

EXPLORING PERSPECTIVE

Grades K-2 (20 minutes)

One challenge of our current media and information landscape is that “fake news” has come to be used as a label for any information that a person doesn’t like rather than as an accurate description of intentionally unsubstantiated reporting. As students work to learn to recognize actual misinformation, this environment can be confusing.

This activity is a response. It helps students build an intuitive understanding of why disagreement does not mean one view is correct and all others must, therefore, be wrong. With a simple hands-on activity followed by a read-aloud of *They All Saw a Cat* students learn that it is possible for people to see things differently without anyone being wrong, and that we judge accuracy based on evidence, not on agreement or disagreement with their opinion.

Students will learn

- The meaning of “perspective,” “point of view,” “opinion,” and “evidence”
- That it is possible for people with different perspectives to see things differently and come to different conclusions without anyone being wrong
- Conclusions must be based on reason and evidence

Students will practice

- Making careful observations
- Seeing things from someone else’s perspective
- Discussion & listening skills
- Asking media analysis questions
- Linking answers to evidence

Materials: large paper or poster with “6” on it; A copy of Brendan Wenzel’s book *They All Saw a Cat* (Chronicle Books, 2016)

Step 1

In the center of your space, place a large sheet of paper with the 6 (which appears to be a 9 if you are looking at it upside down). Be sure the number is face down. Place half the students on the top side of the number and half on the bottom side, so when you reveal it, half will see it as six and half will see it as 9.

When everyone is in place, tell them that you're going to turn over the paper and on the count of three, you want them to tell you what they see. Do the reveal.

Of course, half the students will say "six" and the other half will say "nine." Invite them to return to seats or the rug or wherever you can have them sit to debrief.

Step 2

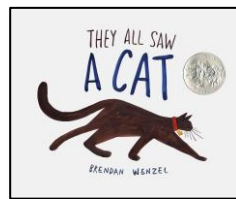
Point out that not everyone said the same thing and ask why? Let students reason out the explanation that they were looking from different points of view. Underscore that no one who said "six" or "nine" (or "a number") was wrong.

That doesn't mean anyone could say anything and it would still be correct. Ask: *If someone had said "eight" or "four" or "a [insert something absurd, e.g. a peanut butter sandwich, caboose, or moose]" would they have been right?* The answer is "no" because there is no evidence to support those answers. So people can believe different things and both can be correct, but they need evidence.

Explain that *this happens when we look at and make media, too. We call it "perspective." We always see things from our own perspective. Sometimes media like books or movies can help us see things from someone else's perspective. It may not be the same as ours, but that doesn't mean they are wrong or trying to fool us. So we don't just pay attention to what they say. We also look at the "evidence." "Evidence" is a word that means "the clues we use to prove that our ideas are correct."*

Step 3

Then explain that you chose a book for today's read aloud that can help everyone understand perspective and practice identifying evidence.



Read aloud *They All Saw a Cat* using inquiry techniques.

After a few pages, pause to ask, *What is going on? Why aren't they all seeing the same thing?* Students should begin to notice that each character is describing the cat from their own perspective.

After you have completed the book, go back and review the evidence. For example, *What is it about the _____ that makes them see the cat like this? (show relevant page)*

As time allows, use examples from the book to practice identifying valid and not valid evidence. One way to do that is to ask a counterfactual: e.g., *If the mouse or the flea had seen the cat as being smaller than itself, would that have been an accurate view? How about if the child saw the cat as being bigger than an elephant?*

Step 4

For 2nd graders, introduce the concept of "opinion." Each of the characters in the book has their own opinion about the cat based on their individual perspectives. Ask, *Can you tell from the illustrations what each character's opinion is?*

Which characters like the cat? Which are afraid? Don't forget to prompt students for evidence when they answer your questions. Explore the type of evidence they offer. Point out when a student uses document-based evidence, i.e., something in the picture that supports their conclusion. Or when someone uses prior knowledge, e.g., cats eat fish, so the fish is afraid of the cat.

Step 5

As time allows, help students get comfortable with differing, evidence-based opinions by offering (or letting them offer) a few real life scenarios where people see things differently without anyone being wrong. For example, ask: *What might these two think about...*

- a rainy day: A child who wants to play outside and a farmer whose crops need water?
- How high the top shelf of a large bookcase is: a preschooler or a 6'7" professional basketball player?

Be sure to prompt for evidence to help students internalize the habit of backing up their conclusions with evidence.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Connect to art and to language arts by having children choose a favorite book character and drawing how that character would see cat. Post the drawings and do a gallery walk. Invite each student to explain the evidence they used to determine how their character would see the cat.

Look for and discuss other media examples that show how different characters can see the same things differently (e.g., *Wicked* or Toby Forward's *The Wolf's Story*).

AASL Standards Correlations

B. I. 1. Using evidence to investigate questions.

C. I. 1. Interacting with content presented by others.

C. II. 2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed.

D. I. 3. Enacting new understanding through real world connections.

D. III. 1. Actively contributing to group discussions.