

## Perspectives: it all boils down to where you stand

---

It's the same for text sources, photographic sources or interviews: every source expresses the perspective of its creator. Perspective means that every person sees himself and the world in his own way, and this point of view comes out in various ways, for example, through what a person says, writes, paints.

The manner in which one perceives oneself and one's surroundings is marked by various influences and experiences to which a person is exposed in the course of his life. A person has a particular nationality, religion, belongs to a political party, and so on – and this influences the way he sees himself and his environment. That is why, when you interpret a source, you must inquire about the **perspective of its creator**:

- Is the originator of the source a man or woman? How old was he or she when the source was generated?
- What political position does the creator of the source represent? Does he or she belong to a particular political party or have a specific mandate?
- What is his or her economic background? What is the person's position, social class or economic level? What kind of education did he or she have? And what was his or her job?
- To which religion, ethnic group, nationality or cultural circle did the person belong?
- In which period did the person generate the source? To what extent was the time period important for this person? How was this person influenced by the times?

**Perspective  
of the creator**

The variety of possible questions shows that there may be very diverse ways of looking at one event. But not only the creator of a source has a point of view; rather, all those persons who take part in an event are marked by it. That can provide an opportunity for you to present various perspectives of an event. For example, recollections of a protest action may differ greatly, depending on whether one is interviewing a former demonstrator or a police officer.

That is why historians speak about the importance of **"multiple-perspectives"**

- to show that there is not only one, "correct" view of an event.
- to illustrate the contradictions within historical events.
- to enable you to develop your own viewpoint with regard to an event.

**Multi-  
perspectives**



But: not every social group of the past left sources behind. The method of "oral history" has been applied frequently in the use of sources with various viewpoints regarding recent history: You interview various participants in an experience. When it comes to more distant events, this is no longer possible, so that you can only make educated guesses about certain perspectives, when necessary. Tip: Organize a role-play, in which you represent all possible positions. On the basis of your material, you can justify why the characters react as they do. Take the character's point of view into consideration!