

An Activity on:



MIRROR MISCHIEF

By Ceci Jenkinson

Purpose: Story-writing focus on **narrative viewpoints**. The class don't need to have read *Mirror Mischief* to do this activity but it's more meaningful if they have. You will need a copy of the book to read from. Everyone will need some paper to write on for the activities.

Introduction: Read the opening paragraphs from '*Mirror Mischief Chapter 1 – A Parcel of Surprises*' to half-way down p4. Ask the class: What is Ceci doing to start this story?

She is introducing three different characters, all in the same situation, and telling the reader what each of them is thinking. In other words, she is using three different, or *alternating, viewpoints*.

Why?

Because:

- Although Oli is one of the main characters, Ceci can't use his point of view to describe how Mr Surd or Slugger wake up because Oli wouldn't know because he wasn't there.
- And, showing life through the eyes of different characters like Mr Surd and Slugger is a great way of telling the reader what kind of people they are. In this case their different characteristics are accentuated because they are all in the same situation – waking up in the morning.
- As a reader, you find out things that the main character doesn't know – in this case that Oli is heading for trouble from Slugger (and probably Mr Surd, too). This gives you an *insight* and helps you feel more involved in the story – like in a pantomime when the audience shouts, 'he's behind you!'.

Stories like Ceci's which use 'he/she' for all the characters, and which have insight into the thoughts and feelings of *all* the characters, are narrated in the *third person 'omniscient'* (which means 'all-knowing') or '*alternating*'. Some authors write mainly in the *third person limited*, which means they concentrate on the viewpoint of just one character. One example is JK Rowling in the Harry Potter books. Can you think why?

- It helps the reader to identify and sympathise with the main character. You see everything through Harry's eyes and you never know more than he knows. You never get that 'he's behind you' moment.

Some authors like to write in the *first person*, (using 'I'). Jaqueline Wilson is one. This emphasises the feeling of togetherness between the reader and the main character, but can you think of any potential problems this causes?

- It limits the action to things that happen to the main character.

MIRROR MISCHIEF



Activity 1:

Let's look at two fairy tales that everyone knows:

- Cinderella
- Little Red Riding Hood

Whose viewpoint features in each story, and why?

- **Cinderella: At first mainly Cinderella's limited viewpoint. This is to help the reader to feel lots of sympathy for the unhappy Cinderella and share her excitement when events lead to the ball. Then Cinderella is imprisoned and at this point, (depending on the version) the viewpoint usually becomes 'omniscient'. This is for the very practical reason that Cinderella is locked up and cannot know what is going on outside her cell!**
- **Little Red Riding Hood: At first hers. Then, of course, the wolf's. This is to build suspense. The reader knows that the wolf is in the cottage when she arrives and that she is walking into huge danger. The exchange that begins, 'What big eyes you have, Grandma...' strings out the tension brilliantly.**

How would the stories be different if the viewpoints were changed? For instance:

- If Cinderella's story was told from her viewpoint all the way through, or in the first person?

(The second part of the story would have to be different - Cinderella would have to do something proactive *at last* like escape!)

- If Little Red Riding Hood's story was told ONLY from her viewpoint, or in the first person?

(There is a good discussion to be had here on whether the reader would suspect, during the classic 'Grandma, what big...' exchange, that 'Grandma' was really the wolf or whether the reader would think her illness had made her go a bit strange. For readers who don't guess, there would be one *enormous* shock at the end when 'she' says, 'All the better to EAT you with!')

Activity 2:

Ask the class to choose one of the above, or another fairy story they know well, and re-write it with different viewpoints. For example *Cinderella* from the point of view of one of the Ugly Sisters, or *Little Red Riding Hood* from the point of view of the wolf! For other stories they could choose *Jack and the Beanstalk* from the Giant's point of view, *Snow White* from the point of view of Grumpy or the wicked queen, etc.

Follow-up Activity:

Look at the book you are reading at the moment; which point of view(s) is it written in? Why do you think the writer chose that point of view, or those points of view?



A Quick Quiz on Chapter 1 of:

MIRROR MISCHIEF

By CECI JENKINSON

How much can you remember?

1. What time did Mr Surd wake up?
2. What is Slugger's real name?
3. Who was startled by Slugger's mum yelling?
4. What is Oli's older sister called?
5. What did Oli have for breakfast?
6. What African country was Sid in?
7. What kind of snakes were draped all over the man in the postcard?
8. What kind of animals are carved around Oli's mirror?
9. Who did Sid buy the mirror, the mask and the bones from?
10. What is the name of Mr Surd's favourite magazine?