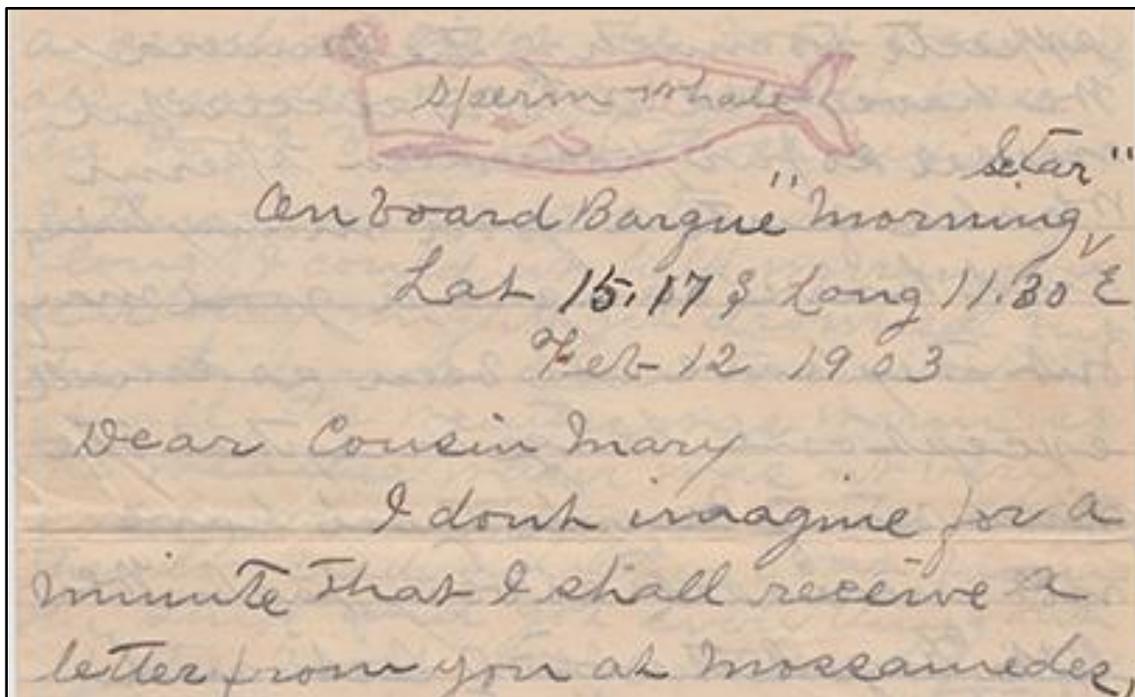


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Perspective and Context: Beyond the Singular (Hi)Story



Millie Jenkins Letter © Mystic Seaport, VFM 2032

Author: Kim Herzog, Staples High School, Westport, CT

Subject: Language Arts, English/Literature, History/Social Studies, General Interest

Grade Levels: 9-12

Timeframe: 2-3 days

Introduction: There is a danger of students receiving only one version of historical events; perspective of the storyteller can easily change the story a listener receives of the past. For students to determine the implications of perspective, they will read and analyze primary documents from the late 19th century from a variety of individuals involved with maritime communities of New England. Through comparative analysis, students will be able to understand the effects of perspective on storytelling, especially historic events.

Content Standards:

- CCR Anchor Standard for Reading 6
 - Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- CCR Anchor Standard for Reading 9
 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Compelling Question: How does perspective shape a story?

Supporting Questions:

- What is the effect of context on perspective when telling the stories of historical events?
- How can the synthesis of alternative perspectives create a more comprehensive understanding of an event?

Objectives for Inquiry: Students will...

- Be able to determine the author's intent
- Be able to recognize bias, given author's context and perspective
- Be able to synthesize a variety of perspectives from the same time to create a more comprehensive understanding of historic events
- Be able to determine what additional perspectives are needed to write the full story of this moment in history.

Materials/Resources needed for students:

Source #1: [Maud Maxon's Letter](#) (1870); VFM 179

Source #2: [George H. Newtown Advertisement](#) (1880); Coll. 197

Source #3: [S. Millie Jenkins's Letter](#) (1903); VFM 2032

Source #4: [Laura Jernegan's Journal](#) (1870s; text and pictures)

Source #5: [Sea Fever by John Masefield](#) (about 1895)

Inquiry Activity (the basis of the lesson that drives students toward the compelling question):

Students will be split into five groups. Each group will be tasked with analyzing their artifact, determining elements of the author’s context:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Social/cultural landscape
- Community connections/family

Then, students will collaborate to answer the following:

- What is the author’s intent?
- How does the author’s context affect his/her perspective?
- What might be missing from the story of this artifact, given the context and perspective?

Communicating Conclusions/Taking Informed Action

Communication/Action #1

Students will be regrouped through a jigsaw activity.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will collaborate and share their ideas regarding their previous group’s artifact, becoming the artifact expert for their group. After all student experts have shared the intent and context of the author, they will work together to create a more complete story of this moment in time.

Communication/Action #2

Students will synthesize the author intents of their artifacts to create a claim regarding this moment in history. Using these artifacts, they will curate an exhibit, using this claim as their guide.

ASSESSMENT:

Curate your exhibit of artifacts. Feel free to add more artifacts to your exhibit’s perspectives, using the [Mystic Seaport Student Resource website](#) and [Mystic Seaport Collections & Research Center website](#). Once your group has curated your exhibit, title it and present it to the rest of class. Present an argument for the message of your group’s curated exhibit. As students share their exhibits, groups will assess each other using the “Claim Checklist,” adding feedback accordingly. This is the same rubric the teacher will be using for assessment (See “Claim Checklist”).

ASSESSMENT: Reflection

As other groups share, synthesize your group’s perspective with those of the other groups in class:

- What similarities do you notice? What differences? What do these similarities and differences reveal?
- How does perspective affect the telling of a story?

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Source Materials

Websites:

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- [Mystic Seaport Collections & Research Center website](#)
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- [S. Millie Jenkins's Letter](#)
- [Laura Jernegan's Journal](#)
- [Sea Fever by John Masefield](#)

Books/Articles:

- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Mark Twain
- *Farewell to Arms*; Ernest Hemingway