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Unusual Points of View

By Rita Marie Keller

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by: **Rita Marie Keller**

Most writers are familiar with first and third points of view and their variations. But have you ever experimented with alternative points of view? Below are some less used points of view, what I call "unusual points of view." Try using these when you're blocked or you want to try something new.

Second Person Point of View

Second person can be written as "you" singular or plural. Josip Novakovich in FICTION WRITER'S WORKSHOP says: "The author makes believe he's talking to someone, describing what the person addressed is doing. But the `you' is not the reader, though sometimes it's hard to get rid of the impression the author is addressing you directly."

Here's an excerpt from Italo Calvino's first chapter of *If on a winter night a traveler*. I think it's one of the most engaging examples of second person point of view. But if the author is not speaking to the reader...then to whom? You be the judge.

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice—they won't hear you otherwise—"I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" . . . So here you are now, ready to attack the first lines of the first page. You prepare to recognize the unmistakable tone of the author . . .

Most stories told in second person are written in the present tense, so the reader identifies directly with the character. You're along for the journey, being an active part of the story. I read this excerpt feeling as if the author sees me and is talking directly to me.

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Like other points of view, second person has its pitfalls. One of them is keeping the reader's attention through the whole story (in this example, an entire novel). Some readers don't like to be told what they're thinking and doing and saying. Sometimes this point of view has a tendency to sound too journalistic or like a recipe.

First Person Collective Observer Point of View (or third person plural)

In this point of view the reader follows the motions and acts of one person through a group's viewpoint. Usually, someone in the group acts as narrator but doesn't have his/her own identity. Usually this is reserved for small town narratives, where an individual lives under communal scrutiny. Schools, towns, churches, or families focus on a secret person in conflict with the community. In William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" Emily is the character scrutinized by the residents of Yoknapatawpha County.

Here is an excerpt from the story which occurs after she is put in the ground and what "we" discover.

For a long while we just stood there, looking at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long deep sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him . . . Then we noticed that in the second pillow was an indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, leaning forward, that fast and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair.

Third Person Plural Observer ("They")

Here the perceptions of a critical situation comes from a group of characters who watch the protagonist. It could be a group of boys watching a teenage girl undressing in her window as in: "They saw her in the window." The excerpt from "A Rose for Emily" might as easily be written in the point of view.

First and Second Combined

This point of view is usually used in love poetry, and rarely in fiction. In this example from "The Roaring Bull and Electra," a short story, it's an adult daughter speaking to her father too ill to speak for himself.

Today the new Roaring Bull was christened, and I wanted you to be next to me as you had been, twenty years ago . . . Now you can't speak. You can barely swallow. I used to feed you melted ice cream and stroke your throat to get it down because I thought the taste would remind you of our ferry rides . . .

First and Third Combined

This point of view is used for characters with a personality dichotomy, to look at the same character from different angles. In "Sarah Cole: A Type of Love Story" Russell Banks does this to portray a narcissistic man's affair with a homely woman.

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I felt warmed by her presence and was flirtatious and bold, a little pushy even.

Picture this. The man, tanned, limber . . . enters the apartment behind the woman.

The switch to third person is the character taking a look at himself, the way one might want to see himself projected onscreen. The shift in point of view might be annoying to the reader, so it's important to establish this shift pattern early in your story.

Try this exercise:

Choose one of your favorite stories and rewrite a scene from it in one of the "unusual points of view." You might want to try rewriting one of the excerpts above. In your exercise show the original passage, then your changed point of view (or points of view). You get extra brownie points if you write a scene from scratch. This is a challenging exercise, but it also shows you don't have to be limited by variations of first and third person.

Let go, breathe deep, and have fun with it!

Ó 2004 Rita Marie Keller

Rita Marie Keller has written and published numerous stories, articles, and essays. Her first novel, *Living in the City*, was released September 2002 by

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Unusual Baby Boy Names – Finding Exotic And Unique Baby Names

By David Buster

Unusual baby boy names and finding exotic and unique baby names can be loads of fun! Rather than giving your baby boy a name like Jacob, John or Harry, you would prefer him have one of the more exotic and unique baby names.

There are several ways to find unusual baby boy names. Here are some suggestions:

1. Start with the most popular names being given to baby boys. For parents living in the USA, you can easily find this kind of information by visiting the Social Security Administration's website (click on the link at the bottom of this page to go to the direct link to the SSA baby names search). See which names that are popular are also unusual baby boy names. You can view the most popular names for the past year, boy names given since the year 2000 or by decade in the previous century. It may

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surprise you how many exotic and unique baby names you can find this way.

2. Look at your own family names and see if using any name combinations create unusual baby names you like. Ask other family members for their suggestions, even invite your friends to give you their opinions. Does a relative have names you like? Do be careful if the names are already used. Ask other family members to be sure your favorite unusual baby names are not given to relatives. It can become confusing in families when two people have the same names.

3. Consider the unusual baby boy names used in the classics. Literary classics are a great source of exotic and unique baby names. Be careful when considering modern names used by this years top male movie stars. Will that popular actor still be in the headlines 3, 5, 10 or more years from now? By using the classics for possible names, you know that these names have withstood the test of time.

4. Visit your local library or bookstore and browse the pregnancy and parenting sections. You will likely find several books in various price ranges that provide you with many unusual baby boy names to consider.

5. Search for exotic and unique baby names online. There are many baby websites with listings and resources for baby names.

Remember, your childs names will be used their entire life, so think how their names will sound and feel once they are grown. Do not let the joy of their infancy cause you to give them a name that they won't be proud of once they are older. Stay away from funny names. Choose his name carefully, a name that will have meaning and significance to you and your child.

Have fun and enjoy viewing and choosing your childs names. Provide them with unusual baby boy names that will add to their success and happiness in life. Take your time and find names you truly love. You will find at some point, there is no doubt about what your new baby boy names will be. When it happens – congratulations! Enjoy and celebrate the moment. You will know it was worth every minute spent looking for unusual baby boy names for that unique and very special person.

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and access the Social Security

baby names listings. David Buster is VP of InfoSearch Publishing and the webmaster of

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