

POINT OF VIEW AND "SLEEPING BEAUTY"

I have retold the story of Sleeping Beauty using the major points of view. The first version is told objectively, just the facts without the thoughts and feelings of the author or of the characters in the tale. After the objective telling of the story, the narratives are all told from the point of view either of the writer or of one of the characters. The *italicized text* identifies ideas, perspectives, and feelings that indicate the point of view and distinguish one version of "Sleeping Beauty" from the other versions.

The facts in each telling of this story are the same; however, depending on the point of view, the facts are perceived and interpreted differently, so that the stories are not alike. As you read them, notice the differences and think about how important the point of view may be in a narrative, whether written or filmed.

I. Objective point of view

The prince slowly pushed open the door; his servant waited in the hall. In the dim light, the prince saw a form lying on a bed. Brushing aside cobwebs, he approached the bed; he left footprints in the thick dust. He looked down at the form, a beautiful young woman; she had long red hair and was wearing an out-of-fashion dress. He stood looking at her for several minutes; then he bent over and kissed her on the lips. She stirred, her eyelids fluttered; then she opened her blue eyes and smiled. "You've come at last," she said. The servant entered the room, and the prince smiled and sat on the bed.

II. First person point of view

I slowly pushed open the door. *In the gloom, I could barely make out someone--or something?—* lying on a bed. Brushing aside cobwebs *and watching for any disgusting spiders,* I approached the bed. *Then I saw her for the first time--the woman of my dreams!* She was beautiful--*long, thick red hair, fair skin with a tinge of blush in her cheeks. But why was she wearing such a strange dress? Maybe there had been a masquerade the night before and she had been too tired to take off the dress.* I looked at her for a few minutes, *awed by her beauty and air of innocence.* Then, *on a sudden impulse,* I leaned over and kissed her on the lips. *Who knows when I would have that opportunity again?* She stirred, her eyelids fluttered; then she opened her blue eyes, *eyes so blue I lost myself in their depths.* She smiled *and breathed,* "You've come at last." Sitting on the edge of the bed, I smiled back, "Yes, I have." *And I hoped we wouldn't be leaving soon. Then that fool of a servant came in and spoiled everything.*

III. Omniscient author

The prince's servant waited in the hallway, *relieved at not having to take any risks. Despite his impatience,* the prince slowly, *very slowly,* pushed the door open. *He was a very cautious prince; as a child, he never went out in the rain without his boots and umbrella.* Brushing aside cobwebs, *he grimaced with distaste* and approached the bed. *He thought of possible dangers.* He looked, *with admiration and a touch of some other feeling,* at a beautiful young woman asleep; *he had always found redheads particularly attractive. He was puzzled by her old-fashioned dress, which looked like the dress his great grandmother was wearing in her state portrait.* He stood by the bed for a few minutes, *looking around to see if anyone was observing him. No, no one was, he noted with satisfaction.* Only then did he bend over and kiss *her full* on the lips. *Before he could kiss her again,* she stirred, her eyelids fluttered; then she opened her blue eyes and smiled at the prince. *She thought he was the handsomest prince she had ever seen. She was in love--again. You must remember that it had been a long time since she had seen a young man.* "You've come at last," she

said warmly, to encourage him. Curious and bored, the servant entered the room. The prince was sitting on the side of the bed, as if he intended to stay awhile.

IV. Limited omniscient

The prince's point of view:

The prince slowly pushed open the door. *What a filthy room; the dust was so thick he was even leaving footprints; was he ruining his shoes? The servants should be punished for their laziness; maybe beheading one or two would give the rest a proper attitude toward their duties. He brushed spider webs aside; he shuddered at the thought of spiders, disgusting little creatures.* He approached the bed; *that was one striking redhead—and lying asleep. It was time to stop and think about his next move. Was anyone around? No? Good. Well, time to act; just standing looking at her wasn't going to accomplish anything.* He bent over her and kissed her lips, *full. Nice. Maybe he could get in a few more kisses.* Just then, she stirred, her eyelids fluttered; she opened her blue eyes and smiled at the prince. "You've come at last," she said. *Come at last? What was she talking about? he wondered,* as he sat on the bed and smiled back *ingratiatingly and hopefully.* To his annoyance, the servant entered the room, and *disrupted the mood.*

The princess's point of view:

Silence and stillness enveloped her, as it had for the last hundred years. There was a slight stir in the air and then the creak of rusty hinges moving. Her sleep was disturbed and she moved restlessly. An awareness of a presence filtered into her consciousness. Was it a rescuer or a danger? Unable to awaken, she incorporated the noises into her dream. The form was hovering over her; time passed. Then the form bent over her; there was a pressure on her lips, a disagreeable pressure. She felt her eyelids flutter; she was waking up at last! Because the room was dimly lit, her eyes adjusted quickly and she saw a prince looking down at her. *Her rescuer. Her savior. How ugly he was, and what an unattractive expression he had on his face. How soon could she get rid of him?* She smiled and said, "You've come at last." He smiled a rather unpleasant smile, and rudely sat on the edge of the bed, *as if he intended to stay a while.* The servant entered the room. *Nobody important. She returned her attention to the prince.*

The servant's point of view:

The prince slowly pushed the door open and entered the bedchamber. *The servant, relieved to be allowed to wait outside, edged toward the opening to get a better view. He cursed his bad luck in having been chosen as the prince's valet. The other servants were back at the palace, a clean, warm palace with regular meals. He wondered what Maria was doing now and was she doing it with James? James thought he was such hot stuff since he was promoted to footman and got to wear....* An exclamation from the room caught his attention and he saw *with satisfaction* that the prince was brushing aside cobwebs. He was leaving tracks in the dust. *Guess who would have to sit up tonight cleaning those shoes instead of sleeping? He reflected on the unfairness of life. He was much more intelligent than the prince, more attractive than the prince, more everything than the prince--and yet the prince was going to get a beautiful princess, and all he was going to get was a cold from standing in this drafty hallway, all for a shilling a week and the prince's castoff clothes.* He heard a female voice say, "You've come at last." He stepped into the room and saw a beautiful woman, with blue eyes; red hair, and a *peaches and cream* complexion. She looked at him and smiled *encouragingly.* *That dolt of a prince thought she was smiling at him.* As the prince sat on the bed, the servant smiled back *irresistibly.*