

1. **Omniscient** – in which the author comes on as knowing everything about everything and everybody. He can tell you the thoughts of any character; he knows the whole past. He may even comment on the story, or he may not. This method is sometimes called “Olympian,” sometimes “analytic author.” [...] with this method there is usually some sense of “authorial presence” conducting the reader, guiding his reactions to the story.
2. **The First Person** – in which the author comes on as if he were one of the characters in the story. Maybe he’s the main character telling his own story. Maybe he’s a minor character telling the main character’s story. Maybe he’s something in between. This is not as cut-and-dried as it seems: the form used (whether letter, interior monologue, memoir, or whatever) will create real differences, even though the story’s told from some first-person basis with an “I” narrator. Distinctions are often made, too, between an “objective” or “reliable” first person narrator on the one hand, and a narrator who is “subjective” or “unreliable” on the other. [ACHIEVES MOST CLOSENESS]
3. **Scenic** – in which the author comes on as almost not being there. He simply describes what happens. He gives nothing of the past, nor of any background; he is inside the mind of no character at all. He simply records dialogue and movement, depicts setting, makes no comment or intrusion. It’s rather like “absence” of point of view in a play, or action seen through the eye of a movie camera. This method is sometimes called “observer-author”; it remains entirely “exterior” and “objective.” [ACHIEVES MOST DISTANCE]
4. **Central Intelligence** – in which the author achieves the story’s narration by inhabiting the mind of one of the characters. It’s like the “omniscient” in that the author can give past, background, description, and so on. It’s like the “scenic” in that the author pretends not to be there. And it’s like the “first person” in that we are limited to what one single character can perceive of the action or feel about it. But that character is depicted, not as a first-person “I” but as a third-person “he” or “she.” The implication is that “he” or “she” will be the *central* character, and that’s usually the case. Otherwise we’d have to have still another term, like “third-person-minor,” or even worse, to cover the whole method, “omniscient-limited-to-one-character.”