**Analyzing Point of View**

Overview

Point of view refers to the narrative voice—real or implied—that presents the story to the reader, and determines the position, or angle of vision, from which the story is told. An important element to keep in mind is the reliability of the narrator, as it can skew the interpretation of setting, character, plot, and theme.

Commonly Used Points of View:

1. **Omniscient**: This is an “all-knowing” narrator who firmly imposes his or her presence between the reader and the story, and retains complete control over the narrative.
2. **Limited omniscient** (also known as ‘third person’): Here, the narrator limits his or her ability to penetrate the minds of characters by selecting a single character to act as the center of revelation.
3. **First person**: First person narration goes one step further than the aforementioned by having a focal character address the reader directly, without an intermediary.
4. **Dramatic** (also known as an ‘objective’): This narration is ostensibly told by no one. The narrator is not present, either as a character within the plot, or an omniscient being outside the story. Rather, the author relies on the absence of a narrator to indicate characterization, plot, and theme. The most well-known example of dramatic point of view is Hemingway’s *Hills Like White Elephants*.

Questions for Analyzing Point of View:

1. What is the point of view: who talks to the reader? Is the point of view consistent throughout the work or does it shift in some way?
2. Where does the narrator stand in relation to the work? Where does the reader stand?
3. To what sources of knowledge or information does the point of view give the reader access? What sources of knowledge or information does it serve to conceal?
4. If the work is told from the point of view of one of the characters, is the narrator reliable? Does his or her personality, character, or intellect affect the reader’s ability to interpret the events or the other characters correctly?
5. Given the author’s purposes, is the chosen point of view appropriate and effective?
6. How would the work be different if told from another point of view?