

Narration: An Introduction

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A *narrative* is a story or account of events, whether true or fictitious. *Narrating* is telling the story, recounting the plot's action.

Fiction is a form of narrative that is related through a voice. In other words, it's told by someone: the *narrator*. The key issue in studying narrative voice is knowing who speaks, or who tells the story.

There are three types of narrators:

Type of Narrator	Description
Heterodiegetic	Is not a character in the story. Hovers above the story action and may know everything about the story and characters.
Homodiegetic	Is a character in the story.
Autodiegetic	Is a character in the story, and that character is the protagonist.

As you can see, narration is partnered with point of view, or focalization, which I'll discuss in a future Word of the Week.

It's important to understand that in fiction the narrator is not the same as you, the author. Narrators can hold opinions that you don't hold. You can create a narrator of the opposite sex without undergoing reassignment surgery. Your narrator can be guilty of murder and all kinds of crimes without you risking incarceration. These are a few things that make writing fun.

Next week we'll take a look at the narrative communication levels and focalization.

—Lee Allen Howard

Sources: Rasley, Alicia. *The Power of Point of View*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2008. <http://www.anglistik.uni-freiburg.de/intranet/englishbasics/PDF/Prose.pdf>.