After Reading Activity
Writing a Scene from a Different Perspective

*Year of Impossible Goodbyes* by Sook Nyul Choi
Dell Publishing (1991)

**Context**
This strategy can be employed at many different moments. It can be used immediately after reading a variety of scenes from the novel, as described below—or, after reading the entire novel, students can then return to a particularly interesting scene with which to carry out this activity.

**Purpose of the Strategy**
Writing a narrative from a perspective different than the one used in a text gives students a rich, complex understanding of the role of narration, as Peter Smagorinsky asserts. In order to rewrite a text from a different speaker’s perspective, students need to “discuss the different ways in which various characters experience the [same] scene.” They also need “to discuss and identify a character’s personality, experiences, perspective, role, ways of speaking,” etc. in order to show how a particular character would relate a scene from the story (Smagorinsky 41).

This activity can be used in conjunction with the “Voicing Internal Dialogue” activity, since both activities focus on using inference to voice characters’ unspoken thoughts and consider events from another perspective.

**Materials Needed**
*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (if used as a model before acting), *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (student/teacher copies), student worksheet (one for each student), writing paper

**Time Allotted**
This activity can be done in one or two class periods. It is advisable to break up the work into two class periods in order to give sufficient time to write. The group work will take at least 17 minutes, and the individual narrative-writing will take at least 10–15 minutes. Depending on the whether the narrative is an L1, L2, or L3, the teacher will need to allot less or more time for students to write.

**Directions**
- In order to emphasize how (and why) to consider events from another perspective, it may be useful to preface this activity by reading a fractured fairy tale, such as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, that tells a previously told story from a new perspective. (Citation for book is below.)
- Prepare enough worksheets in advance for each student.
  1. To begin, divide students into small groups (approximately three or four students per group). Assign the students a section of the book to work with (see suggestions below). Students will be rewriting this scene from a perspective other than that of the narrator, Sookan. The teacher can assign students a particular character (perhaps one to each group), or the teacher can have each group pick their own character.
  2. Give students the worksheet. They will be discussing the information on the worksheets as a group and writing the information down; afterwards, the groups will break up and students will write their own individual narratives.

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3. Give students approximately 15 minutes to re-read their assigned section and answer the questions on the worksheet. Students should be following a “round table consensus” format; that is, they should indicate with a sign (such as a thumbs-up or thumbs-down) whether they agree with another student’s statement. All students in the group must be in agreement before they can write anything on their sheets.

4. When the group work is completed, have students begin writing individual narratives for their assigned character (e.g., Captain Narita) during the selected scene. Students should use the information on their worksheets as a reference to help them convincingly write from that character’s perspective.
   a. In order to make this task easier for students, the teacher should model making connections between observations about a character (on the worksheet) and the form of narration. This can be done with The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, and the teacher can also choose one moment from Year of Impossible Goodbyes and show students how the teacher would write this moment from a different perspective.

5. This writing assignment can be used from anything from an L1 freewrite/“writing to learn” to a polished L3 paper. (These instructions lean more towards an L1 write.) The heavier you plan on grading it, the more time you should give students to work on it and revise it. An L1 freewrite could be completed in one period, whereas an L2 or L3 would need at least two periods for students to work in.

Sections of the Text that Work Well for this Activity
It should be noted that because Inchun is so young, his perspective would probably be too simplistic to meet the objectives of this activity—thus, his name may be removed from the list of characters.

- **Haiwon’s birthday party (pages 23-28):** Various emotions run high in Sookan’s family as Captain Narita ruins the birthday party. It would also be interesting to consider the perspectives of Captain Narita and his two lieutenants, who are arguably characterized a bit too simplistically in this scene. Characters in this scene besides the narrator (Sookan) are Grandfather, Inchun, Sookan’s mother, Aunt Tiger, Haiwon, Captain Narita, and either of the two Japanese lieutenants.

- **Sookan’s family celebrates their freedom from the Japanese (pages 86–90):** All of the characters are relieved for their freedom, but in different ways—and they no doubt have very different things on their mind. Characters in this scene besides the narrator (Sookan) are Kisa, Aunt Tiger, Inchun, and Sookan’s mother.

- **Two Russian soldiers break into Sookan’s house (pages 99-102):** Except for the narrative dialogue of Sookan, there is little dialogue in this entire section—this is a great challenge for students to determine other characters’ thoughts and perspectives. Characters in this scene besides the narrator (Sookan) are Inchun, the tall blonde Russian soldier (Ivan Malenkiv), and the short bald Russian soldier.

- **Sookan, Mom, and Inchun head South (pages 124–128):** There’s a tearful farewell as Aunt Tiger and Kisa remain behind, and everyone’s frightened that they’ll get caught. They’re also nervous about their guide (which turns out to be well-founded; he’s a double agent). Characters in this scene besides the narrator are Inchun, Aunt Tiger, Sookan’s mother, Kisa, and the guide. For an extended version of this scene (including Kisa and Aunt Tiger’s voiced reasons for staying behind), see pages 121–128.

Assessment
After students have completed their narratives, have them hand in both the narratives and their worksheet. (The worksheet can be stapled to the narrative.) Reviewing the worksheet will reveal how well students were able to find and infer details about characters in the text. The student’s personal narratives will help show how well the knowledge gained from doing the worksheet transferred into the students’ own writing. If students’ performance on the worksheet was unsatisfactory, they likely need more modeling
from the teacher of how to glean this kind of information from the text. If students’ performance in the narrative is unsatisfactory, then students likely need more help to figure out how to transfer the general statements from the worksheet into their own writing craft.

**Works Cited**

**Student Worksheet**
(See the following page.)
Name of Character: _______________________

Read through pages _________________. Stop your group when you see answers to these questions, and tell your group what you think:

- If everyone agrees with you, then write down the information.
- If someone disagrees, then discuss the topic more until you all reach an agreement.
- Everyone in your group should give suggestions for things to write down!

1. What is this character’s PERSONALITY like?

2. What does this character SEE in this scene?

3. What does this character HEAR in this scene?

4. What might this character THINK and FEEL in this scene?

5. What PAST EXPERIENCES might this character have that influence him or her? (If you remember them, you can also mention experiences from other places in the book.)

6. How would this character SPEAK if he or she were the narrator?

7. What are the BIGGEST DIFFERENCES between this character’s perspective and Sookan’s perspective? (Consider the roles the characters have, ages, relationships with other people, etc.)

When you finish answering the above questions, start looking as a group at parts of your assigned pages, and brainstorm together how your character would have narrated those events. The information above will help you later on as you work by yourself to come up with a convincing and detailed narrative.

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