Tools for Thought

targeted ✔
adaptable ●

Primary ●
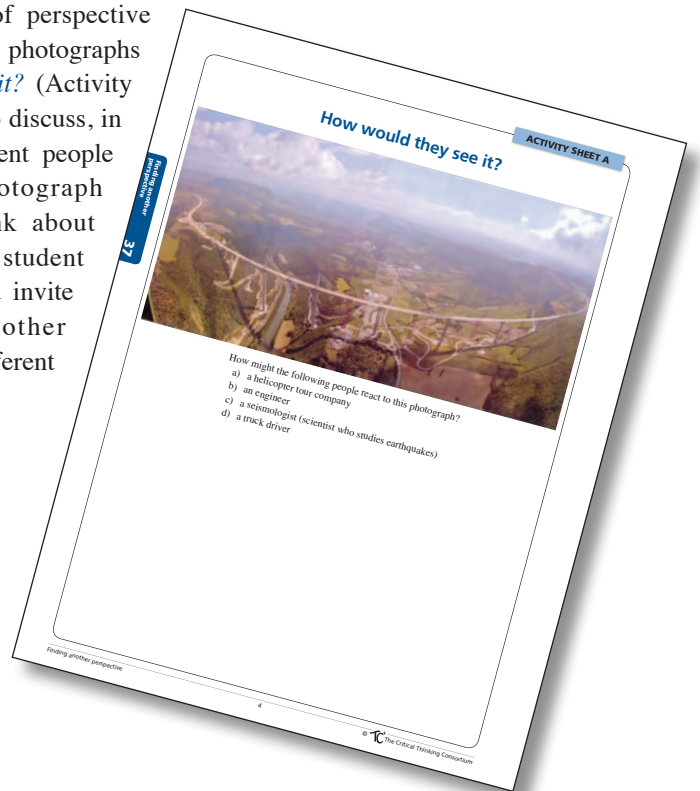Intermediate ✔
Middle ✔
Senior ✔

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Finding another perspective

determining and actively seeking alternative perspectives
to enhance our understanding of an issue

Objectives:
- recognize that differing perspectives on a topic or issue may exist;
- determine which perspectives might most significantly broaden understanding of an issue;
- plan and carry out appropriate steps to find another perspective.

Use the following activities to introduce the featured research strategy

Introduce the strategy

➤ Introduce the concept of perspective by showing students the photographs in *How would they see it?* (Activity Sheet A). Ask students to discuss, in partners, how the different people listed below each photograph would react to or think about the photograph. Share student responses as a class and invite students to suggest other groups that may have different reactions to the images.

How would they see it? ACTIVITY SHEET A

How might the following people react to this photograph?
a) a helicopter tour company
b) an engineer
c) a seismologist (scientist who studies earthquakes)
d) a truck driver

Finding another perspective

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➤ Suggest to students that they are speculating about different perspectives on a particular event or object. Point out that each group reacting to the photographs would share common knowledge and values that would influence their perspective.

➤ Invite students to work with a partner to construct a definition of perspective. If necessary, share the definition of perspective: a particular attitude towards or way of regarding something.

➤ Inform students that during this lesson, they will look at various perspectives on an event or issue and discover how considering different perspectives helps us broaden our understanding of an issue.

➤ As an example, suggest that a decision to develop a skateboard park at their school would require consideration of a number of perspectives. As a class, brainstorm the groups of people who could offer different perspectives on the development of a skateboard park. Ask students why it would be important to consider different perspectives.

➤ Suggest to students that in any issue there are a number of stakeholders that might provide important perspectives. If necessary, define stakeholder: person, group, or organization that has a direct or indirect stake or interest in something. Distribute copies of *Identifying the stakeholders* (Activity Sheet B). Review the first example as a class. Invite students to work with a partner to identify the stakeholders who would have an interest in the suggested issue. Encourage students to consider sub-groups within each group of stakeholders that might have different perspectives. If further practice is needed, invite students to generate their own example of an issue and create an additional web of stakeholders.
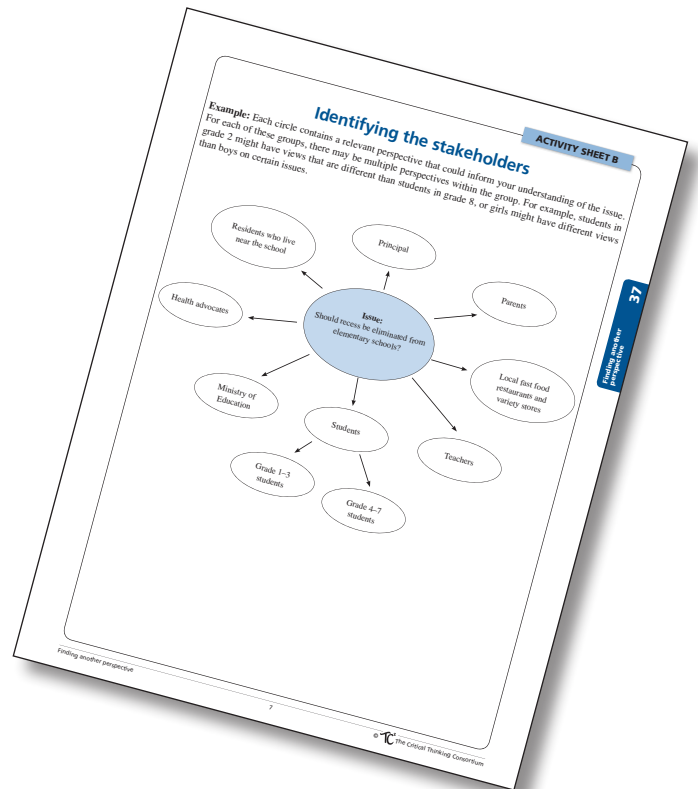
➤ Using one of the examples above, discuss with students which stakeholders might hold similar views and which perspectives might be the most diverse. Discuss the value of consulting the more diverse perspectives.

➤ Suggest to students that we need to actively seek out perspectives other than the one that is presented in a single source of information (for example, a newspaper, textbook, or website). Point out specific steps that can be taken to find another perspective on an issue or event. These steps might include

a) identify the perspective reflected in the source you already have (if there is one);

b) brainstorm all the other stakeholders (people or groups who might be affected by or have an interest in the event or issue);

c) speculate how each stakeholders' perspective might be different and why each perspective is important;

d) select those groups or individuals whose perspective is likely to be most different and be most useful in expanding your understanding of the issue or event;

e) brainstorm various places where you might find out information about each perspective;

f) actively search for the alternative perspective.

Practise the strategy

➤ Invite students to try their hand at finding another perspective on an issue. In pairs or groups of three, invite students to examine a particular issue provided on *Sample issues* (Activity Sheet C). Distribute *Finding another perspective* (Activity Sheet D) and invite students to practise using the strategy.

Reinforce the strategy

➤ Introduce *Finding another perspective* (Student Resource). Review each of the elements: purpose, strategies, practice sample, and self-assessment rubric. Encourage students to refer to this resource when using the strategy in the future.

➤ Invite students to apply this strategy to a topic or question they are investigating for school or to find information for a personal question or issue of interest. Encourage students to use Activity Sheet D to find alternative perspectives.

➤ If apathy is a topic you wish to investigate with your students, use the material on apathy found in this resource and ask students to find another perspective about their selected inquiry issue.

Apply the strategy in everyday teaching

➤ At appropriate times over the ensuing several weeks, encourage students to use this strategy in regular classroom situations, including the following:

- examining relevant social issues;
- considering the implications of certain behaviours in the classroom or in the school yard;
- thinking about alternative ways of approaching a problem to be solved when doing group work;
- researching a particular topic to decide how to proceed on a pressing local, national, or global issue;
- resolving or avoiding conflict.

Assess the use of the strategy

➤ Encourage students to use the rubric in the Student Resource when self-assessing their use of this literacy strategy.

- Allow students opportunities to apply the strategy two or three times without evaluation.
- Guide students in interpreting and using the rubric to assess their own responses.
- Encourage students to use the rubric whenever they use this strategy.

➤ To use the rubric for teacher evaluation of student work, remove the first person (student) reference from each descriptor.
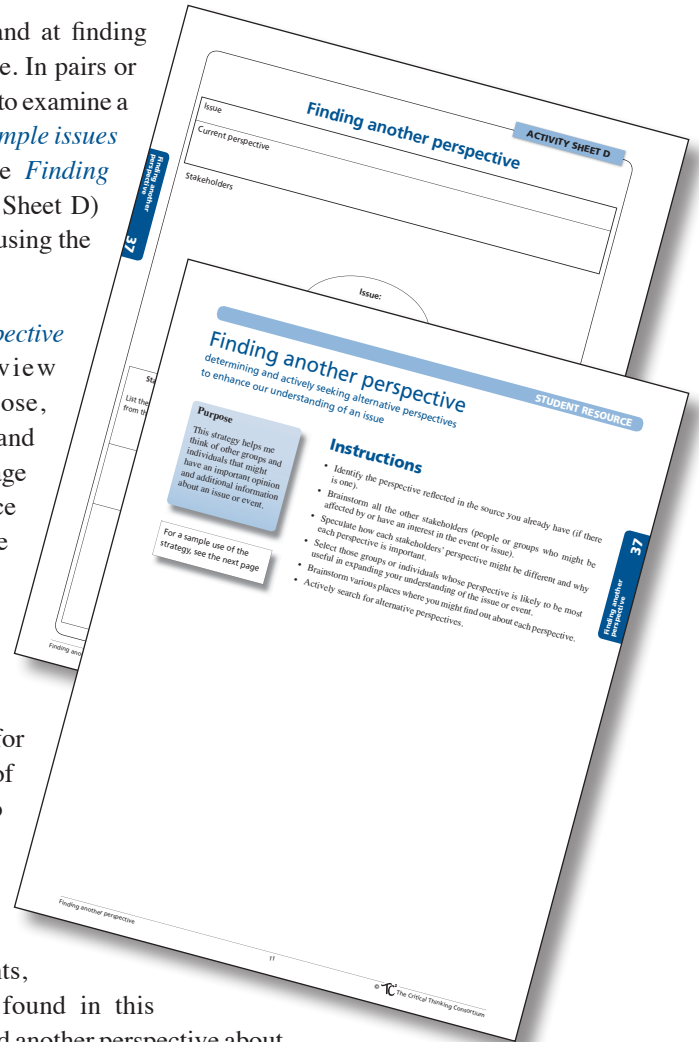
How would they see it?

How might the following people react to this photograph?

a) a helicopter tour company

b) an engineer

c) a seismologist (scientist who studies earthquakes)

d) a truck driver

How would they see it?

How might the following people react to this photograph?

a) a family hoping for a quiet day at the beach

b) a local newspaper reporter

c) a hot dog vendor at the beach

d) an artist

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How would they see it?
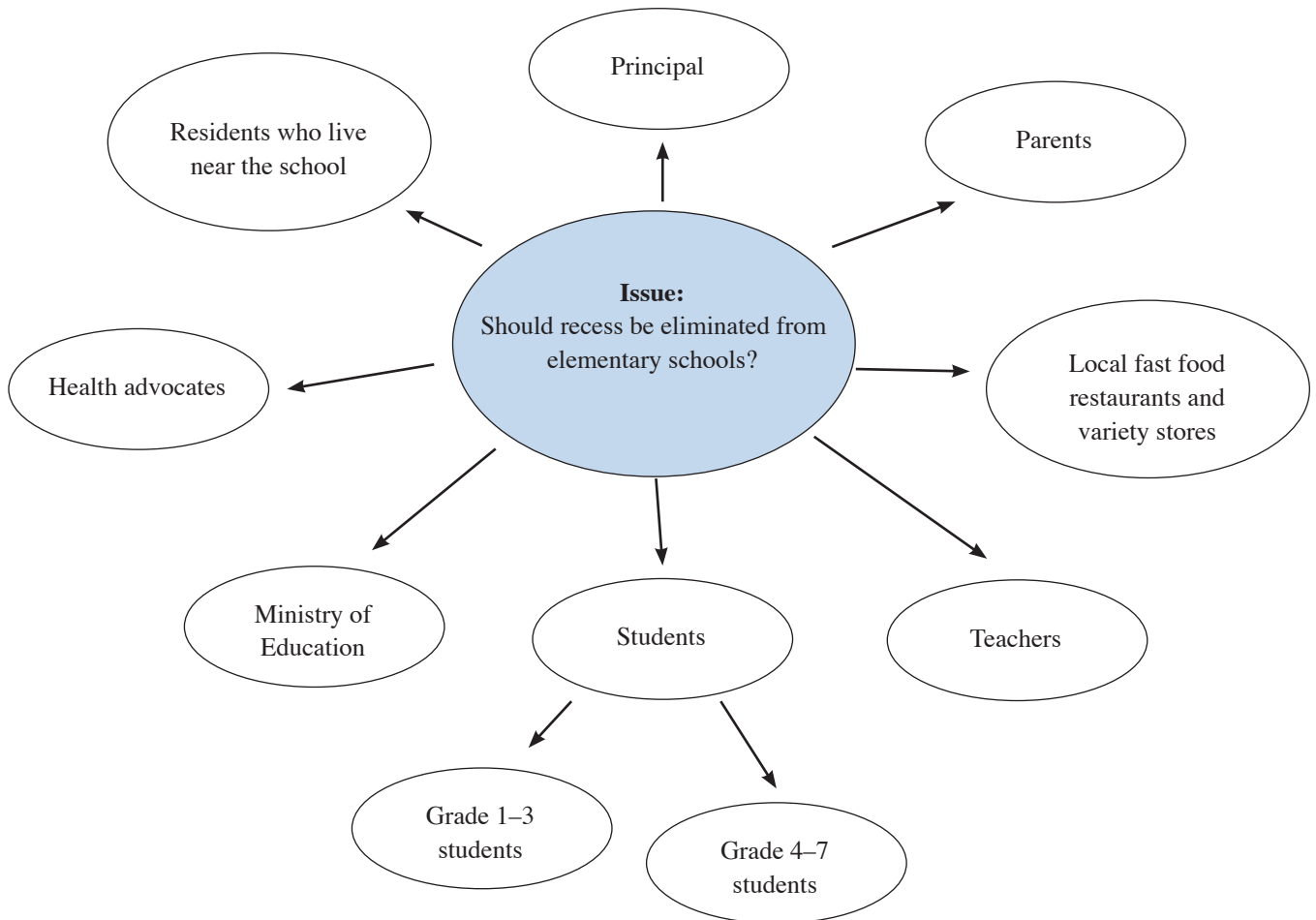
How might the following people react to this photograph?

a) a farmer

b) a hiker

c) a real estate developer

d) an environmentalist

Identifying the stakeholders

Example: Each circle contains a relevant perspective that could inform your understanding of the issue. For each of these groups, there may be multiple perspectives within the group. For example, students in grade 2 might have views that are different than students in grade 8, or girls might have different views than boys on certain issues.

- Principal
- Residents who live near the school
- Parents
- Health advocates
- **Issue:** Should recess be eliminated from elementary schools?
- Local fast food restaurants and variety stores
- Ministry of Education
- Students
- Teachers
- Grade 1–3 students
- Grade 4–7 students

Identifying the stakeholders

Your task:

Brainstorm all the stakeholders who might have an interest in the issue. Add as many circles and arrows as you need.

Issue:
Should our town submit a bid to host the next Olympic Games?
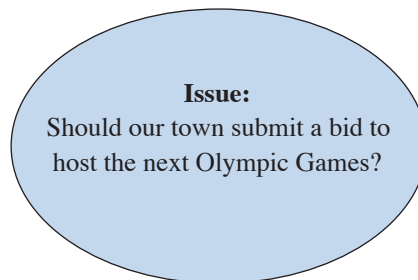
Sample issues

Issue #1: Ban internet use in school

Although learning to use new technology is considered an important part of education, recently teachers and parents have become concerned about the way students are using the internet at school. Many students are using school computers to download music illegally, log onto social chat sites where dangerous adults may lurk, or playing online games rather than doing work. Now, your school will decide whether internet use should be banned or heavily regulated.

Issue #2: Changing school start time

Your school has always started at 8:00 am in the morning; however, some parents, students, and teachers have been pushing for this to change. Students are falling asleep at their desks and only become interested when they are more awake near the end of class. Moreover, new research has emerged that suggests sleep-deprived students do not learn well and that student success increases when schools have later start times. Your school needs to decide whether to start school at 10:00 am next year.

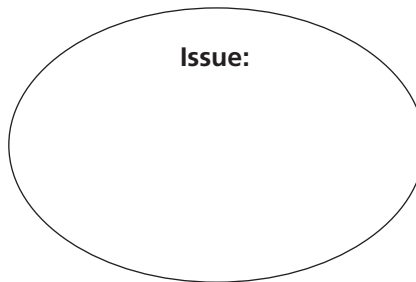### Issue #3: Restrictions on young drivers

The premier has proposed a new law that will place restrictions on young drivers in the province. Any driver under the age of 21 will face a zero blood-alcohol limit and a 30-day licence suspension if caught speeding, and will be allowed only one passenger in the car while driving. The new law has caused a controversy and tonight a town hall meeting will be held to hear all perspectives before a vote is taken on the issue.

Finding another perspective

Issue
Current perspective

Stakeholders

Issue:

Stakeholders	Rationale	Rate usefulness	Where could I learn about this perspective?
List the stakeholders from the web above.	Why is it important to consider this perspective?	Is the perspective likely to be significantly different? Will the perspective increase your understanding of the issue?	Identify the people, organizations newspapers/magazines, articles/books, websites, films, blogs, DVDs, and any other places/things you can search to find more information on these perspectives.
		Not useful Very useful	
		Not useful Very useful Not useful Very useful	

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Purpose

This strategy helps me think of other groups and individuals that might have an important opinion and additional information about an issue or event.

For a sample use of the strategy, see the next page.
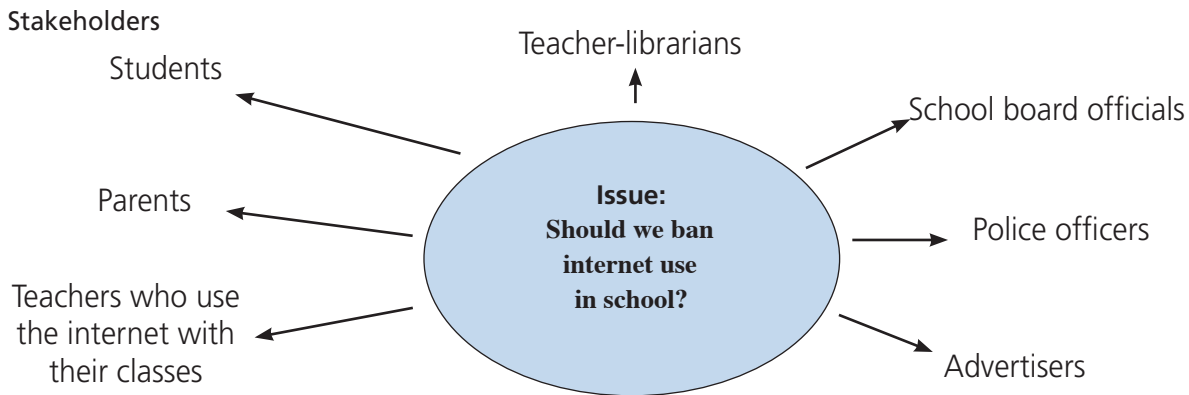
Instructions

- Identify the perspective reflected in the source you already have (if there is one).
- Brainstorm all the other stakeholders (people or groups who might be affected by or have an interest in the event or issue).
- Speculate how each stakeholders' perspective might be different and why each perspective is important.
- Select those groups or individuals whose perspective is likely to be most useful in expanding your understanding of the issue or event.
- Brainstorm various places where you might find out about each perspective.
- Actively search for alternative perspectives.

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SAMPLE **use of the strategy**

Finding another perspective

Issue	Restricting internet use in school
Current perspective	Teachers, and possibly the principal, who think students misuse the internet and that internet use should be restricted.

Stakeholders

Students   Teacher-librarians   School board officials

Parents   **Issue: Should we ban internet use in school?**   Police officers

Teachers who use the internet with their classes   Advertisers

Stakeholders	Rationale	Rate usefulness	Where could I learn about this perspective?
List the stakeholders from the web above.	Why is it important to consider this perspective?	Is the perspective likely to be significantly different? Will the perspective increase your understanding of the issue?	Identify the people, organizations newspapers/magazines, articles/books, websites, films, blogs, DVDs, and any other other places/things you can search to find more information on these perspectives.
Students	- they are most affected by the issue - we need to find out how many are misusing the internet - they should have a chance to tell us how it will affect their ability to do their school work - many uses of the internet are legitimate	Not useful — Very useful	- survey students - interview students - check the student newspaper for articles on this issue - check if Statistics Canada or local/national newspapers have articles on how teenagers use the internet
Parents	- parents might be worried about what sites students have access to at school - parents might not have internet access at home and they might rely on schools to provide access for research projects	Not useful — Very useful	- attend a parent council meeting - interview or survey parents
Teachers who use the internet with their classes	- they will also be very affected by this issue - if they are using the internet with their classes and then we ban the internet, it will restrict what they are teaching - if they are requiring students to use the internet to do research and it's no longer available at school, some students might stop handing in their work because they can't do it	Not useful — Very useful	- survey or interview teachers - check individual teachers' pages on the school website to see what kinds of assignments they are assigning - look at the curriculum to see if there are any requirements about using the internet

SAMPLE **use of the strategy**

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Stakeholders List the stakeholders from the web above.	Rationale Why is it important to consider this perspective?	Rate usefulness Is the perspective likely to be significantly different? Will the perspective increase your understanding of the issue?	Where could I learn about this perspective? Identify the people, organizations newspapers/magazines, articles/books, websites, films, blogs, DVDs, and any other other places/things you can search to find more information on these perspectives.
Teacher-librarians	- librarians use the internet a lot to teach us how to search for information effectively - they also use the internet themselves to find sources for us for our projects	Not useful ←——————●—→ Very useful	- talk to the teacher-librarian at our school - check the school website to see what kind of internet sites the librarian recommends
School board officials	- school board officials might be getting lots of complaints from teachers, parents, and principals or maybe they are not getting many complaints at all—we need to find out - this might be difficult for us to find out, though	Not useful ←——●————→ Very useful	- check the board website to see if there is a policy on internet use
Police officers	- police officers might be concerned about illegal use of the internet - criminals might use social networking sites to contact children	Not useful ←——●————→ Very useful	- search local and national newspapers for statistics on crime and student use of the internet
Advertisers	- advertisers probably want to have access to children through the internet all the time - I'm not sure we need to research this; it seems obvious that they would want unlimited internet use at school so they could advertise to children	Not useful ←—●—————→ Very useful	- search for articles about advertising to children through the internet to find out how big of a problem it is - look on popular websites to find out what type of advertising pops up

Assessing my ability to "find another perspective"

Accomplished	Good	Basic	Struggling
Identify differing perspectives:			
I can easily recognize the perspective in the source I have and can identify many stakeholders who might have a different perspective or additional information about the issue.	I can recognize the perspective in the source I have and can identify a few stakeholders who might have a different perspective or additional information about the issue.	I can recognize the perspective in the resource I have if it is obvious, but I sometimes have trouble thinking of all the different stakeholders.	I struggle to identify the perspective in the resource I have and have difficulty identifying additional stakeholders.
Select the perspectives which are most likely to deepen my understanding of the issue:			
I can easily select the perspectives that are most useful in deepening my understanding of the issue.	I can select stakeholders that are likely to have a different perspective, but I sometimes have trouble prioritizing which stakeholders will probably help my understanding the most.	I can select the most obvious examples of different perspectives, but I often am confused by the more subtle examples.	I struggle to identify differing perspectives and to determine which perspectives would be useful.
Search for perspectives in appropriate places:			
I can think of many different appropriate places to learn about alternative perspectives and I take the initiative to search for those perspectives.	I can think of some appropriate places to learn about alternative perspectives, but I sometimes have difficulty taking the next step to search for those perspectives.	I can think of the most obvious places to learn about other perspectives but I have difficulty thinking of less obvious sources.	I struggle to think of places to find information about alternative perspectives.