# ❝ SUZY VITELLO'S POINT OF VIEW LECTURE ONE

Wondering which POV to choose for a particular novel or short-story or hybrid work?

You're not alone.

Here are the initial questions you should ask when deciding a) who to channel the story through, and, b) where to place the camera

1. Decide which character most owns the story, e.g. who has the most to gain or lose within the grand arc.
2. Decide how many characters in your story should weigh in with motivation, stakes, desire, etc… it may take an outline or a "zero" draft to figure this out. Be patient. (Zero draft will be unpacked in a later lecture.) Often in dual narratives, the bigger story exists in the space between the characters (think, GONE GIRL). In this case, the choice between first or third person relies on how much you want the reader to weigh in. Third person tends to neutralize the weight of the individual voices, and often provides more room for the reader to participate in the struggle without choosing "a side." In a first person dual narrative, the reader will often switch allegiance to the voice whispering in her ear.
3. Consider a significant character who will NOT have a POV (whether first or third person). This is not a hard rule, but often the central antagonist or "obstacle" character (also unpacked in a further lecture), will serve your agenda best if their POV remains somewhat mysterious. Villain Gretchen Lowell in Chelsea Cain's *Heartsick* series is a good example of a character whose head we don't enter.
4. Alignment. This one is tricky. How closely do you want your reader to align with the journey of your main character? Unreliability factors in here. Does your main character start out with a "misbelief"? When in the arc will your reader understand that the mc's story-problem belief is false? How big a role will irony play? (Third person is a better choice when it comes to irony. Again, more will be revealed about this in a subsequent lecture.)
5. What is the age category of your story? Younger readers are often most engaged when "living" inside the main character's head, which is why much (but not all) of MG and YA is written in first person.
6. Scenes. In first person, your mc must be in every scene. Does this serve your story, or will your story benefit from scenes in which your mc does not appear?
7. Timeline. Is your story a "looking back through memory" story, or is it unfolding in real time? Stories firmly attached to your mc's past generally benefit from more interiority and reflection – unless you have a bunch of reveals and misdirection. Mysteries and thrillers written in present tense (crime fiction in particular) work well in close third person or multiple first.

Of course there are other considerations, but these initial seven questions are a starting point!