

How a Narrator's Point of View Shapes a Story

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: ____ / 10



Quick Review

A first-person narrator ("I") can only tell what THEY see, hear, and think. A third-person narrator stands outside the story. The same event can FEEL completely different depending on who is telling it.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Day of the Spelling Bee (told by Devonte)

I am telling you right now: I did not lose the fifth-grade spelling bee on purpose. I know that is what people are saying in the hallway. I know my best friend Marisol thinks I tanked the word "FORTUITOUS" so she could win, because she had been practicing for three months and her abuela had bought her new shoes for the trophy picture. I know all of that. But I am telling you it is not true. The microphone smelled like old apple juice. My socks were itching. The lights were so bright I could see two of Mrs. Acharya, the judge, instead of one.

Here is what actually happened. I had spelled SEVEN words correctly. SEVEN. I was up against Marisol and a kid named Brent who I had never beaten at anything, ever. When Mrs. Acharya read "FORTUITOUS," my brain did the thing where it sees a word and forgets what letters even ARE. So I said, slowly, "F — O — R — T — U — N — A — T — E." Which is, technically, a different word. I knew it the second I said it. I tried to take it back. You cannot take back a word in a spelling bee.

Marisol won. The auditorium clapped. Her abuela cried in the second row. I was happy for her — I really was. But I also wanted, just for one second, for everyone to know that my brain had not given up; my MOUTH had. There is a difference, and the difference matters when you are eleven and you have to walk back to your seat in front of the whole school.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question.

1. From whose point of view is this passage told?
 - A. a teacher who is grading the spelling bee from the back of the auditorium
 - B. Devonte, the student who said the wrong word during the bee
 - C. Marisol, the student who won the spelling bee
 - D. an outside narrator who knows what every student is thinking



2. Which sentence BEST shows that Devonte's point of view colors how the spelling bee is described?
 - A. "I had spelled SEVEN words correctly."
 - B. "Marisol won. The auditorium clapped."
 - C. "Mrs. Acharya read \"FORTUITOUS.\""
 - D. "The microphone smelled like old apple juice. My socks were itching. The lights were so bright I could see two of Mrs. Acharya, the judge, instead of one."
3. How does Devonte's point of view affect the way Marisol's WIN is described?
 - A. His point of view shows the win briefly and then quickly returns to his OWN feelings about losing.
 - B. His point of view describes Marisol's preparation in great detail and gives most of the page to her win.
 - C. His point of view does not mention Marisol's win at all.
 - D. His point of view describes the win in slow motion, focusing on Marisol's face.
4. If the SAME story were retold from Marisol's first-person point of view, which detail would MOST LIKELY change or disappear?
 - A. the fact that Marisol's abuela cried in the second row
 - B. the fact that Marisol won the spelling bee
 - C. the inside thought "my brain had not given up; my MOUTH had"
 - D. the description of Mrs. Acharya as the judge
5. How would the OPENING of the story MOST LIKELY change if the narrator were an outside (third-person) narrator?
 - A. It would still begin "I am telling you right now," because that is how stories about losing always begin.
 - B. It would leave out the word "FORTUITOUS" because outside narrators do not give specifics.
 - C. It would be written in second person ("You did not lose...").
 - D. It would describe the auditorium and the spellers without arguing with what people in the hallway are saying.
6. Read this line: "I was happy for her — I really was." The repeated phrase "I really was" MOST LIKELY suggests that —
 - A. Devonte is lying and was not happy for Marisol at all.
 - B. Devonte is happy AND mixed-up — proud of his friend but also stinging from his own loss.
 - C. Devonte does not actually know what "happy" means.
 - D. Devonte is trying to convince the judge to give him a second turn.



- 7. Which sentence BEST shows information that ONLY a first-person narrator could give?
 - A. The auditorium clapped after Marisol's correct spelling of "FORTUITOUS."
 - B. Mrs. Acharya was the judge for the fifth-grade spelling bee.
 - C. "My brain did the thing where it sees a word and forgets what letters even ARE."
 - D. Marisol had been practicing for three months and her abuela had bought her new shoes for the trophy picture.
- 8. What is the BEST overall reason the author chose to tell this story from Devonte's point of view?
 - A. to make the reader feel the unfair difference between what Devonte meant to say and what he actually said
 - B. to argue that Marisol does not deserve to have won the spelling bee
 - C. to show every speller's experience equally
 - D. to explain how spelling bees are run in fifth grade
- 9. Choose ONE sentence in the passage that you think shows Devonte's point of view MOST strongly. Copy it, and explain in 1-2 sentences how it would change if Marisol were telling the story instead.

- 10. Devonte ends with: "my brain had not given up; my MOUTH had. There is a difference, and the difference matters when you are eleven and you have to walk back to your seat in front of the whole school." Why is this ending more powerful in FIRST person than it would be from an outside narrator?



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9
- 10

Explanations

1. B	The narrator says "I" throughout and tells events from inside Devonte's experience — a first-person narrator who IS Devonte. A is wrong (no teacher voice); C is wrong (Marisol does not narrate); D is wrong (a first-person narrator can only know one mind, not everyone's).
2. D	The smell, the itching socks, and seeing-two-of-the-judge are tiny personal details only Devonte could feel — pure first-person POV. A is a fact anyone could give; B is a wide-shot fact; C is a fact anyone could state.
3. A	Devonte gives the win one short sentence, then turns back to his brain vs. mouth — classic first-person focus on the narrator's own feelings. B and D would be the focus a Marisol-narrator would give; C is wrong — the win IS mentioned ("Marisol won. The auditorium clapped.").
4. C	Only Devonte can know the brain-vs-mouth feeling — that thought would vanish from Marisol's telling. A would still be visible to Marisol; B is a fact she would definitely include — she lived it; D she would also still see.
5. D	An outside narrator would not start with a defensive "I am telling you" — that voice belongs to Devonte. The outside opening would set the auditorium and the spellers more neutrally. A is the OPPOSITE — third-person openings drop the "I"; B is a made-up rule; C confuses outside-narration with second-person.
6. B	First-person narrators often "insist" when feelings are complicated — the repeat shows mixed feelings, not a lie. A is too harsh — the next paragraph proves real friendship; C is dismissive; D contradicts the moment (the bee is over).
7. C	The brain-blank moment is Devonte's INSIDE experience that no one else could see — only the narrator could give it. A is public; B is public; D is a fact Devonte could have learned from outside, so an outside narrator could state it.
8. A	Devonte's first-person voice lets us feel the brain-mouth gap — the heart of the story. B contradicts paragraph 3 (he is happy for her); C is what a third-person narrator would do; D is informational and ignores the emotion the POV is built for.
9.	Answer: Strong answers pick a deeply inside sentence (e.g., "my brain did the thing where it sees a word and forgets what letters even ARE" / "my brain had not given up; my MOUTH had" / the smell-and-itching paragraph) and explain that Marisol would not know that thought, so she might describe Devonte just looking confused or quiet at the microphone — she could only describe what she saw, not what he felt. NOT acceptable: copying a public fact like "Marisol won" (Marisol would also see that); answers that do not explain how the retelling would differ. The strongest POV sentences are the ones that come from INSIDE the narrator's body or mind.

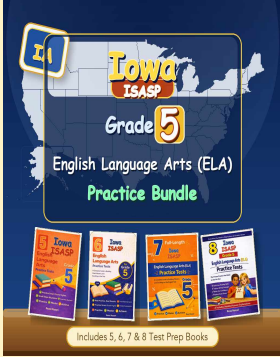


10.

Answer: Strong answer: an outside narrator could only describe Devonte walking back to his seat, but a first-person narrator can tell us EXACTLY what makes the walk hard — the gap between knowing the right answer and saying the wrong one, plus the public shame of being eleven in front of the whole school. The reader feels the moment from inside instead of watching from outside. Acceptable variations: any answer that contrasts "watching" vs. "feeling" the embarrassment, or that points out only Devonte can split his brain from his mouth. NOT acceptable: answers that just rephrase the line without comparing the two POVs.
Compare what we KNOW from inside Devonte to what we would only SEE from outside.



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