

# ***In the Shoes of Another***

It is often said that there are two sides to every story. In reality, there are as many sides to the story as there were people present. Yet the story is usually only told from one of these perspectives. This might be a narrator in a story, an eyewitness reflecting upon what he saw, or a historian looking at it years later. If we want a true understanding of an historical event, we must try to understand the various perspectives of those who were there.



Can you walk in another person's shoes?

Depth and Complexity icon:

Multiple Perspectives

Secondary Depth and Complexity icons:

Big idea  
Over time  
Details

Skills: writing  
research  
critical thinking

Dig Deeper: Just how many perspectives could you represent?

Product:

In learning about multiple perspectives, you will research a historical event and take on the persona of three people from during this time. They can be actual people or a character created by you. For example, researching the non-Christian point-of-view during the Salem Witch era, one of the witches, and one of the Puritans persecuting her. Or researching a king, a nobleman, and a serf during the Middle Ages. Could be listening to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" from the perspective of a black, a white, and an immigrant. Make sure to choose people who would have had a very different set of life circumstances than you have had. You will write a journal entry from the point of view of each of these three people, capturing how they would have seen the event and why this is. You will include a reflection where you share your own perspective of what happened and how you arrived at this.

Calendar:

What is point of view?		Looking at history through multiple perspectives	Research your event in time	
Research your event in time		How do you write a journal entry?	Write journal entry #1	
Write journal entry #2		Write journal entry #3	Write your reflection on how you view the event now.	

Lesson – What is point of view?

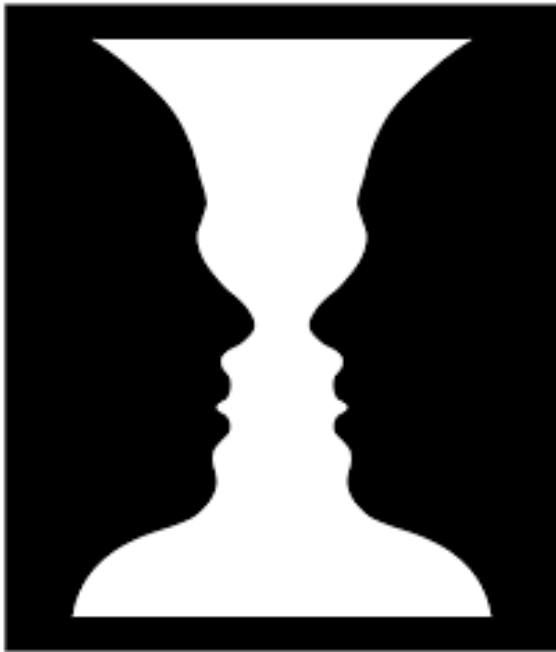
Set up a glass of water that is transparent and is filled halfway. Then ask the students to describe the glass.

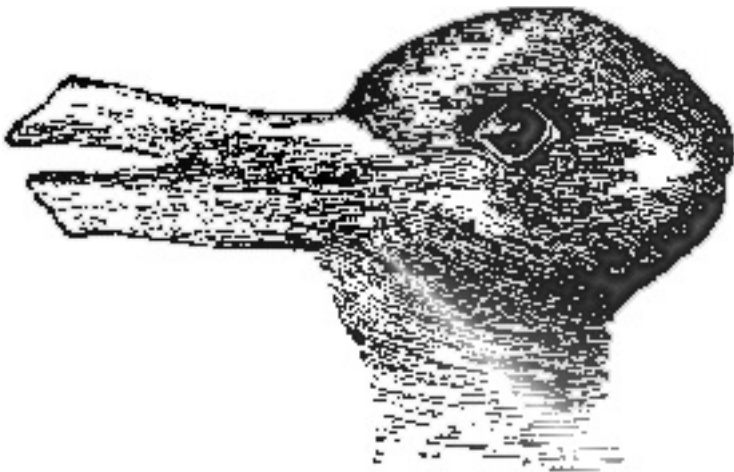
Some will claim the glass is half full  
Others will say the glass is half empty

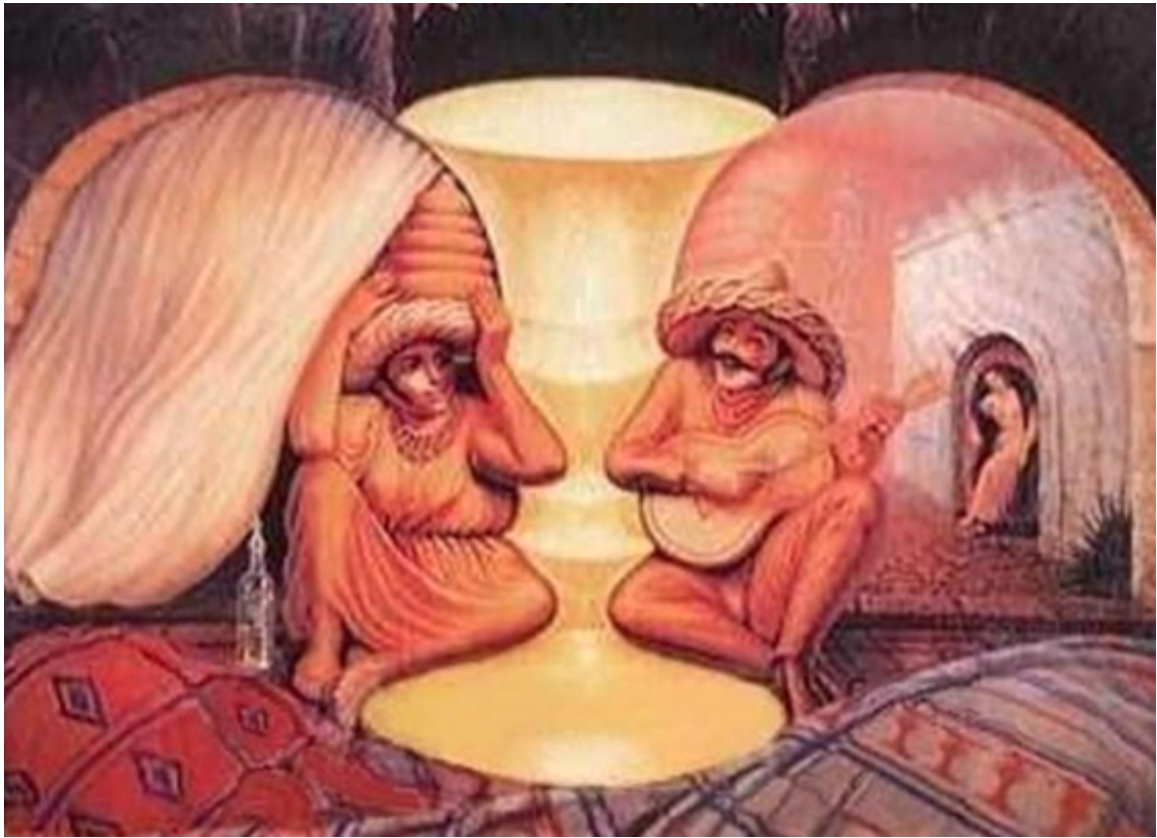
Who is correct?

Both are because they both correctly identify the water in the glass. It is simply a different point of view of what they see.

Show students these visuals and ask them what they see.







You can either read the story to students or show them the video of it  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn9BUfUCL4I>

## The Blind Men and Elephant

Long ago six old men lived in a village in India. Each was born blind. The other villagers loved the old men and kept them away from harm. Since the blind men could not see the world for themselves, they had to imagine many of its wonders. They listened carefully to the stories told by travelers to learn what they could about life outside the village.

The men were curious about many of the stories they heard, but they were most curious about elephants. They were told that elephants could trample forests, carry huge burdens, and frighten young and old with their loud trumpet calls. But they also knew that the Rajah's daughter rode an elephant when she traveled in her father's kingdom. Would the Rajah let his daughter get near such a dangerous creature?

The old men argued day and night about elephants. "An elephant must be a powerful giant," claimed the first blind man. He had heard stories about elephants being used to clear forests and build roads.

"No, you must be wrong," argued the second blind man. "An elephant must be graceful and gentle if a princess is to ride on its back."

"You're wrong! I have heard that an elephant can pierce a man's heart with its terrible horn," said the third blind man.

"Please," said the fourth blind man. "You are all mistaken. An elephant is nothing more than a large sort of cow. You know how people exaggerate."

"I am sure that an elephant is something magical," said the fifth blind man. "That would explain why the Rajah's daughter can travel safely throughout the kingdom."

"I don't believe elephants exist at all," declared the sixth blind man. "I think we are the victims of a cruel joke."

Finally, the villagers grew tired of all the arguments, and they arranged for the curious men to visit the palace of the Rajah to learn the truth about elephants. A young boy from their village was selected to guide the blind men on their journey. The smallest man put his hand on the boy's shoulder. The second blind man put his hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to walk safely behind the boy who would lead them to the Rajah's magnificent palace.

When the blind men reached the palace, they were greeted by an old friend from their village who worked as a gardener on the palace grounds. Their friend led

them to the courtyard. There stood an elephant. The blind men stepped forward to touch the creature that was the subject of so many arguments.

The first blind man reached out and touched the side of the huge animal. "An elephant is smooth and solid like a wall!" he declared. "It must be very powerful."

The second blind man put his hand on the elephant's limber trunk. "An elephant is like a giant snake," he announced.

The third blind man felt the elephant's pointed tusk. "I was right," he decided. "This creature is as sharp and deadly as a spear."

The fourth blind man touched one of the elephant's four legs. "What we have here," he said, "is an extremely large cow."

The fifth blind man felt the elephant's giant ear. "I believe an elephant is like a huge fan or maybe a magic carpet that can fly over mountains and treetops," he said.

The sixth blind man gave a tug on the elephant's coarse tail. "Why, this is nothing more than a piece of old rope. Dangerous, indeed," he scoffed.

The gardener led his friends to the shade of a tree. "Sit here and rest for the long journey home," he said. "I will bring you some water to drink."

While they waited, the six blind men talked about the elephant.

"An elephant is like a wall," said the first blind man. "Surely we can finally agree on that."

"A wall? An elephant is a giant snake!" answered the second blind man.

"It's a spear, I tell you," insisted the third blind man.

"I'm certain it's a giant cow," said the fourth blind man.

"Magic carpet. There's no doubt," said the fifth blind man.

"Don't you see?" pleaded the sixth blind man. "Someone used a rope to trick us."

Their argument continued and their shouts grew louder and louder.

"Wall!" "Snake!" "Spear!" "Cow!" "Carpet!" "Rope!"

"*Stop shouting!*" called a very angry voice.

It was the Rajah, awakened from his nap by the noisy argument.

"How can each of you be so certain you are right?" asked the ruler.

The six blind men considered the question. And then, knowing the Rajah to be a very wise man, they decided to say nothing at all.

"The elephant is a very large animal," said the Rajah kindly. "Each man touched only one part. Perhaps if you put the parts together, you will see the truth. Now, let me finish my nap in peace."

When their friend returned to the garden with the cool water, the six men rested quietly in the shade, thinking about the Rajah's advice.

"He is right," said the first blind man. "To learn the truth, we must put all the parts together. Let's discuss this on the journey home."

The first blind man put his hand on the shoulder of the young boy who would guide them home. The second blind man put a hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to travel together.



Use the story to answer the following questions:



How do different people view the topic?

What are the pros and cons of each viewpoint?

What ideas about the topic will different perspectives question?

Lesson – Looking at history through multiple perspectives

Give half of the class That Was No Brother and the other half That Was No Welcome without telling them this.

Have them read their story and then answer the four questions on the back.

## THAT WAS NO WELCOME

*Henry Stanley was the first white man to travel down the entire Congo River. He was a newspaperman and wrote about his travels. In the story below, he tells how he was met by some Africans while traveling down the Congo in a canoe about a 100 years ago.*

About 8 A.M. we saw a marketplace where there were many small canoes. Then men got into them and circled all around us. We stayed still for a long time, but they became bolder and began to throw their wooden spears whenever anyone cried "Mutti" (the word for sticks). We shot our guns a few times, which made them leave. Drums then awakened the whole country, and horns blew deafening blasts. Some canoes boldly followed us.

About 10 A.M. we came to another market. Here, too, warriors were waiting, and again we had to use weapons. With a lot of noise the little canoes disappeared quickly down the river.

A 2 P.M. we came into a very large stream. There we saw a great fleet of canoes in the middle of the stream. The canoe men, standing up, gave a loud shout when they saw us and blew their horns louder than ever. Looking upstream, we saw a sight that sent the blood tingling through every nerve and fiber of our bodies; a fleet of gigantic canoes bearing down upon us, which were bigger in size and numbers than anything we had seen.

We had enough time to count the number of the war vessels. There were 54 of them! A monster canoe led the way, with two rows of paddlers standing up, 40 men on a side, their bodies bending and swaying like a barbarous chorus driving down towards us.

In the bow there were ten young warriors, their heads bright with red feathers; at the stern, eight men with long paddles, whose tops were decorated with ivory balls, guided the monster vessel; and dancing up and down from stern to stern with ten men, who looked like they were chiefs.

The crashing sound of large drums, a hundred blasts from ivory horns and thrilling chant from 2,000 human throats did not help to calm our nerves. But we had no time to pray. As the first canoe came rushing down, I turned to take a last look at our people and said to them:

"Boys, be firm as iron; wait until you see the first spear, and then take good aim. Don't fire all at once. Keep aiming until you are sure of your man. Don't think of running away, because only your guns can save you."

The monster canoe aimed straight for my boat, as though it would run us down; but when it was fifty yards away, it swerved to the side. When it was nearly opposite us, the warriors threw their spears and on both sides there was a noise of rushing bodies. But every sound was soon lost in the rippling, crackling gunfire. After firing for five minutes we saw that the enemy was regrouping about 200 yards above us.

We were angry now. It was a murderous world, and we felt for the first time that we hated the filthy people who lived in it. We followed them upstream until we saw their villages. We made straight for the river banks and fought in the village streets with those who had landed. We hunted them in the woods until we finally stopped.

1) Use three words to describe the explorers.

2) Use three words to describe the natives.

3) Who do you think started this whole mess?

4) Who do you think is at fault in this whole mess?

## THAT WAS NO BROTHER

*In the story below, King Mojimba, who lived along the Congo River, tells how his people welcomed the first white man they had ever seen. He told this story to a Catholic priest.*

When we heard that the man with white skin was traveling down the river, we were open-mouthed with surprise. We stood still. All night long the drums told the strange news – a man with white skin! That man, we said to ourselves, has a white skin. He must have got that from the river-kingdom. He is one of our brothers who was drowned in the river. All life comes from the water, and in the water he had found life. Now he is coming back to us. He is coming home.

We will prepare a feast, I ordered. We will go to meet our brother and bring him into the village with rejoicing! We put on our ceremonial dress. We got the great canoes. We listened for the gong which would tell us that our brother had arrived. Now he enters the river! We swept forward, my canoe leading, the others following, with songs a joy and dancing, to meet the first white man our eyes had ever seen and to honor him.

But as we came near his canoe there were loud sounds, bang! bang! and fire-sticks spit bits of iron at us. We were frightened; our mouths hung wide open and we could not shut them. Things such as we had never seen, never heard of, never dreamed of – they were the work of evil spirits! Several of my men plunged into the water. What for? Did they fly to safety? No – for others fell down also in the canoes. Some screamed terribly, others were silent – they were dead, and blood flowed from little holes in their bodies. “War! That is war!” I yelled. “Go back!” The canoes sped back to our village with all the strength we could give to our arms.

That was no brother! That was the worst enemy our country had ever seen.

And still those bangs went on; the long sticks spit fire. Flying pieces of iron whistled around us and fell into the water with a hissing sound. Our brothers kept on falling. We fled into our village – they came after us. We fled into the forest and threw ourselves on the ground. When we returned that evening our eyes saw fearful things; our brothers, dead, bleeding, our village plundered and burned, and the water full of dead bodies.

The robbers and murderers had disappeared.

Now tell me; has the white men treated us fairly? Oh, do not speak to me of him! You call us wicked men, but you white men are more wicked. You think because you have guns you can take away our belongings. You have sickness in your heads, for that is not justice.

1) Use three words to describe the explorers.

2) Use three words to describe the natives.

3) Who do you think started this whole mess?

4) Who do you think is at fault in this whole mess?

### Discussion questions:

Use three words to describe the explorers.

Use three words to describe the natives.

Who do you think started this whole mess?

Who do you think is at fault in this whole mess?

Who is right in this situation?

What leads you to believe this?

*By this time students should figure because their answers are so different that there were two stories. If they don't, reveal that there was. Then ask someone to read their story to the others and vice versa. Then continue the discussion.*

Could you understand the perspective of the side you thought was wrong? Why or why not?

How did having one side of the story affect your perspective?

Could this story be told from a 3<sup>rd</sup> perspective?

Who might this perspective be?

How would they see the story differently?

Why would they see it this way?

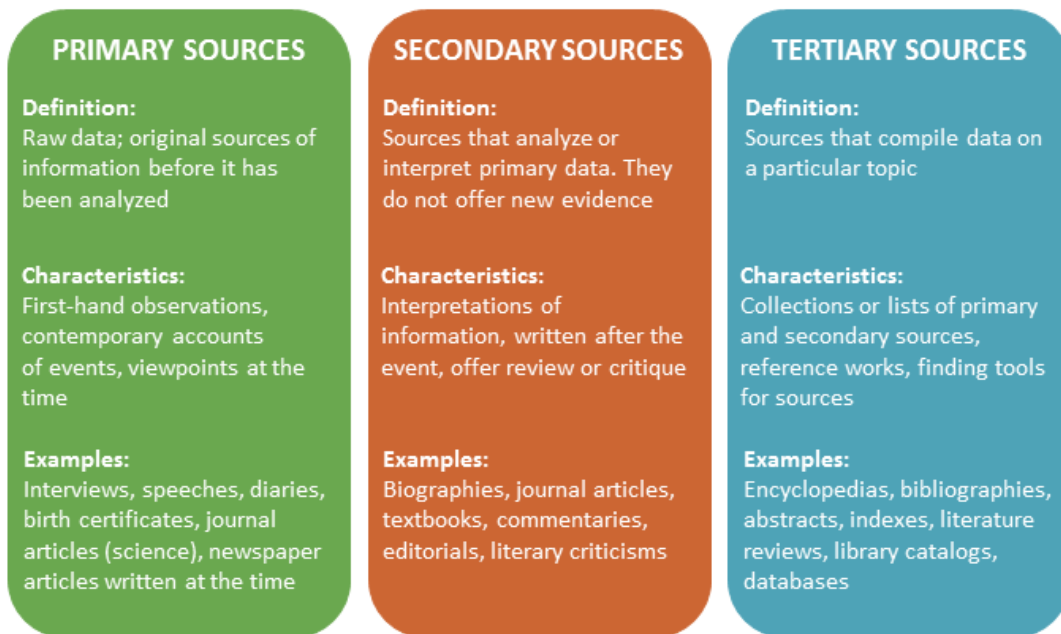
### Reflection

From this discussion have students write the story from the 3<sup>rd</sup> perspective of their choice for the last 15 minutes of class. It doesn't matter how far they get. It is simply an exercise in trying to put themselves in the shoes of someone else. If students want to read them the next class, make time for that.

## Lesson – Researching your period in history

You will want to select a time period, no more than a few years in length, and gather information that would help you to see it from the eyes of another. This might be from:

- **Primary sources:** you might find a journal, letter, a newspaper article, or excerpt from someone who experienced this time period. Your goal would not be to copy this for your own journal but rather to get a feel for what it was like to live during that time and understanding what their point of view.
- **Secondary sources:** this is typically just a reporting of the events that occurred. It usually is told after the fact and may give some perspective but as an outside observer.
- **Tertiary sources:** this is a source that compiles the data or primary and secondary sources. Encyclopedias and reviews are examples of this.





Use the graphic organizer to help you organize your research.

Research from In the Shoes of Another project

Time period:

Event(s) that were taking place:

Description of this event(s):

People who were involved in the event and their role:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Write a Wikipedia entry that summarizes this event in history.

## Lesson – How do you write a journal entry?

1. Gather your writing materials (notebook and pen or computer) and research.
2. Find a comfortable place to write.
3. Go through your notes and select information that will help you to write about this time period from the perspective of another. You might approach this in a few ways:
  - Identify a specific event that you could talk about from multiple perspectives all having experienced it at the same time.
    - Example: the Trail of Tears
      - Perspective #1 – a Native American being moved from her land
      - Perspective #2 – a soldier who is responsible for moving her
      - Perspective #3 – a settler whose either gets the land that is being left or will now have new inhabitants in his territory
  - Look at the time period as a whole and choose perspectives from different dates during that time.
    - Example: Immigration during the 1920s
      - Perspective #1 – an Irishman coming into New York
      - Perspective #2 – a Chinese woman coming into San Francisco
      - Perspective #3 – a Hispanic child coming to Florida
  - Look at a time period and choose chronological years that show the progression of the event over time.
    - Example: Civil War
      - Perspective #1 – a Black person prior to the war (could be free or slave)
      - Perspective #2 – a Black person during the Civil War (could be a freeman, slave, or a soldier)

- Perspective #3 – a Black person after the Civil War is over and how it feels to have freedom and rights

4. Determine the three perspectives you are going to be writing from. These should be perspectives that offer a different point of view on the situation.
5. Date your journal entry in the time period it is set in. Then write for at least 30 minutes in the shoes of this person you have chosen.
6. This should be in 1<sup>st</sup> person so you will be using “I” phrases.
7. Take a little break and then read over the journal entry to see that it makes sense.
8. Go back and revise it for improvement.
9. Repeat this for days #2 and #3.

## Reflection on project

Prompt: How has learning about this period of time from another point of view changed your perspective about it, others, or yourself?

	Journal	Perspective	Research
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has 3 journal entries, each one from the point of view of a different person.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries make sense and follow a logical progression.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries are free from mistakes and are easy to understand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each has a clear voice that seems to differ from entry to entry.</li> <li>▪ Entries put the reader in the shoes of another, allowing us to feel and hear what this person thought.</li> <li>▪ Entries give you an original look at the event rather than just the same details repeated over and over.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Entries use information that is accurate for the time period being shown.</li> <li>▪ Entries include specific details to put the reader in that time period.</li> <li>▪ Entries use multiple facts to show the reader what was going on during that time period.</li> </ul>
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has 2 journal entries, each one from the point of view of a different person.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries at times do not make sense because they don't follow a logical progression.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries are mostly free from mistakes but is still easy to understand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each has a voice that seems to differ from entry to entry for the most part but sometimes sounds the same.</li> <li>▪ Entries put the reader in the shoes of another, giving us their perspective but not allowing us to feel and hear what this person thought.</li> <li>▪ Entries give you an original look at the event but there are times where it is just the same details repeated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Entries use information that is accurate for the time period being shown but sometimes have something that is not true.</li> <li>▪ Entries include details but not enough to put the reader completely in that time period.</li> <li>▪ Entries use a few facts to show the reader what was going on during that time period.</li> </ul>
Needs improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only has a single journal entry, providing the point of view of this person.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries make little to no sense and simply cause confusion.</li> <li>▪ Journal entries have many mistakes which makes it difficult to understand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Each seems to use the same voice so that there doesn't seem to be much difference from entry to entry.</li> <li>▪ Entries do not put the reader in the shoes of another, just sounds like the student.</li> <li>▪ Entries give you the same details to the event which makes them sound all the same.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Entries use information that is inaccurate for the time period being shown.</li> <li>▪ Entries does not many include details to put the reader completely in that time period.</li> <li>▪ Entries use a little to no facts to show the reader what was going on during that time period. Could have happened any time.</li> </ul>