

Point of View I

Overview: Students will interpret narratives in works of art and literature from various points of view.



The Wedding
Edward L. Henry

Goals: This lesson will

Support concepts & skills: see complex realities from different points of view

Fulfill Learning Standards: ELA 8.3, 8.12, 8.23, 9.4, 12.3, 12.6, 17.5; History & Social Sciences Guiding Principle #4.

Practice: interpretation, identifying different perspectives in history, literature and art, writing from a point of view, honoring and articulating differing points of view.

Familiarize students with: monologues, multiple perspectives.

Objectives for Students: Students will

Be able to: identify differing points of view in a complex situation.

Understand: that different, equally valid, points of view may exist about events.

Key Questions (to be answered by students):

1. How can different people interpret the same event in different ways?
2. How can I tell whose interpretation to trust?
3. What happens to our understanding of something when we hear or see multiple perspectives on it?

Materials Needed: Point of View Worksheet

Museum Objects: *The Wedding* by Edward L. Henry, oil on canvas, 1903, The Clapp Estate (1973.1)

Pre-Museum Visit – Discuss the meaning of the term “point of view.” Ask students whether they think more than one point of view about something can be valid. What situations can they think of where this is true? Remind students of the story about the blind men and the elephant, in which each man was sure he knew what elephants were like, based on only a limited point of view. Which man was right?

At the Museum – Look at the painting of *The Wedding* by Edward L. Henry. Lead an investigation of the painting:

- (1) “What is going on here? How do you know? What else is going on? What do you see that makes you say that?” Continue with these two simple questions (what’s going on; what do you see that makes you think that) until they have investigated many aspects of the painting.
- (2) Continue with: “What do you think is the main idea of this painting?” until several different ideas have been voiced, and you have discusses each.
- (3) Then continue with: “What people do you see?” Ask students to describe some of the people they notice. Help them by asking questions to get out more detail.
“The painting tells many stories. Each character may have a different perspective on this event. Not only are they seeing something different from each other because of where they are standing, but they are experiencing something different because of who they are. The wedding might have

a different meaning or feel different depending on who you asked. Each character probably has a different personal response to the event.”

Ask students to choose one character, and after looking carefully at that character in the painting, take some notes about what they think that character might be thinking and feeling at that time. (Point of View Worksheet)

Post-Museum Visit – Ask students to write a rough draft of a one-page description of the event from that character’s point of view. “Use the 1st person, and write it as though you were that person, and as though it were what that person was thinking at the time of the painting.”
 Option to introduce relevant content in Social Studies class: Slavery, plantations, Pre-Civil War in the South, including possible Southern Culture, family roles, standards, norms and beliefs, etc. After this information is presented, or after they read about it, ask them to see if they would like to revise their monologue. Give them the option of returning to the Museum to look at the painting again, or look at it on the CD-ROM. The final drafts could be read to the class while looking at the painting to see if the class can tell which character each student wrote about.

Reflection: “What were your clues in the narrative that let you know which character it was? Has your opinion about what the Main idea of the painting changed? Why or why not?”

Supportive Material: Point of View Worksheet

Documentation and Assessment Options: Keep copies of their notes, rough draft and final copy, to analyze whether they were able to refine the point of view of their character.

Other Works of Art in the Museum that can connect to this lesson: A similar process could be done with Tait’s *On Guard* allowing students to also take the point of view of the sheep or the dog. The Greek *Fragmentary jar, Herakles slaying the Hydra* has three characters, each with a different point of view.

Links to Other Curriculum:

See related lessons: “Point of View II: The Complex Truth of the Peloponnesian Wars,” and also “Hypothesis and Evidence.”

ELA: understanding character in fiction and drama, writing character descriptions and monologues, interpreting journals.

History: Slavery, Pre-Civil War Southern culture, plantations, etc.

Understanding that different players may have very different points of view about an event. A recent example is the new evidence about the Alamo from other perspectives. Students might also examine differing points of view or opinions about current events.

Greek history: See related lesson “Point of View II: The Complex Truth of the Peloponnesian Wars.”

Authors of the lesson: Debbie French and Anne Rhodes

Point of View Worksheet

Describe your character. Be precise. Include details.

What would they be seeing from where they are standing? What parts of the event would they not be able to see from where they are?

Take a few notes about what you think they might be thinking or feeling at that time.

From your character's point of view what is the main idea of the event shown in the painting?