



Author's Perspective: Grades 6–8

OVERVIEW:

In grades 6-8, students read and analyze a variety of texts in social studies. Part of becoming a proficient reader of history involves identifying and analyzing an author's perspective, or their viewpoint on a topic. The following lessons help teachers build students' proficiency in identifying an author's bias and point of view, looking at markers such as certain adjectives, connotative language, and the use of questions and exclamations. Developing students' ability to analyze the author's perspective prepares them to articulate their ideas through their writing and during academic discussions. It also encourages them to consider how the author's point of view impacts the information presented.

Mini-Lesson I

Biased Adjectives (20–30 minutes)

Background: The following mini-lesson includes direct instruction for teaching students how to identify biased adjectives in a text and analyze how these words reveal an author's point of view or purpose. Note that while the instruction can be applied to any lesson within *Expedition: Learn!*, the following examples are based on the lesson "Limited and Unlimited Government."

- Explain to students that although informational texts provide factual information on a topic, they can still contain bias and reflect the author's perspective, or point of view.
- Inform students that learning how to recognize when information reflects an author's perspective can help them think critically about how the information is presented.
- Explain to students that one way they can identify bias is by analyzing the use of certain adjectives. Some adjectives reveal the author's bias for or against what they are describing.
- As needed, define the following academic vocabulary terms:
 - *adjective*: a word that modifies a noun by describing a quality of the thing named, indicating its quantity or extent, or specifying a thing as distinct from something else
 - *bias*: an attitude that always favors one way of feeling or acting over any other
 - *author's perspective*: the author's point of view or feelings about the topic
 - *author's purpose*: the author's reason for providing the information in the text
- Display the [**Biased vs. Unbiased anchor chart**](#) and review the examples to demonstrate how authors may use biased adjectives in informational texts, and how the same information could be presented in an unbiased manner.

- Before modeling how to identify and analyze biased adjectives, read aloud the following passage and explain how an adjective can be unbiased:
 - “Under a limited government, the laws reflect the goals and ideals in the founding documents. They’re meant to apply to each person equally; no person or group has more rights than another. The same laws apply to government leaders as well.”
 - Explain that the adjective “limited” is unbiased because it describes how the government has a certain amount of power and has to operate within set boundaries. The author is not inserting their opinion of the government by using this word.
- Display the **[Author’s Perspective graphic organizer](#)** and read aloud the directions.
- Model how to identify and analyze biased adjectives in a text and how to use the graphic organizer while reading. Consider using the following passage from “Limited and Unlimited Government”:
 - “In a pure democracy, citizens don’t elect representatives. Instead, they govern themselves directly. This is difficult to manage because the voters must make a decision on each and every issue.”
 - Explain that the word *difficult* is a biased adjective because it reveals the author’s feelings about a type of democracy. The author thinks that this form of government is hard to manage, but countries that have this type of democratic government might not find the process difficult. Describing a democracy as “difficult” suggests that the author is not in favor of a pure democracy and might prefer a different form of government.
- Model how to identify and analyze biased adjectives using the following example:
 - “Equality and liberty are basic human rights. Limited governments protect those rights. So what happens when government is unlimited? When leaders have unchecked power, they deny the people their rights so they can strengthen government control.”
 - Explain that the word *basic* is a biased adjective because it reveals the author’s feelings about equality and liberty. The author believes that these are simple or necessary rights for humans. However, equality and liberty may not be simple or necessary for everyone. These may not even be considered rights to everyone everywhere in the world.
- Highlight that the author’s purpose for this text is to inform the reader about limited and unlimited governments. Emphasize that the author’s perspective is that a pure democratic government is difficult to manage, and equality and liberty are basic human rights.
- After modeling how to identify and analyze biased adjectives, invite students to access an informational text from *Expedition: Learn!* that relates to students’ interests or a topic being studied. Have students use the Author’s Perspective graphic organizer as they read to identify and analyze how the author’s language reveals their perspective.

Mini-Lesson II

Determining Author's Perspective in a Primary Source (30 minutes)

Background: Primary sources—texts written or created in the time and place being studied—are essential when learning history. They provide direct insight into the social conditions at the time of their creation and help students relate to and gain a deeper understanding of the content. However, primary sources also present a limited view, since they are incomplete snippets of one point in time. To gain a complete view of the past, students need to learn to analyze primary sources to determine the author's perspective and how it relates to the experiences, background, and conditions of the time. When students examine the perspective of a primary source, it helps them begin to put together the pieces of history. Note that while the instruction can be applied to any *Expedition: Learn!* lesson, the examples provided are based on the lesson "Booker T. Washington." Refer to page 4-Build to view the primary source excerpt used in this mini-lesson.

- As needed, explain to students the difference between a primary and secondary source.
- Facilitate a discussion, asking students to consider the pros and cons of primary and secondary sources. Synthesize responses and highlight the following advantages and limitations of each source in social studies:
 - **primary sources:** provide direct, first-hand evidence of historical events; can be biased, incomplete, or difficult to interpret.
 - **secondary sources:** offer analysis, context, and a broad overview of events; may be biased or rely on incomplete or incorrect primary sources.
- Distribute the [Examining Perspective in Primary Sources graphic organizer](#) and read the directions aloud.
- Fill out the "Title and Author of the Source" section as follows:
 - *Excerpt from "Atlanta Compromise" speech by Booker T. Washington*
- Before modeling how to examine and determine the author's perspective in a primary source, read the excerpt aloud.
- As needed, reread the text to determine the context, time period, and location. Then model how to complete **Step 1:**
 - *The speech is from 1895. Washington gave the speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia.*
 - *We know that in 1895, segregation laws were common, and Black Americans were not treated fairly or equally. This was after the Civil War when Black people were enslaved, and many were forced to work on farms in the South. Washington, a civil rights leader, wrote books and openly fought for racial equality.*
 - *Washington's beliefs and points of view were clear regarding racism in America. He led the fight for equality and dedicated his work to it. He gave this speech at a convention in the South, so he is probably trying to convince people to change their views.*
- Next, model **Step 2** by analyzing the author's word choice:
 - *Washington addresses the audience directly by using "your," emphasizing the personal responsibility of those in his audience.*
 - *He uses words like "treasures," "magnificent," and "progress." These words emphasize the value of the work and contributions of Black Americans.*
 - *Words like "tilled," "cleared," and phrases like "bowels of the earth" emphasize their hard physical labor.*
- Model **Step 3** by examining facts and details. Focus on the following detail: "...without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests..."
 - *This detail describes how Black Americans worked hard and helped build the economy. It describes them as cooperative and peaceful.*
 - *It tells us that Washington believed Black Americans were hardworking and did not start problems.*
 - *By highlighting their peaceful labor and accomplishments, Washington makes a case that Black Americans deserved respect and equality.*

- Explain what it means to make an inference about an author's perspective:
 - **infer:** to use clues from the text and your own knowledge to determine what the author believes, feels, or values, even if it's not directly stated.
- Model how to complete Step 4 by synthesizing the information from Steps 1-3 and making a conclusion about the author's perspective:
 - *Washington felt that Black Americans were hardworking and made important contributions to the economy in the South.*
 - *He valued peaceful cooperation and felt that by showing their worth, Black Americans deserved respect and equality.*
 - *He gave his speech in the South to convince Southerners of the value of Black Americans' hard work and the need for change.*
- After modeling how to determine an author's perspective, invite students to access an informational text from *Expedition: Learn!* that relates to students' interests or a topic being studied.
- Have students use the Examining Perspective in Primary Sources graphic organizer as they read to identify and analyze how background knowledge, the author's word choice, and facts and details reveal an author's perspective.

Mini-Lesson III

Exploring Multiple Perspectives (30 min)

Background: Recognizing historical perspectives is a large part of studying the past. Instead of only looking at events, ideas, and actions from one side, it's important for students to consider how different people have experienced the events that have taken place. In social studies, students often encounter multiple perspectives from various authors, making it essential to identify and analyze these differing viewpoints.

- Explain to students the importance of understanding different perspectives of authors in historical narratives.
 - *Examining multiple perspectives when reading helps develop critical thinking and provide a more balanced overview of events.*
 - *Different perspectives from different authors shape a narrative, from which we can then develop our own perspectives on any given event or time period. Identifying how this is accomplished gives students a more rounded understanding of how history is portrayed.*
- Explain to students that one way they can determine perspectives of multiple authors is by questioning the goals, motives, wants, or needs of two groups.
- Students will read a text as though it was written by two different authors, each representing a distinct perspective.
- Note that while the instruction can be applied to any *Expedition: Learn!* lesson, the examples provided are based on the lesson "The Pilgrims and the Plymouth Colony."
- Display the [**Exploring Multiple Perspectives graphic organizer**](#). Label the blanks as follows:
 - **Event/Topic:** *The Pilgrims and the Wampanoag in Plymouth Colony*
 - **Group 1:** *The Pilgrims*
 - **Group 2:** *The Wampanoag*
- First, read the text to determine the goals of each group. Fill out the first square for **Group 1: The Pilgrims** as follows:
 - *Wanted religious freedom.*
 - *Sought to establish a godly community with self-government.*
 - *Aimed to create a better life and economic opportunities.*
- Repeat the process for **Group 2: The Wampanoag** as follows:
 - *Wanted to defend their land and way of life.*
 - *Sought allies to protect against rival tribes.*
 - *Aimed to survive the impact of European diseases and maintain peace.*

- Complete the 2nd row (**What were their beliefs and values? What motivated them?**), guiding students through the same analytical thinking process:
 - **Group 1: The Pilgrims**
 - *Puritan religious beliefs.*
 - *Motivated by the desire to break from the Church of England and worship freely.*
 - **Group 2: The Wampanoag**
 - *Deep connection to nature and community.*
 - *Motivated by survival and maintaining peace after devastating diseases.*
- For the final row, ask students to work with a partner or independently. Then regroup and review their points, asking, "What did they want or need from the other group?":
 - **Group 1: The Pilgrims**
 - *Knowledge of farming and survival techniques to adapt to the new land.*
 - **Group 2: The Wampanoag**
 - *Weapons and support to defend against enemies.*
- Regroup and ask students what they gained by considering more than one perspective during the settlement of the Plymouth Colony.
- Ask how understanding goals, motives, and needs from both sides helps to gain a more well-rounded and balanced view of historical events.
- Ask students to reflect on how applying these skills to today's events or situations can help them interpret modern issues. Consider using two news articles from two different publications to further practice identifying multiple perspectives of authors.

Check for Understanding

If you observe ...

Then try ...

students struggling to identify the perspective of a primary source

providing students with additional background information about the author and time period in which it was created to help them determine the author's purpose and intent.

students struggling to determine the perspectives of multiple groups

providing opportunities to practice using real-world examples like movie clips or commercials in which multiple perspectives are presented.

Biased vs. Unbiased Adjectives

Biased	Unbiased
Cesar Chavez was a heroic figure who led boycotts and strikes to secure rights for farm workers.	Cesar Chavez led boycotts and strikes to secure rights for farm workers.
Freedom of speech is the most important constitutional right in the United States.	In the United States, freedom of speech is a constitutional right that many Americans value.
Social media is detrimental to our society because people no longer interact in person.	Social media has limited the in-person interaction between people in our society.
Katherine Johnson was a brilliant mathematician whose calculations helped send astronauts to the Moon.	Katherine Johnson was a methodical mathematician whose calculations helped send astronauts to the Moon.
France was a desperate country when they sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States for far below its value.	France was in financial need and decided to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for a nominal fee.
There are dire consequences for citizens who neglect to pay their taxes to the Internal Revenue Service.	The Internal Revenue Service requires all citizens to pay their taxes.
The Roman Empire, which dominated much of Europe for centuries, was an admirable force.	The Roman Empire was a large and influential European civilization for several centuries.
Ancient Egypt's pyramids are magnificent structures that represent ancient achievements.	The pyramids of ancient Egypt are large structures made by people thousands of years ago.



Author's Perspective

Directions: As you read an informational text, record instances of the author using biased adjectives, connotative language, questions, and exclamations. Record the text excerpt and highlight the words that reveal the author's bias. Then consider how the author's word choice reveals their perspective.

Excerpt from Text:

What is the author's perspective?

Excerpt from Text:

What is the author's perspective?

Excerpt from Text:

What is the author's perspective?

Examining Perspective in Primary Sources

Directions: Use the following steps to evaluate the author's perspective, or viewpoint, about the topic.

Title and Author of the Source: _____

Step 1: Examine Your Background Knowledge

- Reread the text to determine the context, time period, and location. Then answer the following questions:
 - What is the context, time period, and/or the location of the document?
 - What do you know about that time period or the author?
 - How might this influence the author's perspective?

Step 2: Examine the Author's Word Choice

- An author's words communicate their perspective, showing their feelings and point of view.
 - Examine the language used by the author. What does this reveal about their perspective?

Step 3: Examine Facts and Details

- Authors use facts, details, and anecdotes to support their opinions. Locate a detail that shows the author's perspective and answer the following:
 - What does the fact or detail mean?
 - What does it tell you about the author?

Step 4: Determine Author's Perspective

Combine the information to make an inference about the author's beliefs, feelings, and values.

Exploring Multiple Perspectives

Event/Topic _____		
	Group 1 _____	Group 2 _____
What did they want? What were their goals?		
What were their beliefs and values? What motivated them?		
What did they want or need from the other group?		