Developing the Narrator's Point of View

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A point of view is not just "first person" or "third person" — it is HOW the writer makes us see the world through a particular narrator. Watch for what the narrator notices, what they leave out, and what they say about themselves between the lines.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Field Notebook

It is the fourth Tuesday in a row that I have written down the wrong word in my own field notebook. The word "erosion" is not difficult, but I wrote "eruption," and now I have to draw a small careful line through it without seeming to draw a small careful line through it, because Mr. Halvorsen is watching, and Mr. Halvorsen does not believe a student should erase. "Cross it out neatly," he tells us, every single time. "A scientist owns her mistakes. She does not pretend they did not happen." I cross out the word, and I own my mistake, but the truth is that I would also like, very much, to pretend it did not happen.

Mr. Halvorsen is the kind of teacher who waits, on purpose, for you to figure something out. When Daniela asked him last week why the riverbank had collapsed in three places but not in the fourth, he did not answer. He said, "What did you notice when you walked past the fourth place?" and then he stood there for thirty-five seconds — I timed him — while she thought about it. He does this to me too. I would describe his teaching as "patient," except that the word "patient" suggests he is being nice. He is not being nice. He is being something more useful than nice, and I have not yet found the word for it.

What I have figured out, after four Tuesdays of getting things slightly wrong, is that he is teaching us to think the way the river thinks. The river does not panic when it meets a rock. It writes the rock into its path and keeps going. When I write "eruption" instead of "erosion," Mr. Halvorsen does not panic either. He writes my mistake into his class, and class keeps going. "Cross it out neatly, Olive," he says, without looking up from his own notebook. I draw the line. I keep going.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question. Pay attention to how the narrator's voice and choices shape what we know.

1. From what point of view is the passage written?

A. third-person limited, following Mr. Halvorsen's thoughts

B. first person, told by Olive, a student in the class

C. second person, addressing the reader directly as "you"

D. third-person omniscient, knowing every character's thoughts

2. What does Olive's line "I have not yet found the word for it" reveal about her as a narrator?

A. She does not actually pay much attention in class.

B. She is a careful thinker who refuses to accept the easy word when it does not quite fit.

C. She does not know many vocabulary words for her grade level.

D. She wants to insult Mr. Halvorsen but cannot find the right word.

3. Look at the line "I cross out the word, and I own my mistake, but the truth is that I would also like, very much, to pretend it did not happen." How does this line help develop Olive's point of view?

A. It shows that Olive is dishonest and will lie to her teacher whenever possible.

B. It shows that Olive is afraid of Mr. Halvorsen and cannot speak around him.

C. It shows that Olive is willing to admit a feeling she also disagrees with — making her a self-aware narrator.

D. It shows that Olive does not care about the rules of the classroom.

4. Olive tells us that she TIMED Mr. Halvorsen at thirty-five seconds during Daniela's question. What does this small detail mainly reveal about the narrator's point of view?

A. She is bored in Mr. Halvorsen's class and has nothing better to do.

B. She pays very close attention to her teacher's methods — close enough to MEASURE them.

C. She is competing with Daniela for Mr. Halvorsen's attention.

D. She is impatient and counting the minutes until class ends.

5. How is Mr. Halvorsen shown to the reader?

A. Through his own thoughts, which the narrator can read directly.

B. Through Olive's observations of what he says, does, and does NOT do — never from inside his head.

C. Through letters that he writes to Olive at home.

D. Through the journal entries he leaves on his desk for the class to read.

6. Read this line: "I would describe his teaching as 'patient,' except that the word 'patient' suggests he is being nice. He is not being nice. He is being something more useful than nice..." What does this passage MOST CLEARLY do for the narrator's voice?

A. It shows that Olive uses words carelessly and contradicts herself often.

B. It shows that Olive admires Mr. Halvorsen but won't flatter him — her voice is honest and exact.

C. It shows that Olive dislikes Mr. Halvorsen and is searching for a polite insult.

D. It shows that Olive cannot find any positive word to describe her teacher.

7. Look at the comparison the narrator makes in paragraph 3: "The river does not panic when it meets a rock. It writes the rock into its path and keeps going." How does this comparison develop Olive's point of view?

A. It shows that Olive is afraid of rivers and avoids them.

B. It shows that Olive thinks her teacher's lesson is silly and makes fun of it.

C. It shows that Olive has BUILT her own way of understanding her teacher — using a metaphor she made, not one he gave her.

D. It proves that Olive is the smartest student in her class.

8. Which sentence BEST captures HOW Olive's voice changes from the beginning of the passage to the end?

A. She moves from confident expert to confused beginner.

B. She moves from a small private frustration to a calm, almost steady understanding of her teacher.

C. She moves from quiet admiration to open rebellion against the rules.

D. She moves from speaking about her teacher to speaking only about herself.

9. Olive describes Mr. Halvorsen mostly through what he SAYS and what he DOES NOT say. Choose one specific moment where his SILENCE (or his refusal to answer) tells the reader something important about him. Quote the moment and explain in 2 sentences what it shows.

_____

_____

10. Imagine the same scenes told from Mr. Halvorsen's first-person point of view instead. Describe ONE specific thing the reader would GAIN and ONE specific thing the reader would LOSE if the narrator changed. Use a detail from the text in your answer.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	**B**	C	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	B	**C**	D
3	A	B	**C**	D	8	A	**B**	C	D
4	A	**B**	C	D	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	"I have written down the wrong word" and "He does this to me too" — first-person pronouns + a student's classroom experience = first person from Olive. A is wrong (we get Olive's thoughts, not Mr. Halvorsen's); C is wrong ("you" appears only in dialogue, not as the address to the reader); D is wrong (we never enter another character's mind).
2. B	Rejecting "patient" because it implies "nice" — and admitting she has not yet replaced it — shows a narrator who values precision. A is the OPPOSITE; C reads a vocabulary gap into a precision choice; D invents an insult the line does not carry.
3. C	She tells the rule, follows the rule, AND admits the part of her that wishes she didn't have to — that double-vision is self-awareness. A overstates a private wish into actual lying; B reads fear where the narrator is steady; D contradicts "I cross out the word."
4. B	Counting silence in seconds is the move of someone STUDYING how the teaching works — a precise, attentive narrator. A invents boredom; C invents a rivalry; D mistakes attention for impatience.
5. B	We only see Mr. Halvorsen FROM Olive — his lines, his silences, his refusal to answer Daniela. The first-person POV blocks direct access to his thoughts. A contradicts the POV; C invents letters; D invents a journal.
6. B	Rejecting a soft word in favor of a more accurate one is admiration without flattery — exactly the voice the passage develops. A misreads precision as carelessness; C reverses the feeling; D ignores "something more useful than nice," which IS a positive description.
7. C	The river metaphor is Olive's own — invented to explain a teacher who does not explain himself. That move BELONGS to the narrator and shows her thinking. A invents fear; B reverses the tone (the metaphor honors the lesson); D overclaims (the text never compares her to other students).
8. B	Paragraph 1: irritation she has to admit. Paragraph 3: river metaphor, "I keep going." That arc is private frustration → calm understanding. A reverses the direction (she starts uncertain, ends steady); C is wrong (no rebellion); D is wrong (she still talks about her teacher in paragraph 3).

9.	**Answer:** Strong answers quote either (a) the thirty-five-second silence with Daniela — showing that he uses silence as a teaching tool, expecting students to think for themselves — or (b) the moment he says "Cross it out neatly, Olive" "without looking up from his own notebook," which shows that he treats her mistake as ordinary, not embarrassing. The explanation should connect the silence/refusal to a quality of the teacher (he teaches by NOT answering; he refuses to make a small mistake into a big deal; he believes students should reach their own conclusions). NOT acceptable: answers that quote a moment where Mr. Halvorsen actually IS speaking at length; answers without a specific quote; answers that read his silence as rude or angry (the text never supports that). Find a line where the teacher does NOT do what most teachers would do — then ask why he made that choice.
10.	**Answer:** Strong answers name a clear gain AND a clear loss. Likely gain: we would finally hear his REASONS — why he chose not to answer Daniela for thirty-five seconds, what he thought when Olive wrote "eruption," why he refuses erasing. Likely loss: we would lose Olive's voice, her river metaphor, her private admission that she would "like, very much, to pretend it did not happen" — the inner life of a student trying to figure her teacher out. Either pair is acceptable as long as the gain and the loss are specific and tied to the text. NOT acceptable: gains/losses that have nothing to do with the actual scenes ("the reader would learn about Mr. Halvorsen's vacations"); only one half answered; answers that just say "third person would be better." Gain = something we cannot see from Olive's seat. Loss = something we only have BECAUSE we sit in Olive's seat.

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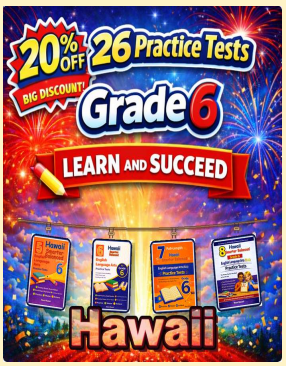

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