



Author's Perspective: Grades 3–5

Overview:

An author's perspective, or point of view, is the way the author thinks or feels about a topic. It is related to their purpose in writing the text as well as their values, background, experiences, and beliefs. In social studies, students encounter a variety of texts from different times and places. Often these texts include perspectives that differ from students' own views as well as from other texts they have read. Learning to recognize and evaluate an author's perspective is critical to not only reading comprehension but also to understanding the past. It can help students to identify bias, take a stance on an issue, or assess an argument as they consider how a person's background, experiences, and perspective influence their viewpoints and how they present information.

Mini-Lesson I

Determining Fact or Opinion (20 Minutes)

Background: By the time students get to grades 3-5, they have likely had practice distinguishing between facts and opinions. As they move into upper elementary grades and encounter more complex texts, this task can become more challenging since in many historical texts, fact and opinion are often woven together. Current events, primary sources, advertisements, and textbooks all require students to recognize the difference between fact and opinion. Distinguishing between fact and opinion not only helps them determine an author's perspective, but it helps them become critical consumers of media. The following teaching suggestions are based on the article "Lincoln's Path to the Presidency" from the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson "Who Was Abraham Lincoln?"

- Invite students to turn and talk to discuss why facts are important to historians. As needed, define what is meant by facts (true and exact information), contrasting them with opinions (thoughts or beliefs about something) to deepen students' understanding. Emphasize that facts help historians understand the past, draw conclusions, and form theories.
- Share that in social studies, students will be asked to read a variety of texts, ranging from textbook passages to speeches to primary sources. Emphasize how reading a variety of texts can help students understand historical events and time periods.
- Display the [Facts Versus Opinions anchor chart](#), and share that authors support their main ideas and viewpoints with both facts and opinions. As critical readers, it is important that they learn to distinguish between them.
- Drawing on previous learning regarding finding the main idea, remind students that critical readers often read texts more than once—first to get the gist and then again to analyze how the author develops and supports their main idea. Read the article once with students. Invite students to turn and talk, sharing the gist with a partner. For example:
 - *Lincoln worked in various levels of government and had a family before becoming president of a divided United States.*

- Invite students to record the title and gist on a piece of paper. Below the gist, ask students to create a T-chart, labeling the two columns “facts” and “opinions.”
- Explain that students will read the text a second time, paying attention to the details the author uses to support their main idea. Share that for each detail they find, they will determine if it is a fact or opinion and then record it in the corresponding column. Emphasize that they can use the “Look Fors” on the Facts Versus Opinions anchor chart to support them.
- Begin a second read-aloud, strategically stopping to identify details that support the main idea. For each detail, think aloud to model determining if it is a fact or opinion and recording it in the corresponding column. Suggested stopping points include:
 - “That man is Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States.”
 - Fact: *I can look at the history of the U.S. presidents and see that Lincoln was the 16th president. Since this cannot be argued, it is a fact.*
 - Record in the fact column: *Lincoln was the 16th president.*
 - “Lincoln is one of the most well-known presidents in U.S. history—and one of the most important.”
 - Opinion: *This sentence uses the word most twice. Someone could argue that Lincoln is not the most well-known or most important U.S. president. This is an opinion.*
 - Record in the “Opinions” column: *Lincoln is a well-known and important president.*
 - “In 1830, the Lincoln family moved to Illinois, where Lincoln studied law. He became a lawyer in 1836.”
 - Invite students to turn and talk, discussing whether this is a fact or an opinion.
 - Facts: *These sentences include two historical dates. We could find primary sources like census records, home ownership documents, or law association records to prove that these are true. These are facts.*
 - Record in “Facts” column: *Lincoln became a lawyer in 1836.*
 - “Abraham Lincoln did not like slavery, but at that time, he did not call for the end of slavery in the United States. Rather, he believed that Congress should make a law to keep it out of new U.S. territories.”
 - Invite students to turn and talk, discussing whether this is a fact or an opinion.
 - This is a tricky one. *These sentences tell us about Lincoln’s opinions when they say he “did not like slavery.” But we could look up what Lincoln said in speeches and wrote about slavery. Because we can prove whether or not this is what Lincoln believed, these are facts.*
 - Record in “Facts” column: *Lincoln didn’t like slavery and did not want it in new U.S. territories.*
- Reinforce that it is important for critical readers to be able to tell the difference between facts and opinion. Because an author’s perspective reveals their feelings about a topic, it can influence the facts and opinions they include.
- Invite students to look over their gist and the facts and opinions they recorded, and then turn and talk, answering the following questions:
 - How do you think the author feels about Abraham Lincoln?
 - Which facts or opinions did the author include that make you think this is the author’s feeling or perspective?
- Ask a few students to share out, emphasizing that this author seems to view Lincoln in a positive light. Phrases like “most-well known” and “most important” president could point to these positive feelings.

Mini-Lesson II

Distinguishing Reader's Perspective from Author's Perspective (20 Minutes)

Background: To identify and analyze an author's perspective, students must understand that each individual has their own opinions about a topic. This lesson teaches students to pay attention to the author's language and the examples they present to determine the author's perspective before considering how that aligns with or contradicts their own perspective. Learning to notice when an author's information contradicts something students have previously learned is critical to becoming a responsible consumer of media, since it encourages students to ensure the accuracy of the source. Note, the following teaching suggestions are based on the article "Civic Responsibilities" from the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson "Civic Duties and Responsibilities."

- Display and ask students the following question, giving them a minute to jot responses in their notebook.
- What does it mean to be a responsible member of a classroom or a community?
- Invite a few students to share, recording their responses on the board. After each response, ask students why they believe this or where they learned it, drawing attention to the fact that previous learning or their experiences helped them to answer this question.
- Explain that each of us has our own unique experiences and ideas, and these shape the way we think and the way we see the world—our perspective. As needed, share the definition of perspective with students:
 - *perspective*: the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs people have about a topic
- Explain that just like us, authors have their own perspectives about a topic. Emphasize that even in an informational text, an author's perspective influences how and what they write. Therefore, it is important that we learn to identify an author's perspective and consider how that aligns with or contradicts our own feelings about a topic. This helps us evaluate both the text and our thoughts on the topic.
- Read the text once through with students. Invite students to turn and talk to discuss the author's perspective and summarize it in one sentence. For example:
 - *The author thinks that civic responsibilities are important to creating a good and strong community and country.*
- Share with students that you will read the article a second time. Students should listen for strong words and examples that show the author's perspective about civic responsibilities.
- Conduct a second read-aloud, strategically stopping to think aloud and demonstrate how to identify language that reveals the author's perspective. For example:
 - *In the section titled "What Is Civic Responsibility?," the author writes that "civic responsibilities are important." They use the word important a few times in this section. This seems to reveal that the author has a perspective about civic responsibilities—they are important to communities.*
 - *The author uses the word important a lot in this passage. They use it to talk about being informed, voting, and respecting the rights and freedoms of others. This author seems to believe that these things are important to a community and country.*
 - *The final paragraph really shows the author's perspective. They use the word should to instruct people to do something that they believe in. They use the word good to show the value they place on engaging in civic responsibilities.*
- Invite students to turn and talk, discussing whether their perspective is similar to or different from the author's, asking:
 - Do you think that civic responsibilities are important?
- Ask a student to share out. Emphasize that when we read, our perspective may be very much like the author's, or it might be different. Sometimes what an author writes can change our perspective by giving us new information or evidence. Being able to tell the difference between our perspective and the author's can help us to become better critical thinkers.

- Invite students to turn and talk, asking:
 - *What does a critical thinker do when they do not agree with an author's perspective?*
- Invite students to share their responses. For example:
 - *read more articles about the topic to learn more*
 - *check the information that the author used to make sure it is accurate*
 - *analyze media in the article to make sure it is up-to-date and based on facts*
- Emphasize that we may not agree with the things that we read. When that happens, our job as critical thinkers is to determine what we do not agree with and why.

Mini-Lesson III

Comparing Perspectives in Multiple Accounts of the Same Topic (45 Minutes)

Background: As critical thinkers and researchers of history, we often read multiple texts about the same idea or topic. This helps us analyze the topic or idea from multiple angles. Because different authors might choose to represent different perspectives, what they write about the topic and how they write about it will vary. It is our job as historians to determine what each author is trying to tell us about the topic and what perspective they represent, looking for similarities and differences between texts. In this lesson, students will focus on how words and text features can help us to compare multiple texts on the same topic. Note the following teaching suggestions are based on the articles “Expansion and Removal” from the lesson “Westward Expansion and American Indian Nations” and “A Nation Grows” from the *Expedition: Learn!* lesson “What Was Westward Expansion in the United States?”

- Explain that when authors write about a topic or event, they represent a perspective in their writing. For example, one author might believe that fossil fuels are important for daily life and another might think that fossil fuels are harming our environment.
- Share with students that in this lesson, they will read two texts about the same topic that have differing perspectives.
- Display the [Analyzing Multiple Texts on the Same Topic organizer](#). Record the topic, “westward expansion,” and the title of the article, “Expansion and Removal.”
- Read the article “Expansion and Removal” once through with students. After reading, invite students to turn and talk to determine the main idea, summarizing it in one sentence. For example:
 - *As the United States expanded west, American Indians were pushed out of their homes by settlers and the government.*
- Share with students that you will read the text a second time, identifying clue words that show the author's perspective, or how they feel about the topic.
- Begin a second read-aloud, stopping strategically to discuss words that reveal the author's perspective and model recording on the organizer under “Clue Words.” For example:
 - *The heading “Losing Their Homelands” implies that American Indians lost something. The word homeland is also important. They're not just losing land; it's their home. I think the author feels bad for these Indigenous people. I'm going to write:*
 - *losing their homeland*
 - *The fact that it's called the Trail of Tears seems to indicate that this is a bad thing, because tears happen when you are sad. The caption of the map and the sidebar make it even more clear, telling us that Indigenous people were “forced to move,” that they had little food or clothing, and that many people did not survive the journey. I'm going to record:*
 - *Trail of Tears, forced out, little food/clothing, 15,000 people died*
 - *The painting of the Cherokee people says that soldiers “forced them to leave.” I'm going to write:*
 - *forced*

- The last section, “Resistance to Westward Expansion,” continues to emphasize how much Native American nations did not want to leave their land. Phrases like “tried to stop westward expansion” and “fought to keep their land” tell me that this was not something that Indigenous people wanted.
 - I’ll write: *resistance, tried to stop, fought to keep their land*
- Invite students to turn and talk, reviewing the words they recorded and discussing what these words reveal about the author’s perspective.
 - Ask a student to share out, and record their answer. For example:
 - *The author focuses on how westward expansion negatively impacted Indigenous people. Under “Perspective,” I’m going to write:*
 - *Westward expansion was horrible and deadly for American Indians and they resisted it.*
- Emphasize that the author believes that westward expansion was horrible for American Indians.
- Repeat the process, using the article “A Nation Grows” from the lesson “What Was Westward Expansion?” Consider highlighting and recording the following clue words:
 - *The title and headings seem to emphasize growth and adventure.*
 - *grows, new, exploring, expand, from sea to shining sea*
 - The captions seem to emphasize adventure and make it seem like the U.S. naturally expanded without humans really being involved.
 - *“Exploring the West” image: exploring, expedition*
 - *“North America in 1803” map: “the United States and its territories had spread across much of North America”*
 - *“The Alamo” image: “Texas’s fight for independence from Mexico”*
- Invite students to turn and talk, reviewing the words they recorded and discussing what these words reveal about the author’s perspective.
- Ask a student to share out, recording their answer. For example:
 - *The U.S. grew as it bought or won land and westward expansion was an opportunity for adventure or a new life.*
- Emphasize that the author of this text believes that westward expansion was a chance for adventurous Americans to start a new life. Stress that the author focuses on how the U.S. grew as it bought or “won” land, and that people saw westward expansion as an opportunity for adventure or a new life.
- Direct student attention to the last table on the organizer. Ask students to turn and talk, discussing what the articles had in common.
- Invite a few students to share, and record their answers in the center of the organizer. For example:
 - *U.S. borders expanded*
 - *fought wars for more land*
 - *settlers moved west*
- Ask students to look at the articles and what you recorded in the organizer. Invite students to turn and talk to discuss how each article addresses these similar topics.
- Invite students to share, and record in the organizer. For example:
 - *U.S. borders expanded*
 - *Article 1: U.S. forced American Indians from their homeland*
 - *Article 2: U.S. bought land or won wars to get land*
 - *fought wars for more land*
 - *Article 1: fought Plains Wars to take Native land*
 - *Article 2: fought against Mexico and bought land from France*
 - *settlers moved west*
 - *Article 1: settlers took land that belonged to Indigenous people*
 - *Article 2: settlers were looking for adventure or a new life*
- Emphasize that while both of these articles discuss westward expansion, they represent very different perspectives. The first article focused on and centered the experience of American Indians, while the second article focused on the U.S. government and the settlers. Reiterate that reading multiple texts on the same topic helps us to get a fuller picture of history and to understand how different people experienced the same event.

Check for Understanding

If you observe ...**Then try ...**

students struggling to differentiate between facts and opinions

having students create 6-8 note cards with a fact or opinion about a preferred topic written on each one. Students can then exchange sets and sort them into "fact" and "opinion," checking their work with the creator of the set. For example, a student might create a set about the NBA that includes the following:

- Michael Jordan is the best player of all time.
- Bill Russell holds the record for the most NBA championships won, with 11 titles.
- Steph Curry is the most talented point guard in basketball.
- LeBron James has won championships with three different teams.

Encourage students to use the "look fors" to create their sets.

students struggling to differentiate between their perspective and the perspective of the author

using simple and familiar fiction (e.g., "The Three Little Pigs" and "The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs!" by Jon Scieszka) to help students understand how a retelling of the same event can change depending on perspective.

students struggling to determine the author's perspective

working with the class to generate a list of words that could reveal an author's perspective. Words may include: *best/worst, good/bad, most/least, should/should not*, and superlatives

Facts Versus Opinions

<p style="text-align: center;">Facts</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Opinions</p> 
<p>true and exact information from research or experiments</p>	<p>thoughts or beliefs about something</p>
<p>can be proven or measured</p>	<p>cannot be proven or measured</p>
<p>inform the reader</p>	<p>persuade the reader</p>
<p>cannot be argued</p>	<p>reader can agree or disagree</p>
<p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers and data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ measurements ○ population • quotes from experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ scientists ○ historians ○ experiment results 	<p>Look for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>-est/most/worst</i> words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>greatest</u> athlete ○ <u>most</u> important discovery ○ <u>worst</u> pet • author's feelings or thoughts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "I think" ○ "I believe" ○ "I feel"

Analyzing Multiple Texts on the Same Topic**Topic:** _____**Text 1**

Title	Clue Words
Perspective	

Text 2

Title	Clue Words
Perspective	

