What is a Psychological ‘Perspective’

Over the course of the year we will be studying a number of different “perspectives” in the field of psychology. A psychological perspective is a school of thought or a philosophy which would guide someone’s interpretation of an individual’s behavior. Take the subject of aggression, for example. Someone working from the biological perspective would focus on how the brain and nervous system are working in combination to produce the aggressive behavior. Another researcher working from the behavioral perspective would instead investigate how aspects of the subject’s environment have reinforced, supported, or encouraged aggressive actions. Yet another psychologist working in the psychodynamic (Freudian) perspective would seek to understand how the subject’s aggression is rooted in past experiences and unconscious motives. This assignment is designed to familiarize you the perspectives we will be studying in this course.

Your Assignment:

1. Research the seven assigned psychological perspectives (listed below) using either print or online sources of your choosing. If using websites, be sure they are valid and trustworthy (NOT Wikipedia). You must have at least 3 different sources. You must cite each of your sources in APA (American Psychological Association) format. Help with proper APA formatting may be found at this link.

2. Present the definition of each of the seven perspectives found in your sources. This will be your “official” definition.

3. Define each of the perspectives again, but this time in your own original words. Don’t worry about using technical language. Just do your best to express your understanding of that school of thought.

4. List any significant psychologists associated with the perspectives that you come across in your research and include what their contribution was to that perspective.

5. In your own original wording, write out an example of how each perspective might apply to a real-life problem or situation. This will likely require you to engage in a bit of research in order to fully understand that school of thought. Don’t worry about 100% accuracy. I’m looking to see that you have a basic understanding of the applications of these schools of thought.
Here is an example of how each of your seven entries should be structured:

**BEHAVIORAL GENETICS** (you aren’t assigned this one)

OFFICIAL DEFINITION: A field of study which focuses on the role of genetics in human behavior. It examines behavior patterns which are familial and hereditary in origin. It studies behavior traits and their genetic mechanisms.

SOURCE:

MY DEFINITION: Behavioral genetics tries to explain human behavior by understanding what parts of it are based on our inherited genes versus being brought about by the environments in which we live. It basically focuses on the question of “nature vs. nurture.”

SIGNIFICANT NAMES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS:
Sir Francis Galton: First to use twins in genetic research; coined the term “nature vs. nurture”
Charles Darwin: Theory of natural selection
Thomas Bouchard: Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE: Behavioral geneticists spend a lot of time studying twin siblings. Of greatest interest are identical twins who were separated at birth and raised in significantly different home environments. This allows them to compare the twins and determine the extent to which a shared genetic makeup combined with different life experiences create similar or different individuals, all for the purpose of seeking to settle the “nature vs. nurture” debate.

That’s it! Do this for all seven perspectives listed below and be ready to turn it in by the FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL. You will print a hard copy to turn in to me. Here is the list of perspectives:

1. Behavioral (***Different from the “Behavioral Genetics” example above)
2. Biological (Neuroscientific)
3. Cognitive
4. Evolutionary
5. Humanistic
6. Psychodynamic (Freudian)
7. Social-Cultural