

POINT OF VIEW

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Look! A cute bird! What does everyone think? What's the cat think? Look at how he's glaring. And this worm? What's the worm think? Look, he's crawling away. All these animals see the bird differently. The cat wants to eat it. The worm wants to escape it. When it comes to the bird, each of these animals have a different point of view.

Authors also have a point of view. In this video, we will learn how to identify the author's point of view. An author's **point of view** consists of his or her opinions and theories about the subject matter—basically, how they think and feel about the subject. It's important to learn how to identify point of view, because an author's perspective influences how they present different subject matter. It can determine how accurate and objective the author's presentation is. Another word for point of view, by the way, is **bias**.

Here are examples of author bias:

- **AUTHOR 1:** Virtual reality can help patients overcome phobias.
- **AUTHOR 2:** Virtual reality leads to dissociation from reality.

In these examples, it's clear how each author feels about virtual reality, or VR. In the first example, the author seems to favor VR, whereas in the second example, the author is criticizing VR's effect on the mind. Because of each author's point of view, or bias, the first author might present more facts and opinions that favor VR, where the other author might present more negative facts and opinions. In other words, bias affects presentation.

To reveal an author's point of view, ask the following questions:

- **What is the author's opinion?**
In other words, what are his or her thoughts and theories about the subject?
- **What are the author's credentials?**
Credentials include things like education, background, and jobs or positions the person holds.

- **What does the author have to gain?**
Money? Recognition? Support for his or her cause?
- **Does the author use facts or opinions?**
In other words, is he or she using information that can be proven true through things like studies or scientific research? Or are they stating unsupported thoughts?
- **Are the facts selected and slanted toward the author's bias?**
In other words, does the author use only facts that support their point of view while ignoring facts that don't support it?

Ask those questions while reading the following example.

[A]t just the time that the Internet is reminding us about the extraordinary value of freedom, the Internet is being changed to take that freedom away. Just as we are beginning to see the power that free resources produce, changes in the architecture of the Internet—both legal and technical—are sapping the Internet of this power. Fueled by a bias in favor of control, pushed by those whose financial interests favor control, our social and political institutions are ratifying changes in the Internet that will reestablish control and, in turn, reduce innovation on the Internet and in society generally.

-*The Future of ideas*
CC BY-NC Lawrence Lessig

So first, what is the author's opinion? Well, he seems to think regulating the internet is bad. We can highlight clues in his writing to prove this. Second, does the author use facts or opinions? We have yet to learn strategies to distinguish fact and opinion, but for now I will tell you the author is using primarily opinion. He isn't giving us any direct facts we can verify yet, but I assume the facts he does give later in his book will be selected and slanted toward his bias—mostly, he'll give the facts that support his point of view.

Next we should ask, what are the author's credentials? Well, we can see that the author, Lawrence Lessig, is well-educated and a professor. He is also the founder of the Creative Commons and the Stanford Center for Internet and Society; these are both related to the concept that ideas, resources, and the internet should be open and free of restrictive laws.

Finally we should ask, what does the author stand to gain for writing his book? Primarily, I would say Lessig stands to gain followers to his cause, more voices against internet regulation. He stands to win the debate over the control of the internet.

After answering these questions, if we put all our answers together it's clear to see the author's perspective: he believes that regulating the internet will hobble innovation. Again, point of view, or bias, affects presentation. The next time you're reading, be sure to ask questions that help you identify point of view.

So, do you remember this cute little bird? All the other animals saw the bird from different points of view, didn't they? What about this male bird? Look at that face. What's on his mind? Ah, gur. Better check his credentials, gur.

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