

Lesson Plan:

Differing News Reports (long)

News Reports from Different Viewpoints: Introduction of concepts (Part 1 of 3)

Note: A shortened (one class period) version of this lesson is also available [here](#).

Description

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the concept of bias and viewpoints in news reporting.

Objectives/Skills

- Students will be exposed to examples of news articles providing differing interpretations of the same event.
- Encourage students to discuss the importance of understanding the existence of bias in news reports.
- Prompt students to consider examples in their own lives of biased/differing presentation of factual information.

Questions or Assessment

- Were students able to identify that the different news articles contained the same factual information? Were students able to further identify the manner by which this information was presented in different ways?
- Do students recognize the possibility for bias and interpretation in news reports, including contemporary events?
- Do students appear comfortable with the concept of critically analyzing the information around them?

Procedure

Teacher prep

Find examples in the news of different interpretations of the same event. If possible, print out copies for students to see. [Links provided in online version]

Introducing Critical Media Analysis (15 min.)

1. Share some of the prepared examples of news articles with the class. Examples include:
 - a. Headlines from the most recent Super Bowl, World Series, etc. from the respective cities represented in the game. One city's newspaper will likely say "[Team 1] Won!", while the other city's paper will say something along the lines of "[Team 2] Falls Short". Have students read and understand how the focus of the two articles are different, even though they recount the same event. Examples of these differences can be found online.

Subjects

Social Studies, History,
Language Arts

Grade-level

Middle, 6-8
High, 9-12

Time required

35 min.

Materials required

- Printouts of news examples
[optional; explained in lesson
plan]

Related background reading

None

Related documents

None

Related links

[Guampedia](#)

- b. Yahoo news report labeling white Katrina hurricane survivors as “finding food” and African American survivors as “looters.”
2. Initiate a discussion with students.
 - a. Are these news articles about the same event?
 - b. How are these news articles the same? How are they different?
 - c. How did you feel after reading one article? And after reading the other?
 - d. What do they notice about these articles when they are compared to one another?
3. Explain to students that news reports attempt to remain neutral, but that it is impossible to remove all bias and interpretation from the presentation of information.

Discussing Applicability to Daily Life (15 min.)

1. Ask students if they have ever read or heard something that appeared slanted or biased. Feel free to cite additional examples, or refer to the articles used in the previous exercise.
2. Explain to students that people write news reports, and all people have viewpoints, backgrounds, and biases. News reports are thus not always neutral, and that the same event and factual information may be portrayed in vastly different lights.
3. Discuss with students why it is important to be aware of possible biases or motives of authors of news reports. Note that it is difficult to ever know the motives of the author, but that it is important to critically analyze news articles to see if they require the reader to seek further understanding or a different viewpoint on the issue.

Homework (3 min.)

1. Ask students to find an example of a news piece. Instruct them to bring it in, along with some notations on how they could rephrase or restructure the piece to be portrayed in a different light. Provide an example: “This articles says that the NY Yankees won the World Series. However, you could rephrase it to say that the Philadelphia Phillie Phanatic narrowly lost the World Series. As you’ll note, the focus of the story shifts, and instead of feeling happy for the Yankees, the author assumes that you are more concerned about feeling sad about the Phillie Phanatic.”
 - a. Students may be confused. Feel free to provide additional instruction, but also encourage them to just try. Inform them that, at the very least, they should bring in a news article that they believe may have multiples sides in terms of the underlying story.

Recap (2 min.)

1. Recap what we’ve done and learned in the lesson:

“Today we examined some news articles and came to understand that all media may contain bias or viewpoints. We discussed the importance of this knowledge, and in the process, hopefully became more aware of the need to be critical consumers of media (or, in other words, to understand who is creating what we read/watch/hear, and what purposes or biases they may have).”
2. Ask students for their favorite parts of the activity.