

# Lesson Plan: Differing News Reports (long) 1

Introduction of concepts (Part 1 of 3)

**Subjects:** Social Studies, History, Language Arts

**Time required:** 35 minutes

**Related links:** [Guampedia](#), [Pacific Daily News](#), [Guam Daily Post](#), [KUAM](#), [Pacific News Center](#), [Stripes Guam](#)

**Grade-level:** Middle [6-8], High [9-12]

**Materials required:** Printouts of news examples [optional; explained in lesson plan]

## 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 minutes)***

1. Share some of the prepared examples of news articles with the class. Examples include:
  - 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](#).
  - Yahoo news report labeling white Katrina hurricane survivors as "finding food" and African American survivors as "looters."
2. Initiate a discussion with students.
  - Are these news articles about the same event?
  - How are these news articles the same? How are they different?
  - How did you feel after reading one article? And after reading the other?
  - 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 minutes)***

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 minutes)**

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 article says that the NY Yankees won the World Series. However, you could rephrase it to say that the Philadelphia Phillies 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 Phillies.”
  - 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 multiple sides in terms of the underlying story.

### **Recap (2 minutes)**

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).”

Ask students for their favorite parts of the activity.

## **Lesson Plan: Differing News Reports (long) 2**

Sharing examples and writing our own news reports (Part 2 of 3)

**Time required:** 45 minutes

### Description

In this lesson, students will recap the previous lesson by sharing their examples of news articles that are open to interpretation. Students will also begin writing their own examples of news reports.

### Objectives/Skills

- Recap content that has been covered previously in class (or that is currently being studied).
- Experience, first hand, the possibility for skewing factual information through a self-written historical news report.
- Understand the importance of critically engaging with news.

### Questions or Assessment

- Were students able to identify the potential, or existence, or bias in their brought-in examples of news articles?
- Were students able to begin writing their news reports from a different point of view?
- Are students familiar with the resources available to conduct additional research for their assignment?

## **Procedure**

### **Teacher prep**

Find additional examples in the news of different interpretations of the same event (different from the previous day). If possible, print out copies or provide links for students to see. These may be needed if not enough students completed the homework assignment.

### **Sharing Homework Assignment (15 minutes)**

1. Have a few students (two or three) volunteer to share their news article with the class. There will not be enough time for them to read the entire article, but they should describe the general content and tone of the article.
2. Have each student describe where the article came from, who the author is, and any other background information they may have regarding the writing of the article.
3. Have students then explain if they think the article is biased or not. If the article is fairly neutral (and most will be), then encourage the student to imagine what changes could be made to the article in order to make it more biased.
  - This exercise will help students understand that small, subtle changes can make an article more biased.

- Students may have some difficulty at the beginning of this exercise. Help them by providing some guidance; show how objective descriptive statements (e.g. dangerous, silly, unsupported, supported) can be added to change the tone of an article.
  - If students still have difficulty, provide them with two copies of the same, brief article that you've revised highlight the different tones that can be accomplished by making minor changes to a news report. Or, use an example as provided here. [Link provided in online version]
4. Have all students, in pairs, briefly share their articles with each other. They are to then repeat the above exercise for their own articles, and in so doing, identify the bias or potential for bias. Be sure to walk around the room to make certain that students are on task, and that questions can be answered.

### ***Writing from Different Points of View (15 minutes)***

1. Present to students a specific time-period of Guam history (most likely, this will be a content field the class has recently covered, or is currently learning about). Simply state the time period along with some general background information (to prompt student recall). Next, identify a specific event that the class will be focusing upon.
2. Next, separate the class into two groups. Explain to students that one half will be writing from the point of view of one side of the event, while the other half will be writing from the point of view of an opposing side of the event. For example, if the event was the Japanese invasion of Guam, then one half of the class will be reporters for the Japanese, while the other half of the class will be reporters for the Guamanians (Chamorros).
3. Using information collected from Guampedia or other reputable sources, list some factual information on the board regarding the event (e.g. date, participants, location). Then list additional information that may be up to interpretation (e.g. impact of the action, importance of the events, etc.). Provide the same information to the entire class.
4. Prompt each student to write his or her own brief news report on the event. Students/reporters should write from the point of view of one side (in accordance to which group they are in). Encourage students to be biased while maintaining a news-worthy tone; the purpose of this exercise is to understand how a news article, though reporting factual information, can still be slanted toward one interpretation or bias.
5. While students are writing, be sure to observe their progress and provide help. Some students may continue to be confused by the prompt. Be sure to further explain that they are to imagine themselves as a reporter writing from a specific point of view.

### ***Explaining the Homework Assignment – Additional Research (3 minutes)***

1. Instruct students to include in their report at least three additional factual points that were not written on the board. Remind them that they have numerous resources which they can use, including:
  - Textbooks
  - Content authorities, including teachers
  - Reputable websites, including [Guampedia](#)
  - First-hand information [depending on the topic]
2. Remind students to include facts that support their viewpoint on the issue.

### ***Recap (2 minutes)***

Recap what we've done and learned in the lesson:

“Today we used the news articles we collected in order to analyze the presence and potential for bias in media. We discussed how minor changes can change the entire tone of an article, which in turn would change our perception of the event. Even though the facts remain the same, it's the presentation that changes our attitudes. Lastly, in order to best understand this concept, we began writing out own news articles from differing viewpoints. Don't forget to finish them up tonight with additional information! We'll be sharing them with our peers during the next class period.”

Ask students for their favorite parts of the activity.

## **Lesson Plan: Differing News Reports (long) 3**

Sharing our news articles and recapping the lesson (Part 3 of 3)

**Materials required:** [Optional] Healthy snack and drinks

## Description

In this lesson, students will share their completed news reports about Guam history from opposing viewpoints. Students will then recap their work from the previous lessons, and discuss the importance of being critical media consumers.

## Objectives/Skills

- Review content that has been covered previously in the course (or that is currently being studied).
- Experience, first hand, the possibility for skewing factual information through a self-written historical news report.
- Understand the importance of critically engaging with news.

## Questions or Assessment

- Were students able to add additional researched information to their news reports?
- Were students able to identify the manner by which factual information can be presented in a biased manner?
- Do students recognize the possibility for bias and interpretation in news reports, including contemporary events?
- Do students appear aware of the need to more critically analyze the information around them?

## Procedure

### *Teacher prep*

Healthy snacks and drinks. [Optional]

### **Recap (3 minutes)**

1. Review the activities of the previous two lessons in order to convey to students that the lesson series has worked toward an increasingly nuanced understanding of critical media consumption, culminating with today's sharing activity. In other words, explain to students that the first day introduced the concept of critical news consumption, the second day the class participated in creating their own versions of news reports, and that today they are sharing their different reports and discussing the implications of acknowledging different sides to historical and contemporary news report.
2. Ask students if they had any difficulty completing their homework assignment.
  - Were they able to find resources or additional information to include in their news reports?
  - Where did they get this information?
  - Were they able to use different sources, such as newspapers, Guampedia, textbooks, family members, and teachers? (Depending on the content matter you've chosen for the class exercise, not all of these resources will be applicable)

### **Sharing (20 minutes)**

1. Seat students into small groups; each group should have equal numbers of reporters from each of the two sides of the topic.
2. Share healthy snacks and drinks with the class. [Optional]
3. Have students share their reports with the group, alternating between viewpoints.
  - Remind students not to make negative comments about any of the reports.
  - Walk around the class and make certain students stay on task. It may help to provide a specific time limit; for example, have each student share for 3 minutes, and then move onto the next report. If students finish before the 3 minutes, they are to briefly discuss the challenges to may or may not have encountered in formulating their report
  - [For advanced students] Encourage students to take notes on things that stuck out to them. Patterns, general concepts, interesting/surprising interpretations or juxtapositions, etc.

### **Discussion on Findings (12 minutes)**

1. Ask students to consider the two different viewpoints taken in writing the news reports, and have them share common points shared between the two sides. List these points on the board.
2. Now ask students to identify differing points between the two sides. List these points on the board.
3. If students are familiar with the concept, identify among the previous points examples of objective and subjective statements. Convey to students, through either discussion or explication, that statements can be technically objective, but juxtaposed or presented in a slanted manner. [If students are unfamiliar with the concept, you may use this opportunity to teach it to them, or you may skip over it; the lesson does not require it]

4. Lead a discussion on how these same factual events can be portrayed in such different lights. Emphasize that the content of these reports are all technically factual, but the manner of presentation can color the interpretation.
5. Have students share their thoughts about hearing a news report written from a different viewpoint than they personally used.

***Discussion on Application (8 minutes)***

Have students explain how today's lesson can be applied when reading old news articles.

- Guide students to briefly discuss the importance of understanding an author's point of view, and that even news articles can be biased.
- Ask students how the understanding of authorship can be applied when reading current events. Prompt students for specific examples.
- Students will likely repeat their responses from the previous question. It is important to encourage students to draw connections between the lesson and contemporary events affecting their lives.
- Examples of new topics include: military buildup, elections, political news, or even game recaps of favorite sports teams.

***Recap (2 minutes)***

Recap what we've done and learned in the lesson:

For advanced students: "Over the last three class periods, we've learned about the importance of understanding an author's point of view. We all have viewpoints or biases, though it's sometimes hard to identify them; the same applies to news articles. While news reporters attempt their best at remaining neutral, it is impossible for anyone to remain completely dispassionate (or, in other words, unbiased). For this reason, it is important to always consider the viewpoint of the author when reading a news article. Even if it's difficult to know what the author is thinking or feeling, we can look for clues, including the subjective comments (comments that are opinions) or the type of information that is being published (or not published). This exercise was just an introduction into the range of ways an historical event may be portrayed. Hopefully this will aid you in becoming more aware and critical media consumers."

For younger students: "Over the last three class periods, we learned how the same event can be portrayed in different ways. Half of you were reporters for [name side], while the other half were reporters for [name side]. You both had the same information, but your news articles were very different in tone. By doing this exercise, we've learned how different news articles can be, and we've learned that it's important to always be aware of the tone of a news article."

Ask students for their favorite parts of the activity.