narration may have identified a specific characteristic of the narratee, for example, his profession or nationality, passages mentioning this characteristic should also be considered in this first category. Thus, if the narrator is **a lawyer**, all information concerning lawyers in general is pertinent. Finally, we should retain all passages in which the addressee is designated by **second-person pronouns and verb forms.**

**('Without a doubt, dear reader, you have never been confined in a glass bottle')**