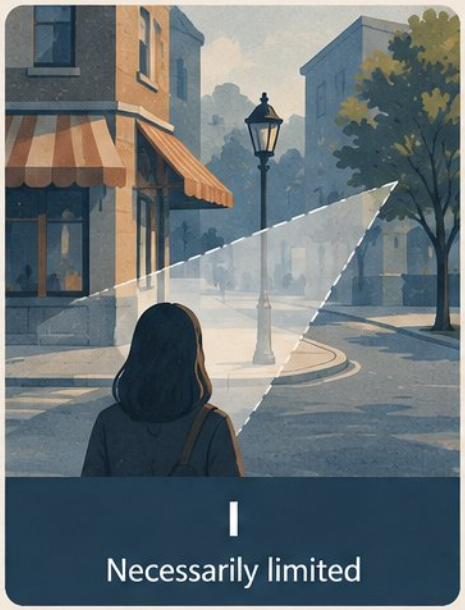
Narrative Point of View:
Who Tells the Story and Why

- POV is a craft decision: it controls access, sympathy, suspense, theme
- Ask: who sees, who speaks, what does the narrator know or withhold?
- Same scene, three lenses: first person, close third, omniscient
- Workshop arc: narrator spectrum, reliability, psychic distance, pitfalls, revision
- Goal: diagnose your draft's POV and choose deliberately and consistently



The Core Question: Grammar Versus Narrative Stance



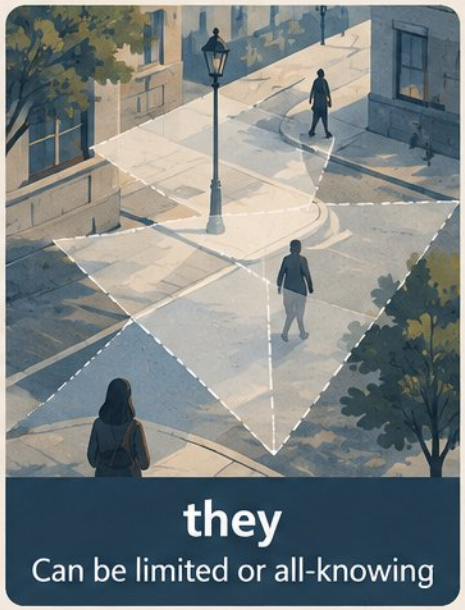
I
Necessarily limited



you
Necessarily limited



he/she
Can be limited



they
Can be limited or all-knowing

- Grammatical person (I, you, *he/she/they*) is only one layer.
- Narrative stance—objective, subjective, limited, omniscient—is another.
- First person is necessarily limited; third person can be limited or all-knowing.
- Objective narrators report actions only; subjective narrators interpret the action.
- Practical rule: POV is less about who's speaking, more about who's knowing.

The Narrator Spectrum: First Person to Omniscient



- **First person:** intimate voice, constrained knowledge, room for self-deception
- **Second person:** immediate and uncomfortable; strong in short forms
- **Third-person limited:** flexible default balancing access and control
- **Omniscient:** panoramic access and commentary; risks distance and intrusion
- **Objective/camera-eye:** observes behavior and dialogue, no inner thoughts

Second Person and Other Hybrid Forms

- Second person needs a clear "you": reader, character, or self.
- It forces identification, but can feel confrontational—keep knowledge consistent.
- Free indirect discourse blends narrator and character voices in third person.
- No quotation marks or thought tags; character language colors narration.
- Diagnostic: who owns this word or judgment—narrator, character, or both?





Reliability and the Narrator's Mask

- Unreliable narration: a gap between what the narrator claims and what readers infer
- Common types: withholding, misreading, self-deception, ideological bias, limited maturity
- Plant credible doubt through contradictions, omissions, and revealing secondary characters
- Strongest in first person and close third; genre shapes reader tolerance
- Keep misdirection believable—and leave a path to the truth

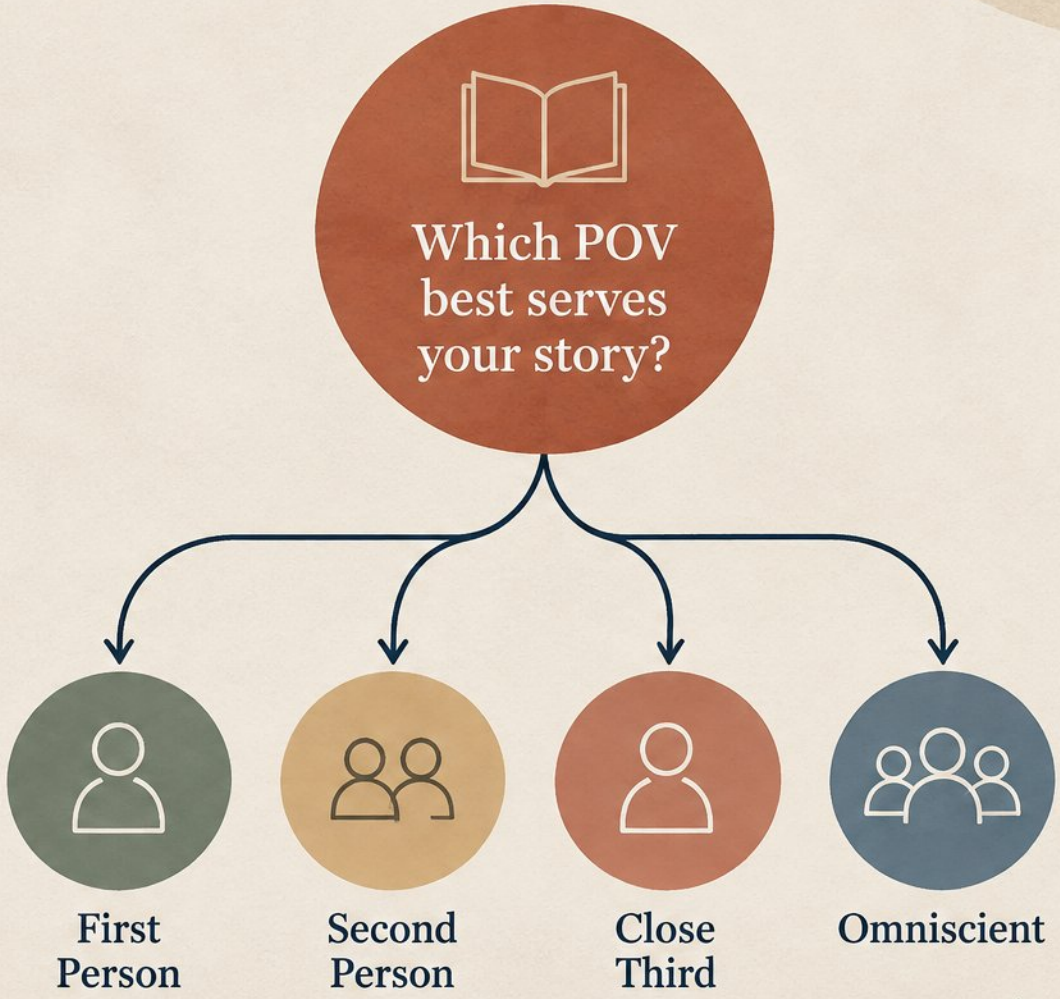
Psychic Distance and Narrative Camera Control

- Psychic distance: felt closeness between reader and character's inner experience
- Gardner's ladder: "It was winter of 1853" to "Snow. Under your collar…"
- Word choice, thought access, and sentence texture shift distance within a scene
- Move one level at a time: zoom in for intensity, pull back for transitions
- Sudden, inexplicable shifts look amateur—change on a boundary or motivated trigger



Choosing a POV for the Right Reasons

- Whose story is this—who has the most at stake?
- Match POV to the central question, not habit or fashion.
- Balance promised access to consciousness against genre distance.
- Weigh intimacy, flexibility, commentary, and restraint by reader effect.
- Consider representation and who owns the voice being told.



Who Tells the Story and Why It Matters

- Narrator choice shapes theme, tension, and reader allegiance.
- Testing a scene under two or three POVs reveals gains and losses.
- Suspense depends on information control: know more, less, or differently.
- Reader trust and emotional closeness are built by consistent choices.
- Discussion: when does a different narrator make the story say something new?



Common POV Pitfalls and How to Fix Them

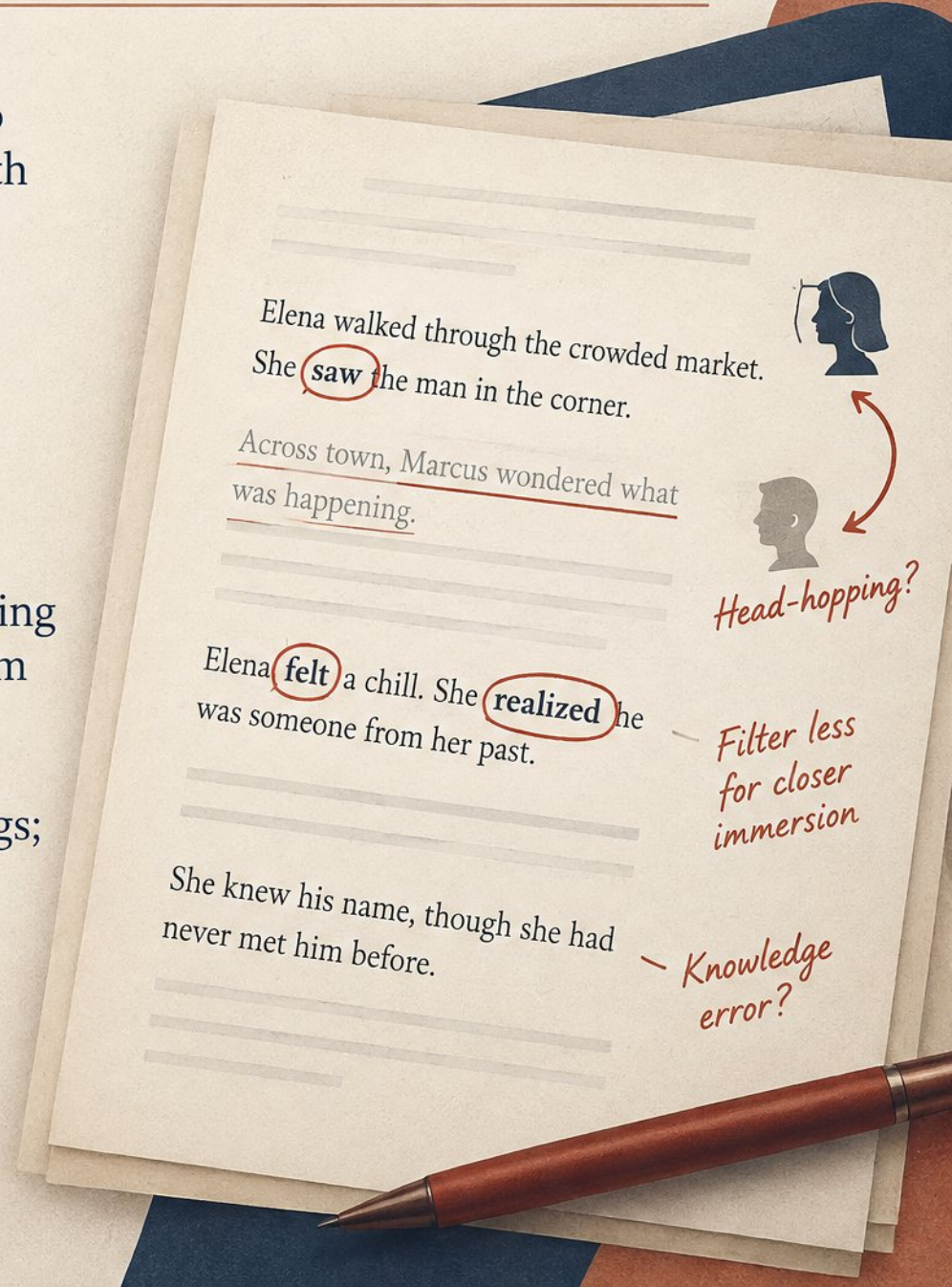
Head-hopping: unearned shifts into another character's thoughts; fix with scene breaks or visible behavior

POV slips: track verbs like saw, felt, realized — verify they belong to the viewpoint character

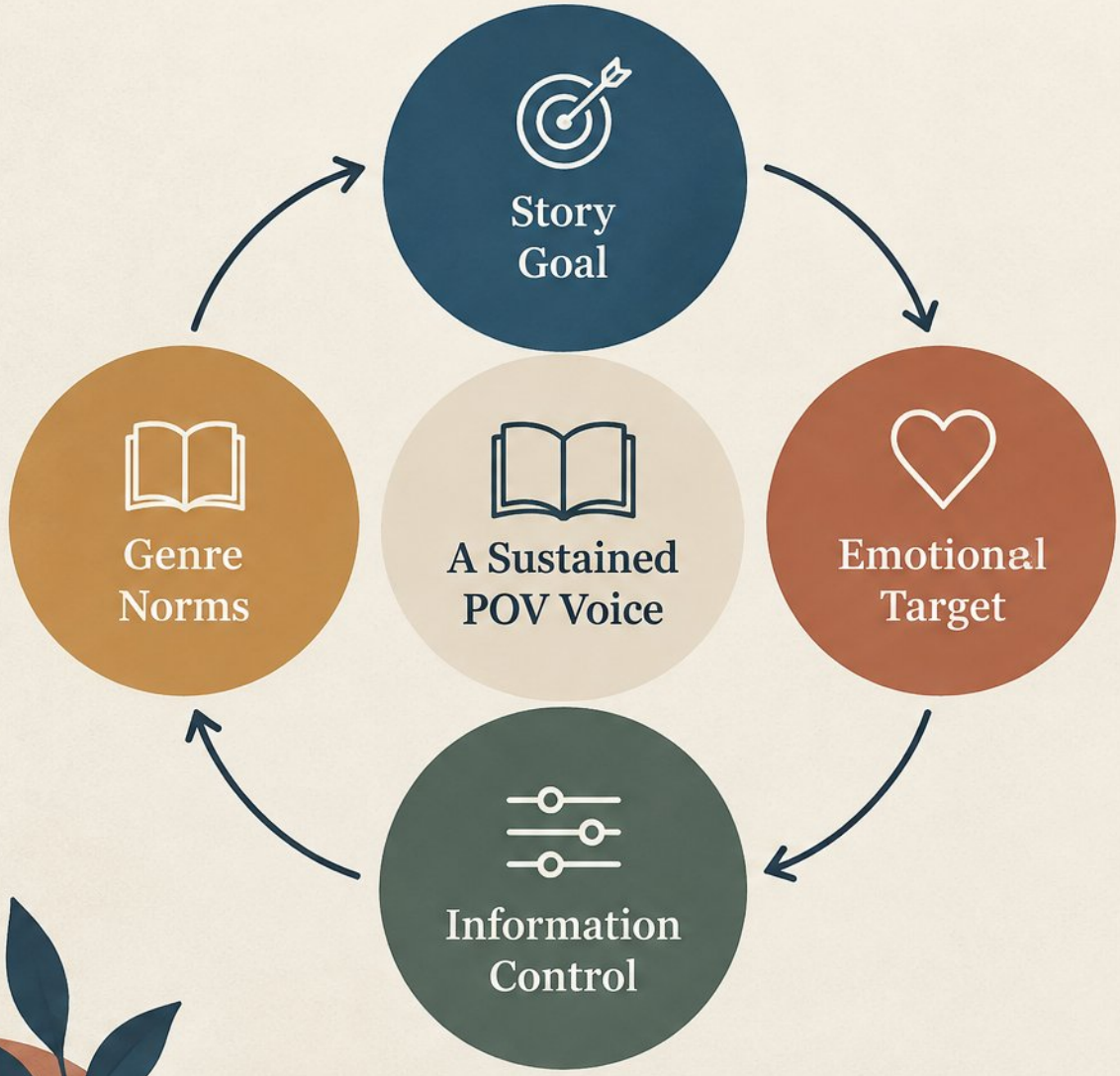
Knowledge errors: characters naming people or facts before they learn them

Filtering: too many 'saw' and 'felt' tags; cut them for closer immersion

Checklist: one POV per scene, consistent pronouns, transitions flagged by breaks



Practical Strategies: Choosing and Sustaining a POV



- Decide POV by story goal, emotional target, and information control
- Check genre norms: what access to consciousness do readers expect?
- Set POV rules early; mark every intentional shift clearly
- Track each scene's narrator, goal, conflict, and outcome on a POV map
- Run one revision pass on POV only, separate from proofreading

Designing a POV Map for a Long Project

- POV map: one line per scene—viewpoint, goal, conflict, outcome
- Reverse outline reveals scenes that need no separate narrator
- Distinct narrators: different diction, priorities, habits, blind spots
- Write a one-line POV mission for each major narrator
- Track continuity: names, knowledge gained, order characters learn facts



Diagnose and Repair: Guided POV Exercises

- **Exercise 1:** spot POV type, stance, and reliability cues in three excerpts.
- **Exercise 2:** rewrite a 200-word scene, compare access, sympathy, suspense.
- **Exercise 3:** diagnose a partner's POV slip and propose one concrete fix.
- **Solo option:** label draft lines as observed, inferred, or known.
- **Debrief:** which choices surprised you, and what will you change?



Assessing POV Choices: A Practical Rubric

Clear viewpoint: name the viewpoint character in one sentence.	✗	−	○	✓
Consistent access: every detail comes through what this character could notice or know.	✗	−	○	✓
Intentional distance: shifts in closeness are motivated and clearly signaled.	✗	−	○	✓
Distinct voices: narrators differ in diction, rhythm, and emotional vocabulary.	✗	−	○	✓
Theme fit: the POV serves the story's central question and reader experience.	✗	−	○	✓



Your Next Step: Apply One POV Change







- Take-home prompt: make one deliberate POV or distance change to a current project.
- Record what it gains and costs in access, pace, and suspense.
- Run the POV checklist on one revised scene before your next session.
- Devote one editorial pass to POV alone, separate from proofreading.
- Commit: name one POV decision you will make deliberately this week.

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