

What's Going on & Who's Thinking About It?

Plotting Your Novel & Maintaining Clear, Consistent POV

- 👉 Challenge Yourself to: **Plot with *Direction*. Do POV with *Discipline*.**
- 👉 Memorize this: **Plot guides the journey. POV shapes the experience.**

Today's focus is PLOT & POV, and because of our time constraints, we will spend most of our time on something that will make a reader put down a book faster than most anything else – HOW TO CLEAN UP YOUR POV. **Or in other words, stop the chaos!** First, let's get that PLOT CHAT under our belt.



PLOT is a chain of cause-and-effect events that move the story

forward and shape the character's growth. Many writers start with characters but no clear story direction while others have a great premise but no emotion. You must align plot events with character transformation to have a successful story.

THINK and SHARE:

- 👉 Do you resemble one of these?
- 👉 Do you struggle with plotting?
- 👉 Maintaining POV?
- 👉 Both?
- 👉 Something else?

Plotting Your Novel

1. Start with the Central Story Question - Will the protagonist achieve _____ despite _____?
Example: Will he uncover the truth before the past destroys his family?

Guess the title to the plot summary:

- 1. A young girl is swept away to a strange land, makes unusual friends, and must defeat a powerful villain to find her way home.*
- 2. A young man discovers a hidden world of danger and adventure after receiving a mysterious ring that dark forces desperately want back.*
- 3. A young boy grows up on a farm, learns he has a greater destiny, and joins a rebellion to stop an evil empire.*

Can you write your WIP (work in progress) story question in one sentence?

2. The Three Layers of Conflict

- 👉 **Internal conflict** — the character's emotional or spiritual struggle
- 👉 **Relational conflict** — tension with family, friends, love interests, or community
- 👉 **External conflict** — circumstances, obstacles, or forces pressing on the character

Example: A woman struggling to care for her sickly mother (internal) clashes with her sister over caregiving decisions (relational) while trying to save the family home (external).

Let's spend the balance of our time working to STOP THE CHOAS!

DEFINE IT - POV is Point of View. Which character is thinking, relating, or experiencing the current plot element?

Why POV Slips Happen

- Writers want to explain too much too soon.
- They drift into other characters' thoughts.
- They forget the reader only knows what the POV character knows.



Choose Your POV Type and Commit (for today's workshop, we choose from the top 2)

(On a handout)

Consider these Five Common POV Problems as we discuss the POV handout

- **Head-hopping** — slipping into another character's thoughts
- **Authorial intrusion** — the narrator explains instead of dramatizing (*show, not tell*)
- **Filter words** — “she saw,” “he realized,” “she noticed”
- **Knowledge leaks** — the character knows things they haven't learned

Tools for Keeping POV Clean

- **The Body Test:** Whose body am I in
- **The Knowledge Test:** Can this character know this
- **The Emotion Test:** Is emotion shown through physical response, not told?
- **The Lens Test:** How does *this* character uniquely interpret the moment



Now, go and practice, practice, practice!
You can do it!

MUDDY CHOAS! POV jumble! Let's look closer!

Abby sighed at the sight of the team of horses coming to a stop before her. The next few days were going to be a challenge. A man with silvery white hair helped Abby and an older woman into the stagecoach. He then climbed inside and sat next to the woman on the opposite seat.

“Good morning,” Abby said meeting each person's eye only briefly, hoping to discourage conversation on the long ride.

“Mornin', hon,” Hannah Newburn said with a smile. “I'm Hannah and this is my husband, Jake.” Was that girl related to Lilly, her friend down the way. She looked very familiar and Hannah pondered it as Jake made some observations of his own.

“You from around these parts?” Jake asked, surprised to see the violet eyes and ebony hair of his wife's closest friend reflected in this young stranger's face,

“Not really, no,” she answered, uncomfortable with the kind stranger's too-curious demeanor. “My name is Abigail Bradford, and I'm going to Tyler for a job.” It was a lie, but what else could she do?

THE PROBLEM: 3 distinct characters thinking their own thoughts about what's happening, all together in the same space. Let's fix it. How do we express all of these things from one person's perspective/POV?

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"Mornin', hon," Hannah Newburn the woman across from her said with a smile. "I'm Hannah and this is my husband, Jake." Was that girl related to Lilly, her friend down the way. She looked very familiar and Hannah pondered it as Jake made some observations of his own.*

"You from around these parts?" the elderly gentleman asked, his eyebrows raised. Jake asked, surprised to see the violet eyes and ebony hair of his wife's closest friend reflected in this young stranger's face.**

"Not really, no," she answered, uncomfortable with the kind stranger's too-curious demeanor. "My name is Abigail Bradford, and I'm going to Tyler for a job." It was a lie, but what else could she do?

THE FIX: *, ** - this crossed-out information relates to the plot, but it can't come from Abby's perspective; she can only know her own mind. This is Abby's POV section. No one else's. To share what Hannah thinks about her, you finish the scene with Abby's POV and then you can move to Hannah's. Jake describes the girl Abby. This information (what she looks like) can be given at any time, but not right here while we're in Abby's POV.

Watch the professionals do it ...and let's emulate them!

For our purposes today, there are 2 main types of POV for today's Christian (and General Speculative) Fiction. Dig deeper if you like, but most of us will use one of these two:

1. FIRST PERSON POV (one person tells the entire story)

PROS – many of us find it easier, speaking in present tense from one POV. "I did this" and "I thought that"
CONS – the reader only gets a single perspective; if you want the reader to know more than the narrator, you must use *devices* to make that happen. Such as, she can be exposed to new POVs from TV shows you play for her, newspapers she sees; letters, journals, she reads. Dialogue can share her co-character's POVs (although, her reaction to them is all you can give). *DRACULA* by *BRAM STOKER* is written in letters, journals, & newspaper articles.

Keifer didn't come home last night. I got in from that horrible therapy session with his demonic brother and the apartment sat empty. My first thought when I entered, closed and locked the door, and crossed into the living room was that he had gone for good. A preternatural void filled the place and I stepped to the bedroom to see if he'd taken his clothing. After finding everything in place, including his toothbrush and floss, I allowed myself to shower and go to bed.

When I awoke, he hadn't come home. There are no messages on my phone nor any emails explaining where he might be.

"I missed you last night. See you soon," I sent to Keifer's phone and forced myself to let that be it.

2. THIRD-PERSON POV (overall narrative is omniscient, giving the reader a feeling of watching a movie. There are multiple characters to express the plot in their individual POVs, which are divided into sections)

PROS – most authors find it much easier to tell the story from each character's experience and feelings

CONS – it is incredibly easy to mix up and confuse multiple POVs; great care must be taken to keep them apart

Mankind rose as one organism to cheer for the graduates, poised like prized fish on the forward rise. Kelly Meade Canaan stood out, her long hair over each shoulder, a perfect blend of her mother's loose coils and her biological father Kilmeade's reddish-brown hue. Her blue-gray eyes, visible even from their back-row seating, looked his way and Canaan sent her a wink. (Canaan's thoughts reveal the other characters' appearance details)

“Oh, honey! Look at her! I am so happy!” Chloe grabbed Canaan's bicep, hugging it tight, her eyes glued to their daughter below. Chloe wiggled his arm. “Honey, what's she saying?” (Canaan's POV expresses his wife's emotions by observation)

Canaan grinned at his daughter, even at fifty yards he read her lips: “*You owe me a pizza...*” Canaan whispered the sentiment to Chloe who waved crazily back, saying words drowned out by the clapping of parents and family members. (Again, Canaan's observations reveal his wife's happy, joyful emotional state.)

“Congratulations, Canaan,” his old (but still young) friend Javier said beside him, nudging his elbow. On Javier's right stood his wife, Dr. Claire Boone, and beside her Beryl had come alone, cheering for his niece with the fervor of any mortal uncle. (Canaan's observations reveal Javier's wife is a doctor, and that Beryl is single and loves his niece very much.)

Beryl caught Canaan's eye and tipped his chin. “*You did good,*” he mouthed.

Canaan gave him a “*dub*” look and faced front grinning. The third man in his normal entourage, Roman, had intended to come, but he and his wife Bonnie had gone on a golfing vacation. The man smartly sent Kelly Meade a huge bouquet of flowers and more chocolate than one girl could eat, and had thus, been rightfully forgiven. (Canaan's POV shows the reader a lot of his personality. He feels confident & in charge of the world around him. His friends defer to him, which suits him fine. All of this is revealed in this early section of the novel.)

STUDY OF A POV SWITCH within a scene

Kelly Mead's graduation is over. Canaan's POV is ending, and Kelly's sister's POV picks up next. (Kelly's sister Shebah was “thought about” by Canaan a lot in the un-posted parts for this study, so it flows that she “thinks” next.)

...Canaan nodded as Chloe's SUV rolled passed. She honked once and he waved.

“Beryl, give us a lift,” he said low. “Chloe has Claire in the Yukon.” The three [Canaan, Beryl & Javier] started for Beryl's BMW and Canaan walked between them. “Something's up. My idiot spirit is rumbling again.”

“Mine, too,” Javier agreed and Beryl nodded.

“Keep your eyes peeled. Investigate, but keep your head down.” Canaan took a steadying breath so his friends might not notice his sudden emotion at his next command. “Use extreme caution. I want you two alive to enjoy for decades, *comprende?*”

“We will,” Beryl said and opened Canaan's door.

“Nice,” Canaan replied and fell quiet for the short ride to the reception.



This is a scene divider. Use any sort of symbol to tell the reader that the scene or the POV or both are changing.

“Your father said stay close until he arrives, ‘kay?’” Shebah’s mom said in her ear and she nodded. [this tells the reader we are now in Shebah’s POV]

Kelly Meade was at the buffet table fifteen yards away ignoring a fellow graduate who yammered in her ear. Her sister hadn’t yet told their parents about the dream-vision, but she would. *First things first*, was Kelly’s tenet for sorting her business. [Notice Shebah was able to tell us her sister’s thoughts by framing it as something they had discussed earlier. This is an excellent device]

Shebah waved her over. “Is that all you’re eating?” she asked when Kelly was close.

Kelly’s response was to lift a sprig of three grapes and pull them off with her teeth. She chewed and swallowed. “Dad’s taking us for pizza. Don’t fill up.”

“I know.” Shebah said and then leaned in to whisper, “Mom said Dad saw someone spying on you at graduation—”

“How’s my new grad?” Dad’s voice boomed and Shebah looked up to see him pull Kelly under his wing and kiss her head. He towered over them all, although Kelly had at least reached 5’8”. Shebah and her mom played the munchkins of the family at 5’6”. Dad made a grab for Shebah and Mom and pulled them into a group hug. “All clear,” he whispered for their ears alone. [Note Shebah sees Cannan as “Dad.” We know Cannan is Dad from the previous POV scene. Also Note the new character appearance available from Shebah now. The reader can build an image of the character without you spelling it out in an awkward manner.]

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