

## **Character Point of View**

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What people need and what they want may be very different...  
Teachers are those who educate the people to appreciate the things they need.  
Elbert Hubbard

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### **Overview:**

I have developed a creative curriculum unit for my project relating to a character's point of view. Pittsburgh Public School students are required to read a novel that parallels each theme in the Harcourt Reading Program as part of the curriculum. Customarily, the students read their novels on an individual basis, silently and to themselves. At the close of the chapter's reading assignments, students typically complete a series of written journal questions and answers separately and apart from others. The questions and answers are reviewed as the students progress through the chapters of the novel. This process is often methodical. Therefore, I have enhanced this process by asking the students to write more expansive answers, and, then asked them to do a "what's next" scenario.

As the students progressed through the novel and reading assignments, the main character was a source of focus for the students. I stimulated the child's thought process by asking questions like,

- 1) What characteristics does the main character in the story possess?
- 2) Why do you think this person is the main character?
- 3) What qualities does this person embrace?
- 4) How has this character developed throughout the storyline? And
- 5) What aspects of this person's character would you either like to change or build on?

**Rationale:**

I have written this particular curriculum unit because I believe the thought-provoking questions I have provided will stimulate the students' inquisitiveness. It will also develop critical thinking skills, thus generating an exciting subject matter on how to critique and create main literary characters with a different point of view. My objective is to incorporate an effective and exciting reading/writing connection into the curriculum. The students are at an age where they lack enthusiasm about expressing themselves through writing. Therefore, my goal is to have the students become reoriented to a love of reading and writing. This can be done by the reading/writing modeling process. The modeling process will help to create a personal enjoyment for the student, a strong love for literature, and assist in the development of reading creativity. It will also generate critical thinking and writing skills.

According to Lucy Calkins of The Art of Teaching Writing, research will show, "while there are other theories on the writing process, the cognitive school of thought is perhaps the most effective for aiding the actual practice of writing" (255). The cognitive theory maintains that writing does in fact happen in "steps," but they aren't necessarily followed in the same order as in the stage model. Nor does each step lead directly to another in a sequential order. Instead, for the most part the writer moves fluidly back and forth between the processes that make up the act of writing.

These processes of writing are similar to the ones we learned all those years ago, but their sequence, duration, and the frequency of use is left up to the writer. By non-compartmentalizing the tasks involved in any writing project we are empowering ourselves. Certainly this new freedom opens us up to moments of indecision, but it also introduces us to moments of genius that we may not have realized were waiting there for us.

Here is something to think about when understanding the importance of point of view. An automobile accident occurs. Two drivers are involved. Witnesses include four sidewalk spectators, a policeman, a man with a video camera who happened to be shooting the scene, and the pilot of a helicopter that was flying

overhead. Here we have nine different points of view and, most likely, nine different descriptions of the accident.

In short fiction, who tells the story and how it is told are critical issues for an author to decide. The tone and feel of the story, and even its meaning, can change radically depending on who is telling the story.

Someone is always between the reader and the action of the story. That someone is telling the story from his or her own point of view. This angle of vision, the point of view from which the people, events, and details of a story are viewed, is important to consider when reading a story.

Every story is told through a viewpoint character. The viewpoint may be first person, third person, or omniscient point-of-view. Here is one way to put the different types of point of view into perspective.

### **Objective Point of View**

With the objective point of view, the writer tells what happens without stating more than can be inferred from the story's action and dialogue. The narrator never discloses anything about what the characters think or feel, remaining a detached observer.

### **Third Person Point of View**

Here the narrator does not participate in the action of the story as one of the characters, but lets us know exactly how the characters feel. We learn about the characters through this outside voice.

### **Omniscient and Limited Points of View**

In the first person point of view, the narrator does participate in the action of the story. When reading stories in the first person, we need to realize that what the narrator is recounting might not be the objective truth. We should question the trustworthiness of the accounting.

### **Omniscient and Limited Omniscient Points of View**

A narrator who knows everything about all the characters is all knowing or omniscient (Fletcher 151).

These viewpoints are defined further here.

### **First person:**

These are the "I" stories. Stories told from this point-of-view are limited to what the one character (normally the protagonist) senses, either through sight,

touch, hearing, smell, or taste. Your character cannot be seen through someone else's eyes, and the reader is not privy to the thoughts of other characters. This point-of-view is not used very often and is not usually seen in mainstream or genre fiction. However, it may occasionally be used in young adult fiction, as well as in "confession" stories, and in the real-life stories published in women's magazines. This technique may also be used when a story or sequence of events is being seen from several first person points-of-view. This is accomplished by either breaking the story into sections, each told by a different character, or by having each chapter reflect a different character's perception and description of events.

### **Third person, single point-of-view:**

These are the "he", "she", "they" stories. From the single point-of-view, they are much like the first-person stories. This technique is particularly acceptable in the romance and mystery genres, since it allows for the building of suspense. The reader can only know as much as the protagonist knows. The reader does not have access to all of the clues, or the thoughts of the romantic hero. This is the most common point-of-view in use today. In romance stories, generally only the heroine's point-of-view is used. In mysteries, often only the protagonist's thoughts and actions are revealed to the reader.

### **Third person, multiple points-of-view:**

These are also "he", "she", "they" stories. However, the multiple viewpoints add depth to the story. In a romance, the reader can see the thoughts and know the motives of both the hero and the heroine. In a mystery novel, the reader can know things that the protagonist may not know. This allows the reader to think ahead of the hero and root for him.

The key to the third person, multiple point-of-views, is to make it clear who is speaking, or whose thoughts are being revealed. Using clear section or chapter breaks makes this point-of-view easier to manage.

### **Omniscient point-of-view:**

The reader can experience the story from many different perspectives. However, as with third person, multiple points-of-view, it is important for the reader to know who is speaking, or whose thoughts are being revealed. Chapter breaks would be the preferred method of making the viewpoint character clear to the reader. Keep in mind that points-of-view other than the first person and the third person, single point-of-view take practice to master.

A narrator whose knowledge is limited to one character, either major or minor, has a limited omniscient point of view (www.suite101.com).

As you read a piece of fiction think about these things:

- 1) How does the point of view affect your responses to the characters?
- 2) How is your response influenced by how much the narrator knows and how objective he or she is?

First person narrators are not always trustworthy. It is up to you to determine what the truth is and what is not?

The students will eventually be asked to pair up with a child from a younger grade. I believe the importance of this is tremendous. The older children will form a bond with the younger child that they might not have had before. They will work together and learn from each other. Lucy Calkins of the Art of Teaching Writing states “that having some kind of mentor in your life can make a marvelous difference in your life later on” (320). The younger children look up to the older children and this will be a good opportunity for each child to experience this mentorship.

### **Objective:**

I plan to incorporate the Board of Education’s standardized guidelines and focus for this project while utilizing the Harcourt Reading Curriculum. This unit will have optimum value when utilized towards the latter end of the school year after the students have read and discussed a large portion of the novels in our classroom library.

Primarily, I will establish what point of view is and its importance. After a thorough discussion, we will have also recognized what point of view the character is in each novel initially. The students, on an individual basis, will then select a novel from our classroom library. The students will be using their novels from the classroom library to revitalize the main character’s point of view.

In addition, the students will be using the school’s library to check out books related to how the author determines the usage of point of view in their books for further assistance and exploration in the development of their story. Next, the students will organize, plan and compose ideas that they have gathered from the library books. There will be peer conferencing and sharing of ideas in Literature Circles in the final stages of the unit.

I intend that the students have a chance to regain their love of reading and writing. I would like the students' imaginations and impressions to re-emerge into positive conclusions and experiences. The character point of view curriculum will ultimately promote a development of individual responsibility, enrichment; and, prepare a student to progress to the next level of middle school. This character point of view unit will also inspire thought provoking ideas, that although may be tedious at the outset, but the outcome is essential to continued creative development.

After completion of the unit, I believe the students will be proud of their accomplishments and have the ability to transfer ideas to future endeavors. In addition, the students will be able to apply the novels they have read towards their twenty-five-book requirement set up by the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

The goal of this exciting curriculum unit is to stimulate a student's imagination through fiction, drama and bring a character to life based on individual beliefs and a comprehensive thought process. My intention is to have the student identify characteristic traits and transfer that recognized knowledge to the character when changing their point of view. Another objective I wish to accomplish is to bring a return of a love for reading and writing that may now be lost or in a declining capacity. I anticipate that this project will increase a students desire to read and write and enhance existing reading skills.

### **Strategies:**

There will be an introduction to learning point of view at the beginning of the school year. We will have a discussion involving a question and answer session regarding point of view in order for the students to understand the modeling process. The modeling process is important for the children so they can see the right way to do something. If I model the assignment for them, then there will be no problems when it comes to completing the assignment.

One of the most important factors in this new writing model is what rhetoricians call the "monitor." The monitor oversees the writing processes the same way a general oversees a battle being waged. Retreat or move forward? When is it time to move from one process to the next? Every writer, every piece of writing, every particular moment of writing will have a different answer. Some successful writers may re-read every sentence or phrase; some may only re-read when they're stuck. Listening to your "monitor" may take some conscious thought to begin with, but skilled writers hardly even notice when their "monitor" tells them to check in on this or that.

As the year progresses, we will discuss point of view with stories that the students have finished reading. The class will be reading novels that correlate with the theme in conjunction with the current lesson plan.

After reading the stories, we will discuss what point of view the story was written in. The students will read and do activities related to point of view in their Harcourt Reader throughout the advancement of the school year. The students will be required to keep track of the point of view of each story in their Harcourt reader and novels. A reading/writing journal will be supplied at the start of the new school year in order to document their findings.

Furthermore there will be an extensive discussion of the development of the character based on the following questions. What was the character like at the beginning of the story, the middle, and the end? The reasoning behind this is while “at times, characters’ thoughts are made explicit for the reader, but often we observe only the action and must infer the drive behind it”, as Shelby L. Wolf of Interpreting Literature with Children states (110). She also states, “Questions that you and your children can consider are:

- 1) Who are the characters?
- 2) Are they flat and unchanging or round and dynamic?
- 3) How do the characters move, think, and feel?
- 4) Do they take on primary roles, or do they stand in the background?
- 5) How do they change during the course of the story” (112)?

There will be a lengthy discussion on these questions. A discussion of the character will help the students further understand the point of view.

As the class progresses, there will be a discussion of how the author determines the point of view of the character. “The view can be limited to the actions of characters or spread to their innermost thoughts and feelings. The view can offer insight into a single character or expand to everyone in the story” (Wolf 120). There will be lengthy conversations and note taking sessions during this question and answer period.

After we have established the important aspects of point of view, we will discuss the agenda for the assignment. I will originally present a finished copy of how the book will appear. I will answer whichever questions the students may consider and visualize. A checklist will be developed for the students to follow as a guideline that outlines the requirements of the project. The students can begin brainstorming about the project after reviewing the details of the curriculum. They will choose a book from our classroom library that we have already read and discussed. They will choose tools from the school library in

accordance with assistance from the librarian to support their writings. Next, they will begin their assignment.

The developmental process of the main character will envelop a more in-depth objective criticism and allow the students to bring their own thoughts, words and ideas to the story line. I envision that this will help the students realize there is more to the main character than they initially recognized and understood. The connection between point of view and character is particularly strong. My desire is to teach students that their imagination, feelings, beliefs, and curiosity are an integral part of being able to write proficiently. I believe one imaginative thought can progress to numerous questions and be transformed into an inspiring magical story.

After the students have had a chance to review the questions in relation to the main character, they will proceed with the next step of the curriculum. The object of the students' writings will focus on changing the point of view of the character. Essentially, students will be able to create and develop their own children's literary novel. I plan on administering a blank book to each student where they will be required to inscribe and illustrate their novel from an individual prospective.

It will be a compulsory requirement for the student to present his/her novel to a lower grade classroom after the completion of the individualized children's literary work has been written. At the conclusion of the fifth grade student's presentation, oral feedback from the class audience will be encouraged, recommended and, a necessary tool to assist the writer in this developmental process. The fifth grade students will be required to follow a rubric in order to meet all the expected criteria.

### **Classroom Activities:**

### **Background Information:**

Before this curriculum unit begins, the routines and guidelines will already be in place in the classroom. The background information regarding the unit will be covered initially.

### **Writing guidelines:**

During the course of the year, the children do several writings that correlate with the Pittsburgh Public Schools portfolio requirements. A required checklist will be provided to the students outlining guidelines that must be followed in order to have a successful writing. I have developed a checklist for the students to

follow for this unit as well. The checklist will demonstrate what the students are required to do. The checklist will include, but not limited to:

- 1.) Brainstorm ideas,
- 2.) Choose novel,
- 3.) Get information from school library to assist with assignment (i.e.: point of view guidelines, how does the author choose the point of view),
- 4.) Establish point of view of novel, and decide how are you going to change this character? How are you going to change what happens in this story? What can you do differently?
- 5.) Next, start re-writing the novel from the new point of view,
- 6.) Hold peer conference,
- 7.) Hold teacher conference,
- 8.) Write second copy, with all corrections, and make illustrations (paper book copy),
- 9.) Make final copy).

### **Harcourt Reading Series:**

The students are required to read a series of novels that correlate with the Harcourt Reading Series. During the readings, we discuss the aspects of the stories and answer a series of questions in journal writings. The students will now choose a novel and change the point of view of the character.

### **Lessons:**

#### **Introduction:**

The class will discuss the assignment as an entire group as well as the writing process that has been established since the beginning of the unit curriculum. We will review each step of the writing process and the rules of writing in our classroom. We will discuss where materials are that we will need to have for successful writing. We will discuss who will be there to offer assistance, guidance and the steps required to accomplish a final copy of the writing. Once we have followed each of these steps, we will discuss how to set up a project with the first grade. We will discuss each of the steps that need to be taken to get to that point. Once the question/answer and note taking session is over we will begin brainstorming ideas. Students will choose the novel from which will change the point of view. The teacher must approve the book. Only two copies of each book can be chosen. A suggested time line shows how long each lesson should take.

**Lesson 1** (Approximately two days, four periods):

(Have children take notes in their writing journal). Tell the students that they will be making their own children's book. The children's book will consist of them rewriting a novel that they have already read from their classroom library and changing the point of view.

- 1) Review point of view.
- 2) Show students what a final copy of their book could look like.
- 3) Read a book to them.
- 4) Have a question/answer session for any concerns.

**Lesson 2** (Approximately fourteen days for steps one to nine, two periods a day):

The students will discuss with the writing process in conjunction with the teacher. The students are to be aware of each step in the process. Distribute checklist (see appendix A), and lined paper. Have students pick novels.

1. Brainstorm ideas
2. Get information from other sources (classroom library, school library, internet etc.).
3. Write first draft.
4. Check checklist
5. Hold peer conference
6. Hold teacher conference
7. Prepare illustration draft (paper book)
8. Peer conference
9. Teacher conference
10. Prepare final copy
11. Plan first Grade Collaborative

Together, write the eleven steps on the board or chart paper. Have the children copy the steps into their journal if needed (the steps should already be there from the beginning of the year besides eleven). Have a question/answer session as needed for any concerns. The students should now begin their first step. This lesson should begin the day before Library, so the next day they can go to the Library to get out materials for point of view.

The teacher will circulate and assist each child in small groups at first and then individually

**Lesson 3** (Approximately one week):

Students should complete step ten. Blank books will be distributed (Books can be purchased at Joanne Fabrics or Pat Catan's). Circulate and assist as needed. By this point the children are confident and excited about illustrating their hard work. Allow as much time as needed for success.

**Lesson 4** (Approximately two to three days):

Students will now present the final copy of their book. The students in the audience will have a packet (see appendix B) to complete after the student has presented his project. The packet will consist of the rubric that they were to follow with their assignment, the original checklist, and the new checklist for the Fifth Grade presentation. There will also be a question and comments session for those students that need to express their observations verbally, as well as in writing. This provides excellent feedback and critique for each student's writing and presentation.

**Lesson 5** (Approximately four days):

A date will be selected to present the information to the First Grade. In addition, the first graders will be given a packet also (see Appendix C). The packet will be suitable for their age. This packet will focus on their presentation and how well they liked the book. After the Fifth graders have presented their book, they can choose to join a First Grader in an effort to read their book on a more personalized degree.

**Lesson 6:**

After everything has been completed the teacher will display the students' books in the display case in their school or on an exhibit table. To add a personal touch, the students' pictures will be displayed next to their book. The students will give anonymous feedback about their assignment through a questionnaire (see Appendix D). Explain the questionnaire thoroughly prior to having the children fill them out.

**Summary:**

This unit will take approximately one to two months to complete. At the completion of this unit, the students will develop a new outlook on their writing. They will achieve recognition for the development of their own book, complete with illustrations. They will have taken a book and thoroughly changed its outcome and contents. They will have had the opportunity to pair up with a student they might not have known previously. During this assignment the students will accomplish many of the standards set forth all through out the

Pittsburgh Public Schools. I anticipate that the students will have achieved the ability to cultivate their love of reading and writing after completion of this unit curriculum. My anticipation is growing to try this curriculum unit out in the upcoming school year.

## Bibliography

Calkins, Lucy M. The Art of Teaching Writing. New York, Irwin Publishing, 1994.

Daniels, Harvey. Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom. Portland, Maine. Pembroke Publishers Limited, 1994.

Farr, R. C.; Strickland, D.S.; and Beck, I. L. Pathways to Adventure. Harcourt, 2001.

Fletcher, Ralph. What a Writer Needs. Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Heinemann Publishers, 1992.

Wolf, Shelby A. Interpreting Literature with Children. Mahwah, New Jersey. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 2004.

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=267](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=267)

<http://www.learner.org/exhibits/literature/read/theme2.html>

<http://www.suite101.com/lesson.cfm/17744/1091>

### **Annotated Student Book List**

Butcher, Nancy. *Wishbone Mysteries*. Lyrick Publishing. 1998.  
A story of Wishbone and his buddy taking an adventure through an old movie studio.

Clements, Andrew. *Frindle*. Young Readers, Simon and Shuster Children's Publishing Division. 1996.  
A story about a boy who wonders where certain words come from and decides to make up his own words.

Dorris, Michael. *Sees Behind Trees*. Hyperion Books for Children. 1996.  
A story about a boy who can not see like every other child and wishes that he could.

Farley, Walter. *The Black Stallion*. Random House Children's Books. 1998.  
A classic about a boy named Alec trying to tame the majestic Black Stallion.

Garfield, James B. *Follow My Leader*. Penguin Putnam Inc. 1985.  
A story about a boy who becomes blind after an accident and has to learn how to see all over again with the help of his new dog leader.

George, Jean Craighead. *The Trantula in My Purse*. HarperCollins Publisher's Inc. 1996.  
The story of the author, Jean Craighead George's adventures in a house full of wildlife enthusiasts.

Gleitzman, Morris. *Misery Guts*. Harcourt, Inc. 1993  
A compassionate story full of humor and memories.

Hooper, Maureen Brett. *The Violin Man*. Boyds Mills Press, Inc. 1991.  
A story about a boy named Antonio who loves the magical sounds of the violin.

Hurwitz, Johanna. *Class President*. William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1990.  
A story about Julio Sanchez who just wants to be class president. Follow his adventures.

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *Beetles Lightly Toasted*. Atheneum Publishers. 1987.

A story about a boy named Andy who thinks his idea about using insect recipes as a future food source is brilliant enough to win the big essay contest.

Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World*. Random House, Inc. 1986.

A story about a boy named Justin who is the only boy in a house full of girls who gets invited by his grandfather to stay at his ranch.

## Appendix A-Student Checklist for Character Point of View

Directions: After you have done each number check it off.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Character Point of View checklist*

1. Choose a novel that you have read and that really interests. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Skim the novel for recollection. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Change the point of view of the main character. If it was in first person, make it third person. If changing it to thirds person, make sure you tell whether it is third person omniscient or limited. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rewrite the story using the new point of view. (You will eventually turn your new story into book form with illustrations). Use your notes from your writing journal. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Schedule peer conference. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Schedule teacher conference. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Write final draft. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Type story. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Glue story into book. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Make illustrations. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Prepare how you are going to present it. \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B-Audience Checklist (Fifth Grade)

Directions: Do not put your name on this assignment. Give the presenter honest feedback that they can use for future reference. Criticize the ideas, not the person.

***Character Point of View Feedback***

1. Did the presenter change the point of view correctly? \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know?

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2. Is the new story organized? \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know?

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3. Did the presenter use robust vocabulary and vivid words to make the story more exciting? \_\_\_\_\_  
How do you know?

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4. Did the presenter speak clearly? \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, what happened?

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5. Did the presenter use exciting illustrations? \_\_\_\_\_  
What did you like the best?

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6. Could the presenter have done anything differently?

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7. What number on the rubric would you give the presenter? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why did you give them this number?

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Any other comments? \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C-First Grade Checklist





Appendix E

# Scoring Rubric for Expressive Writing

	Score of 4 * * * *	Score of 3 * * *	Score of 2 * *	Score of 1 *
Ideas	The paper fits the purpose. The audience would enjoy it.	The paper fits the purpose. The audience would probably enjoy it.	The purpose and audience are not very clear.	It is not possible to identify the purpose and audience.
Organization	There is a clear beginning, middle, and ending.	There is a beginning, middle, and ending, but one section may not be clearly defined.	The beginning, middle, and ending are not clearly defined.	The paper does not have a beginning, middle, or ending.
Word Choice	The paper has rich description, sensory details, and vivid words and phrases.	The paper has some description, a few good details, and some interesting words and phrases.	The paper has only a little description, only a few details, and few colorful words or phrases.	The paper has almost no description or details, and no interesting words or phrases.
Voice	The writing is original and engaging. It is appropriate for the purpose and audience.	The writing is appropriate for the purpose and audience.	Language isn't always appropriate for the audience and lacks originality.	Writer's voice is not evident in the writing.
Sentence Fluency	The sentences are written in a variety of ways.	Some sentences show variety, but many are the same type.	Most of the sentences are written in the same way.	Most sentences are not written correctly.

Conventions	There are very few errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	There are a few errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	There are many errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	There are so many errors that the writing is hard to understand.
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# READING STANDARDS

Appendix F

## READING STAND/ARD 1

\* I use the library to find different kinds of books and information.

## READING STAND/ARD 2

\* I understand what I read by using word attack skills, context clues, pictures and graphs.

## READING STANDARD 3

+ I can show that I understand what I read through retelling, written response, answering questions and problem solving.

## READING STAND/ARD 4

\* I can write about myself, about what I have read and about what I have learned in my classes.

## READING STANDARD 5

\* I can tell if what I read is real or make believe and give examples of information, facts and opinions that are not true.

## READING STAND/ARD 6

+ I share my ideas, listen carefully to what others say, follow directions and ask and answer questions.

### READING STANDARD 7

- \* I listen carefully and show my understanding of what I hear by answering questions.

### READING STANDARD 8

- + I can plan, write and report to explain what I have learned.

### READING STANDARD 9

- + I can apply and share my understanding of what I have learned wherever I go.