

One way to practice **exploring multiple perspectives** is to put yourself in the shoes of several different characters in a story. In this way, you attempt to understand each character's perspective—*what* each character sees and *how* and *why* the character sees it that way. This can be challenging to do, particularly if you do not feel you relate to or sympathize with a character. However, exploring multiple perspectives can also help you develop multiple interpretations of a story. By putting yourself in others' shoes you gain a deeper understanding not only of what you read, but also of the world around you.

The tale of the flying Africans depicts people drawing forth a special power to break free from slavery—to rise up from brutal oppression. In the following excerpt from a memoir, the author relates a tale her grandfather told about a woman who went flying during the night. From what might the flying woman in this tale be trying to break free? Consider that question as you read the tale, which is told in the third person. Record your thoughts in the **Response Notes** column.

from **Black Ice** by Lorene Cary

... I began to tell myself Pap's old stories. They began in the black night, too.

"Can you imagine how black? With not a light anywhere. So black and dark that women were sure to be home by nightfall, because they didn't know what could be out there..."

... I imagined that the spirits were always women, like the one who slipped out of her skin at night and flew around in the darkness. She left her skin draped over a chair by the window, as easily as others leave their lingerie. When her husband realized what was happening, he went to an old woman in the village and asked how he could keep his wife home with him, where she belonged. The old woman told him to pretend to be asleep that night and wait until his wife was gone. Then he was to take salt and rub it on the inside of her skin. So he did. Just before the following dawn, when the sky began to lighten a little, but the moon still shone white and silver through the window, the husband heard the rustling and then a shriek of pain as the wife tried to slip back in. "Skin, skin," she screamed, "ya no know me?" ❖

Response  
Notes

✿ What is your first interpretation of the story? How do you explain what happened?

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✿ Now consider the tale from the perspective of the flying woman by imagining that you are that woman. Rewrite the tale in the first person. Include some of her thoughts about why she chooses to fly, why she must leave her skin behind, and how the skin makes her feel.

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✿ Imagine that you are the husband. Rewrite the tale in the first person. Have him narrate the story. Include his thoughts on why he feels the need to keep his wife at home or how he felt when she screamed out in pain from the salt.

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✿ The versions of the tale you wrote from the different perspectives illustrate your interpretations of the story. Share your retellings with a partner, and discuss the differences and similarities.

How does examining the perspectives of multiple characters influence your interpretation of a story?