

CRITICAL THINKING 15

BIAS AND GOVERNMENT SPENDING

In the town of Lakeside, a large parcel of land on Raccoon Lake is for sale. One group of citizens wants the town government to buy the land and turn it into a nature preserve. Another group wants to make the land available for houses. The following two letters, each advocating a different point of view, were sent to the Lakeside Weekly News.

Directions: Read the letters and look for signs of bias, and then answer the questions that follow.

Letter 1

To the Editor: The population of Lakeside is growing. Young families are desperate for housing. Depending on how it is subdivided, this land could provide homes for ten to fifteen families. People have a right to have houses on the lake, so that they can enjoy the wholesome sports of swimming and boating. Only tree huggers and nature extremists object to building houses here. And if the town buys the land, our taxes will go up outrageously.

Letter 2

To the Editor: We, as a community, need to preserve this place of natural beauty for future generations. The land along Raccoon Lake is home to many wildflowers and animals. Every year, hundreds of hikers, birdwatchers, and other people use this land for recreation. If houses are built on that land, it will become ugly and barren. Turning this natural paradise into a housing development would be a tragic loss for Lakeside.

1. Identify the statements of fact in each letter.

2. Writers often show their bias by using emotional language. Identify examples of emotional language in each letter.

3. A person's bias is affected by his or her background, including such things as occupation, family and financial situation, and hobbies. What are some specific factors that might affect the point of view of each of the letter writers?

4. On a separate sheet of paper, list questions that you might ask each letter writer to help yourself evaluate his or her point of view.