First, Second and Third Person Overview

The voice of the narrator and the choice of the perspective that the author uses to engage the reader significantly affects the style of the narrative. This is determined by the choice of person that the narrator writes through.

- the person speaking (first person)
- the person listening or being spoken to (second person)
- the person being spoken about (third person)

The ‘person’ or voice is indicated by the pronouns used and influences the linking of pronoun references within and between sentences and paragraphs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First person</th>
<th>Second person</th>
<th>Third person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>he, she, it, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>him, hers, it, them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>yours</td>
<td>his, hers, its, their, theirs</td>
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Many narrative texts are written in the third person. The use of the third person generally puts some distance between the reader and the writer (or what is written about).

The second person (you) is used to address the reader personally and is therefore often used in persuasive writing and advertising.

Using the first person, narrators create texts in their own voice. They are personally placed in the story or related closely to them.

The choice of first person, especially the singular I, generally makes the writing very personal and engages the reader closely with the events. The use of the plural form of the first person (we) is often used by writers to include the reader in factual writing. For example:

*I walked quickly down the street with my mum.*

*I set off down a small alleyway where a cat exchanged a disturbing glance with me.*

*We should all take responsibility for our planet.*

Using the second person, narrators engage the reader and ask them to participate in the events or feelings. For example:

*You would be really scared too!*

*Your legs would be crammed up against the seat in this type of theatre.*

Using the third person, narrators place a distance from the events and the reader. For example:

*Amongst the crowd making their way through the snow, were three men wearing thick warm jackets and carrying heavy machine guns. Moscow could not hide the events that were about to fall upon them.*
Skill Focus: Using and identifying third person in texts

STAGE 4

Strategy

Analysing and manipulating texts. Changing the voice used in a text.

Students need to:
• identify the words that give the person the text is written in
• change the pronouns to change the way the text is written.

Activities to support the strategy

Guided

Exploring metalanguage (QTF)

The teacher explains that in the Year 9 Language Conventions 2008 paper, the text on Jacques Cousteau was written in the third person.

The text is read to the students. As the text is read, the students underline the words that place the passage in third person. The text is then jointly deconstructed by repeating the activity using the text on an OHT.

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French diver Jacques Cousteau was influential in making the general public aware of the underwater world. Through his documentaries featuring sunken wrecks and those featuring the natural environment, Cousteau’s film work captivated people worldwide. His films allowed audiences to glimpse a new world.

After the text has been read, the students share the words they found that placed the text in third person.

The students compare their results with the deconstructions completed as a class.

Students list and categorise the words that place the text in third person (nouns and pronouns).

The ‘person’ or voice is set by the pronouns used and is part of linking pronoun references within and between sentences and paragraphs.
Copies of the matrix are provided to students. Using the matrix on an OHT, students discuss how a text could be changed from first, second and third person.

The students refer back to the joint deconstruction (analysis) of the passage written in third person.

Students reconstruct the passage in second and first person as shown below.

Discuss the difference when this text is written in **second person**.

French diver Jacques Cousteau was influential in making you aware of the underwater world. Through his documentaries featuring sunken wrecks and the natural environment, Cousteau’s film work captivated you and allowed you to glimpse a new world.

Discuss the difference when this text is written in **first person**.

French diver Jacques Cousteau was influential in making us aware of the underwater world. Through his documentaries featuring sunken wrecks and the natural environment, Cousteau’s film work captivated us and allowed us to glimpse a new world.
Your task is to analyse the passage and write the first paragraph in third person.

Discuss why the second paragraph should not be changed to first person.

At dawn, I set out on my horse for the wood at the edge of the village of Treegap. I was going there as I did once every ten years, to meet my two sons, Miles and Jesse. At noontime, I, Winnie Foster, whose family owned the Treegap wood, lost my patience at last and decided to think about running away. And at sunset a stranger appeared at my gate. He was looking for someone, but he didn’t say who.

No connection, you would agree. But things can come together in strange ways. The wood was at the centre, the hub of the wheel. All wheels must have a hub. A Ferris wheel has one, as the sun is the hub of the wheeling calendar. Fixed points they are, and best left undisturbed, for without them, nothing holds together. But sometimes people find this out too late.

From *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt, p. 4