

# 3

## Lesson Three

### FOCUS: Narrative and Point of View

## “Cooking Lesson” by Rosario Castellanos

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 story, 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.

“Cooking Lesson” is narrated from the first-person point of view by a newly married woman struggling to cook a meal for her husband. She tells us, “I stand here like an imbecile, in an impeccable and neutral kitchen, wearing the apron that I usurp in order to give a pretense of efficiency and of which I will be shamefully but justly stripped.” As she prepares the meal, she reflects on her troubled marriage.



### Discussion Activities and Writing Exercise



Using the homework assignment from the last class, ask students to discuss the role of the narrator in the story. Why might Castellanos have chosen to tell the story from the young woman’s perspective rather than through a third-person objective narrator? How would a change in point of view have changed the reader’s perspective?

Ask students to write a response to the quotation below in their reader’s journals addressing the following questions: Why is the narrator rebelling against her role as a wife? How might her duties differ from those of her mother’s generation? How does she believe her husband will react if she refuses to perform these tasks, or if she fails to do them well? Why might that breed resentment?

All the responsibilities and duties of a servant are assigned to me for everything. I’m supposed to keep the house impeccable, the clothes ready, mealtimes exact. On the other hand, I’m supposed to contribute to the support of the household ... In my free time I transform myself into a society matron who gives luncheons and dinners for her husband’s friends, attends meetings, subscribes to the opera season, watches her weight, renews her wardrobe, cares for her skin, keeps herself attractive.



### Homework

Read “Tell Them Not to Kill Me!” by Juan Rulfo. Make a list of the story’s main characters and write a one-sentence description of each.