

# 4e

## What's Missing? Making Room for Multiple Perspectives

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Sometimes what is missing from a media message can be more important than what is included. Using stories and events found in classroom texts, students select one story and generate a list of all the people who are missing from the story but who could have been affected by the events. Then they choose one of the missing persons and retell the story from his/her perspective. Being able to recognize and name missing perspectives is a critical skill in today's media culture.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify missing characters from a text, particularly a school text.
2. Increase critical thinking by supplying missing perspectives in a text.
3. Build empathy through understanding different points of view.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B6), (S10/10)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. From any classroom book or textbook select a story students are familiar with. For example, a short story from a Language Arts text or in Social Studies, a story from history.

**Teaching Strategies:**

### I. Review the Story

- Discuss the basic parts of the story. Ask and chart:
  - ? Who are all the characters?
  - ? What is the plot?
  - ? Where is the setting?
- Explain that sometimes who or what is missing from a media text can be more important than who and what is there. Have students reflect on the plot and setting of the story and think of people who could have been at that setting and in this plot but are not mentioned in the story as we have it. Chart their responses to create a list of the missing people. Ask:
  - ? Who are some characters that could have been in this story?

### II. Rewriting the Text

- Briefly discuss a couple of the new characters that the students mentioned. Have the students comment on how the story might change if these new characters were present. Also encourage them to imagine what these new characters would think about the original characters and plot.
- Assign students to work in pairs to choose a missing character and rewrite the story from

that person's perspective. Give plenty of time and encourage students to adapt the plot to fit the needs of their character.

- Have each team read their stories to the whole class. Then discuss the way the plot may have changed because of these new perspectives. Ask students to explain their responses to the following questions:
  - ? Does this new character add important issues or concerns that were missing?
  - ? How does this new character add to the quality of the story?
  - ? Why do you think the author did not include this character in the original story?

### III. Real Events

- Using a story from a news magazine or newspaper, students do the same activity with real life events to understand the importance of asking “what is missing” from news reports we receive daily in our lives.
  - ? For younger students, select an appropriate story from the news about a child. Tell or read the story to them. Chart on the board or chart paper the people mentioned in the story and who they are. Then have students discuss who else in the child's life could have been affected by the story. What perspective could these missing people contribute?

### IV. Extensions

- It could also be helpful for students to read books, magazines or newspapers that offer different perspectives than the typical mainstream media versions.
  - ↳ *Encounter* by Jane Yolen is an outstanding children's picture book where an indigenous boy tells the way he saw Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas.
  - ↳ Compare alternate versions of the *Cinderella* story, the *Three Little Pigs* or other classic children's books.
  - ↳ *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn and *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James W. Loewen are two readily available books that provide perspectives missing from many US history textbooks.