

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- identify the writer's perspective
- understand how a writer communicates their perspective to a reader.

IDENTIFYING THE WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE

A writer's perspective is their point of view, or the angle from which they see the subject matter. Even the most purely informative articles, which show no personal angle at all, can be said to have a point of view, even if that point of view is objective or unbiased.

Many articles or pieces of writing that claim to be objective are not always unbiased, because everyone brings a personal, societal or national bias to bear on what they write. An article written for an encyclopaedia in the United States of America will be written from an American perspective, which means that the article may be different to one written in China, even though it is apparently unbiased. If the subject of the writing is politics, history or culture, national perspectives will often be very different. For example, in the travel writing extract on page 69, Stanley Stewart writes from the perspective of a curious British traveller, not from that of a native Mongolian. This fact means that his account of the wedding is entirely different from that of a native Mongolian.

There are many different types of perspective. The writer's origin in a particular community or ethnic group may give them a particular perspective. Having a certain job or occupation might also influence their perspective – you could say they write from the perspective of an economist, a student, a singer, and so on. Martin Luther King's famous speech, 'I have a dream...' is written from the point of view of a black American minister who has become the voice of a whole people.

DIFFERENCES IN PERSPECTIVE

In comparison, one of the commonest reasons for difference in perspective is the fact that people interact with others whom they do not necessarily understand. This may not be because of what they do or where they come from, but simply because people cannot know exactly what is going on in another person's thoughts. This is shown by the following accounts of the same event.

▼ DEV'S ACCOUNT

It was awful. He hit me hard in the face and all his friends laughed at me when I started to cry. I was just walking past and was trying to be helpful by pointing out that the bell had gone. They always laugh at me in the corridor and I thought if I tried to help they would like me more. I don't understand what is going on.

▼ DANIL'S ACCOUNT

This has nothing to do with my friends. They didn't even realise what had happened until after I hit him. I think they were laughing at a joke Adesh had made. I did punch him, but that was because he told me I was going to be late with this smirk on his face like he was going to tell the teacher. I have never really seen him before and I thought he was trying to show me up in front of my friends.