

# Media Literacy Lesson (Secondary)

TEACHER

DATE

GRADE LEVEL

Secondary

SUBJECT

Civics, history or literature (for working with primary sources)

## LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

- SWBAT discuss the bias of at least three different news sources.
- SWBAT analyze the roles of media in society using multiple news articles.

## MATERIALS

- Computers (one per pair) or printed articles from a range of sources
- Printed Media Bias Chart (see resources) source:  
[https://www.adfontesmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Media-Bias-Chart\\_4.0\\_8\\_28\\_2018-min.jpg](https://www.adfontesmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Media-Bias-Chart_4.0_8_28_2018-min.jpg)
- Media literacy worksheet (see resources)
- Optional: Gates Annual Letter 2014 <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/Who-We-Are/Resources-and-Media/Annual-Letters-List/Annual-Letter-2014>

## ENGAGEMENT

- Describe how the teacher will capture students' interest.
- What kind of questions should the students ask themselves after the engagement?

Start the lesson with a guided discussion of news. Possible questions to raise and explore with the class:

1. Where do you get your news? On what devices and in what contexts?
2. How do you know when a source is biased or unbiased? Why is it easier to see bias when it comes from a position (i.e., the other side) that you may not share?
3. Have you heard of the term "echo chamber"? How has technology played a role in creating echo chambers?
4. What do people mean by "fake news"? Why is fake news so frequently discussed currently?
5. When have you or someone you know fallen for a fake news story? What was it?
6. What is "the media"? What does the media do for society?

## EXPLORATION

- Describe what hands-on/minds-on activities students will be doing.
- List "big idea" conceptual questions the teacher will use to encourage and/or focus students' exploration

Project the Media Bias Chart and distribute copies to each pair of students. Explain how the chart works, starting with the two axes and then pointing out a few sources that students may be familiar with. Ask students to reflect on the chart. What do they notice? What surprises them or does not surprise them? You may want to read the FAQs for the media bias chart to better answer student questions, especially about the chart's own bias. <http://www.mediabiaschart.com/faq/>

Provide students with a list of topics that have recently been in the news. You could assign topics, or students could investigate whichever they are most interested in. Have students work in pairs to find four different articles from about the same time dealing with one of the topics. Students should skim articles from different sources and analyze the bias in the article using the media literacy worksheet. Encourage students to find specific parts of the text that introduce bias.

**EXPLANATION**

- Student explanations should precede introduction of terms or explanations by the teacher. What questions or techniques will the teacher use to help students connect their exploration to the concept under examination?
- List higher order thinking questions which teachers will use to solicit student explanations and help them to justify their explanations.

**ELABORATION**

- Describe how students will develop a more sophisticated understanding of the concept.
- What vocabulary will be introduced and how will it connect to students' observations?
- How is this knowledge applied in our daily lives?

Introduce the different roles media has in society. The four major ones include as a gatekeeper (which stories society is aware of), an agenda-setter (what issues are in need of a response or action), an advocate (how can reporting better the lives of others) and a watchdog (how can reporting monitor those in power). Ask students to say what role the articles they found were examples of. You can use resources from Learning to Give or iCivics to guide this discussion or dive deeper.

<https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/media-literacy>

<https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/role-media>

**EXTENSION**

- This lesson focused only on written media. You could assign as homework or as an additional lesson a similar analysis using radio or television news.

**GOING DEEPER**

*Option One:* You can explicitly connect the work that students did in class today to their visit to the Discovery Center by using the Gates Annual Letter from 2014. This letter lays out three myths that block progress for the poor. Engage the students in a discussion about how the spread of these myths relates to the role of media and its biases.

<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/Who-We-Are/Resources-and-Media/Annual-Letters-List/Annual-Letter-2014>

*Option Two:* Social media has made an impact on how people get their news – and often in ways they cannot control through the use of algorithms. Break students into groups to research different platforms as sources for news media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube). For example, they might search for “misinformation” that has spread via these platforms, which traditional print media has played a watchdog role by reporting. Ask them to discuss and share back with the class their findings.

**DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES TO MEET DIVERSE LEARNER NEEDS**

- You may choose to provide some of the articles for students. Newsela is a good resource that has current events articles at a variety of reading levels. <https://newsela.com/>
- Note: This lesson assumes some student familiarity with recognizing bias and instead focuses on exploring different news sources and comparing and contrasting. Should you want to provide students with more guidance about how to recognize bias both the New York Times and National Public Radio have more in depth resources.
- <https://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/learning/lesson-plans/evaluating-sources-in-a-post-truth-world-ideas-for-teaching-and-learning-about-fake-news.html>

POSSIBLE STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6  
Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.5  
Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8  
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

EXAMPLE ARTICLES

The following articles demonstrate a wide range of news coverage about Omarosa Manigault-Newman’s book *Unhinged*. They could be a starting point if you don’t want students to find their own articles. You could even have students just start by comparing the titles.

- NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/10/636955054/omarosa-tells-npr-she-heard-trump-n-word-tape-contradicting-her-own-tell-all-boo>
- Christian Science Monitor: <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2018/0813/Got-a-story-to-tell-or-sell-Better-back-it-up-with-a-tape>
- BuzzFeed News: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/darrensands/omarosa-new-book-fbi>
- Slate: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/08/omarosa-tapes-there-is-nothing-the-former-trump-aide-can-say-or-do-that-could-possibly-matter.html>
- Fox News: <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2018/08/13/omarosa-cuts-off-today-appearance-tells-savannah-guthrie-to-calm-down-during-bizarre-interview.html>
- Fox News: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/08/14/trump-calls-omarosa-dog-as-war-over-salacious-memoir-explodes.html>