

Grade 7 Playlist: Analyze How Various Authors Present the Same Topic Differently

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.9*:

- Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

Welcome

When different authors write about the same topic, it is not uncommon for them to have different perspectives on that topic. Writers convey their perspective on a topic by emphasizing certain ideas and evidence while de-emphasizing or ignoring other ideas and evidence. Paying close attention to what ideas and evidence an author includes in a text will help the reader better understand his or her perspective on the topic.

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- analyze how two authors write about the same topic from different perspectives.
- think critically about how these authors convey their perspectives through their choices about how to interpret and present evidence.

Review

Key Terms

- The **perspective**, or point of view, of the author is the way in which he or she sees an issue. It is the idea or opinion that he or she will attempt to convey to the reader.

Exploring the Standard

Each author brings his or her own perspective to their writing. This is especially the case when an author is writing about a controversial topic. Two texts about the same topic may be written from very different perspectives. When a reader encounters two different perspectives on the same topic, it is important that he or she understands the different perspectives and analyzes how each author has made choices in order to convey his or her perspective. Being able to understand and analyze texts with differing perspectives will help the reader gain a more informed and complete understanding of the topic.

A Closer Look: Understanding Different Perspectives on the Same Topic

When reading two texts about the same topic, it is important to identify the perspective of each author. How does he or she present the topic? To do this, first identify information that is similar in each text. What topic do these texts share? What points are similar in each text? Next, identify the differences in each text. What do the similarities and differences tell the reader about the viewpoint or perspective of each author? How does each author communicate their perspective? What ideas and evidence do they highlight? What do they leave out? Read the two passages below and identify the topic they share. Be prepared to answer questions about the similarities and differences between each passage.



Passage 1: This passage is taken from James Henry Hammond’s speech, “The ‘Mudsill’ Theory.” He gave this speech to the U.S. Senate in 1858. **Mudsill* is a building term. A mudsill is part of the foundation of a building.

¹In all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life. That is, a class requiring but a low order of intellect and but little skill. Its requisites are vigor, docility, fidelity. Such a class you must have, or you would not have that other class which leads progress, civilization, and refinement. It constitutes the very mud-sill of society and of political government; and you might as well attempt to build a house in the air, as to build either the one or the other, except on this mud-sill. Fortunately for the South, she found a race adapted to that purpose to her hand. A race inferior to her own, but eminently qualified in temper, in vigor, in docility, in capacity to stand the climate, to answer all her purposes [...]

²The Senator from New York said yesterday that the whole world had abolished slavery. Aye, the name, but not the thing; all the powers of the earth cannot abolish that. God only can do it when he repeals the fiat, “the poor ye always have with you;” for the man who lives by daily labor, and scarcely lives at that, and who has to put out his labor in the market, and take the best he can get for it; in short, your whole hireling class of manual laborers and “operatives,” as you call them, are essentially slaves. The difference between us is, that our slaves are hired for life and well compensated; there is no starvation, no begging, no want of employment among our people, and not too much employment either. Yours are hired by the day, not cared for, and scantily compensated, which may be proved in the most painful manner, at any hour in any street in any of your large towns. [...]. None of that race on the whole face of the globe can be compared with the slaves of the South. They are happy, content, unambitious, and utterly incapable, from intellectual weakness, ever to give us any trouble by their aspirations. Yours are white, of your own race; you are brothers of one blood. They are your equals in natural endowment of intellect, and they feel galled by their degradation. Our slaves do not vote. We give them no political power. Yours do vote, and, being the majority, they are the depositories of all your political power. If they knew the tremendous secret, that the ballot-box is stronger than “an army with banners,” and could combine, where would you be?

Read!

To read James Henry Hammond’s complete speech, visit:

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h3439t.html>

Passage 2: This passage is taken from Abraham Lincoln’s “Milwaukee Speech,” given to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in 1859.

¹The world is agreed that labor is the source from which human wants are mainly supplied. There is no dispute upon this point. From this point, however, men immediately diverge... By some it is assumed that... all laborers are necessarily either hired laborers, or slaves. They further assume that whoever is once a hired laborer, is fatally fixed in that condition for life; and thence again, that his condition is as bad as, or worse, than that of a slave. This is the “mud-sill” theory. But another class of reasoners hold the opinion that there is no such relation between capital and labor, as assumed; and that there is no such thing as a freeman being fatally fixed for life, on the condition of a hired laborer, that both these assumptions are false...



Teaching Notes: Analyze How Various Authors Present the Same Topic Differently

The goal of RI.7.9 is for students to think critically about how two authors convey different perspectives on the same topic. Students will identify key pieces of information and analyze how authors emphasize certain ideas and pieces of evidence in order to convey their perspective. The below information and resources pertain to how this playlist may be implemented in a classroom setting.

A Closer Look: Understanding Different Perspectives on the Same Topic

Discussion Starter: Allow students to answer these questions on their own. They will have an opportunity to share and modify their answers during the next activity.

- 1. What is the shared topic in these passages?** *Answer: These passages are both about the mudsill theory of society, which states that every society must be built on a laborer class.*
- 2. What are some similarities between the two passages?** *Answers may differ for this question. Encourage students to think not only about the information that is included in each passage but also about the way this information is presented. For example, the language indicates that both passages are meant to be persuasive. Because both speeches were made at official gatherings, they both have a formal tone. Neither includes statistical information or facts and both use rhetoric. Some other important similarities include: both make references to God in order to support their claims and both present their ideas in such a way as to suggest that there is no middle ground.*
- 3. What are some differences between the two passages?** *As with question 2, the answers here may differ. These questions are meant to give students the opportunity to pay close attention to the details of the passage. Students may notice that Hammond uses the words “our” and “your” – indicating that he assumes that at least some members of his audience do not agree with him. Lincoln, however, does not do this. While his speech can be understood as a rebuttal, he is not directly addressing his opponents. Students also should begin to list some of the differences in information. This question will help them prepare to do the next activity.*
- 4. What do the similarities and differences tell the reader about the perspective of each author? What does each author want the reader to understand about the topic?** *This question is meant to prompt students to think about each author’s purpose and to connect the author’s purpose to his writing choices. It may be helpful to ask students to revisit their answers to questions 2 and 3. Ask what each author is conveying through each of the choices he has made. Making a list of these choices and what they tell the reader about the author’s purpose and perspective may be a helpful way to help students make connections between the writing choices an author makes and the message they wish to convey.*
- 5. How does each author communicate his perspective? What ideas and evidence do they highlight? What do they leave out?** *This is an extension of the question above. Ask students to reflect on the shared topic and think about the different perspectives each author has on this topic. Encourage them to make connections between perspective and the author choices they listed as part of question 4.*

