

Point of View, Perspective, and Personification: Stuart Little and Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Point of View (POV)

Point of View (POV) and Perspective are often used interchangeably, but they are not quite the same. *Point of View* is the type of narrator the author chooses to use to tell their story.

- First person (POV) is when “I” am the one telling the story
- Second person (POV) is when the story is told to “you”
- Third person, limited (POV) is when the story is told about “he” or “she”
- Third person, omniscient (POV) is when a story is told about “them” from an all-knowing viewpoint.

Perspective, on the other hand, is the author's point of view from which the entire story is written. It's not the person telling the story, although the choice of POV is ultimately what an author uses to provide their perspective.

To clarify the differences between perspective and POV, let's look at the two books by EB White, *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*.

To establish POV, ask the question, “Who is telling the story?”

- Is Fern telling the story? Wilbur? Charlotte? No. When referring to them, the term “he” and “she” is used. So, the POV is third person, but is it limited or omniscient?
- To answer that question, we must determine whether the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of each character or not. Do we know how Fern feels about Wilbur? How Wilbur feels about Charlotte? Yes. Therefore, the POV is third person, omniscient.

1. Who is telling the story in *Stuart Little*?

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2. Do we know the thoughts or feelings of the characters in the story?
3. What POV is employed for Stuart Little?

Perspective

Perspective is a literary tool used by authors. It serves as a lens through which readers observe characters and events in a story.

In Stuart Little, EB White wants us to see the world from the perspective of someone very small.

4. Can you think of any other stories in which the main character becomes small in a big world or a land of giants?

From their perspective, many of these characters face danger in an otherwise ordinary environment.

5. What are some of the dangers Stuart faced on a daily basis in the Little household?
6. How would the story be different if Stuart were something big like an elephant?
7. What difficulties would Stuart have then? What challenges would the Little's face?
8. Can you think of stories in which the main character becomes very large?
9. Why do you think EB White chose this perspective to tell the story? (Consider the theme of the story and how size influences it.)

Personification

Personification is another literary tool in which the author gives human-like characteristics to an animal or object. Both Stuart Little and Charlotte's Web are examples of personification in literature. Stuart is a mouse who actually is perceived by his parents to be a little boy (pun

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intended). Wilbur and Charlotte are in their natural habitats, but they become friends and ultimately Wilbur cares for Charlotte's children. These are not typical behaviors between pigs and spiders, not to mention Charlotte's ability to spell.

10. Why do you think EB White uses animals to tell his stories?
11. Why is personification so often used in children's literature?
12. How would these stories be different if their main characters were not animals?
13. List other stories which use personification? (Winnie the Pooh, Arthur, Shrek, are a few to get you started)

ACTIVITY

- ✓ Give students twenty to thirty minutes to write and illustrate an original story – they must use personification (not limited to animals), and include characters who find themselves either big in a small world or small in a big one.
- ✓ Have students read their stories to one another.