

Reading exercise  
Optional outdoor writing exercise

### Writer's Perspective

Often, the interests and views of a person, as well as his or her background and occupation, influence the way that person sees and experiences an event, and the way in which he or she describes it in writing. This is certainly true of the three men who kept journals during the journey to Onondaga in 1743. John Bartram, a botanist and naturalist, was keenly interested in almost every physical detail about the trip. Lewis Evans was a cartographer, or mapmaker, and looked at the journey from a different perspective. The interpreter and go-between Conrad Weiser, their experienced guide on the trip, had different things on his mind, which he too noted in his journal.

Read the following journal excerpts below. Who do you think wrote each entry?

1. *A mile beyond this gap we passed by a path, or Indian road, led N.W. directly over the mountains to Shamokin; but this is little [traveled] on account of the great steeps over which it leads. Passing thence three miles along a continued slant of shrub and white-oak, we came to more ridges. Our path led us up some of these and along the tops of others for twelve miles; we then came to a creek which falls into the Susquehanna River.....*

Writer:

\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. *The 24th the Council of the Onondagas sat again. Jonnhaty, the captain of the unhappy company that had the skirmish last winter in Virginia was sent for with two more of his companions. He was desired to tell the story from the beginning how every thing happen'd, which he did. He seemed to be a very thoughtful and honest man, and took a deal of time in telling the Story.*

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. *Our journey now lay through very rich bottoms to a creek 6 miles from Shamokin, a great extent of fruitful low ground still coming. Here we found a fine meadow of grass on our right and rich dry ground on the left. In our path lay a large rattlesnake, but he civilly crept into the grass and let us pass by without danger. Our way from hence lay through an old Indian field of excellent soil, where there had been a town, the principal footsteps of which are peach-trees, plums and excellent grapes.*

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Oswego is rather a collection of trading huts, built for the residence of the Indian traders during the mart, or trading season, than a fixed habitation of settlers. It consists of seventy log houses, in two rows, forming a street, on the west shore of the river, at its mouth. The fort stood at the point next to the lake. The latitude of this place is 43° 22”.

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

---

---

---

5....In about half an hour we found ourselves at the great fall...Here we hauled our canoe ashore, and carried it on our back a mile to a little town of about four or five cabins....These Indians were very kind to us, and gave us boiled corn and watermelons.....In the morning they had caught some stout eels and a great fish two feet long; it was round and thick. They strike them with long slender shafts eighteen or twenty feet long, pointed at the end with iron. The two splints of wood spreading each side, direct the point into the fish.....

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

---

---

---

6. The 30th. About noon the Council then met at our Lodging and declared themselves complete, and a deal of ceremonies passed. First the Onondagas rehearsed the beginning of the Union of the five Nations, praised their grandfathers' wisdom in establishing the union or alliance, by which they became a formidable body; .....a string of wampum was given by Tocanuntie, in behalf of the Onondagas, to wipe off the sweat from their bodies, and God, who had protected them all against the evil spirits of the woods,....was praised.

Writer: \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

---

---

---

**Answers**

1. Lewis Evans
2. Conrad Weiser
3. John Bartram
4. Lewis Evans
5. John Bartram
6. Conrad Weiser

**Optional Writing Exercise**

Extend this lesson on writer's perspective by taking the class outdoors for an observation and writing session. Ask students to spread out over a selected area. Have them remain quiet for a period of 10 - 15 minutes to observe and note down in writing any details they wish to write about. Back in the classroom, share these written observations and discuss different perspectives apparent from the writings. See if students can guess the identities of the writers from these perspectives.