

## PERSPECTIVES

### Issues:

- We all have our own perspective, which affects the judgements and decisions we make in life. What factors influence our perspective? What is it like to see things from someone else's perspective? How can we go about changing the way in which we see things? Are all perspectives of equal value?

### Learning Objectives:

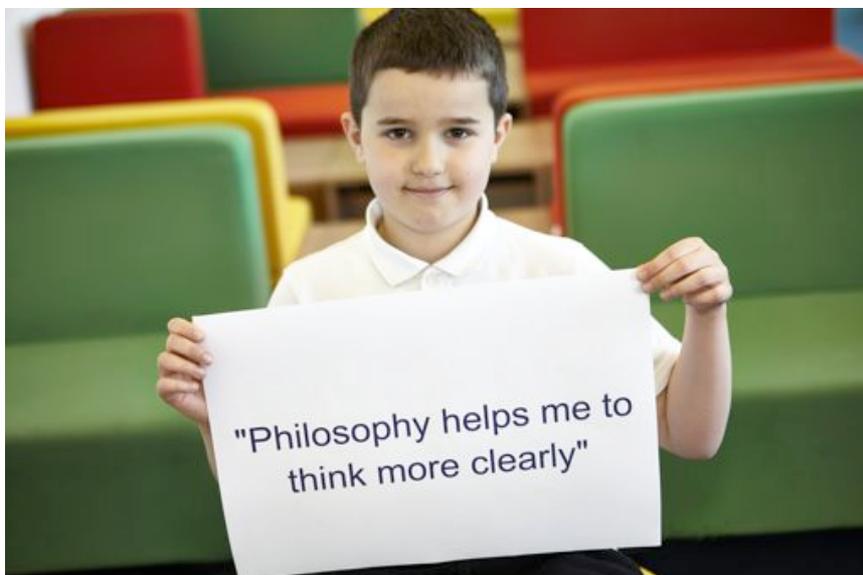
- Children will recognize and be able to give examples of different perspectives on the same object or event.
- Children will be able to examine their viewpoint and go some way towards empathizing with others by trying to see things from their perspective.

### Higher level Objectives:

- Children will be able to examine and question some of the factors (e.g. age, gender, cultural background, home experiences) that comprise their perspective.
- Children will understand that their actions may be interpreted by others in ways they did not intend.

### Contents:

- Lesson plan
- Notes and Suggestions
- Resources     Story: *The View from the Zoo*.



## Lesson Plan

Activity	Activity Content	Aim
Introduction Story 5 mins	<p>Read to the class <i>The View from the Zoo</i>. Explain that the story is from three perspectives (the child, Jackie, a monkey and Jackie's Mum). There is a copy of the story in the workbook in case you want the children to read along.</p> <p>Clarify any comprehension issues.</p>	Understanding what a perspective is
Small group imaginative exercise and discussion  5-10 mins	<p>Ask the groups to discuss the story from the three different perspectives, putting themselves into the shoes of each character in turn. Encourage empathy with the characters by asking groups to use the formulation "I think..." "I feel..." speaking from the perspective of the character concerned.</p> <p>Discuss and try to agree which of the perspectives is the most accurate or correct one. Groups may elect a scribe to note down their thoughts.</p>	Empathising with alternative points of view
Feedback and open discussion  10-20 mins	<p>The group scribe or an elected speaker for each group should be invited to report back to the whole class on their groups' decisions, reasoning and any disagreements.</p> <p>When all groups have reported back, open a discussion exploring the factors that make the perspective of each character different. This may include facts about their species, age and environmental factors, etc. which impact on both their feelings and expectations.</p> <p>Move the discussion on to consider which perspective is the most accurate. It is often helpful to introduce other perspectives at this point, such as that of a passerby, the zoo keeper, or even the reader. Discuss which, if any, of these might be the more objective viewpoint.</p> <p>End the discussion by raising the question of how we might behave differently in a particular situation when we consider how it might be viewed or understood from another perspective.</p>	Distinguishing the factors that comprise a perspective  Evaluating different perspectives
Think - Pair - Share 5 mins	<p>Think of a situation or event that happened to you in the past couple of days. Try to re-tell what happened from the viewpoint of someone else who was there. Again here, encourage the use of empathy by using the personal perspective formulation "I think.." "I feel..." putting oneself into the other person's shoes.</p> <p>A number of teachers have found it valuable to replace or extend this exercise using a scene from the current class literacy reader.</p> <p>Consider how viewing what happened from another perspective can make you see the whole situation differently.</p>	Reflecting and re-evaluating
Feedback and open discussion  5-10 mins	<p>Invite individuals to share what they have learned from thinking about a situation from another person's perspective.</p> <p>Ask the class to take the time in the coming week to try and think about what other people are thinking and feeling in different situations. They might experiment with trying to put themselves in the shoes of a teacher or parent when they are in trouble, or of a friend or sibling when they are having a disagreement.</p>	Sharing learning  Planning and setting goals

Notes and Suggestions

There are a number of extended activities that can be used to develop the following:

- the ability to empathise,
- weighing up the relative value and accuracy of conflicting points of view,
- understanding the kinds of factors that comprise different perspectives.

One of the most straightforward exercises is to use a familiar story or an article from the news and to re-tell this from a range of perspectives, each of which can be analysed for its key factors.

Key Concepts:

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that

“Facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations.” (*Will to Power*, Section 481)

Perspectivism:

Different accounts of the same thing or event are determined in large part by the specific conditions (the place, time, disciplinary orientation, identity, etc.) of the observers. For example, the same event (e.g. the French Revolution) may be interpreted very differently by people from different countries, social classes, political ideologies, and at different points in history. Equally, the same thing (e.g. an apple) may be described differently from the perspective of an artist, scientist, farmer and nutritionist.

Some philosophers argue that whilst there are different perspectives or points of view, insofar as they are accounts of the same event, there remains only one definitive and true account of the situation, i.e. ‘the facts’.

Others disagree, claiming that facts do not exist in themselves but can only be ascertained (if at all) by bringing together many differing viewpoints. The latter group do not, however, agree as to which and how many perspectives should be taken into consideration and the relative value of each.

Perspectivism is often confused with relativism. Both have their origins in the writings of the Ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras who declared that, "Man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not." Relativism takes a more extreme view than perspectivism, arguing that there is no ‘truth’ independent of different perspectives (i.e. the truth is ‘relative’). Perspectivism, on the other hand, does not deny that there may be a single underlying truth, but claims that the same fact is interpreted differently by different individuals and different cultures. One of the most influential investigations of perspectivism/relativism is found in Plato's *Theaetetus* - here Socrates tries to show the incoherence of Protagoras' position

Further Reading:

- <http://www.iep.utm.edu/cog-rel/>
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Relativism (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism>)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Friedrich Nietzsche (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche>)
- Rick Roderick on Nietzsche on Truth & Lies (<http://rickroderick.org/202-nietzsche-on-truth-and-lie-1991>)
- Plato *Theaetetus* 151d-183c

## The View From The Zoo

### First View.

It was finally Saturday! I was so excited! I was finally going to the zoo! I'd been waiting for this day for what seems like years now.



"Jackie, have you got your wellies on?"

"Yes Mum!" I ran as fast as I could along the pavement jumping in every puddle I could find even though I know Mum doesn't like it!

The coach was a few minutes late, but it didn't matter, we were going to the zoo! The coach journey seemed to last forever but we finally made it!

Mum wanted to look at all the boring animals, you know, farmyard stuff. I wanted to see the monkeys! How much fun they are!

I ran over to the monkey cage and just looked on in admiration at them!

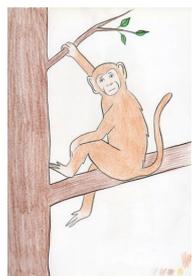
I went right up to the edge of the wire and one monkey came over! He swung across a tree to get to me. "Hello monkey!" The monkey looked so happy to see me and even banged on the side of the cage! So cute!

Some time after playing with the monkey there was a loud voice "JACKIE!" "How dare you run off like that!". I turned red with embarrassment and my new monkey friend ran off. Mum looked angry and she was crying.

I only wanted to see the monkeys.

We went back on the coach home straight away and didn't speak to one another all the way home. It was still raining. What a bad day.

### Second View



It's bad enough being locked up in here when it's sunny, it's even worse when the rain pours down. The only exercise we get to do is swinging across a couple of bare branches over and over again. It gets really boring.

Then there are those ugly humans and their ugly children who come and point at us. Why are they so rude? And why haven't they got any fur?

There's this kid today who's been staring in my cage for ages, looking at me like we're best friends or something! Now the kid's mother comes over waving her arms and shouting.

What a noise! And they call us animals!

### Third View



Jackie had been waiting for this day for a long time now, and so had I. I hadn't been to a zoo since I was a young girl.

Bless Jackie jumping in all the puddles. I'm so glad I bought those wellies!

We finally got to the place and Jackie was so excited, although that changed when I explained we had to see all the animals in the order of where they are on the zoo map. I found the toilet near where they keep the cows and pigs. Thank goodness, I don't like to go on coaches.

"Now Jackie, you promise to wait on this bench. I'll only be a couple of minutes"

"Yes Mum".

Less than two minutes later I left the toilet and Jackie wasn't on the bench.

"Jackie! JACKIE!" I looked to where the snakes were, and no Jackie.

I went over to where the lions were, but no Jackie.

Next the skunks, no Jackie.

By now I was getting really worried.

What about the pink flamingoes? Still no Jackie.

Finally I arrive at the monkeys, "Jackie!", I was crying with happiness, "Why did you run away like that? I thought I wouldn't see you again, Jackie, my dear Jackie".

I was so relieved, but Jackie was quiet for the rest of the day, even though we had our favourite pizza for tea. At least my child is still safe and sound! I have that to be thankful for!



By Brian Cooper

