Two Views, One Flight

Compare a personal account and a biography of the same event.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.9 "Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In paragraphs 1 and 2, underline details that show what each author emphasizes about Katherine Johnson's work. Circle words or phrases that show whether the author focuses on personal experience or historical context.

Checking the Flight Path

1. In a first-person account, mathematician Katherine Johnson looks back on astronaut John Glenn's 1962 flight. She recalls being asked to check the new IBM computer's orbit calculations by hand. Johnson describes working through the numbers at her desk and checking each step before saying the figures matched. Her account keeps the tense moment close to her own work. The reader follows what Johnson did, from receiving the request to giving an answer Glenn could trust for his flight.

2. Historian Margot Lee Shetterly presents the same event in Hidden Figures, her book about Black women mathematicians at NASA. She explains that Johnson worked in a workplace where segregation and unfair rules limited Black women's opportunities. Shetterly places Glenn's request within NASA's urgent effort to send an American around Earth during the Space Race. Her account focuses less on Johnson's feelings at her desk and more on the barriers she faced, the team around her, and the flight's national importance.

3. Glenn's Friendship 7 spacecraft launched on February 20, 1962. The flight circled Earth three times, and Glenn returned safely after nearly five hours in space. Johnson's checking mattered because a small error in the trajectory could affect where the capsule landed. The successful mission made Glenn the first American to orbit Earth. Years later, Johnson's calculations became widely known through books, interviews, and the 2016 film Hidden Figures. These later retellings helped more people learn about her work.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Johnson's first-person account emphasize about the event? Use one detail from paragraph 1.

2. What does Shetterly's biography emphasize that Johnson's account does not emphasize as much? Use one detail from paragraph 2.

3. Both authors describe Johnson checking flight calculations. How is the kind of information in Johnson's account different from the kind in Shetterly's account?

4. How does the authors' different presentation of the event affect what you learn about Johnson?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly four sentences comparing Johnson's and Shetterly's presentations of the flight-calculation event. Include one detail from each account, explain one difference in emphasis, and state which presentation gives you a stronger understanding of Johnson's achievement and why.

ANSWER KEY

Two Views, One Flight

GRADE 6 · RI.6.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In paragraphs 1 and 2, underline details that show what each author emphasizes about Katherine Johnson's work. Circle words or phrases that show whether the author focuses on personal experience or historical context. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Johnson's first-person account emphasize about the event? Use one detail from paragraph 1.	**It emphasizes Johnson's own careful work checking the calculations, including the sequence from receiving Glenn's request to giving an answer he could trust.**
2	What does Shetterly's biography emphasize that Johnson's account does not emphasize as much? Use one detail from paragraph 2.	**Shetterly emphasizes the larger context, including segregation and unfair limits on Black women, NASA's team effort, and the Space Race.**
3	Both authors describe Johnson checking flight calculations. How is the kind of information in Johnson's account different from the kind in Shetterly's account?	**Johnson gives a close, personal view of doing the calculation at her desk, while Shetterly gives historical and social context about Johnson's workplace and NASA's goals.**
4	How does the authors' different presentation of the event affect what you learn about Johnson?	**Johnson's presentation shows what her work was like in the moment. Shetterly's presentation shows why her work was important despite barriers faced by Black women at NASA.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Johnson presents Glenn's flight as a personal math problem that she solved at her desk. Her account follows her careful checking and makes the moment feel close and immediate. Shetterly presents the event as part of NASA's Space Race work and shows the unfair limits Black women faced. Shetterly's account gives me a stronger understanding of Johnson's achievement because it explains the barriers she overcame as well as the importance of her calculation.

Accept equivalent comparisons that accurately distinguish Johnson's personal, first-person focus from Shetterly's broader historical focus. For the open task, check for exactly four sentences, evidence from both accounts, a stated difference, and a supported judgment.