The Kite Runner

Point of View and Tone

Activity for Chapters 1-2*

*The enclosed is a selection taken from
The Kite Runner Activity Pack, item 303182.
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Item No. 308337
Objective: Recognizing and working with point of view and narrative tone

Activity

The point of view from which a story is told makes a big difference in how it is told. In a first-person narrative, we are receiving the impressions of one only of the characters, and that character's impressions will be colored by his or her age, gender, beliefs, and so on. First-person narratives are always limited to this single character's perspective. In a third-person limited narrative, the story is told from the perspective of a single character, but in the third-person voice as opposed to the first person voice. In a third-person omniscient narrative, the narrator is not limited to the perspective of a single character. The narrator now has access to the thoughts and feelings of all characters in the narrative—he has omniscience.

It is important to keep in mind that nothing is accidental in writing. Authors choose their words, punctuation, and structure of the language with deliberate care to convey just the appropriate tone and message.

A. Read the below passages and fill in the chart that follows, providing both the point of view and the tone of each passage. If the narrative is in the third-person, make sure to mention whether it is limited or omniscient.

Selection from The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain:

You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,” but that ain’t no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied, one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly–Tom’s Aunt Polly, she is–and Mary, and the Widow Douglas, is all told about in that book–which is mostly a true book; with some stretchers, as I said before.

Selection from Frankenstein by Mary Shelley:

His tale had occupied the whole day; and the sun was upon the verge of the horizon when he departed. I knew that I ought to hasten my descent towards the valley, as I should soon be encompassed in darkness; but my heart was heavy, and my steps slow. The labour of winding among the little paths of the mountain and fixing my feet firmly as I advanced perplexed me, occupied as I was by the emotions which the occurrences of the day had produced. Night was far advanced when I came to the half-way resting-place and seated myself beside the fountain. The stars shone at intervals, as the clouds passed over them; the dark pines rose before me, and every here and there a broken tree lay on the ground: it was a scene of wonderful solemnity and stirred strange thoughts within me. I wept bitterly; and clasping my hands in agony, I exclaimed, “Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me: if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not depart, depart, and leave me in darkness.
Chapters 1 and 2

Point of View and Tone

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Selection 2:

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Selection from *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini:

**Selection One:**

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeping into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize that I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

**Selection Two:**

When we were children, Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts. We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, pelted each other with them, giggling, laughing. I can still see Hassan up on that tree, sunlight flickering through the leaves on his almost perfectly round face, a face like a Chinese doll chiseled from hardwood...

**POINT OF VIEW AND TONE CHART**

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| *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* | first person  | informal                 | Narrator speaks directly to reader; numerous grammatical and punctuation errors; lots of slang and dialect; simple sentences | • "without"
• "ain't"
• "there was things"
• "I never seen anybody but lied..."
• That is nothing.* |
| *Frankenstein*                 | first person  | formal                   | Narration is filled with descriptive complex sentences; difficult vocabulary; direct address no contractions | • "Clouds passed over them; pines rose before me"
• "Wonderful solemnity"
• "nought"
• "Stars and clouds and winds, ye/are all..." |
| *The Kite Runner*              | first person  | informal                 | Very personal; exact time; figurative language               | • use of "I"
• "winter of 1975"
• I have been peeking into that deserted alley.* |
Selection 3:

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it's wrong what they say about the past, I've learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize that I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years.

Selection 4:

When we were children, Hassan and I used to climb the poplar trees in the driveway of my father's house and annoy our neighbors by reflecting sunlight into their homes with a shard of mirror. We would sit across from each other on a pair of high branches, our naked feet dangling, our trouser pockets filled with dried mulberries and walnuts. We took turns with the mirror as we ate mulberries, pelted each other with them, giggling, laughing. I can still see Hassan up on that tree, sunlight flickering through the leaves on his almost perfectly round face, a face like a Chinese doll chiseled from hardwood…

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|             |               |                          |                                                                        | • use of "I"
• "winter of 1975"
• I have been peeking into that deserted alley." |
B. Is there any difference in tone between the two selections from *The Kite Runner*? Explain.

In at least a page, retell a scene from either of these chapters from the point of view of someone other than Amir.

*Note to Teacher: Students should consider the points of view of these selections and note that they are largely the same. In order to highlight the differences in style, you might have students, as an extension, take a few sentences from Hosseini’s selection and rewrite them in a similar fashion to another of the selections. This should serve to illustrate that even when the point of view and tone seems to be the same, there are still subtle differences that make an author’s style all his or her own.*

*In addition, you might have students do Activity “A” in small groups, while Activity “B” is designed to be worked on individually.*
B. Is there any difference in tone between the two selections from *The Kite Runner*? Explain.

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