

ALOE

A LESSON ON ENGLISH

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Analyzing a work of fiction: point-of-view, mood and theme

Every work of fiction is essentially a story, and every story is told from the **point of view** (also called “perspective”) of someone: a character in the story, a narrator who may or may not be a character, or an imaginary narrator who can see into the mind of every character.

There are six commonly-used perspectives in fiction:

1st person singular (I)

Example: *My dog ran into the street.*

2nd person singular (you)

Example: *Hey! Your dog is in the street!*

3rd person singular (he, she, it)

Example: *She went to get her dog, which had run into the street.*

1st person plural (we)

Example: *We chased our dog out of the street.*

2nd person plural (you)

Example: *All of you who live on this street need to watch your dogs.*

3rd person plural (they)

Example: *They were concerned at the number of dogs in the street.*



*The woman waits to cross the street
(3rd person singular)*



Of course I can (1st person singular)

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The **mood** of a work of fiction is simply the emotional impact it makes on the reader. Mood is developed by the author through such elements as diction (word choice), setting, characters and plot.

Typical moods in fiction are fear or anticipation of the events, sorrow or sympathy for the characters, nostalgia for the past, and hatred for evil characters. Building the desired mood is one of the author's most difficult tasks, as each reader reacts differently to what he or she reads; humor is especially hard to convey as mood, since what one person finds funny may not be at all funny to someone else!

Even more challenging is the theme of a work of fiction. **Theme** refers to the central point of the story: courage in the face of danger, or true love, or betrayal by a friend. Every language's literature has a handful of themes that occur again and again, making it easier for the reader to recognize them.

For example, American literature of the 18th century is often written around religious themes, while 19th century literature may have themes of the beauty of nature, or the dangers of living in large cities. Themes may reflect the concerns and problems of a particular society, or may refer to the dreams and accomplishments of its past.

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"A Lesson on English" is a series of short lessons created for people who want to become fluent in conversational English. The lessons are practical and useful for students learning English in a traditional classroom setting or on their own.

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