

Warning and World

Trace how a writer's viewpoint and historical moment shape an argument.

12.T.C.2 "Authors & Speakers: Evaluate how authors' and/or speakers' perspectives influence texts and how circumstances shape their creation."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that reveal Carson's perspective, and number details about circumstances surrounding the book's creation. Use your marks to explain how perspective and circumstances shaped the book.

A Warning in the Weeds

- ① When Rachel Carson began writing *Silent Spring* in the late 1950s, she was not simply compiling laboratory findings. Trained as a marine biologist and known for lyrical nature writing, she viewed the natural world as an interconnected system rather than a storehouse of separate resources. At the same time, American farms, suburbs, and public agencies were using synthetic pesticides widely after World War II. Carson had received letters describing dead birds, sick livestock, and pesticide spraying near homes. Those circumstances led her to investigate whether the promise of pest control concealed broader ecological and human costs.
- ② Carson's perspective shaped her choices on the page. Instead of presenting pesticides as a narrow agricultural issue, she traced how chemicals could move through soil, water, insects, birds, and people. Her opening chapter, "A Fable for Tomorrow," imagines a town where birds no longer sing, a literary scene designed to make an invisible hazard emotionally immediate. She also cited scientific studies and named chemicals such as DDT, but her calm, vivid descriptions asked readers to question official assurances. The book's combination of evidence and warning reflects a writer who trusted science while doubting claims that human technology could control nature without consequences.
- ③ *Silent Spring* appeared in 1962, when chemical companies and many government officials defended widespread pesticide use as modern progress. Its publication brought sharp criticism from industry representatives, who challenged Carson's conclusions and motives. Yet the book reached a large public partly because it translated specialized research into scenes readers could picture in their own communities. Carson did not argue that every insect-control method should end. Rather, she pressed for caution, public scrutiny, and approaches that considered whole ecosystems. Her position, professional background, and moment in history therefore shaped both the book's persuasive methods and the controversy surrounding it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 How did Carson's view of nature influence the way she framed pesticides in *Silent Spring*?

2 Identify two circumstances that helped lead Carson to write *Silent Spring*. Explain how each made her investigation urgent.

3 How do the imagined town in "A Fable for Tomorrow" and Carson's use of scientific studies work together to advance her perspective?

4 Why could *Silent Spring* appeal to many public readers while also provoking criticism from industry representatives?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Choose a text, speech, podcast episode, editorial, or image you know. In 3 to 4 sentences, identify the creator's perspective and one circumstance of creation, then explain how each influenced a specific choice in the work.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that reveal Carson's perspective, and number details about circumstances surrounding the book's creation. Use your marks to explain how perspective and circumstances shaped the book. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Carson's view of nature influence the way she framed pesticides in <i>Silent Spring</i> ?	She viewed nature as an interconnected system, so she presented pesticides as affecting linked systems of soil, water, insects, birds, and people, not just farming.
2	Identify two circumstances that helped lead Carson to write <i>Silent Spring</i> . Explain how each made her investigation urgent.	Widespread pesticide use after World War II made the issue broadly important, and letters about dead birds, sick livestock, and spraying near homes suggested possible ecological and human harms.
3	How do the imagined town in "A Fable for Tomorrow" and Carson's use of scientific studies work together to advance her perspective?	The imagined town makes an invisible hazard emotionally vivid, while scientific studies support her warning with evidence. Together, they encourage readers to question official assurances about pesticides.
4	Why could <i>Silent Spring</i> appeal to many public readers while also provoking criticism from industry representatives?	Readers could connect specialized research to scenes in their own communities, while industry representatives defended widespread pesticide use and challenged Carson's conclusions and motives.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr. writes as a civil rights leader committed to nonviolent resistance. Because he wrote from a Birmingham jail in 1963 after eight white Alabama clergymen called for patience, he directly answers their criticism. His position and circumstance lead him to use measured, reasoned language and personal examples to argue that delaying justice protects injustice.

Accept responses that connect a stated perspective and a specific historical, professional, or personal circumstance to identifiable choices in the work. Students may use different valid evidence if their explanation accurately shows cause and effect.