In most novels the differences between implied author and narrator are evident and clear. The author decides how the story should develop—what characters and details of setting to include, how they should be described, and what themes or symbols to include (of course the reader has some influence on recognizing the latter). The narrator presents narrative decisions already made by the author; she doesn’t make her own decisions about the way the story is told.

Think of the first-person narratives that you know; the narrator has a name and it differs from the author’s. Think of the third-person narratives you know—works with covert narrators such as those used by Woolf or Joyce. Literary voices may peer into the consciousness of one character after another, but they are not the voices of the authors.

Novels are fiction. What happens to the relationship between implied author and narrator when the literary genre is not fiction? What happens when the storytelling is autobiographical? Consider Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior*. Who (or what) is the narrator? How is her presence revealed in the text? Why does Kingston choose to employ the narrator(s) in this way?

The identity of the narrator is probably least important. One critic will see her as a virtual match for implied Kingston; others will suggest that all authors take liberties when employing a narrator and that the narrator of *TWW* is no more than a literary construct. How the narrator is employed is more significant. In what ways does the narrator function? Is the narrative voice consistent or does it change? Does the narration ever sink into non-narrated or minimally narrated text? Is the narrator generally covert or overt? Does the narrative voice have limitations of time or space? Are there significant distinctions between the points of view employed by the narrator? Does use of the narrative voice shift? If so how? Remember, the relationship between author and narrator can often be understood more clearly in light of the characteristics of the narratee/implied reader.

The why behind technical characteristics—the reasons for authorial choice—is difficult to know with certainty. But you should be able to ascribe reasons, and surely you will be able to describe how the various narrative techniques affect your reading and critical analysis.