

Name: _____ Date: _____

Character Perspectives

Objectives: By completing this worksheet, you will be able to evaluate the development of character perspectives, including conflicting perspectives.

Understanding Character Perspectives

Perspective means a **particular attitude toward** or a **way of regarding something**. **Perspective** is **not** to be confused with point of view—the viewpoint of the narrator, such as first or third person point of view.

When developing a character's attitude toward something or someone in a text, authors use elements such as **setting** (where and when the story takes place) and **conflict** (issues or problems that arise within a character or among characters in a story).

To understand character perspectives, it is important to consider

- how a character fits into the world around them.
- how a character is received and viewed by others around them.
- the identities of a character (gender, religion, culture, age, etc.).
- the goals or desires a character is working toward.
- what motivates a character to interact with others, accomplish goals, or create or resolve problems.

All of these can be described by three broad terms: **feelings, actions, motivation**.

Please note that there can be multiple perspectives throughout a text. These multiple perspectives can be conflicting.

Characters can also change their perspectives as a story progresses.

Next, you will read an excerpt from *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, narrated by the character Nelly.

Study the following excerpt:

Mr. Hindley came home to the funeral; and—a thing that amazed us, and set the neighbours gossiping right and left—he brought a wife with him. **What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us:** probably, she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his father.

She was not one that would have disturbed the house much on her own account. Every object she saw, the moment she crossed the threshold, appeared to delight her; and every circumstance that took place about her: except the preparing for the burial, and the presence of the mourners. **I thought she was half silly, from her behaviour** while that went on: she ran into her chamber, and made me come with her, though I should have been dressing the children: and there she sat shivering and clasping her hands, and asking repeatedly—‘Are they gone yet?’ Then she began describing with hysterical emotion the effect it produced on her to see black; and started, and trembled, and, at last, fell a-weeping—**and when I asked what was the matter, answered, she didn’t know; but she felt so afraid of dying!** I imagined her as little likely to die as myself. **She was rather thin, but young, and fresh-complexioned, and her eyes sparkled as bright as diamonds.** I did remark, to be sure, that mounting the stairs made her breathe very quick; that the least sudden noise set her all in a quiver, and that **she coughed troublesomely sometimes:** but I knew nothing of what these symptoms portended, and had no impulse to sympathise with her. **We don’t in general take to foreigners here, Mr. Lockwood, unless they take to us first.**

Explanation: In this excerpt, the reader gets insight into Nelly’s attitude, or perspective, toward Mr. Hindley’s wife. Pay attention to the highlighted text. These details highlight Nelly’s **feelings, actions, and motivation.**

Nelly does not care for Mr. Hindley’s wife. Even after noticing she has a cough that seems serious, Nelly notes that she does not sympathize with her. Nelly watches the wife’s mannerisms closely—she is excited to be in the house, she is silly, and she’s afraid of dying. Finally, Nelly dissociates herself from Mr. Hindley’s wife, informing Mr. Lockwood, “we don’t in general take to foreigners here.”

Activity 1

Instructions: In this activity, you will read another excerpt from *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, narrated by Nelly. As you read, notice her **feelings, actions, and motivation**. Also notice how she describes the **feelings, actions, and motivation** of Hindley Earnshaw. As you read and consider the highlighted supporting evidence, think about how Nelly's and Hindley Earnshaw's attitudes, or perspectives, toward Heathcliff and Catherine (Cathy) differ.

Heathcliff bore his degradation pretty well at first, because Cathy taught him what she learnt, and worked or played with him in the fields. They both promised fair to grow up as rude as savages; the young master being entirely negligent how they behaved, and what they did, so they kept clear of him. He would not even have seen after their going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves; and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper. But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, and I not daring to speak a syllable, for fear of losing the small power I still retained over the unfriended creatures. One Sunday evening, it chanced that they were banished from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind; and when I went to call them to supper, I could discover them nowhere. We searched the house, above and below, and the yard and stables; they were invisible: and, at last, Hindley in a passion told us to bolt the doors, and swore nobody should let them in that night. The household went to bed; and I, too anxious to lie down, opened my lattice and put my head out to hearken, though it rained: determined to admit them in spite of the prohibition, should they return. In a while, I distinguished steps coming up the road, and the light of a lantern glimmered through the gate. I threw a shawl over my head and ran to prevent them from waking Mr. Earnshaw by knocking. There was Heathcliff, by himself: it gave me a start to see him alone.

Complete the table to compare how Nelly's and Hindley Earnshaw's attitudes, or perspectives, toward Heathcliff and Catherine differ.

Character	Text Evidence	Feelings	Actions	Motivation
Hindley Earnshaw				
Nelly				

Describe Hindley Earnshaw's perspective or attitude toward Heathcliff, and then describe Nelly's perspective toward Heathcliff. How do their perspectives conflict?