

# 3

## Lesson Three

### FOCUS: Narrative and Point of View

The narrator tells the story, with a specific perspective informed by his or her beliefs and experiences. Narrators can be major or minor characters, or exist outside the story altogether. The narrator weaves her or his point of view, including ignorance and bias, into telling the tale. A first-person narrator participates in the events of the novel, using “I.” A distanced narrator, often not a character, is removed from the action of the story and uses the third person (he, she, and they). The distanced narrator may be omniscient, able to read the minds of all the characters, or limited, describing only certain characters’ thoughts and feelings. Ultimately, the type of narrator determines the point of view from which the story is told.

Many of *Love Medicine*’s chapters are told from a first-person point of view, with characters who take turns as the narrators of these chapters. However, several chapters are told from a third-person point of view. Students should carefully consider who is narrating each chapter and why Erdrich might have chosen to tell the story from the perspective of that particular character.

### Discussion Activities

By this point your students have read the first four chapters of the novel, each of which has a different first-person narrator. Ask the students to identify differences in how, through diction and tone, the characters express themselves. You might also want to discuss the common elements across the chapters and how they help the overall story come together despite the shifting narrative voices.

Ask students to create a chart showing the narrator and point of view for each chapter they have read. They should include whether the chapter is narrated in first-person or in third-person, who the narrators are, who is the protagonist of the story, and whether the narrator participates in the action. Ask students to continue to update the chart as they read further into the novel.

### Writing Exercise

Ask students to rewrite a portion of one of the family scenes in the first chapter from the point of view of a character other than Albertine Johnson. How would the story be different if Gordie Kashpaw or King Kashpaw were the first-person narrator?

### Homework

Ask students to read “The Beads” and “Lulu’s Boys” (pp. 84–117) and Handout Three. In their reader’s journals, students should make a list of the characters they’ve encountered so far in the novel and classify them as “major” or “minor.” Students should continue to identify the narrators of each chapter in their journals.