

UNDERSTANDING POINT OF VIEW

Grades K-5 (40 minutes including time for drawing and sharing; add an additional 20 minutes plus 3-4 minutes for each student if you want students to write and share their work with one another)

To learn about perspective and reinforce their understanding that people can see the same thing in different ways without anyone being wrong, students will use cameras or drawings to re-create varied perspectives. As an option, students can practice writing about what they see, composing a non-fiction or news-style account rather than inventing a fantasy tale.

Pre-requisites – This activity is intended to pair with the Exploring Perspective activity. It will be more effective if students have already done that lesson.

Students will learn

- That people can come to different conclusions without anyone being wrong, but that each person must back up their perspective with logical connections to valid evidence.
- To ask the media analysis questions, including: “What do you notice?” “How (and why) might someone else see this differently from me?” and “What’s your evidence?”
- The meaning “perspective” and “point of view”
- The distinction between non-fiction or news and fantasy (optional)

Students will practice

- Asking media analysis questions
- Making careful observations
- Discussion & listening skills
- Linking answers to evidence
- Writing (optional)

Materials: A way to show the image; digital cameras and a printer or drawing materials (depending on which option you choose); pencils & paper or digital writing tools if you opt to add the writing activity

Images

[Duck Paddling](#) – Slide #28

Step 1

Show the Duck Paddling picture (slide #28) and ask: *What do you see?* Prompt them to go beyond the obvious “a duck” answer. For



example, *Notice the shoreline – what does that tell them about the sort of place this is?* (e.g., it has trees, not skyscrapers) *Notice the sky. What information does it give you?* (what the weather is like)? The point of the follow-up questions is to

reinforce the habit of noticing everything in an image and thinking about the possible messages conveyed.

Then ask, *Would a fish in the water swimming under the duck see the same thing that you see? How would it be different?* Probe for evidence after each answer.

Then change the perspective. *What would the duck look like to a bird flying overhead?* Again, probe for evidence. If students have trouble grasping the difference, hold a piece of paper over the top half of the duck and help students describe what the fish would see. Then move the paper to cover the duck's feet and help them describe what the bird would see. Or bring in a stuffed animal duck and place it on the floor so students could stand over it to see what it looks like from above.

Wrap up this short media analysis session by summarizing the conclusions and introducing some important vocabulary: *The bird and the fish wouldn't see the same parts of the duck because they have different "perspectives."*

Perspectives can be about where we are physically, like the bird is in the sky and the fish is underwater. They have different perspectives. Different perspectives also happen because some people know things that other people don't or because they have different life experiences. For example, a person who grew up in a family that never eats meat might see the duck as an interesting animal but a person from a family that hunts might see dinner!

Whatever explanation you provide, end by noting that *when we draw conclusions based on our perspective, we call that our "point of view." It's the ideas we have because of the way we see things – because of our perspective. So the bird's idea about the duck is that it calmly floats on the water while the fish might describe the duck as a frantic creature with a lot of energy. And they would both be correct. That's why, when we're analyzing media,*

one of the questions we ask is, "How (and why) might someone else see this differently from me?"

Step 2

Invite students to put into practice what they've just learned about perspective and point of view by re-creating how different people/animals would see the duck. Assign them a perspective and let them draw or use a digital camera to show what their assigned character would see.

The younger the students, the more concrete you will need to be. If they are going to use cameras, you'll need a physical duck they can photograph. A rubber duckie in a see through plastic container with water would work. If they are going to draw and are old enough to use their imaginations you can stick with the image of the duck they've been analyzing.

The assignments can be as simple or complex as you think students can handle. The youngest students can stick with the bird and fish perspective.

For slightly older students you might add the option of someone standing on shore or sitting in a kayak near the duck or a scuba diver who can see below and above the water line. Or you might simply have them sit in different places in the room and draw what they see (e.g., some facing the duck, some looking from behind, and some looking from each side or above and below). This works well with a duck that has different colors or features on different sides.

The oldest students might be assigned familiar media characters. For example, how would the duck appear through the eyes of a character like Clifford (the big red dog) or Anansi the spider sitting on a rock near the duck? In these cases, size is an added part of the character's perspective. The duck would appear to Anansi to be large, but to Clifford it would be small.

Assign different perspectives to different students so you end up with a variety of photos or drawings.

Step 3

Allow students adequate time to draw or photograph. When students have finished their work, post their examples and do a gallery walk. Note that they were all looking at the same thing, but from different perspectives, so they had different points of view. Invite them to compare and contrast, noticing similarities and differences.

Conclude by pointing to a couple of pictures from different perspectives (e.g., one drawing facing the duck's head and another from behind the duck). As time allows, invite the artists to describe in words what the duck looked like to them.

Wrap up by underscoring that both students are accurate even though their descriptions and pictures are different. What you say will differ depending on the age of the students. Here are some ideas you might convey: *Understanding that we can disagree without anyone being wrong or deceptive is important when we're trying to find accurate information. Sometimes people will be wrong, so we ask, "What's your evidence?" If their evidence makes sense, it might just be that we're seeing things from different perspectives. Because by ourselves often don't see all perspectives of something, the only way to find out the whole truth is to seek information from multiple sources. It is also why just because someone disagrees with you that doesn't make them a liar or "fake news." And why we always ask, What's your evidence!*

Step 4 (grades 4-5 only)

Tell students that doing drawings or taking photos is one way for them to describe what they see from their perspective or point of view. Another way is to write. Have them write what they depicted in their drawings or photos. What did the duck look like.

Instruct them that their account should be non-fiction and, as needed, remind them of what that means. Just facts that tell what they observed. They shouldn't make up stories about the duck or how it feels or how it got there. That would be fantasy, not non-fiction.

After students have completed the writing assignment, invite a few (or all) of them to share what they wrote. Again note that no one was being deceptive, but their descriptions were all different.

Connect this to the way that news is reported. *Part of the job of a journalist is to just report the facts about what they observe (just like the students did). Sometimes to help people understand, journalists add other facts, which they find by asking Who, What, When, Where, Why?*

If you want to pursue this topic, you could share the [Is It News](#) handout and do the "What Is News" activities.

If not, explain that *sometimes journalists ask people who witnessed or were part of event what they saw. To get the full picture, they must speak with people from different perspectives. As readers, we should always look for those different perspectives and notice when an important perspective is missing (like a news article about your school where the reporter didn't actually talk to anyone from the school).*

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

As part of current events lessons, have students search for perspectives in the articles they are reading, seeing, or hearing. As a group, discuss what they find.

Read aloud Cynthia Rylant's book *Life* and talk about why each animal has a different point of view.

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.