

Dust in the Ledger

Trace how an author's position shapes language, evidence, and theme.

12.T.C.2.c "Evaluate the extent to which historical, disciplinary, and/or personal perspectives affect authors' stylistic and thematic choices in text. (I)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that show the narrator's health-care perspective, circle words that reveal a personal stake, and number three details that place the report in its historical moment. Use your marks to judge how each perspective shapes the report's language and message.

Report from the Dust Bowl

- ① August 1936, Cimarron County, Oklahoma. By noon, the clinic windows rattle under a brown wind, and grit gathers in the folds of every bandage. Mothers arrive with children whose coughs deepen after each storm. I record temperatures, breathing rates, and the days since a family last had clean water. The ledger grows heavier than my medical bag. Outside, wheat fields lie flat and bare. Men who once measured a season by the height of grain now study the sky, then the empty road toward California. At night, I wash dust from my younger brother's hair before he sleeps.
- ② At the county meeting, I bring no jar of storm dust. Instead, I place the clinic ledger beside the relief committee's budget and read the figures aloud: forty-three children treated for inflamed eyes this month, nineteen households reporting an empty cistern. The chairman asks whether the number will rise. I say that a forecast cannot be made from one week, but the pattern is plain enough to require action. We need covered wells, water deliveries, and masks for schoolchildren. A neighbor calls the requests expensive. I answer that a child's lungs are not a line item that can wait for rain.
- ③ Newspapers from Amarillo to Kansas City print photographs of black clouds rolling over fences, yet photographs do not show what remains after the camera leaves. They do not show a mother shaking dust from a baby's blanket, or a boy hiding his cracked shoes beneath the porch. Federal posters promise loans and soil-conservation work, and some families pin those notices beside overdue bills. Others have already loaded quilts, dishes, and seed packets into trucks. I write this report because the storms have turned private hardship into a public record. If officials read only totals, they may miss the names behind them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 How does the narrator's reference to washing dust from a younger brother's hair affect the report's style or concern? Use the detail in your answer.

- 2 What do the ledger, medical counts, and cautious statement about forecasts reveal about the narrator's disciplinary perspective? How does that perspective shape the argument?

- 3 Identify two details that place the report in the Dust Bowl era. Explain how this historical context affects the subjects the narrator chooses to describe.

- 4 Which perspective most directly supports the narrator's demand for public action: professional, personal, or historical? Defend your evaluation with two details from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a 100-130-word mini-report set during a real historical event, from the viewpoint of a person with a defined field or role and a personal connection to the event. Include details that show the historical setting, the writer's disciplinary perspective, and personal perspective, then add a two-sentence analysis of 40-60 words that evaluates how those perspectives shape style and theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words that show the narrator's health-care perspective, circle words that reveal a personal stake, and number three details that place the report in its historical moment. Use your marks to judge how each perspective shapes the report's language and message. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the narrator's reference to washing dust from a younger brother's hair affect the report's style or concern? Use the detail in your answer.	It gives the report an intimate, caring tone and shows that the crisis affects the narrator's own family, not only clinic patients.
2	What do the ledger, medical counts, and cautious statement about forecasts reveal about the narrator's disciplinary perspective? How does that perspective shape the argument?	They reveal a health-care perspective that relies on observations, records, and qualified claims. This evidence supports the argument for wells, water deliveries, and masks.
3	Identify two details that place the report in the Dust Bowl era. Explain how this historical context affects the subjects the narrator chooses to describe.	Details may include bare wheat fields, travel toward California, dust storms, relief committees, federal loans, and soil-conservation work. The context leads the narrator to focus on drought, migration, poverty, and public relief.
4	Which perspective most directly supports the narrator's demand for public action: professional, personal, or historical? Defend your evaluation with two details from the passage.	The professional perspective most directly supports action because the narrator presents clinic records, treatment totals, and health needs before requesting specific resources. Accept another perspective if the response uses two accurate details and explains its reasoning.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

July 20, 1969. In the tracking room, I watch the lunar module's fuel numbers descend while my sister, a teacher in Ohio, waits beside a television set with her class. The transmission breaks into static, then Neil Armstrong reports that Eagle has landed. My checklist tells me to verify communications, trajectory, and remaining propellant, but the room is silent except for clipped confirmations. Outside this room, the United States and Soviet Union have measured their technological strength against one another for years. Tonight, the figures on my console feel less like competition than a narrow path home for two astronauts. The engineer's professional perspective creates precise technical diction and a controlled tone, while the sister's classroom makes the moment intimate. Cold War competition supplies the broader theme, but personal and disciplinary details make the landing feel both politically significant and human.

Accept varied evaluations when students identify accurate textual evidence and explain how a perspective affects language, evidence, tone, or theme. For Part 3, require a real historical setting, a defined role, a personal connection, and an analysis that addresses the effects of multiple perspectives.