Point of view is the perspective from which a narrative is told. Point of view affects the kinds of details that are revealed to the reader.

- **First-person point of view**: The narrator is a character who participates in the action of the story and tells the story using the words *I* and *me*. The narrator can reveal only his or her own observations, thoughts, and feelings.

- **Third-person point of view**: The narrator is not a character in the story and uses third-person pronouns such as *he*, *she*, and *they* to refer to the characters. The narrator may know and reveal the observations, thoughts, and feelings of more than one person or character in the narrative.

Read this example from *An American Childhood*:

It was a long time before he could speak. I had some difficulty at first recalling why we were there. My lips felt swollen; I couldn’t see out of the sides of my eyes; I kept coughing.

You can see from the pronouns *I*, *we*, and *my* that the event is being told from the first-person point of view. The speaker is there—her lips are swollen; her eyes are clouded; she is coughing.

**DIRECTIONS:** Read each quotation from *An American Childhood*. Underline each pronoun that shows that the event is told from the first-person point of view. Then, on the lines that follow, briefly describe what you learned from or about the speaker.

1. Boys welcomed me at baseball, too, for I had, through enthusiastic practice, what was weirdly known as a boy’s arm.

   **What I learned:**

2. He ran after us, and we ran away from him, up the snowy Reynolds sidewalk. At the corner, I looked back; incredibly, he was still after us. . . . All of a sudden, we were running for our lives.

   **What I learned:**

3. He chased us silently over picket fences, through thorny hedges, between houses, around garbage cans, and across streets. Every time I glanced back, choking for breath, I expected he would have quit. He must have been as breathless as we were.

   **What I learned:**
from An American Childhood by Annie Dillard

Vocabulary Builder

Word List
compelled  improvising  perfunctorily  righteous  strategy  translucent

A. DIRECTIONS: Think about the meaning of the underlined Word List word in each sentence. Then, answer the question.

1. The children came up with a strategy for throwing snowballs at passing vehicles. Did the children have a plan? How do you know?

2. The man compelled Dillard to run through the neighborhood. Did she have a choice? How do you know?

3. Dillard and Mikey were improvising their escape route as they went along. Had they planned an escape route? How do you know?

4. When the man finally caught the kids, he said his words perfunctorily. Did his words hold unique meaning? How do you know?

5. Dillard describes the man’s anger as righteous. Did he believe he was correct to be angry? How do you know?

6. Dillard’s iceball was completely translucent. Could you see light through it? How do you know?

B. WORD STUDY: The Latin prefix trans- means “over,” “across,” or “through.” Words containing the prefix trans- include transfer (“to move from one place to another”) and translator (“someone who converts one language to another”). Consider these meanings as you answer each question.

1. Why might you need to transfer your records if you change schools?

2. Why might you need a translator in a foreign country?