

ELA LESSON PLAN		Bias—in the News and Inside of Us (lesson #3 of 3)	
OVERVIEW			
Unit	<i>Where Did You Hear That? Becoming Critical Consumers of News Media</i>		
Lesson Length	Three hours minimum (can be split up over a couple classes)		
Class	ELA, Pre-ASE, GLE 4–8, CCRSAE C & D		
Teachers	Kristi Kaeppel, Ric Nudell, and Aliza Ansell		
STAGE 1—PLANNING for DESIRED RESULTS			
ESSENTIAL & GUIDING QUESTIONS	<p>How do our biases impact the way we consume and judge information?</p> <p>What techniques do authors use to influence the way we consume information?</p>		
LESSON OBJECTIVES		CCRSAE Instructional Shifts addressed in this lesson	
<p><i>By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify common news biases (bias by omission, by photo, by emphasis, by statistics, and by language) and how they influence our view of the information we consume ✓ Recognize how our values and beliefs impact our assessment of the trustworthiness of the news media ✓ Compose a short text that illustrates knowledge and application of common biases found in news media 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice with complex text and its academic language ○ Ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence from literary and informational texts 	
CCR LEVEL-SPECIFIC STANDARDS THAT SUPPORT AND ALIGN WITH THE LESSON OBJECTIVES			
<p>R.4.D: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</p> <p>R.5.D: Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.</p> <p>R.6.C. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.</p> <p>R.6.C. Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.</p> <p>R.6.D. Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).</p> <p>W.4.C: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>L.3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</p>			
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED	This lesson builds on lesson 2 in this unit.		

STAGE 2—EVIDENCE of MEETING the LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students' understanding will be assessed through classroom discussion, performance on handout exercises, and through application of concepts to their writing in the final part of the lesson.

STAGE 3—ACTION

*Materials provided with this lesson are posted at

<https://www.sabes.org/content/curriculum-critical-media-consumers-unit-lesson-3>

PRE-TEACH VOCABULARY (15 min.)

using appropriate EBRI strategies

**bias, conservative, liberal,
propaganda, prejudice**

(see the [MA STAR Handbook](#), pg. 17, for a chart of vocabulary strategies)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION to BIAS (1 hr.)

Materials:

- 1) Handout*: Bias in news headlines
- 2) Handout*: Common media biases
- 3) Website: [Media Bias Fact Check](#) provides lists of sites that contain right and left-biased articles. Pull paragraphs from these articles for the Application section of this lesson.

Explanation:

1. To illustrate the concept of bias, write two statements on the board that frame the same information differently such as: “Kelly is thrifty” and “Kelly is cheap.” Discuss how each is a different way of seeing a situation, using different language to show bias.
2. Define **bias** for students as **being one-sided and prejudiced on an issue**. Discuss and define what an objective statement would look like—for example, “Kelly doesn’t spend money on lunch” or “Kelly brings her own lunch and coffee to work instead of buying it out.” Note the role of language choice in detecting bias.
3. Explain that even though news agencies often try to be objective in their reporting, many are biased and bias can creep in without the author noticing since we all have biases.
4. Show students **examples of headlines*** on the same/similar issues and the various biases. Example: “A crowd of over 900 attended the march” vs. “Fewer than 1,000 people showed up to the march.”
5. Review a few common forms of bias found in news media: bias by language, by omission, by emphasis, by statistics, and by photo. Consider creating a slideshow based on the handout, **Common Media Biases***, with current headlines as examples.

Guided Practice:

6. Together with students, look at news articles that contain a few biases from the **Common News Biases handout***. Model identifying one and have students orally try to identify them as a class. There are up-to-date examples continually posted on [Media Bias Fact Check](#) and [Student News Daily](#) (although this site itself may be biased—to be pointed out and discussed with students). One example is the [NY Times Misleading Photo of the Patriots’ Visit to the White House](#).

7. To practice listening and to use various forms of media, consider using biased video clips as well as texts.

Application:

1. Provide students with **paragraphs from 3-6 articles** that exhibit various biases (pull examples from [Media Bias Fact Check](#)). Students will work independently or in pairs to identify the biases using the handout.
2. To differentiate, lower level pairs can use fewer paragraphs at an easier GLE level, while higher groups use more complex and longer texts.
3. When finished, groups will report out their answers and discuss what evidence they used to find biases.

PART 2: CONFIRMATION BIAS (1 hr.)

Materials:

- 1) Political Values Survey, Liberal Version
 - 2) Political Values Survey, Conservative Version
 - 3) [Pew Research Political Typology Quiz](#)
 - 4) Headline Credibility Survey
1. To illustrate confirmation bias before explicitly teaching what it means, give students the **political values surveys***, which will give a simplistic idea of whether they lean more left or right. *Note: there are two versions of the survey, one where the higher score = conservative and one where the higher score = liberal.* Pass out randomly. For a more in-depth and valid instrument, students can also take the **15 minute free online political typology quiz*** from the Pew Research Center.
 2. Give the students the **Headline Credibility Survey handout***, which asks students to rank the likely credibility of headlines.
 3. Ask students to then compare their scoring on each. How many people who scored likely liberal on the political values also came out liberal on the credibility survey and vice versa? Discuss how our own values impact what news and information we accept. You may also want to discuss how the wording of the headlines affected perceived credibility—for example, how the phrase “in the toilet” in the first headline potentially reflects subjectivity.
 4. Explain that in addition to news sources having bias, we (all people) are often biased in what we accept as valid news and what we reject. This is called confirmation bias.
 5. Give **other examples** and discuss how one’s background and beliefs impact acceptance of news and information. For example, ask how they might view a police shooting of a Black man if they were white and from a family of police members? What about if they were Black?
 6. At the end of the discussion, remind students to consider their own values/beliefs when reading news and how that impacts their judgment.

Extension Activity: For student groups that have already done independent research on the web, consider having them search through a **variety of news publications**, using the **common biases organizer** to identify articles containing the biases. These students can then present their findings to the class.

WRITING/WORK ON NEWSLETTER (CULMINATING ASSESSMENT) (1 hr.)

Materials: *Biased article checklist

1. By this point in the unit, student groups should have chosen a controversial topic that their newsletter will focus on.
2. Explain to students that they will now work on creating a biased article using the common news biases discussed in class today (they can refer back to the **handout for the definitions** of each).
3. Model creating a biased paragraph using 1-2 of the common biases.
4. Students will work in their groups to write a biased article, choosing 2-3 common biases to include in a short article on their topic. Use the **biased article checklist** for guidance.
5. For differentiation, lower level groups can write a 1-2 paragraph article while higher groups can write 2-3 paragraphs. For extra structure, consider assigning roles to students (1 student comes up with idea for using 1 common bias, another comes up with idea for a different bias, etc.)
6. Students can collaborate on writing using Google Docs or a similar digital tool.
7. Remind students that they will later revise their articles, and that they should have fun with this one!
8. When finished, students can read theirs aloud in groups and have other students identify the common biases used and what clues they used to identify them.

CLOSING (5–10 min.)

Materials: Exit slips or internet access for google forms

Exit question (using Google Forms or writing a few sentences on paper):

Why is it important to consider the potential biases of news that we see?

What are some ways to tell if a source is biased?

What should we keep in mind about our own biases when reading an article?

If time allows, have students share out answers and have a closing discussion.

NOTES:

- If you have more class time, use it for further writing and editing of these pieces. Find examples of previously studied article types and techniques in authentic news. Revise, format, and present the newsletters.
- After teaching this lesson, add a *Reflection / Notes for Teaching it Again*.

Useful documents on the SABES website:

[“Standards-Aligned Classroom”](#), [“Instructional Planning Guide for ELA”](#), [“Three Key Shifts”](#)