


Lesson 11 Part 1: Introduction

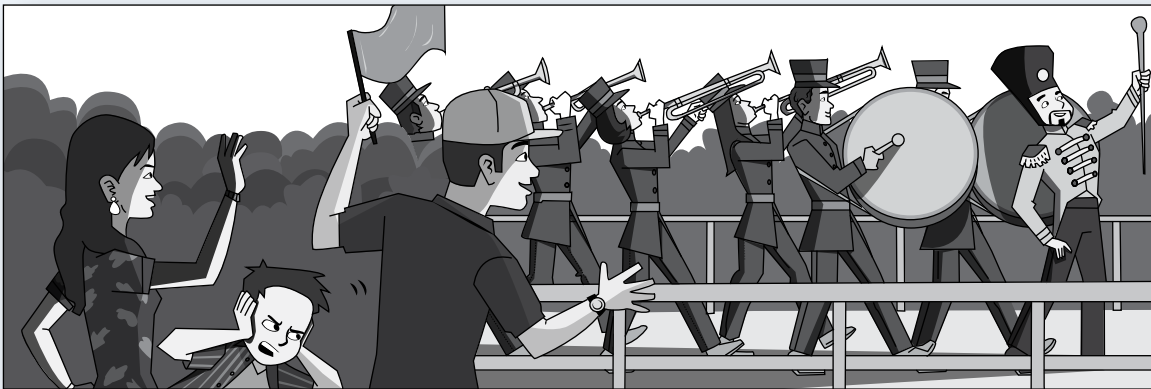
Determining Point of View

 **MS CCRS RI.7.6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

Theme: *Catastrophes*

Look at a photo or a picture of an event, and you can usually figure out the feelings and attitudes of the people involved. Actions, body language, and other clues give away each person's **point of view** about what's happening.

Can you figure out the feelings of the people watching the parade in the picture below? Circle clues that help you figure out their points of view.



Read the chart below, which provides details that suggest different points of view about the parade scene.

Topic	Evidence	Positive (+) or Negative (-) Attitude	Point of View
Parade	The woman is smiling. The man in the baseball cap is waving a flag.	+	The man and woman are excited and happy to be watching the parade.
	The child is frowning and holding his ears.	-	The child dislikes the noise from the parade.

When you're reading a book or magazine, you must use different clues to help you determine the author's point of view. Notice the content and language choices; they'll help you infer an author's position on a topic. Also look for clues that reflect an author's **purpose**, or main reason for writing, and the tone being adopted. Analyze facts an author includes and leaves out, the opinions expressed, and word choices. All of these details help reveal the author's point of view—where he or she stands—on a particular topic.



Read the following scientific account about the eruption of Mount St. Helens.

Genre: Scientific Account

Rising from the Ashes *by Lee McLoughlin*

It was a disaster, the stuff of nightmares, and yet it began in broad daylight. On the morning of Sunday May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted with a horrendous blast that blew 1,300 feet off the top of the mountain. Within minutes, an ash cloud shot 15 miles into the sky. People up to 200 miles away could hear the roar of the volcano. And people as far away as Spokane, Washington, 350 miles from the mountain, watched in amazement as ash from the black sky turned their world a powdery grey.

That morning, Craig Reddinger of Richmond, Washington, was sunbathing with his wife. Reddinger witnessed the ash cloud blot out all daylight and, terrified, thought it was the end of the world. To some it was. The terrible blast knocked down nearly 150 square miles of forest, felling trees like matchsticks. The dreadful eruption lasted 9 hours, but Mt. St. Helens and the surrounding wilderness were forever changed within moments.

(continued)

Explore how to answer this question: “What is the author’s point of view about the eruption?”

Point of view is what authors think, feel, or believe about a topic based on their interests and values. Complete the chart below to help you determine the author’s point of view.

Topic	Evidence from the Text	Positive (+) or Negative (-) Attitude	Author’s Point of View
Eruption of Mount St. Helens	It was a disaster, the stuff of nightmares	–	
	a horrendous blast		

With a partner, take turns rereading the first two paragraphs of the account. Identify all of the negative words and phrases used to describe the eruption of Mount St. Helens.



Close Reading

Think about the author's point of view on page 104. Then **circle** the phrase that signals a shift in attitude in this part of the account. Think about why the author may have made this kind of shift.

Hint

The different attitudes expressed in the account support the author's purpose for writing. Which answer choice best explains why the author presents different points of view?

Continue reading the account about Mount St. Helens. Then answer the question that follows.

(continued from page 104)

From a scientific perspective, however, the eruption was an exciting event. Ecologist Charlie Crisafulli points out that the volcanic devastation at Mount St. Helens provides insight into the reawakening of ecosystems. "It's the most thoroughly studied large-forest disturbance in the world," claims Crisafulli.

The blast zone, once barren and uninhabitable, is gradually becoming fertile ground for growing numbers of plant and animal life. Like the mythical phoenix, the blast zone is rising from the ashes, reborn and very much alive. The spectacular event shocked and amazed many. Nature's ability to heal herself, however, is even more awe-inspiring.

Circle the correct answer.

Which sentence most accurately describes the author's purpose for writing this account?

- A** The author's purpose is to persuade readers to agree that the Mount St. Helens eruption was a horrible disaster.
- B** The author's purpose is to tell the frightening yet exciting story of the Mount St. Helens eruption.
- C** The author's purpose is to show readers that even this terrifying natural disaster has had some benefits.
- D** The author's purpose is to convince readers to research the Mount St. Helens eruption.



Show Your Thinking

Using text evidence, explain the author's point of view about the Mount St. Helens eruption.



With a partner, discuss the different viewpoints in the account and explain which view is strongest.



Read the editorial below about the Gulf Oil Spill. Then answer the questions that follow.

Genre: Editorial



One way to identify an author's point of view is to find words or phrases in the text that communicate a strong opinion or feeling. I will look for describing words that give me clues about the author's opinions.

Close Reading

Underline sentences in paragraphs 2 and 3 that present the point of view of the BP executives. Think about why the author might have included those details.

What position does the author take on BP and the oil spill? **Circle** words and phrases in the first and fourth paragraphs that express the author's viewpoint.

The BP Oil Spill *by Kate Jackson*

- 1 In April of 2010, a British Petroleum oil rig exploded. The blast caused a horrific oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Known to many as the “Disaster in the Gulf,” this tragic event killed not only workers, but innocent wildlife as well. It also assaulted the environment. BP knew an event like this was possible, but the reckless company refused to take the threat seriously.
- 2 Months before the explosion, BP’s David Rainey had assured members of the U.S. Senate that deep-water oil drilling was safe. Rainey had also remarked that drilling had “been going on for the last 50 years . . . in a way that is both safe and protective of the environment.”
- 3 The spill leaked millions of barrels of oil into the ocean. It then took five months for the company to seal the underwater well properly. Doug Suttles, a BP executive, claimed that the company worked “around the clock to stop the flow of oil, protect the shore, clean up the damage, and restore the Gulf Coast. We also want to ensure that a tragedy like this never happens again.”
- 4 Those five months took a terrible toll on beaches, animals, and the fishing industry. Although the words of Suttles sounded noble, BP did not act quickly or thoughtfully to control the disaster. Experts also feel that an ounce of prevention could have avoided the disastrous spill altogether. Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that the oil industry was aware of drilling dangers but carelessly dismissed them.
- 5 Many reports had also warned of the difficulty of capping a deep water spill. BP ignored these warnings and continued to drill as planned. Robert Bea, an expert in offshore engineering, called BP’s practices a “recipe for disaster,” but BP willfully refused to listen. At least we know they’re listening now.



Hints

How does the author describe BP? Look for words that describe the company's actions.

Look for quotes in the text that describe the BP executives' position on deep-water drilling. How well do their statements reflect what actually happened?

Look back at the words and phrases you circled in the editorial that show the author's strong feelings and beliefs.

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which sentence most accurately summarizes the author's point of view in the editorial?
 - A The explosion leaked millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf Coast, but BP responded quickly and responsibly.
 - B The oil spill disaster was a result of BP's thoughtless actions and its refusal to listen to experts.
 - C The rig explosion is a tragedy, but events like this are a problem that the oil industry can learn how to control.
 - D BP has been drilling safely in the Gulf of Mexico for over fifty years, and one accident should not be held against the company.
- 2 Why does the author of the editorial include statements made by the BP oil executives?
 - A to show the contrast between the evidence and the company's official position
 - B to emphasize that the oil company executives are truthful but unimaginative
 - C to explain why BP's actions were understandable
 - D to defend the company's actions both before and after the deep water oil spill
- 3 Think about the author's attitude toward the oil spill. Then explain the author's purpose, or reason for writing this editorial. Use at least two details from the text to support your answer.



Read the scientific article. Then answer the questions that follow.

from “A Dire Shortage of Water”

by Emily Sohn, Science News for Kids

Causes

- 1 Scientists are just beginning to understand the conditions that lead to droughts. They’re finding that small changes in the flow of wind and water can have a huge effect on climate around the globe.
- 2 Strangely enough, much of the story depends on the temperature of water in the oceans.
- 3 Normally, winds blow west across the tropical Pacific Ocean, away from Central and South America. As wind-driven warm water moves over the ocean, it piles up in Indonesia and elsewhere in the western Pacific. Warm air rises offshore, causing rain to fall. Meanwhile, cold water comes up from the bottom off the coast of South America. This flow allows a richness of life to flourish near the coast, and it helps maintain predictable weather patterns from season to season.
- 4 Every 5 to 10 years or so, though, the wind dies down. As a result, the surface of the Pacific Ocean gets warmer. Rainfall then tends to fall further to the east. Such a change in weather causes, among other things, floods in Peru and droughts in Australia and Indonesia. This new weather pattern is known as El Niño.
- 5 An opposite cascade of events happens during the weather pattern called La Niña, when Pacific surface temperatures cool down. Both El Niño and La Niña, when they happen, usually last for 2 to 4 years.
- 6 The current drought in the West could last much longer than that. In fact, historical records show that droughts typically go on for 10 to 50 years.
- 7 And it’s not just El Niño and La Niña at work. In the last few years, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have begun to link precipitation on the Colorado Plateau to temperature shifts both in the Pacific Ocean and in the Atlantic Ocean.

Atlantic Effects

- 8 A recent statistical study by USGS researchers found that less moisture falls on the United States when surface temperatures in the North Atlantic are warmer than normal. These conditions prevailed during a number of droughts over the past century.
- 9 The study also found a correlation between warm water in the central North Pacific and drought in the southwestern and northern plains of the United States. When water is warm in both the North Atlantic and the North Pacific at the same time, conditions can get mighty dry in the American West.
- 10 This explains at least a part of what’s going on right now in the Colorado River Basin, geologist John Dohrenwend says.
- 11 Records show that the basin’s annual flow volume has been dropping for more than a century. But the drought has grown much worse since the year 2000. Compared to measurements taken in 1922, water flow has dropped to one-third of its original rate.

**People Problems**

12 Oceans can't take all of the blame for the impact of today's drought, Dohrenwend says.

13 Although ocean temperatures may be an important factor in starting a drought, people are making the problem of water shortages much worse. Dohrenwend notes that cities are growing faster in the southwest than anywhere else in the country. And people keep pouring in.

14 "Many of these people are retired persons who lived in the northeast or northwest and want to get out of the cold," Dohrenwend says. It's hard for them to adjust to using less water than they're used to, he adds, and they don't want to let go of their golf courses, green lawns, or long showers.

15 "Over time, more and more water has to be allocated to people moving in and less goes to everything else," Dohrenwend says.

16 Ironically, as the drought continues, the cycle feeds on itself. Ranchers go out of business because they don't have enough water to grow alfalfa for their cattle. Then developers arrive and build more homes. As more people move in, the demand for water continues to grow—even as the supply of water rapidly dwindles.

How Long?

17 It's impossible to know how long this drought will last, and some scientists are beginning to fear the worst.

1

How does the content of the passage reflect the author's point of view?

- A** It shows that the author approves of ongoing scientific research.
- B** It provides facts and statistics showing that the problem of water shortages is growing.
- C** It shows that the author feels hopeless about the fate of our planet.
- D** It shows that the author dislikes the fact that cities are growing faster in the southwest than elsewhere.



2

This question has two parts. Answer Part A, and then answer Part B.

Part A

Which sentence **best** describes the author's point of view in this article?

- A** Droughts occur because of a combination of human and natural factors.
- B** Droughts can be avoided if people stop moving to southwest cities.
- C** The current drought will last 2 to 4 years at the most.
- D** Scientists are overly pessimistic about how long the current drought will last.

Part B

Which sentence from the text **best** supports the answer in Part A?

- A** "Both El Niño and La Niña, when they happen, usually last for 2 to 4 years."
- B** "Although ocean temperatures may be an important factor in starting a drought, people are making the problem of water shortages much worse."
- C** "As more people move in, the demand for water continues to grow—even as the supply of water rapidly dwindles."
- D** "It's impossible to know how long this drought will last, and some scientists are beginning to fear the worst."

3

In your own words, describe the author's point of view about the water shortage and tell how you determined it. Use at least **two** details from the article to support your answer.



Self Check

Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 86.