



**CREATING  
PROBLEM  
PERSPECTIVES**

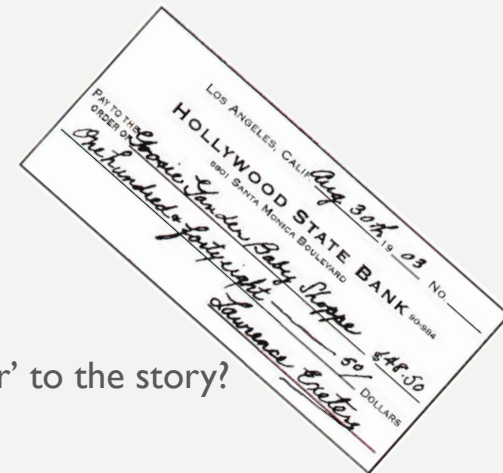
**MAKING MEANING WITH TEXTS**

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES

- Creating a **Problem Perspective** is synonymous with **Problematizing a Text**
  - The idea behind “problem perspectives” is to get students to think in terms of the problem the reading addresses (the issue the reading is discussing). Everything, including all relevant knowledge, results from solutions to problems. Unfortunately, many textbooks gloss over the problems that the information therein was created to explain or solve.
  - Your job as a teacher—using problem perspectives—is to get students to consider the kind of problem confronted in the reading. Students should, ideally, be placed (guided) into taking on roles of those actually involved in the reading/issue. You can use the actual events or an analogy/metaphor.

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES

- Consider “Ordeal by Cheque”
  - What ‘problems’ did the story convey?
    - What did you question in the story?
    - How was the story a puzzle?
    - Why do students almost always want a firm ‘answer’ to the story?
- This story gains much of its strength *because* it incorporates many of the attributes required for a reading to be interesting; rather than ‘giving’ readers information, it engages them in meaning making and problem solving. Prior knowledge



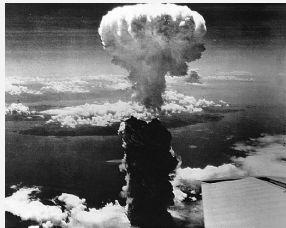
# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

You are a passenger on the deck of a sinking Titanic. You are young, healthy, and have a small children back home on land who need you (for both financial and emotional support). What do you think and what do you do when you realize that there aren't enough lifeboats and, at the same time hear the call of "women and children first." What do you think and do when you see old women climbing aboard the only lifeboats?



# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

You are Robert Oppenheimer in 1942. You have the unique power to create what will be the world's most powerful and destructive weapon, the nuclear bomb. You know that this weapon could be the proverbial "game changer" in World War II, but you soon come to realize that for the weapon to be used most effectively, it will be dropped on a large, populous city full of civilians. You also know that, once unleashed, this weapon will change the future in dramatic ways, many of them negative.



*What goes through your mind?*

*Do you have any doubts about whether or not to participate in the Manhattan Project?*

*Do you feel any lingering guilt for your actions?*

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

- **Language Arts:**

- *The Grapes of Wrath*: What would you do to survive were you in a situation similar to that of the Joad family? What value is there in a social ‘safety net’ today that did not exist for people like the Joads?
- *The Great Gatsby*: In what ways have you or others you know changed an ‘identity’ to try to fit in with other cultures or group? What would you be willing to sacrifice and why? What might you lose in doing so?
- *The Giver*: In what ways do you know knowledge to be painful and ignorance to be “bliss”?
- *Things Fall Apart*: Can you think of an example of how a culture has been diminished or damaged from the influx of another group or culture? What was lost and why? How does the book compare to “the prime directive” in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and why?

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

- **Social Studies (or Language Arts):**

- **World War II:** If you lived in 1930s-1940s Germany, would YOU have been a Nazi? Would you have worked at a concentration camp if ordered to do so? Would you have turned in Jews in your neighborhood?
- **Vietnam War:** It is late 1968. The son and grandson of veterans, you are in your senior year of high school and preparing to go to a good college. In the mail you receive your official draft notice demanding that in two month's time you report for induction into the U.S. Army, most certainly to be sent to fight in Vietnam. You just saw the results of the Tet Offensive and Walter Cronkite's [commentary](#) on the "stalemate" in Vietnam.
  - Do you a) go to the induction center as demanded, b) burn your draft notice and face possible prison time, c) move at least temporarily to Canada to avoid the draft, d) claim conscientious objector status, d) other? WHY?
  - Knowing now what you do about how Vietnam ended, would you change your mind? Why? More importantly, what is the effect of 'retrospect' on history?

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

- **Health and Politics:** You are a politician weighing the relative pros and cons of putting health risk labels and/or additional taxes on such things as cigarettes, high-calorie and high-fat foods, alcohol, etc.?
  - What variables should you consider and why?
  - What would you decide and why?

## Smoking by Economic Level

### Income

- In 2007, 29% of adults with incomes below the federal poverty level smoked, compared with 20% of those at or above the poverty level.<sup>1</sup>
  - Thirty-two percent of men below the poverty line were smokers compared with 23% of men at or above poverty level.
  - Twenty-six percent of women below the poverty line were smokers compared with 18% of women at or above poverty level.
- In 2006, there were 14,322,000 poor or near poor current smokers aged 18 or over in the United States.\*
- In 2006, 18% of adults under 65 years of age with private health insurance coverage were current smokers, compared to 35% of Medicaid recipients and 34% of the uninsured.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2000, 25% of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid smoked compared to approximately 12% of pregnant women in the general population.<sup>4</sup>



A. **WARNING CIGARETTES CAUSE LUNG CANCER**  
85% of lung cancers are caused by smoking. 86% of lung cancer victims die within 3 years.  
Health Canada

B. **WARNING CIGARETTES CAUSE MOUTH DISEASES**  
Cigarette smoke causes oral cancer, gum diseases and tooth loss.  
Health Canada

C. **WARNING TOBACCO USE CAN MAKE YOU IMPOTENT**  
Cigarettes may cause sexual impotence due to decreased blood flow to the penis. This can prevent you from having an erection.  
Health Canada

D. **WARNING YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE SMOKING THIS CIGARETTE**  
The smoke from a cigarette is not just inhaled by the smoker. It becomes second-hand smoke, which contains more than 50 cancer-causing agents.  
Health Canada

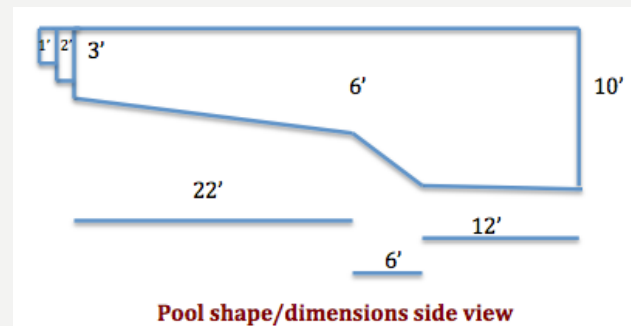
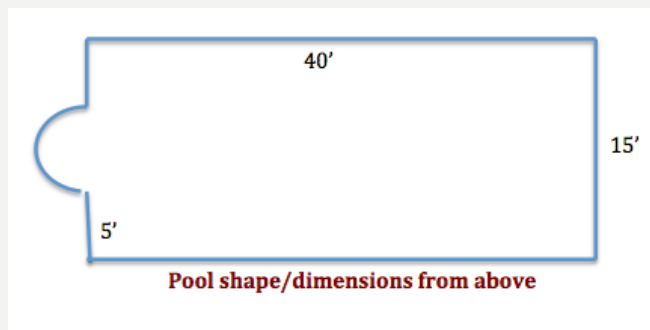
E. **WARNING CHILDREN SEE CHILDREN DO**  
Your children are twice as likely to smoke if you do. Half of all premature deaths among life-long smokers result from tobacco use.  
Health Canada

F. **WARNING CIGARETTES CAUSE STROKES**  
Tobacco smoke can cause the arteries in your brain to clog. This can block the blood vessels and cause a stroke. A stroke can cause disability and death.  
Health Canada



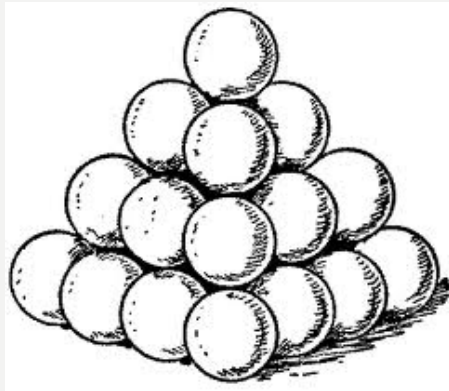
# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

- **Math & Science:** You have decided to build a swimming pool in your back yard. The city building code specifies that you must pour one ton of concrete for every 5000 pounds of water weight (a gallon of water weighs 8.34 pounds). There are 7.48 gallons in one cubic foot.
- You must figure out a) the total volume of the pool, the weight of that water, and the amount of concrete needed to ensure adequate pool strength.



# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES: EXAMPLES

- **Math & Science:**

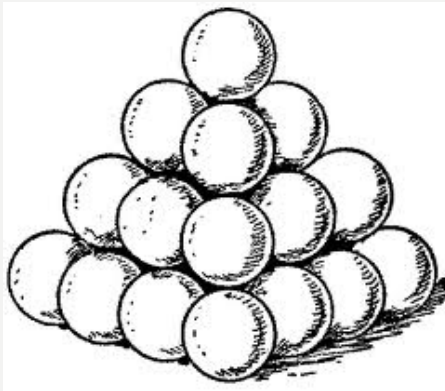


## QUESTION:

- 1) How many balls are in the pyramid?
- 2) *Is there any critical information missing?*

# PROBLEM PERSPECTIVES

- **Math & Science:**



The pyramid has a square base and is solid

QUESTION:

- 1) How many balls are in the pyramid and how do you know this to be true?
- 2) What would the mathematical formula be to determine the number of balls were you to add another level? Two more levels? Infinite more levels?