**Writing About Point of View**

Raise Questions to Discover Ideas

* How is the narration made to seem real or probable? Are the actions and speeches reported authentically, as they might be seen and reported in life?
* Is the narrator/speaker identifiable? What are the narrator’s qualifications as an observer? How much of the story seems to result from the imaginative or creative powers of the narrator?
* How does the narrator/speaker perceive the time of the actions? If the predominant tense is the past, what relationship, if any, does the narrator establish between the past and the present (…providing explanations, making conclusions)? If the tense is present, what effect does this tense have on your understanding of the story?
* To what extent does point of view make the work interesting and effective?

First-Person Point of View

* What prompts the speaker to tell the story? What does the story tell us about the experience and interests of the narrator/speaker?
* Is the speaker talking to the reader, a listener, or herself? How does her audience affect what she is saying? Is the level of language appropriate to her and the situation? How much does she tell about herself?
* To what degree is the narrator involved in the action (…as a major participant or major mover, minor participant, or nonparticipating observer)? Does he make himself the center of humor or admiration? How? Does he seem aware of changes he undergoes?
* Does the speaker criticize other characters? Why? Does she seem to report fairly and accurately what others have told her?
* How reliable is the speaker? Does the speaker seem to have anything to hide? Does it seem that he may be suing the story for self-justification or exoneration? What effect does the this complexity have on the story?

Second-Person Point of View

* What situation prompts the use of the second person? How does the speaker acquire the authority to explain things to the listener? How directly involved is the listener? What is the relationship between the speaker and listener if the listener is indefinite, what does the speaker choose to use “you” as the basis of the narration?

Third-Person Point of View

* Does the author speak in an authorial voice, or does it seem that the author has adopted a special but unnamed voice for the work?
* What is the speaker’s level of language (formal and grammatical, informal or intimate and ungrammatical)? Are actions, speeches, and explanations made fully or sparsely?
* From what apparent vantage point does the speaker report action and speeches? Does this vantage point make the characters seem distant or close? How much sympathy does the speaker express for the characters?
* To what degree is your interest centered on a particular character? Does the speaker give you thoughts and responses of this character (limited 3rd person)?
* If the work is 3rd person omniscient, how extensive is the omniscience (all the characters or just a few)? Generally, what limitations or freedoms can be attributed to this point of view?
* What special kinds of knowledge does the narrator assume that the listeners or readers possess (Familiarity with are, religion, politics, history, navigation, music, current or past social conditions)?
* How much dialogue is used in the story? Is the dialogue presented directly, as dramatic speech, or indirectly, as past-tense reports of speeches? What is your perception of the story’s events as a result of the use of dialogue?