

Using Point of View to Maximize Reader Engagement

Jane K. Cleland

“You never really understand a person until you
consider things from his point of view.”

Harper Lee

POV Options:

1. First person

First person is the most intimate option b/c the narrator is speaking directly to the reader.

2. Second person

Second person can feel accusatory, but it can also foster empathy, since the narrator is sharing an experience directly with you.

3. Third person

Third person is the most versatile POV. There are three sub-categories of third person:

(1) Third Person Omniscient: This POV is the voice of God, all knowing.

(2) Third Person Limited: While the third person omniscient POV has full access to the thoughts and feelings of all characters, limited third person is restricted to a single character.

(3) Third Person Objective (Fly-on-the-Wall): This POV is a completely objective narrative perspective.

4. Breaking the Fourth Wall:

Speaking directly to audience

5. Multiple POV:

Very common within a book, often alternating between chapters, but it can also be used within a series, a chapter, even a sentence.

Robert B. Parker
Night Passage

- Chapter One: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Two: Tom Carson, a victim
- Chapter Three: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Four: Hasty Hathaway, the antagonist
- Chapter Five: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Six: Jo-Jo Genest, the villain
- Chapter Seven: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Eight: Carole Genest, a victim; half-way through this chapter, the perspective changes to Jo-Jo, her ex-husband, for three sentences (Note: Jo-Jo interjects his voice into his ex-wife's chapter, a perfect metaphor, given Jo-Jo's behavior—a sub-plot tracks Jo-Jo's efforts to interject himself into his ex-wife's life.)
- Chapter Nine: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Ten: Jo-Jo Genest, the villain
- Chapter Eleven: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Twelve: Hasty Hathaway, the antagonist
- Chapter Thirteen: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Fourteen: Jesse Stone, the protagonist
- Chapter Fifteen: Jesse Stone, the protagonist (Note: The perspective shifts to Abby Taylor, Jesse's love interest, for two sentences, one in the middle of the chapter, the other near the end.)
- Chapter Sixteen: Tom Carson, a victim
- Chapter Seventeen: Abby Taylor, Jesse's love interest
- Chapter Eighteen, Charlie Buck, a detective from Wyoming

Note that of the eighteen chapters in this sample, nine are from the protagonist's point of view.

6. Epistolary stories:

The narrator uses everyday text formats, often ephemera, including letters, diaries, calendar entries, newspaper clips, police reports, email, texts, court transcripts, etc.

Exercise:

Window to the World

Write a brief scene about what your character sees through the window from three points of view, first, second, and third.

Three Questions to Help You Decide

1. What are your readers' expectations? This requires considering your genre.
2. Is there a reason why the reader should see only one point of view?
3. Do you want to show how different people react or interact?

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Nov. 14:

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Upcoming Events



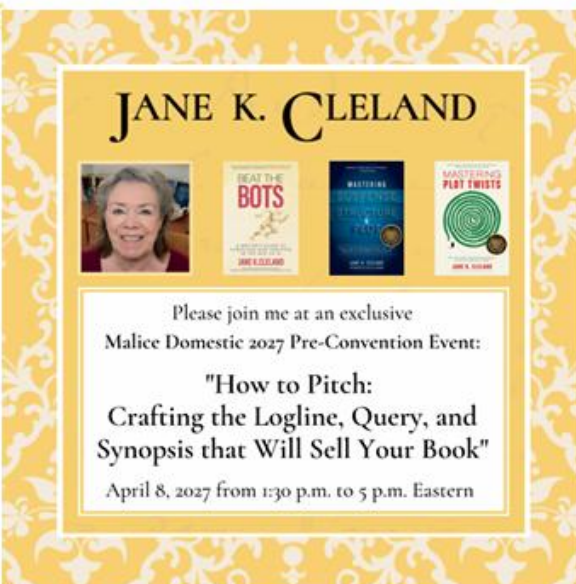
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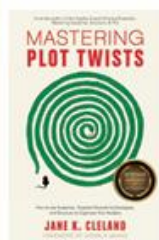
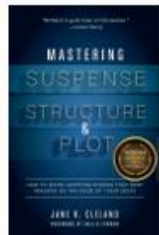
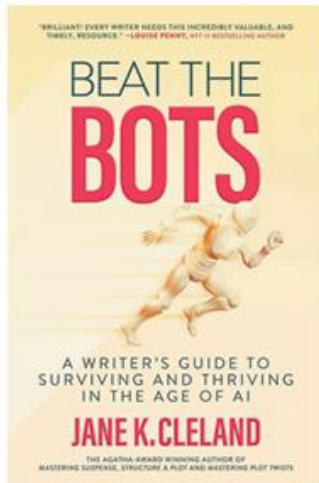
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Jane K. Cleland has written fourteen novels in the multiple award-winning Josie Prescott Antiques Mystery series [St. Martin's Minotaur, with short fiction published by *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*]. The series has been optioned for TV/film development.

Jane also writes about the craft of writing. In her most recent book, *Beat the Bots: An Author's Guide to Surviving and Thriving in the Age of AI*, she shares practical exercises to nurture imagination, spark original thinking, and resist creative conformity. Her other nonfiction books, *Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot* and *Mastering Plot Twists* both won the Agatha Award. In addition, Jane is a contributing editor for *Writer's Digest Magazine*. She also offers small-group Mystery Mastermind virtual workshops, free monthly webinars, Jane's Inner Circle, and free weekly YouTube Shorties—one- to three-minutes answers to FAQ. More information is available at <http://janecleland.com>

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