

# In the penal colony



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Although Kafka's story "In the Penal Colony" can be considered 3rd person omniscient, I believe the story was primarily narrated through the officer. I agree with Brittany's interpretation that the traveler benefits from the narration of the officer, because I believe that the traveler symbolizes the reader while the officer plays a more active role as the narrator. The traveler like the reader is brought to a foreign place where the officer's explain the intricacies of his beloved machine.

The officer seems to be in control of everyone on the penal colony, while the traveler seems to be a passive bystander who did not try to stop the officer's "unjustified" punishment. "The traveler now wanted to remain silent, but he felt the eyes of the condemned man on him; he seemed to be asking whether the traveler could approve the procedure that had just been described." (Page 40) Even when the traveler believed that it was immoral to "judge" the condemned man without a fair trial, he believed it was wiser to not to interfere with the officer's judgment.

Nevertheless, he had to remind himself that this was a penal colony, that special disciplinary measures were necessary here, and that military procedures had to prevail throughout." (Page 41) Therefore, I think the authoritative officer seems to be the primary narrator. By presenting the narrative in this perspective, the reader like the traveler is able to emotionally and intellectually react to the story; however, we can only be the passive bystander watching the inhumane acts unfold right before our eyes.

Perhaps we are the traveler who just happens to be "invited" to the penal colony. Perhaps we possess neither the courage nor the power to stop

torture of the condemned man. More importantly, by representing the traveler as the reader, Kafka asks the reader several critical questions.

Would we impose our judgment upon others, if we deem them immoral? Are we the passive bystander who would do nothing to stop torture? How can we “ be just? ”