

1 ELA units · Grade 3 Understanding Point of View Who is telling you this, and what can they see for themselves?

5 days · 3 books · 173 min in full · 96 min short · Grade 3

The idea Every narrator has a position, and a position has limits. These three books put narration in the foreground: two are diaries kept by animals, and one places a grandmother's telling inside a granddaughter's narration. The unit asks what each narrator can directly see or experience and, harder, what lies outside that position unless somebody else supplies it. Only three books, which is the minimum a unit may draw on, and it is deliberate: the two diaries are by the same author and are close enough in setting and form to make the last day a genuine comparison rather than a contrivance. The unit's spine is that a limit is not a fault. A worm does not directly see what a boy sees, and the book is not weaker for it - that position is part of the telling. The class learns to distinguish what a narrator experiences firsthand from what would have to be remembered, inferred or supplied by somebody else.

The arc

1. A story can be told by somebody inside it
2. What the teller directly sees is shaped by who and what they are
3. A limit in direct experience is a feature of the telling, not a fault in it
4. One voice can carry information supplied by another person
5. Two narrators can be compared by what each notices firsthand and what each would need from elsewhere

Where this fits

When to run it. Early Grade 3, and before substantial theme work. Deciding what a book is about is harder if the class has not yet learned to ask who is saying it.

What it assumes. The Grade 2 perspective unit, or the ability to give an account from somebody else's position.

What it builds. Identifying a narrator; distinguishing firsthand experience from information that must come from elsewhere; retelling an event from another position; noticing a story told through another person's account; comparing two narrators across texts.

What it leads to. Later work on narrator reliability, point of view and comparison across texts.

The 5 days

DAY 1

Told By A Worm Work out who is telling this diary and how the same events would look to somebody else.

Why here. First because the narrator is unmistakable and the same event is available from another point of view inside the same book. The whole unit is visible on Day 1.

From Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin · First-person narration, and the same event from another point of view 35 min full · 20 min short · Makes: A diary entry rewritten from the other side

DAY 2

What A Worm Notices Explain how being a worm changes ordinary things, using the words and the pictures.

Why here. Second: the limits, worked out from what a body can and cannot do. Same book as Day 1, so the class reasons about a narrator they already know.

From Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin · A character's perspective, worked out from what a body can and cannot do 34 min full · 18 min short · Makes: A table of ordinary things and their worm versions

DAY 3

Told By A Spider Work out how the diary is shaped by who is writing it, and how the same thing looks from the other end.

Why here. Third. A different animal, and size seen from both ends - the class applies yesterday's method to a new narrator without being told to.

From Diary of a Spider by Doreen Cronin · First-person narration, and size seen from both ends 34 min full · 18 min short · Makes: Two lists side by side, and three spider-only sentences

DAY 4

3 Who Is Telling This Work out how many people are between the reader and the events, and how the book marks each voice.

Why here. Fourth, and the hardest. The granddaughter narrates a story that includes what her grandmother told her.

A

class that has spent three days with a single, obvious narrator is ready to hear the extra layer.

From Just like Josh Gibson by Angela Johnson · A narrator carrying another person's account inside her own telling 35 min full · 20 min short · Makes: A three-column sort, and the voice that ends the book

DAY 5

Two Diaries Compare this book with Diary of a Worm and say what the two share and where their narrators differ.

Why here. Last: two texts by the same author, in the same diary form, compared through their narrators. It has to be last because comparison now depends on having characterised each narrator rather than merely noticing that the books look alike.

From Diary of a Spider by Doreen Cronin · Comparing two texts by the same author through what each narrator experiences firsthand and learns from elsewhere 35 min full · 20 min short · Makes: A comparison chart, and one dinner described twice Words to use Word How it is used narrator Introduced on Day 1 and used precisely thereafter. first person Named on Day 2, after children have already met an obvious “I” narrator on Day 1. voice Used on Day 4 for the person whose telling the reader is hearing at that moment.

Teacher language. “At one remove” can be useful shorthand when discussing the architecture of Just like Josh Gibson, but it does not need to become student vocabulary. With children, “one person telling what another person told her” is clearer and does the instructional work. What to prepare

- Checkpoint 1 page, one per child
- Checkpoint 2 page, one per child
- A blank diary page per child for the performance task

Checkpoints After Day 2 · What the worm experiences firsthand One diary entry. The child names two things the narrator could experience directly from that position and one thing that would have to come from somewhere else, with a reason. Without a book. No - it needs the entry, which can be photocopied.

Look for. The distinction follows from the narrator's position or body. An answer is strongest when the child can say whether the information is firsthand or would have to be remembered, inferred or supplied by somebody else. Say to the child. Name two things the worm could experience for itself. Now name one thing it would need to learn some other way, and tell me why. After Day 5 · Whose voice Four short passages, each with a different narrator; one passage contains a narrator reporting another person's telling. The child says who is telling each and how they can tell.

4 Without a book. Four passages on a page and no book. Look for. The nested telling is spotted. Three of four correct, including the nested one, is a strong Grade 3 result. Say to the child. Who is telling each of these? What gave it away? The task at the end The same day, the other diary Each child takes one day from the worm's diary or the spider's and writes that same day as the other animal would have kept it. The entry has to include one thing the new narrator could experience

firsthand that the first narrator could not, and treat one thing outside the new narrator's direct experience as something it could only know if it had another source. Collect. The diary entry, with the firsthand addition and the outside-direct-experience item marked. Time. One session of about 40 minutes.

Teacher key

- Checkpoint 1: acceptable answers must follow from the worm's position or body. The child should distinguish what the worm experiences firsthand from information that would require memory, inference or another source.
- Checkpoint 2: the nested narration is Just like Josh Gibson - the granddaughter is the narrator, but part of what the reader receives comes through what her grandmother told her. The child should notice both levels.
- Task: the harder evidence is how the child handles information outside the new narrator's direct experience. It may be omitted, inferred cautiously or included only when the entry gives the narrator a source for it. What a strong answer looks like Strand What to see Narrator Says who is telling the story. Limits Distinguishes what the narrator experiences firsthand from information that must come from elsewhere. Reposition Retells an event from another narrator's position. Comparison Says how two narrators differ in what they notice firsthand and what each would need from another source. Keeping the daily evidence Keep each child's first attempt on Day 1 to explain how an event would look from another position, and the final performance-task diary. What should change is not simply the amount of detail but the child's control of position: by the end, the new narrator should have different firsthand information, and anything outside that experience should be handled as inference, memory or information supplied from elsewhere. Also keep the Checkpoint 1 response if you want a direct record of the unit's central distinction between firsthand experience and secondhand information. What to pass on
- A child who can identify a single narrator but cannot follow the nested telling at Checkpoint 2 is ready for more single-narrator work before later work on reliability.
- This unit draws on the minimum three books. If the class has met either diary very recently, it is better to postpone the unit than to substitute a weaker book simply to preserve the calendar. The books this unit uses
- Just like Josh Gibson by Angela Johnson · 1 lesson 5
- Diary of a Spider by Doreen Cronin · 2 lessons
- Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin · 2 lessons