

Analyzing Point of View

CCLS

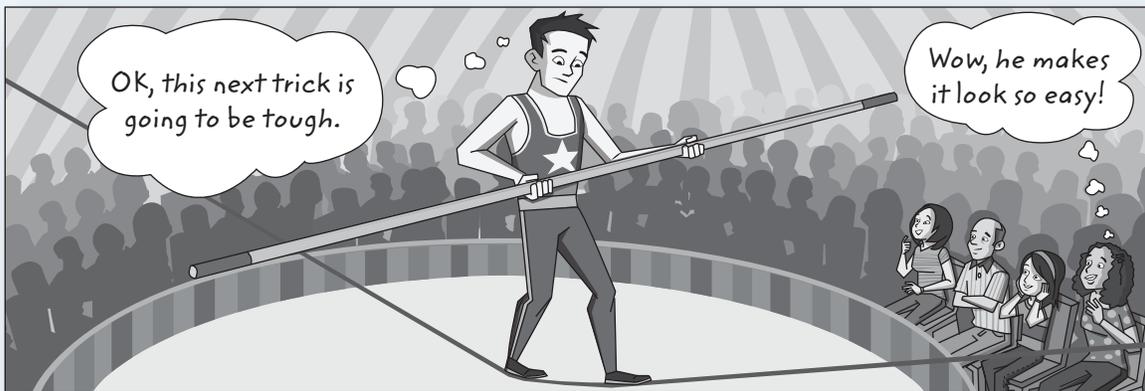
RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the point of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
RL.7.6.a: Analyze stories, drama, or poems by authors who represent diverse world cultures.

Theme: *Perspectives*

Roller coasters aren't for everyone. You might love the thrills, but your friend keeps her eyes closed the whole time! Each of you has your own perspective, or **point of view**, about the experience.

Stories contain different points of view, too. Sometimes you'll get the point of view of the narrator, or the voice telling the story. At other times you'll get the point of view of one or more characters. By revealing their words, thoughts, feelings, and actions, the author gives you insight into the characters' attitudes about the events and people around them.

Who are the main characters in the scene below? How would the description of the same event differ if it were told from each character's point of view?



Read the chart below. Note how the evidence shows why a contrast exists between the acrobat's point of view about the situation and the audience member's perspective.

Character	Evidence	Point of View
Acrobat	says next trick will be tough; walking a high tightrope	The routine is very dangerous, and he could fall at any minute.
Audience Member	smiling, eyes wide, says acrobat makes it look easy	The acrobat seems very talented, and he's in no danger.

The characters in the scene are having two different experiences and would tell different versions of the same story. In other words, *how* an event is described is directly affected by *who* is describing it. So by carefully choosing or describing points of view, the author is able to advance the plot and help readers understand the characters' actions and motivations.



Read this story about Ramon and Blanca’s trip to an art museum.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Places of Disinterest *by Rowena Jackson*

Another Inez family Saturday afternoon outing was drawing to a close, and for Blanca and Ramon’s parents, the car ride home from the art museum couldn’t be over fast enough. Blanca stared stonily out the car window, while Ramon beamed.

“That is the absolute last time you get to pick where we go,” Blanca exclaimed and scowled at her older brother. “The entire exhibit was filled with paintings that looked like someone ran around splashing buckets of paint randomly all over the canvas.”

“That’s called *expressionism*,” Ramon eagerly explained, “Each painting is meant to evoke a feeling. What were some of the emotions you experienced in the exhibit?”

“I felt quite frustrated and exhausted,” Blanca sighed dramatically, and then she exclaimed, “And I didn’t appreciate that security guard being so rude to me!”

“You sat on a priceless metal sculpture! He was just doing his job.”

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: “How does the author contrast the points of view of the different characters?”

To figure out each character’s point of view, identify words and phrases that reveal his or her thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward story events. Underline text evidence that suggests how Blanca feels about the afternoon at the art museum. Circle the evidence that suggests how Ramon feels about the same experience. Then complete the chart below, and compare the characters’ points of view.

Character	Evidence	Point of View
Blanca	stares stonily out window, doesn’t want Ramon to pick an activity again, disliked the paintings, sat on a sculpture	
Ramon		enjoyed his time at the museum because he understands and appreciates fine art

Blanca and Ramon have contrasting perspectives about their experience at the museum. How do the characters’ interests and feelings affect their points of view?



Close Reading

How do Blanca’s and Ramon’s points of view differ about the still–life paintings? **Underline** the words and phrases that show the contrast.

Hint

How does Ramon react to Blanca’s complaints?

Continue reading about the visit to the art museum. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 154)

After a few moments, Ramon tried again. “Those still–life pieces were so remarkable. Did you notice how the artists captured the interplay of light and shadow across even such ordinary objects?”

Blanca checked her text messages for the billionth time and muttered angrily, “Sure, I always pay attention to boring stuff like light and shadow when I’m looking at a bowl of fruit.”

“Well, was there anything at the museum that you enjoyed?”

Blanca thought carefully for a moment before flashing her wrist—“I did enjoy the gift shop, because I got this cool watch.”

Circle the correct answer.

Based on evidence from the story, which statement best describes Ramon’s point of view about his sister?

- A** He thinks Blanca could be a painter if she paid attention to details.
- B** He believes she should admit to knowing that the art is valuable.
- C** He hopes to convince her that she can appreciate fine art.
- D** He’s not sure that Blanca will ever appreciate expressionism.



Show Your Thinking

Citing evidence from the text, describe how the author contrasts Blanca’s point of view from that of her brother.



With a partner, discuss how the contrasting points of view help readers understand the characters’ relationships with one another.



The following is a retelling of an ancient Zen tale called a *koan*, which is meant to teach a moral or lesson. Read the tale and use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

Genre: Allegory



Authors often reveal their characters' thoughts and feelings through dialogue. As I read, I'll pay close attention to what the characters say.

Close Reading

How does Sakura feel about Gessen?

Underline any evidence in the text that explains her point of view.

What do the last two paragraphs reveal about Gessen's motives? **Star (*)** any details that help explain how his actions reflect his point of view.

“The Stingy Artist” *retold by Keisha Walker*

This is the tale of Gessen, a Tibetan monk who became a famous artist. Recognized for his amazing talent, Gessen would always demand payment in advance before ever picking up a paintbrush.

- 1 A wealthy and proud noblewoman named Sakura heard of a wonderfully skilled artist named Gessen. She quickly summoned him to her palace to paint a scene of her three prized dogs.
- 2 “How much can you pay?” Gessen inquired sternly.
- 3 “It is shameful to speak of money so early in the discussion,” the noblewoman replied, barely hiding her contempt.
- 4 “Perhaps,” replied Gessen, unmoved. “But I must know now!”
- 5 Sakura sneered at the artist, but she finally named a price. Gessen demanded more. Finally, the two agreed on the fee, the highest sum ever paid for a painting anywhere in the land. Gessen was paid in advance, and the piece was unveiled at a grand feast in honor of the noblewoman's prized dogs.
- 6 “It is the grandest painting in my collection, to be sure,” the noblewoman told Gessen over dinner. “But you taint its beauty with your stinginess and petty desire for money. You would no doubt ask me for a year's wages to sketch upon my napkin. Your outrageous greed means you will never paint anything of worth.”
- 7 “A year's wages I will take, if that is what you will pay.” Gessen bore the scorn of all at the table, especially from she who would hold a lavish feast for pampered canines while people starved.
- 8 For you see, unbeknownst to Sakura or her guests, Gessen's village was suffering from a terrible famine. He had used every bit of his earnings to fill a warehouse with grain, to repair the roads leading to the National Shrine, and to build his people a new temple. And when all had been accomplished, he gave his paintings away for free, never again asking for a single coin.



Hints

As you fill out the graphic organizer, think about how the author reveals the characters' thoughts and feelings through dialogue and narration.

Which answer choice helps explain why Gessen charges such high prices?

As you write, think about how Sakura's ignorance of Gessen's motives colors her point of view.

Look at your marked-up text. Then use the Hints on this page to help you complete the graphic organizer and answer the questions.

- 1 For each character, identify two or more details from the text that support your analysis of each character's point of view.

Character	Evidence	Point of View
Gessen		
Sakura		

- 2 Which statement best describes Gessen's attitude toward money?
 - A Gessen thinks people should spend money any way they wish.
 - B Gessen believes art is more important than money.
 - C Gessen thinks that money is more important than beauty.
 - D Gessen feels money should be used to help others, not wasted.
- 3 Citing at least two specific details from the text and the chart above, contrast the points of view of Gessen and Sakura from *The Stingy Artist*.



Read this excerpt from *The Good Earth*, a novel written by Pearl S. Buck. Then answer questions 1 through 4.

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck was born in 1892 in West Virginia but soon moved back to Zhenjiang, China, with her missionary parents. Raised by a Chinese nanny, Pearl learned Chinese tales and myths and could speak and write both English and Chinese by the age of four. Her daily interactions with the people of Zhenjiang taught Pearl a great deal about Chinese life and customs.

While Pearl traveled back to the United States for brief time periods, she spent most of the first forty years of her life in China. In 1917, Pearl and her husband John moved to a poor rural community in the Chinese province of Anhui. There Pearl observed the challenges and hardships faced by impoverished peasant-farmers. Later, during her writing career, Pearl was able to draw from a wealth of memories about China and its people.

from *The Good Earth*

by Pearl S. Buck

A hard-working peasant named Wang Lung labors long hours in his fields to feed his growing family. After years of fruitful harvests, however, a severe drought cripples the countryside, and all its inhabitants suffer as the crops wither and perish. Ultimately, the family's food stores are exhausted, the family ox is consumed, and they are starving. All that remains of Wang Lung's inheritance is his land, now just bleak,
5 hardened fields. In this scene, Wang Lung senses the hopelessness building inside him; then he sees his uncle and two men come up to his house. How well-fed they look! Wang Lung all but accuses his uncle of being heartless enough to feed himself while his relatives are starving.

"I have thought of nothing but of you and of your father, who is my brother," retorted his uncle briskly, "and now I prove it to you. As soon as I could, I borrowed from these good men in the town a
10 little food on the promise that with the strength it gave me I would help them to buy some of the land about our village. And then I thought of your good land first of all, you, the son of my brother. They have come to buy your land and to give you money—food—life!" His uncle, having said these words, stepped back and folded his arms with a flourish of his dirty and ragged robes.

Wang Lung did not move. He did not rise nor in any way recognize the men who had come. But
15 he lifted his head to look at them and he saw that they were indeed men from the town dressed in long robes of soiled silk. Their hands were soft and their nails long. They looked as though they had eaten and blood still ran rapidly in their veins. He suddenly hated them with an immense hatred. Here were these men from the town, having eaten and drunk, standing beside him whose children were starving and eating the very earth from his fields; here they were, come to squeeze his land from him in his extremity. He looked up at
20 them sullenly, his eyes deep and enormous in his bony, skull-like face.

"I will not sell my land," he said.

His uncle stepped forward. At this instant the younger of Wang Lung's two sons came creeping to the doorway upon his hands and knees. Since he had so little strength in these latter days the child at times had gone back to crawling as he used in his babyhood. . . .



25 “What is your price?” Wang Lung whispered at last. Well, there were these three children to be fed—the children and the old man. He and his wife could dig themselves graves in the land and lie down in them and sleep. Well, but here were these.

And then one of the men from the city spoke, a man with one eye blind and sunken in his face, and unctuously he said, “My poor man, we will give you a better price than could be got in these times
30 anywhere for the sake of the boy who is starving. We will give you . . .” he paused and then he said harshly, “we will give you a string of a hundred pence for an acre!”

Wang Lung laughed bitterly. “Why, that,” he cried, “that is taking my land for a gift. Why, I pay twenty times that when I buy land!”

35 “Ah, but not when you buy it from men who are starving,” said the other man from the city. He was a small, slight fellow with a high thin nose, but his voice came out of him unexpectedly large and coarse and hard.

Wang Lung looked at the three of them. They were sure of him, these men! What will not a man give for his starving children and his old father! The weakness of surrender in him melted into an anger such as he had never known in his life before. He sprang up and at the men as a dog springs at an enemy.

40 “I shall never sell the land!” he shrieked at them. . . . “I will dig up the fields and feed the earth itself to the children and when they die I will bury them in the land, and I and my wife and my old father, even he, we will die on the land that has given us birth!”

1

Which of the lines from the story **best** reflects Wang Lung’s point of view about the motives of his visitors?

- A** line 14
- B** line 16
- C** line 18
- D** line 19



2 Which statement **best** describes the difference between the points of view of Wang Lung and the men from the city?

- A Wang Lung thinks his uncle is heartless, but the men are sure that his uncle really does have Wang Lung’s best interests in mind.
- B Wang Lung thinks the men are taking advantage of him, but the men believe a starving man has no choice but to sell.
- C Wang Lung thinks that the men from the city are soft, but the men are convinced that peasants can be easily fooled.
- D Wang Lung believes that his uncle’s proposal is unreasonable, but the men believe that Wang Lung is uncertain and slow to make decisions.

3 Which line from the story **best** reveals what is highly valued by both Wang Lung and the Chinese culture?

- A “I have thought of nothing but of you and of your father” (line 8)
- B “. . . they were indeed men from the town dressed in long robes” (line 15)
- C “I will not sell my land” (line 21)
- D “. . . we will give you a better price than could be got in these times” (line 29)

4 **Short Response** How is the author’s background reflected in Wang Lung’s response to the city men? Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

Self Check Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 120.