

How to See: Perspective, Bias & Point of View

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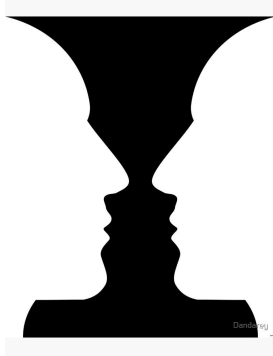
[@cinehead](#)



One of the most important skills in life is to be able to understand other people, events, and actions for what they truly are. But how can we do that if we haven't walked in their shoes, or when someone's actions seem so contrary to what we believe to be true or right?

1. What do you see?

Look at this image and write down what you see.



Now look at this image and write down what you see.



Compare your answer to other students in class.

- Did you see the same thing? Why or why not?
- Does your understanding of the image change once you discuss this with your classmates?

2. How do we make sense of an action or event?

Take a look at [this image from the New York Times](#) and answer these questions:

- What's going on in this photo?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

Then read the full description of the image at the bottom of the web page and respond to these questions:

- How has this new information changed the way you think about this image and the people in the shot?
- How does this image make the topic come to life, or provide you with a new perspective about the topic?

3. Perspective and preconceived ideas.

Watch this video and reflect on the questions below.

[The Lab: Decoy](#) (Canon)

- How did these professional photographers' work differ based on what they believed about their subject?
- What surprised you in this video?
- Has anything like this happened to you in your life? Have your expectations of a person ever been wrong? How did you find out that you were wrong about them, and what happened as a result?

4. Institutional bias

The **tools** we use to understand other people or events can limit our **vantage point**--how we perceive people and events, and also the type of information we can get about them. The **ways** we see people limits our ability to see the complete picture (literally and figuratively).

Read [this article in the New York Times](#) and answer the reflection questions below.

In this article, Sarah Lewis talks about how camera film is chemically designed to favor white skin tones. Consider:

- What other tools for understanding people and events do you use on a regular basis (friends, parents, teachers, social media, websites, personal experience, etc)?

- What other ways of ‘recording’ or ‘measuring’ people do we have in school? Who designed those ways of measuring? How might these techniques favor some groups of students over others?

5. Exercise

Individually, brainstorm ideas/responses for the following questions, then share them with the class:

- Think: How do I usually deal with new information that might make me uncomfortable, especially if it contradicts what I currently believe to be true?
- How can we change our vantage point to see the world from different angles (perspectives)?
- What are some things I can do to get reliable information from different perspectives other than my own?

6. Project: Oral history podcast

Find someone you don’t know very well, or haven’t spoken with before. Ideally, you’ll want to work on this project with someone who has a different vantage point than you, such as someone of a different race, gender, geographic region, income level, etc.

Develop a few questions as conversation starters. Some examples include:

- Tell me about a time when you feel someone misjudged you or your intentions. What happened? How did that make you feel?
- Tell me about a time when **you** misjudged someone else because you might have had a preconceived idea about what they were like or what their intentions were. What happened?
- What is something about yourself that no one knows, but you wish they did?

Required questions:

- What is your name? Can you spell it for me?

Record a conversation with them using these questions.

- If you’re face to face, use the Voice Memos app on your iPhone
- If you’re conducting the interview remotely, use [Zoom](#) to record an audio track.

Option to produce this recording in a podcast format and share.

See this free resource to [learn more about producing a podcast](#).

Reflect on your conversation.

- What did you learn about this person that you didn’t know before?
- How comfortable were you discussing these topics? Why do you think you felt that way?
- Do you feel they told you everything, or did they hold anything back? Why?
- Has this interview process changed the way you think about other people? Why or why not?

Additional follow up discussion questions/Podcast project

Our vantage point can also be affected by who we are, where we come from, and what our life experiences have been. Consider these questions that affect what we know about other people and events:

- Talk about a time when you were wrong about something or someone. How did it feel when you found out you were wrong? Why?
- What is **your** vantage point? (age, gender, race, income level, geographical location, family beliefs, religion, etc). What are some ways you think these factors might affect who you meet and work with? How might it affect the priorities or goals you set for yourself?
- What information do you have access to that helps you understand other people or events in the world? How can you be sure that information is accurate? How is that access to information different for people with other vantage points?
- Do you ever feel pressure from friends, family, teachers--or even yourself-- to stick with what you know, even if you have new information? Why?