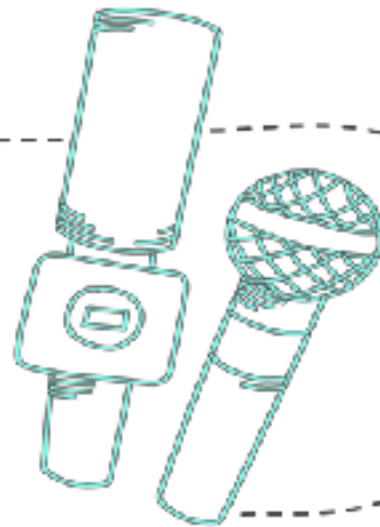


# Broadcast Journalism

Unit: News Literacy

Adapted from JEA



*Dianne St Clair*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

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# FOUNDATIONS OF NEWS LITERACY

## 1. UNDERSTANDING NEWS LITERACY

### Understanding News Literacy: Overview

In this lesson, students are introduced to the fundamental conventions of news literacy and are asked to reflect upon their own expectations for today's news media.

### Objectives

- Students will learn the basic concepts of news literacy to determine what skills they must refine to become better news producer and consumers.
- Students will understand why news literacy is important for citizens in today's democracy.

**Length:** 50 minutes

### Resources:

- Whiteboard and screen projector with audio
- Handout: Class set of "Main Concepts of News Literacy" at the bottom of this lesson
- Handout: Journal entry prompts and rubric
- [Assessment: Understanding news literacy matching quiz](#)

### Lesson step-by-step

#### 1. Building background — 15 minutes

Write the text of the First Amendment on the whiteboard for students to reference. If you have not yet covered the First Amendment in your class, discuss with students the idea of the free press as a check on government. We expect that the news media, as part of the press, will tell us about important things going on in our country. We expect that because we can't be on Capitol Hill for every Congressional hearing, someone in the media is doing that for us. We entrust them, as their job, to look at what the government is doing and warn the people if something doesn't seem right.

Explain that the news media has often been the source of some of the most important information — including Watergate (may need to explain this one), the Pentagon Papers (also might need to be explained), and the war on Iraq. But more recently, as digital media has changed our understanding of the press and the profit models for how the press sustains itself, traditional journalism is struggling.

"News literacy" is one way we can understand the traditional conventions of journalism, the current state of the news media and our role as media consumers. This week, we're going to learn more about what, exactly, news literacy is all about.

#### 2. Understanding the concept — 10 minutes

Write the terms "news" and "literacy" on the board next to each other, with space underneath for descriptors. Ask students first to define what news is (information, knowledge, current and relevant facts, etc.). Then, ask students to define literacy (the ability to read and write, to understand a specific

knowledge area, to comprehend information about a subject). Given these two words, what, then, do they assume is meant by the phrase news literacy?

As one organization puts it, “To be news literate is to build knowledge, think critically, act civilly and participate in the democratic process.” —Robert R. McCormick Foundation

Essentially, news literacy is the process of making oneself an informed, participatory, engaged, conscious news producer and consumer. It means we don’t sit in the passenger seat anymore when it comes to understanding how the news media affects our world and what we can do about it.

### 3. Think-pair-share — 10 minutes

Pair students up, and have them take turns reading the news literacy concepts found on the handout. As they read each concept, students should stop and discuss whether they agree with that concept and why. They can discuss any personal experiences with information or media that have shaped their perceptions of these concepts.

Next, assign each pair one of the main concepts, and instruct them to come up with a specific, recent news media example that illustrates that concept. They will share this example with the class during the last 15 minutes. For instance, for Number 4, one pair of students might remember how Twitter users posted many tweets with inaccurate information about the Boston marathon bombing.

### 4. Contextualize and present — 15 minutes

Go around the room and allow groups to share their recent news media example and explain how it relates to the news literacy concept they were assigned. Other students can offer feedback on how well this example relates, or they can expand on that example with additional information.

### 5. Homework and segue to Lesson 1.2 — 5 minutes

Assign students a personal media log for homework. Starting at the end of class and continuing until they return tomorrow (or the next time you see them), students should keep a media log that details what kind of media they use (news, entertainment, personal), the specific websites or media they read (Facebook, the local paper, etc), and the time spent with each one. Ask them to keep a simple chart that looks like this:

<b>Media Type</b>	<b>Description of Media</b>	<b>Time Spent</b>
Social media	Facebook	1 hour
News	KKCO evening news	30 minutes
Entertainment	Jon Stewart	30 minutes
Retail	Amazon.com	15 minutes

### 6. Journal response

Reflect on your media log. Are you surprised by the amount of media you consume? Are you surprised by the type or the amount of time you spend on any given media? Do you think

you consume more or less than the average teenager? Was there any item of your media chart that was unusual or atypical of your normal daily media usage?

## 7. Assessment

To check for understanding of the news literacy concepts and application of the examples discovered in class, pass out copies of the understanding news literacy matching quiz. Students should match the main concept of news literacy with the action statement that best represents that concept. After completing the quiz individually, students can compare their responses with a partner, discuss their answers, and use the key provided to self-check. This assessment can be implemented before or after assigning their journal response.

### A note on journal assessments

This is a highly reflective, discussion-based unit on news literacy. Because the topic is inherently reflective, many of the lessons use reflection journal entries for assessment purposes. Students will submit their journals on a weekly basis for grading.

There are two types of journal entries:

1. **Respond to the Prompt:** Students respond to the prompt during class time or as homework.
2. **I Spy Media:** Students journal about something they read in the media that they think applies to the news literacy concepts they've been discussing.  
Refer to [prompts](#) and the [rubric](#).

Student growth and understanding throughout this unit will be largely based on their journal responses. They should take the prompts seriously and consider their responses carefully. They can expect to spend 20-30 minutes on each response, thinking, evaluating and responding.

1. *Informed citizens are essential to good government and free society.*
2. *There is a public value to sharing accurate, newsworthy information.*
3. *The Internet has changed how people receive news information and now people have to take a more active role in becoming well informed and sharing accurate information.*
4. *Accurate information is available online, but so is poor quality, misleading information.*
5. *The Internet makes it possible to independently fact check and verify information by looking at multiple information providers.*
6. *In assessing accuracy of information, it is important to consider who is providing it and their sources and whether the information includes verifiable facts and key perspectives as opposed to opinions and unsubstantiated conclusions.*
7. *To be well informed, one should get news from multiple outlets representing different perspectives.*
8. *It's important to follow a story over time to be able to trust the information.*
9. *Some news and information has a strong bias, and there are ways to recognize this.*
10. *One should be skeptical of information based purely on anonymous or biased sources.*
11. *It's important to be aware of one's own biases and assumptions and seek reliable information that challenges one's own views.*

12. It is important to be open-minded rather than having fixed opinions that can't be changed even with new facts.

Adapted from: Main Concepts of News Literacy

Created by Baruch College Professor Geanne Rosenberg and Alan Miller, director of the News Literacy Project, in collaboration with Dean Miller, director of Stony Brook University's News Literacy Center, and Tom Rosenstiel, founder and director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

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## Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

## 2. EVALUATING YOUR MEDIA SAVVY

### Evaluating Your Media Savvy: Overview

*Students will evaluate their own personal news media habits based on the media log assigned in the [Understanding news literacy](#) lesson and by answering self-reflective questions. Students will consider how their perspectives on news media have developed over time, and what influences their family, community, and education have had on their expectations for journalism.*

### Objectives

- Students will examine their personal media habits.
- Students will explain and analyze their perspectives on news media and how those perspectives have developed.
- Students will apply their personal knowledge to the greater workings of journalism in today's society.

**Length:** 50 minutes

**Resources:** Student media log (assigned as homework after [Understanding news literacy](#))

## Lesson step-by-step

### 1. Class media chart — 10 minutes

Explain to students that you're going to use the personal media logs they created to build a class media chart. Using the whiteboard, create a master chart based on the individual logs, leaving space under media type, then ask students to come up one at a time to add to each category so that their media use is represented on the board. (Example below. Students should expand the list under "name of media" or add a different media type if needed. The chart should represent each student's media use once it is complete)

<b>Media Type</b>	<b>Description of Media</b>	<b>Time Spent</b>
Social media	Facebook	1 hour
News	KKCO evening news	30 minutes
Entertainment	Jon Stewart	30 minutes
Retail	Amazon.com	15 minutes

Once every student has gone to the board and added to the chart, tally the total time spent under each activity. You will no doubt see a much greater amount of time spent on non-news activities. This will be the basis for the following discussion.

### 3. Class discussion — 15 minutes

As a class, discuss the following questions. Ask students to thoughtfully respond to other's responses and to challenge any stereotypes or general statements about teenagers and media use. The goal is to push students to understand their personal media use, and how an emphasis/expertise in non-news media might make them less informed news media consumers than they otherwise might be.

#### QUESTIONS:

- What trends do you notice in your personal media use?
- Why do you think you spent so much more time on other media types besides news?
- Let's look specifically at the news category. Do you think it's important to get news and information about current events? Why or why not?
- Why do you think teens often don't read or watch the news?
- How might reading or watching the news help you in your daily life?
- How do you think keeping up with the news might make you a better citizen? What about when you're an adult? Do you think it's a necessary part of adulthood to know and understand what's going on in the world?

#### 4. Individual exercise – 10 minutes

Now that you've discussed their personal experience with media and some of their expectations and beliefs, it's time to evaluate their own news media savvy. That is, what do they know about how the news media world operates? Pass out the short quiz (found at the end of the lesson) and ask students to take 5-10 minutes to answer each question.

#### 5. Quiz regroup and discussion – 15 minutes

Once all students are done with the quiz, go over the answers as a class and explain. Ask students to keep track of which questions they got right or wrong. Ask the following questions:

##### QUESTIONS:

- Were you surprised by how many you knew or how many you missed?
- Those of you who answered most of the questions correctly, how did you learn all this
  - about the news media?
- Why do you think knowing the answers to questions like this is good for us as news consumers?

#### TEST YOUR NEWS SAVVY

*True or False?*

1. Journalists must have a certain college degree to get hired and do their jobs.
2. Any news stories printed online have been fact-checked just like those printed in newspapers.
3. The ads that appear as sidebars on most websites are always approved by the people who run the websites.
4. Newspapers, magazines, and websites will always tell you if something they wrote was incorrect.
5. Journalists don't write stories about their friends.
6. Journalists never write their own opinion.
7. It's easy to tell if a story is one-sided or unfair.
8. Whoever wrote a story usually writes the headline (or title) that goes with it.
9. Journalists let the people who are in their stories read the articles before they are printed.
10. A good journalist won't print something if they think it will get someone in trouble.

#### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1</a>	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
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<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1c</a>	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d</a>	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

### 3. WHY NEWS MATTERS

#### Description

Using historical documents and news coverage, this lesson explores the role of news in a democracy, and the role journalists play in helping citizens to be active, informed, and engaged. By understanding the societal obligations that underpin journalism, students will have a greater appreciation for why news literacy is important.

#### Objectives

- Students will understand key social and political movements in which the news media was a vital force.
- Students will consider the journalist’s role in shaping history.
- Students will analyze how certain events might have unfolded differently if the news media were more or less engaged in the issue.
- Students will evaluate how consuming news media helps keep them informed on local/national events.

**Length:** 50 minutes

#### Resources

[Slideshow: News covers history](#)

[Rubric: Why news matters](#)

Access to video/audio projector to show news segment

#### Lesson step-by-step

##### **1. Introduction – 10 minutes**

Write the following quote on the board:

**“Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.”– Thomas Jefferson**

Discuss with students what Thomas Jefferson might have meant by this quote. Consider these questions:

- How does freedom of the press, or the ability for journalists to write without being censored, help keep us free?
- How important do you think this freedom is?

- Why might people, especially in the government, want to control what journalists write about?

*Explain:*

- *the founding fathers, especially those in favor of the Bill of Rights, though it was **especially important to protect the freedom to publish.***
- *They thought the **government shouldn't be able to control what was printed and what wasn't.***
- *Most of all, they were afraid that **if the press wasn't protected** (along with religion, petition, speech, and assembly), **the citizens of the new America wouldn't be able to fully express themselves.***

*Sometimes, things that are printed make the government, a business, or people look bad—journalists tend to shed light on things that aren't working, or things that need to be better in society. At times, this can make readers or the subjects of stories uncomfortable or even offended. But ultimately, **informing people about what is truly happening is the journalist's highest goal.***

## **2. Context and examples — 20 minutes**

Show examples of how journalists have written about important events in American and world history. These events all relate to major issues our country was facing, including the Civil Rights movement and wars abroad.

*Ask students about the coverage and about what role they think the news media had in informing the public about these moments in history:*

- *Is this an issue you're interested in?*
- *Would you want to read about this?*
- *Would you seek out this kind of information on your own?*
- *To what extent would you depend on the news media to tell you about stories like this?*
- *Where else do you think we would get this kind of information if not from journalists?*
- *Emphasize that because we, as citizens, can't be everywhere all the time (would they want to sit in Congress every day and take notes on what our politicians do?!), journalists are tasked with doing that for us.*

## **3. Watch and respond — 10 minutes**

Now, show the students 5-10 minutes of a local or national evening news segment. Be sure the segment is mostly news and not sports or entertainment. Instruct students that as they watch, they should keep a list of the things they learned about what's going on through the news stories. They need to list at least 3-5 things they learned from the newscast. Explain that this is an example of how the news acts as a teacher for us, pointing out things we need to know in order to be fully aware of the important events happening in the world around us.

## **4. Individual response — 5 minutes**

Ask students to then compile a list of stories, happening today, that are really important to them for whatever reason. Once students have identified a few examples, ask for volunteers to share. While students share, ask other students for ideas on where we could find information about these topics if not through the media.

**2. Homework: student prompt and response – 5 minutes**

Assign and explain the following short-answer prompt to students. Grade according to the provided rubric. They should type or write two paragraphs addressing the following:

Consider this quote by James Madison when talking about the role of the press: “The great danger [in a republic] is that the majority may not sufficiently respect the rights of the minority.” Write a response to this quote, and consider the following questions: If we apply this quote to the news media, how can journalists use this philosophy to help protect the rights of the minority? What can this quote tell us about the diversity of voices, stories, and perspectives we should expect from our news media? Give examples to support your argument.

**Common Core Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1</a>	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1c</a>	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d</a>	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7</a>	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

**4. BLACK JOURNALISM IN AMERICA**

**Black Journalism in America: Description**

After reading news stories from a variety of Black and general audience media, students will be able to analyze differences in coverage, sources and perspectives in current news.

**Objectives**

- *Students will be able to recognize media bias across multiple outlets.*
- *Students will be able to discuss why a minority press is still necessary in America.*

- *Students will be able to critique media outlets' uses of quotes, photos, video clips and other content to portray people of color.*

**Length:** 45 minutes

**Materials / resources:** List of Black newspapers

### Lesson step-by-step

1. *The teacher will give students two news stories about the same event, one from a mainstream newspaper and one from a Black newspaper. See list of potential news outlets above. Suggestions:*
  1. *Localize this as much as possible. If your state has a Black newspaper, use it.*
  2. *Try to make the stories as timely as possible.*
  3. *To see more of a difference, choose a story in which a Black person is a main player in the event.*
2. *The teacher will lead students through analyzing the two stories for use of minority sources, use of slanted language or implied bias, image content (if applicable) and tone.*
  1. *When leading class discussions regarding race, be sure not to “tokenize” students of color to get their perspectives unless they are clearly comfortable sharing.*
  2. *Students may not feel comfortable discussing these topics. Consider having them construct written reactions instead of verbal.*
3. *Allow students time to browse the same websites you pulled the stories from. Tell them to read similar content on both websites. Then with a partner, have the students discuss the differences they see and why specifically Black news outlets still exist in the U.S.*

### Differentiation

As an extension, have students craft an opinion piece on the necessity of the Black press.

Students could research the history of one Black news outlet. Students could also examine their student-produced news for any implied racial bias.

To provide scaffolding for struggling students, the teacher could provide the two original stories with differences already annotated.

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
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<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4</a>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.5</a>	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).
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6</a>	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.

## 5. FAMOUS BLACK JOURNALISTS

### Famous Black Journalists: Overview

*After learning basic information about historic and current Black journalists, students will create a project looking more in depth into one historical figure. Optionally, teachers may have students present their projects so the whole class can learn more about each figure.*

#### Objectives

- ***Students will be able to recognize famous American Black journalists.***
- ***Students will be able to discuss barriers overcome by American Black journalists.***
- ***Students will be able to discuss the achievements of one Black journalist in depth.***

**Length:** 45 minutes with optional presentation time following lesson and project creation

#### Materials / resources

[W.E.B. Du Bois \(1903\) — Excerpt from The Soul of Black Folk](#)

[Ida B Wells \(1909\)](#)

[Black American journalists reference list](#)

[Assessment rubric](#)

#### Lesson step-by-step

1. 10 minutes: Provide the list of Black journalists to students. Students will perform a cursory search on five to ten individuals for brief discussion of achievements. Encourage students to apply their knowledge of history and culture to determine possible obstacles each journalist would have had to overcome.
2. 15 minutes: Students will report back to group about one of the journalists they learned and what they learned. Teacher will encourage discussion about the

different journalists that students have learned about, encouraging them to connect to the journalists' experiences and historical context and hardships.

3. Optional: Teacher may share writings of other important Black journalists in history (see two above in resources) to further discuss further topics such as evolution of journalist writing style and historic sentiments on racism.
4. 35 minutes: Students will choose one journalist from the list to do in-depth research on, including reading/watching some of the work for which the journalist is known.
5. Long-term homework or in class projects: Each student will create a project highlighting the achievements of his/her journalist. This could be a paper, presentation, a poster, a video segment, a podcast, but it should contain some biographical information, the journalist's major contribution to the world of journalism and background information about the time period and struggles Black Americans faced at the time.

### Differentiation

*As an extension, provide clips (or ask students to find clips) from different journalists for them to explore and analyze (see links above for some examples).*

*Students could also write current news stories from the styles of their chosen journalists.*

*Students could compare the style, popularity and story types from the different eras in the slideshow.*

*Students may choose to work with a partner for these projects.*

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A</a>	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2</a>	Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7</a>	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C</a>	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

## 6. THE CHANGING AMERICAN NEWSROOM

### ***The Changing American Newsroom: Overview***

*This lesson explores the changing culture of the newsroom, especially in light of new media technologies. As news gathering and reporting changes, so does our concept of what news is, and our expectations for traditional journalism. Students will discuss perceptions of news coverage and will reflect on their own role as news consumers.*

### **Objectives**

- ***Students will understand the changing dynamics of today’s newsrooms in order to conceptualize the role of news in contemporary society.***
- ***Students will identify the main challenges in today’s newsrooms.***

**Length:** 50 minutes

### **Resources**

Online video: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/newswar/#video-3>

*(Note, this should open Part 3 of News Wars. This lesson and the viewing guide covers the first 13 minutes of this Part 3 segment)*

*Class set: Viewer response guide*

*Rubric: PBS Viewer’s Response*

### **Lesson step-by-step**

#### **1. Building background — 15 minutes**

*Discuss with students the kind of balance in content they expect to see in traditional news media (newspaper, evening news, etc). If students are already familiar with news values (timeliness, proximity, prominence, conflict, consequence, human interest, etc.), this might be a shorter discussion. Remind students that traditionally, news media seeks to strike a balance between publishing what people want to know about, need to know about, and should know about.*

*For more information about news values, please see the lesson “News Judgment.”*

*Write “want, need, and should” up on the board in three columns, and ask students to give you examples of recent stories that fall under each category. As they provide examples, list them under the proper category. If one category seems to have many more stories, discuss why that is. (Likely, the “want” category will have a longer list.)*

*Discuss their perceptions of whether the news media covers more “wants, needs, or should” in the daily news. Does it depend on the medium (TV, online, or newspaper)?*

*Explain that the short video they will view next discusses some of the new ideas of what “news” has looked like and the challenges that have come up in the news industry as media companies try to meet user demand and meet profit quotas. Tell students to take notes because they will answer four short questions after the movie is over.*

#### **2. Activity — 13 minutes**

Watch “A New Definition For What’s News” <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/newswar/#video-3>  
(Note, this should open Part 3 of News Wars. This lesson and the viewing guide covers the first 13 minutes of this Part 3 segment. You can stop the video after 13 minutes (when it mentions CBS’s new 60 minutes program) and proceed to the next part)

### 3. Reflection — 20 minutes

Ask students to write quietly for the next 20 minutes, responding to all four questions below as best they can. They can use their own personal experiences to explain their responses. If they finish early, have them start the follow-on exercise detailed below.

### 4. Follow-on assessment — take home

Ask students to write their own “consumer code of ethics.” This should be a list of 5-10 things they will do, actions they will take, or habits they will adopt in order to be more engaged and informed news consumers. For each item, they must describe the action and then explain in 2-3 sentences why it is important and what the goal of the action is. The next day, have students tape their codes to the classroom wall and sign their names as a pledge to adhere to this code for one week. In one week, have a follow-up discussion about the exercise. What went well? What didn’t? Was it easy? What fell through the cracks? What did they learn?

### 5. Journal entry

By the end of the week, students should have completed their first “I Spy Media” journal entry, in which they discuss something they read, watched, or heard about in the media that relates to what we’re discussing in class. This is an open-ended journal response.

Additional note: For even more historical context, you could continue showing part 3 to provide more history on the changing newsroom.

## **“A New Definition For What’s News”**

### **A viewer response guide for PBS Frontline’s segment on what is news**

2. During the introduction, one newscaster says: “We’re judging journalism by the same standards that we apply to entertainment. That may be one of the greatest tragedies in the history of journalism.” Respond to this statement. What do you think those standards are? Why are those standards a bad fit for journalism?
3. A producer of Jon Stewart’s Comedy Central said that the show’s success is really a reflection of other people’s/news organizations’ failures. What do you think he means here? How are news organizations failing?
4. The same producer describes today’s media as “horrible news, broadcast horribly.” Is this too cynical? Are we putting too much pressure on journalists to keep us informed when we, too, share the obligation and responsibility to be well-informed citizens?
5. ABC President David Westin said “News is what’s important to people.” What if what’s important to people isn’t useful or current? How do journalists create content that addresses this dilemma or balances out what people need to know, want to know, and should know?

## **Common Core State Standards**



<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8</a>	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.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5</a>	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).
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6</a>	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.

## 7. WHEN JOURNALISTS MUST ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES

### When Journalists must Advocate for themselves: Overview

Students will evaluate a July 4 front page that advocates for freedoms and for a critical awareness of government actions. Then, after reading background information and Facebook discussions about the role of the newspaper and the purpose of page one, students will debate whether the page was an appropriate reflection of the newspaper's purpose.

### Objectives

- *Students will analyze the role of newspapers in democracy and explore the challenge of being impartial publishers of information.*
- *Students will examine the arguments for and against an 'advocacy' press.*
- *Students will explain and defend their positions on the role of the press in America.*

**Length:** 50 minutes

### Resources

Class set: [Virginian-Pilot front page](#) (one for each student)

Group set: [ACES story](#) (one per group of 3)

Group set: [Facebook comments page](#) (one per group of 3)

Rubric: [Letter to the editor](#)

### Lesson step-by-step

#### 1. *Building background* — 10 minutes

Explain to students that today they'll be discussing the value of journalism and how to best advocate for a free press in a democracy. Sometimes, journalists have to advocate for themselves, going out of their way to remind the public why they exist, whom they serve, and that their role is enshrined in the very fabric of our Constitution. However, for some, doing so crosses the line between an impartial press and advocacy press. If a journalist is advocating for something, what does that mean? Does it violate the expectations we have that newspapers will provide information and not push an agenda?

What if that agenda is something most people would agree is good or beneficial? What if that position is supported by our very Constitution?

Explain that students are going to read and analyze a recent front page that received mixed feedback on whether the content was appropriate. This summer, on July 4, the *Virginian-Pilot* published a front page complete with quotes and graphics explaining, advocating, and defending certain freedoms in our country. You will first spend some time reading this front page, and then you'll get more background information about how it was created and what others thought about it.

*(Hand out image of front page, and give students 10 minutes to read and process it. Ask them to make notes on a separate piece of paper about their original reactions. Did they like it? Did they like the content and the visuals? One or the other? What did they think the main message was?)*

### **2. Think-pair-share – 20 minutes**

Next, group students into groups of three. Allow students to pick a task (reader, writer, speaker), and hand out the Facebook comments and the ACES story that goes with the text. Instruct the reader quietly to read the comments and story to the group. Then, the group should spend 10 minutes discussing their reactions and whether they agree with any of the comments. The writer should keep notes on the group's reaction and comments to the feedback. Finally, the group should discuss and come to a consensus about whether they think the front page was appropriate, reflected quality journalism, and why (or why not).

### **3. Present – 20 minutes**

Have each group explain their argument to the class (the speaker talks), and allow the groups to debate it a little. Finally, as a class, take a vote on whether the page was appropriate and professional. Was this advocacy? Was it journalism? Was it both? And finally, are students OK with the outcome? Can they live with it either way? Do they even care?

### **4. Follow-up – Take home exercise**

Directions: Write a 200-word letter to the editor in response to this front-page design. Be sure to state your opinion about whether you believe the front page was appropriate or inappropriate and why. You must back up your claim with at least three specific facts or references. You can cite recent national issues, other media coverage, political documents, and/or historical knowledge to support your argument.

## **Common Core State Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8</a>	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.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8</a>	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5</a>	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).

# INFORMATION GATHERING & FACT CHECKING

## 1. THE EXPERT CURATOR

### OVERVIEW

*In this lesson, students explore the concept of information curation. They are exposed to the wide variety of news and hybrid news mediums while also reflecting on their own “newsgathering” habits. To practice these skills, they will learn to curate information and facts from a variety of sources in order to curate a comprehensive, accurate account of an event.*

### Objectives

- *Students will understand the processes of curation.*
- *Students will identify different types of news mediums and news sources and will explain how each helps build a comprehensive “news” account.*
- *Students will demonstrate mastery by curating information from a variety of sources into a complete news account of an event.*
- *Students will demonstrate best practices in oral speaking by presenting their information to the class.*

**Length:** Two 50-minute class sessions (or three 50-minute sessions depending on the skill level/work speed of your class).

**Resources:** Computer lab or laptop access: 1:1 ratio preferred, but students can work in pairs  
Presentation software: GOOGLE SLIDES, Prezi online, Storify, or other software

### Lesson step-by-step

#### ***1. Introduction and concept review – 15 minutes***

This lesson asks students to think about how, in the digital age, we use multiple sources across multiple platforms to inform our understanding about an event. Today and during the next class, students will learn how today's news consumers must also be news curators.

First, define the word “curation.” Curation is the act of searching for, examining, and compiling information from a variety of sources in an attempt to gather the most relevant and truthful content. When journalists research stories and gather news, they are in essence completing a kind of curation that is very specific to the newsmaking process. As consumers, we have so many choices for where to get our information, and we will often get bits and pieces from many different places. This reality has turned us into information curators. Ask students: If you want to know what's happening this weekend, where might you get information on that? (They should answer Facebook, text messages, email, etc.). Sifting through all that information and deciding which is most relevant to you and your needs is an act of curation. In reality, we curate all the time.

When it comes to news literacy, there are some “best practices” in news curation that can help us to be the most effective news curators and find the most credible information. Review these best practices with students. You could write them on the board or create a handout.

**1. Aim for variety**—If you’ve scoured multiple sources and types, chances are you’ve exposed yourself to a wide enough variety of information that the most important information will be present somewhere.

**2. Look for repetition**—Repetition of facts (numbers, statistics, dates, names) can often mean your information is more accurate and reliable.

**3. Keep track of confirmation**—Do **different** sources confirm the same facts in step two? If so, this can indicate that your information is truthful and more credible.

**4. Gather multiple perspectives**—Try to find information that tells the story from a variety of perspectives or emphasizes different angles of the same story. This way, you get a more well-rounded version of the event or issue.

**5. Consider the intent**—Remember that the best intent for publishing information is simply to inform. Sometimes, people publish information for other reasons (to express their opinion, to put someone or something in a positive or negative light, to get attention, to persuade you in some way). The best information and sources won’t have an intent to do anything other than provide information.

## **2. Curation activity** — *remainder of class*

Ask students to think of a recent **major** news event. Their job for the rest of the class period is to curate information from a variety of sources related to that news event. They should explore at least 10 different sources from a variety of **news** media sources (website or traditional news media available in your school library). Advise them that social media, like Twitter or Facebook, are not viable sources here (not because they can’t actually provide news, but because school filters might be an access issue here).

As they curate information, their main goal is to compile a truly complete, cohesive account of the news event. They will present their fully curated account of the news event to the class during the next class session. So, they should take notes on the information they find (either by taking manual notes, typing notes, emailing notes to themselves with links to the sources, etc.). They’ll need detailed, specific notes and examples that relate to the event (they can reference the five best practices above to help guide their curation).

During the presentation, they’ll need to talk about what sources they examined and where they found their information. As they curate, they can build their presentation either in powerpoint, using the online Prezi site, or via an online curation tool like Storify. They can take screenshots to show what the coverage looked like across mediums. Students should spend the remainder of the class time today curating information related to their event and compiling their presentation.

NOTE: Depending on the skill level of your students, they may need an extra class period to keep curating and putting together their presentation. That would extend this lesson into three 50-minute sessions.

## **4. Present** — *45 minutes*

During this class period, students should present their curated news event, taking three minutes each to explain to the class how they went about finding information, an overview of the sources they found, and how they were able to get the “big picture” view of what happened based on their examination of all the information.

### 5. Homework — journal reflection

Students should write a 2-3 paragraph reflection on their curating experience and how it relates to their daily life. Ask them to respond to the following prompt:

In 2-3 well-written paragraphs, address the following questions: What was easy about the curation process? What was hard? Was there anything about the process or the results that was surprising or unexpected? What about this process can you take away and apply to your daily life and your habits of media consumption?

## Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7</a>	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6</a>	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8</a>	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

## 2. FACT CHECKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

### OVERVIEW

*In this lesson, students will learn about the importance of fact checking in the journalism profession. This lesson explores the practice of fact checking and requires students to identify and accept information with a critical eye for accuracy. Students will learn to use online resources to verify information. This is the third lesson in a week-long unit on news literacy. A great segue into this lesson is to show the movie "Shattered Glass" first and discuss the breach of trust that happens when news media get things wrong. If you'd like to show the movie, add two-three extra class periods to this unit to show the film and discuss.*

### Objectives

- *Students will evaluate claims of fact to determine authenticity.*

- *Students will analyze false statements to determine what information is necessary to make them accurate.*
- *Students will use online research tools to aid in the fact checking process.*

**Length:** 50 minutes

**Resources**

Link: <http://theweek.com/article/index/235578/10fakephotosofhurricanesandy>

Link: [https://www.thestar.com/opinion/public\\_editor/2017/01/06/typo-of-the-year-for-2017-is-a-shocker-public-editor.html](https://www.thestar.com/opinion/public_editor/2017/01/06/typo-of-the-year-for-2017-is-a-shocker-public-editor.html)

(Reader alert: one of the typos is “shits (a chord)” instead of “hits.”)

Link: <http://www.deweydefeatstruman.com/>

Computer access: 1:1 ratio preferred

Class set: *Checking the Facts*

**Lesson step-by-step**

**1. Building background — 20 minutes**

Explain to students that in the world of journalism, nothing is more important than being accurate. Our reputation depends on us verifying information and getting things right. Ask: What happens when you read something that is incorrect? What do you think about the person who wrote it? How does this change your perception of them or the news organization? Do you rely on people whom you know are not accurate? Ask students to think of things they may have seen or heard in the news media that were wrong. For example, they may have heard facts during the presidential campaign about either side that weren't actually accurate. Maybe they saw photos online through Twitter or Facebook of Hurricane Sandy that were actually from Hollywood movies. Ask students what aspects of a story are especially important for journalists to get right. Make a list on the board: facts, numbers, names, spellings, addresses, locations, numbers (figures). This requires a lot of fact checking.

Using a smart board (or other projection device), use the links below to show students the following examples of false reports and typos. Discuss each site and ask: Why do you think these errors/mistakes happened? Is a typo (an error in spelling, for example) as bad as an error in fact? What do you think the newspaper/journalist should do to correct these errors? How would you feel if you made this kind of error in fact or judgment and published it for the world to see?

1. [Fake photos of Hurricane Sandy](#)
2. [Famous typos of 2012](#)
3. [A historical blunder of presidential proportions: Dewey beats Truman](#)

**2. Exercise — 30 minutes**

For this exercise, each student will need access to his/her own computer. Distribute the attached fact checking worksheet, and instruct students to use online resources to find the correct answers. Students may NOT use Wikipedia. Once they have checked their facts, they must locate 5 websites they could use to reliably check general claims or specific facts. This exercise will take the rest of the period.

The teacher should pace the room, observing students as they research and correcting the sheet to check for understanding. Ask often: How do you know this fact on this site is accurate? What makes you think it is reliable?

### 3. Journal entry

I Spy Entry: By the end of the week, students should have completed their first “I Spy Media” journal entry, in which they discuss something they read, watched, or heard about in the media that relates to what we’re discussing in class. This is an open-ended journal response.

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8</a>	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.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.7</a>	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6</a>	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.

## 3. HOW THE PROS FACT CHECK

### How the Pros Fact Check: Description

*This lesson walks students through the fact checking process of professionals at the American Press Institute and Politifact. Then, students will apply this same process to their own fact-checking exercise.*

### Objectives

- Students will examine the process professional journalists use to ensure accuracy in their stories.
- Students will evaluate the strengths and weakness of this process.
- Students will apply the same procedures to their own fact-checking exercise and reflect on the process.

**Length:** 60 minutes (this may take up to 90 minutes if your students are new to fact-checking and need extra time on the exercise)

### Resources

Group set: print or online access to news stories about a candidate, election, or campaign

[Slideshow: 7 Steps to fact checking](#)

[Group set: 7 Steps to fact checking exercise sheet](#)

Internet access for each group

[Group set: 7 Steps to fact checking assessment](#)

## Lesson step-by-step

### 1. Building background — 5 minutes

Begin this lesson by asking students how often, especially during political campaigns, they hear their parents or other adults grumbling about inaccurate ads or untruthful politicians. Allow students to share their experience with this, and then ask them if or how their parents go about getting the right information about politics.

Explain that the news media often take special care to fact check political statements because these statements are often ones citizens use to make political decisions. Ask students to consider the most recent election in their area (school board, midterms, etc.). *What were the big issues during that election? What were the main statements of “fact” that the candidates discussed or even fought over?* (Depending on your students, you might have to do some pre-lesson preparation here and have an example ready).

Tell students that when it comes to fact-checking, the best professional media are very methodical about how they approach finding the truth. Use the slideshow provided to walk students through the process used by expert fact-checkers at Politifact and the American Press Institute.

### 2. Slideshow — 20 minutes

Talk through the slideshow using the notes provided and the discussion prompts within the slides. This slideshow is an example of how professional journalists go about fact-checking. Ask students to take notes and ask questions as you go because they will apply this process to their own fact-checking exercise later.

### 3. Group activity — 5 minutes for set up, 20-40 minutes for completion

Divide students into groups of three, and provide access to a political story (either campaign, candidate, or ad-related) that appeared in local media. Pass out copies of the exercise sheet and assessment (one for each group). Then, go over instructions with students and ask them to complete the exercise, reminding them that it will be graded according to the assessment.

### 4. Debrief — 5-10 minutes

Ask students to reflect with the class on their exercises. *What was hard? How could they apply this process to what they might do on the publications staff (if they are student journalists)? How would they need to adapt this process for their own publications?*

## Differentiation

*For higher-level students, ask them to follow up the exercise by creating their own step-by-step process for fact-checking that would be used for a specific publication (newspaper, newsmagazine, yearbook, web, etc.) at your school. This should be a very school-specific process that editors or the entire staff could follow. Alternatively, ask upper-level students to interview publications editors on their fact-checking process.*

*For students who need more reinforcement on the concepts before completing the activity, assign them one of the tools described under Step 4 of the process (slide 8 in the slideshow). Let them use a computer to explore the tool/website, and then write a summary of what it is about and why journalists might use it. Have students share their summary with the rest of the class.*

*Students with more specific reading needs could be provided with an audio clip or a TV ad to watch instead of reading the print stories. Or, pair students with a stronger reader who can read the story aloud.*



## Extensions

Repeat this exercise with another story or a different medium—would any of their responses or approaches to the 7 steps change?

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8</a>	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.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8</a>	Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

## 4. TRUTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### Truth and Social Media: OVERVIEW

Students will look at infamous social media mistakes, inaccuracies and hoaxes in order to better identify which posts are correct or inaccurate. Students will become familiar with social media conventions that often hint at how authentic a post really is. Finally, students will develop their own step-by-step guide for assessing the accuracy of a social media post.

### Objectives

- Students will identify common indicators of inauthentic social media posts.
- Students will understand common practices for reliable social media feeds (such as news sites).
- Students will create a personal guide for assessing social media accuracy.

**Length:** 50 minutes

### Resources

[Class set: 7 ways we could tell that AP tweet was a fake](#)

[Slideshow: Fake AP tweet](#)

### Lesson step-by-step

#### **1. Building background — 10 minutes**

*Explain to students that they will be exploring social media today and paying special attention to how to tell what's real and fake in social media "news." To start, have students create a K-W-L chart about social media. They should fill in the first two columns, describing what they know and what they would like to know. After the lesson, students will fill in the last column.*

*Social Media K-W-L Chart*

*Know | Want to Know | Learned*

Ask students to share their chart with a student next to them. Then, as a class, make a list on the board of all the things students already know about social media, including how it works, who uses it, any specific guidelines, what sorts of things get posted, etc. Explain that today we're going to look specifically at how news gets spread on social media and how to identify truthful posts from false posts.

## **2. Social media basics — 10 minutes**

To start, let's talk about some basics of social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter. First, social media means that essentially anyone with access to the Internet can create and spread their messages. We know that some mediums, like Twitter, put restrictions on how many characters can be in a single message. Other mediums, like Facebook, allow embedded links, images, and video. Social media is a great tool for spreading information, but just like truthful, helpful information spreads, so, too, does false information. Often, false information can even spread faster and farther than true information because there might be something unique or sensational about it. When it comes to using social media to learn about what's going on with our friends, community, or the world, we have to know what and whom to trust.

But first, we have to learn a little bit more about how these social media work. Because I know many of you are familiar with Facebook and use it on a regular basis, let's start with Twitter, which isn't as popular with high-school-aged students.

Write these Twitter terms on the board, and ask students if they know the definitions (provided for your reference).

*hashtag: the # symbol, which is used to mark keywords or topics in the Tweet.*

*FF: this stands for "follow Friday," the hashtag Twitter users use to encourage others to follow certain people, most often on a Friday.*

*RT: this stands for "retweet," which means someone is reposting someone else's original message.*

*MT: this stands for "modified tweet," which means someone is reposting another person's message and have modified it or altered it in some way, usually to shorten it.*

*Trends: a subject determined to be among the most popular on Twitter, determined by a formula.*

*RLRT: "real life retweet," or a Tweet of what someone just overheard in real life.*

*So, why is it important to understand the inner workings of social media in this way? Because the more we know about how different social media work, the more adept we will become at identifying inaccurate and misleading information. For example, if we know what RT means, we know that there is a different person who was the original source of that information, and perhaps by following the trail, we can determine who first posted something. Then, we can evaluate whether that person is really a good source for that information.*

## **3. Example — 15 minutes**

Using the slideshow provided, click through the example of the fake AP News tweet that was published in April of 2013. Ask students what they think about the tweet and whether they might have believed it to be true. Ask them to defend their position and reasoning. Was there anything that might tip off the average reader to the fact that this was fake?

Then, pass out class copies of the article *“7 ways we know the AP tweet was fake.”* Ask students to read silently about how some readers discerned the tweet was fake. When students are finished reading, ask the class for other ideas about how they can tell if a message on social media might be fake or inaccurate. Hopefully, they’ll suggest things like:

*spelling errors, no source, sounds implausible, no one else had that information, etc.*

*Going back to the slideshow, look at the charts that show just how the fake tweet affected the financial markets. Explain that while the markets recovered, the posting of this fake information caused global chaos and fear, which negatively affected the financial position of U.S. markets. Some people, believing that the U.S. was under attack again, might have immediately sold stocks or traded investments, only to find out that nothing ever happened. This is just one example of how social media can have a huge impact on the world around us.*

**4. In-class journal – 15 minutes**

*For the last 15 minutes, students will brainstorm in their journals in response to this prompt:*

*Devise a 3-step social media accuracy strategy that would be easy for anyone to follow if they want to check the accuracy of a post on Facebook or Twitter. What steps should they take? How can they verify what they are reading? Explain your strategy and why you think others could follow it.*

**Common Core State Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7</a>	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.9-10.4</a>	Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 9-10 texts and topics.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4</a>	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

# BIAS AND CREDIBILITY

## 1. UNDERSTANDING SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

### Understanding Selective Exposure: Overview

*This week’s lessons are all about bias and credibility in the news. Students are introduced to the concept of “selective exposure,” a body of research that shows that we tend to seek out information that will confirm our already-held beliefs and perspectives. After discussing this concept and understanding the phenomenon, students consider how this unintentional practice might harm their ability to be balanced, well-informed news consumers.*

## Objectives

- Students will understand the concept of “selective exposure.”
- Students will identify trends in research related to selective exposure.
- Students will apply outcomes of selective exposure to their own consumption habits.
- Students will judge their own level of selective exposure in their media habits.
- Students will revise their own daily media habits to better counteract selective exposure.

**Length:** 50 minutes

## Resources

[Slideshow: Selective exposure](#)

Computer access: 1:1 ratio for research (1:2 would work if individual computers aren't available)

## Lesson step-by-step

### **1. Experimental Activity – 20 minutes**

To begin this lesson, you'll have students engage in a bit of an experimental study to frame the information you'll present next. Students should be at a computer with search engine access and should be ready to search for news media coverage.

Instruct the students to think for a moment about an issue or topic they feel very strongly about and have a specific opinion on. This could be religious or political in nature, or it could be less serious (for instance, which local restaurant is the best or worst, or their favorite place to travel or a favorite sports team/athlete). It doesn't matter the topic; the most important thing is that they have a strong belief about it.

Once they've picked a topic, ask them to search for five news media articles about the topic.

Read through the articles, and write a one-two sentence summary of what the article says about that topic. Explain that you'll use this information later in class.

### **2. Exploring selective exposure – 15 minutes**

Once the students have finished searching for their articles, ask for feedback about the topic students searched for, what they found, and whether the articles they read supported their beliefs on the topic.

You could do a quick survey of the class, or you can ask students one by one. In most cases with this exercise, you'll find at least 3-4 students who say that the articles they read supported or confirmed their beliefs in the topic. You'll use their experience as a segue into the lesson topic. If no students found this to be true, you can chalk it up to them being some savvy news consumers! Once students have shared their results, explain that they just practiced an exercise in selective exposure. To introduce the concept of selective exposure, talk through the slideshow provided. Explain to students that in this lesson, they are going to learn how their own habits, some of which they might not even realize they practice, can contribute to their own feelings of bias about the news.

When you get to the second-to-last slide in the presentation (about negative effects), write down student responses to this question on the whiteboard to reference later. Do not continue to the last slide until after part three below.

### **3. Balancing the search – 10 minutes**

Now, ask students to go back to their computers and search again. This time, they're looking for articles that present ideas that are *opposite or contradictory* to their own ideas about the topic.

Ask them to find only two articles this time that give information that contradicts their beliefs about the topic. They should read through the articles and write 1-2 sentence summaries for each one.

#### **4. Class reflection and follow-up journal — 5 minutes**

Once they are finished with their final search, come back together as a class to reflect on what they read and how it made them feel about the topic. Ask questions like:

How did it make you feel to read things that were directly against your beliefs on the topic?

Do you feel informed? Do you feel like you've expanded your perspective on this?

Or, do you feel like reading the opposite side has only make your beliefs stronger?

Finally, go back to one of the original concepts of news literacy (last slide in slideshow). Remind them of this basic news literacy tenet:

“It’s important to be aware of one’s own biases and assumptions and seek reliable information that challenges one’s own views.”

Then, challenge students to pick another topic on which they have strong beliefs, and to read three contradictory news reports on this topic throughout the week. In their journal, write a 2-3 paragraph reflection responding to the same questions listed above.

### **Common Core State Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.9-10.2</a>	Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; trace the text’s explanation or depiction of a complex process, phenomenon, or concept; provide an accurate summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9</a>	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## **2. EXAMINING RACIAL BIAS IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA**

### **Examining Racial Bias in Mainstream Media: Overview**

This lesson provides students an opportunity to discuss how racial bias impacts news coverage in mainstream media outlets through a short video about multidisciplinary artist Alexandra Bell creating counternarratives from NY Times content. Students will apply ideas from this video to their own news consumption and/or student media.

#### **Objectives**

- Students will watch and analyze a video about artist Alexandra Bell’s Counternarratives series, collect sound bites and document questions, feelings and connections to her work.
- Students will evaluate the relevance of Bell’s work to their own student media and create action steps in response.

**Length:** 60 minutes

#### **Materials / resources**

- Access to internet and ability to project video on a whiteboard or share a link students can watch independently
- Link to [Nieman Lab Twitter thread](#) documenting journalists of color’s experiences in American newsrooms

- [2018 Infinity Award Video — Applied: Alexandra Bell](#) – hyperlink to YouTube video about Alexandra Bell’s Counternarratives series
- [Examining Racial Bias in Mainstream Media](#): Student reflection doc. Students can make a copy of the Google doc and complete it digitally or teacher can print copies for the class. Assessment rubric included on doc.
- [2020 editorial](#) from the L.A. Times (for differentiation/extension activity)

### Lesson step-by-step

1. **Warm-Up (5 min):** Ask — What is the importance of diversity in a newsroom? (Possible answers: more perspectives on issues, greater awareness of what all members of the public experience, more angles on stories, different story pitches)
2. **Context (10 min):** Summer 2020 was a time of racial reckoning across America, and newsrooms were no exception. Nieman Lab documented journalists of color’s tweets about their encounters with institutionalized racism in [this thread](#). (Teachers might project on the board or have students explore some of these tweets on their own. Teachers could have students preview this thread and respond in a journal as an alternative warm-up activity.)

According to the [Pew Research Center](#), “more than three-quarters (77%) of newsroom employees – those who work as reporters, editors, photographers and videographers in the newspaper, broadcasting and internet publishing industries – are non-Hispanic whites.” While marginalized communities have long, rich traditions of establishing their own media outlets and investigative journalists like Ida B. Wells published stories white-dominated newspapers wouldn’t run, mainstream media has long been dominated by a single perspective. This lack of diversity in the newsroom impacts both what is covered and how it is covered.

[Alexandra Bell](#) is a “multidisciplinary artist who investigates the complexities of narrative, information consumption, and perception. Utilizing various media, she deconstructs language and imagery to explore the tension between marginal experiences and dominant histories. Through investigative research, she considers the ways media frameworks construct memory and inform discursive practices around race, politics, and culture.” She has won multiple awards and exhibited her art in many prominent galleries. She holds a M.S. in journalism from Columbia University.

3. **Video Prep (5 min.):** Distribute copies of “[Examining Racial Bias in Mainstream Media: Student Reflection](#)” for handwritten notes or provide a link to the Google doc so students can make a copy and type their own notes. Students can watch the video as a class or on their own in remote classrooms.

**Review basic instructions:** “As you watch this video, add notes to the yellow row, jotting down sound bites that seem interesting or important. When you’ve finished watching the video, you will have an

additional five minutes to add notes to the blue row (questions, feelings, connections). After the video, you'll meet in small groups to discuss and then create action steps (green row)."

4. **Video and initial reflection time (15 min.):** Either watch as a class or have students watch independently. The video is nine minutes long. Give students 15 minutes total so they have time to watch the video and then, independently, add questions, feelings and connections to their personal note sheets.
  
5. **Small groups (15 min):** Break students into small groups. Students should use their personal note sheets to discuss the video and share their questions and connections. One person in each group should serve as notetaker and another as spokesperson. In the last five minutes, the teacher should direct students to create concrete action steps in the green row. The group may have some shared actions, but students should be encouraged to tailor these actions to their own needs and personal experiences.
  
6. **Report out (10 min):** The spokesperson from each group will share takeaways from their discussion and specific actions the video inspired them to take. Teacher will collect note sheets to assess.

#### Differentiation/extension

Students who want a stretch activity might consider reading this [Sept. 2020 editorial](#) from the L.A. Times to see how the Times is confronting its history rooted in systemic racism. If the school's media program has existed for a long time, students could examine historical copies and consider their own media's history. If appropriate, students might consider writing their own editorial in response to what they find.

#### Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A</a>	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C</a>	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D</a>	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1</a>	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### 3. COVERING SENSITIVE TOPICS — EXPLORING MEDIA COVERAGE OF RACE CASES

#### COVERING SENSITIVE TOPICS: Overview

This lesson explores news editorial coverage of the Michael Brown and Eric Garner cases by looking at editorials printed by major newspapers during the cases and grand jury investigations. The lesson begins by asking students what they already know about the Brown and Garner cases, and then pairs of students are assigned an editorial to read and analyze. Students then contribute to a collaborative document about how the media covered these events.

**Note:** If your students are unfamiliar with the purpose and role of editorials, consider first completing [the lesson on editorial writing](#).

#### Objectives

- Students will discuss news editorial coverage of recent controversial events.
- Students will articulate the purpose and role of news editorials.
- Students will compare and contrast media coverage from a variety of publications.
- Students will analyze factors that might contribute to differences and similarities in media coverage.
- Students will evaluate the overall tone and message of specific media content.

**Length:** One 50-minute class

#### Resources

**Handout:** [Covering sensitive topics: links to coverage](#) (*note: this may be something you'll want to put in a Google doc and provide access to students as they work*).

**Rubric:** [Covering sensitive topics journal](#)

Class Internet access (*if using an online collaborative space*)

For each pair of students in class, provide one copy of a different editorial (*linked in "Covering sensitive topics: links to coverage"*)

Collaborative space (like a Google doc or even a whiteboard)

Highlighters for each student pair

#### Lesson step-by-step

##### 1. Introduction—10 minutes

Prior to class, create a K-W-L chart on a white board. Ask students to also keep this chart written down in their own notebook for later reference. For the first five minutes, ask students to raise their hands and tell you what they know or want to know about the Michael Brown and Eric Garner cases. While you don't want to give them



too much information (since they'll do some reading later), you might need to correct or clarify information as they offer up their ideas. Leave the "L" column blank:

What do you KNOW? / What do you WANT to know? / What did you LEARN?

Explain to students that they are going to read some media coverage regarding the very sensitive cases of Michael Brown and Eric Garner (depending on your class makeup, this might be the time to remind students of class discussion rules or set ground rules for respectful discussion and contribution). Tell students that often, when there are controversial issues covered in the press, many readers often begin to think that the media has a collective, shared mind (or opinion) regarding those issues. By looking at media coverage today, we'll be able to better evaluate whether the media, indeed, covered these tragic cases in exactly the same way.

**2. Media evaluation—20 minutes**

After the initial K-W-L brainstorm, break students into pairs (be sure there is a strong reader in every pair), and hand out one copy of a Brown or Garner editorial to each pair. Ask students to do an initial read of the editorials together. Once they are done, they should discuss with each other by asking each person to summarize the point of the editorial (this will help ensure the readers actually comprehend what the editorial argues). Then, ask the students to do a second close-read in which they annotate the text in the following way:

- **highlight the main argument the editorial makes**
- **underline specific facts used to support that argument**
- **circle the main sources of information provided**
- **put any specific figurative language or notable use of tone/descriptive language in brackets**

While students work, create a google doc with four columns that represent the four types of annotations they are making (or, create a spreadsheet on a white board without erasing your K-W-L chart).

<b>Publication</b>	<b>Main argument</b>	<b>Specific facts</b>	<b>Main sources</b>	<b>Notable use of tone or figurative / descriptive language</b>
Washington Post				
Daily News				

As pairs finish up, ask students to contribute their findings to the spreadsheet (either by going into the collaborative document or going up to the board).

When each pair is finished, ask the class to spend a few minutes examining the spreadsheet.

**3. Class discussion—10 minutes**

As a class, come to a consensus on what different editorials wrote/expressed that was different, and what was the same among certain publications. Were the sources relatively similar? How about the facts used? Was the main argument the same across most media? For the ones that were very different, ask students to consider why their sources/facts/argument were so different.

Was it because of the audience? What about the people who *wrote* the editorials? What kind of publication was it? How did the tone change between editorials regarding Brown, the first case, and Garner, the second case? Were you surprised by how similar/different the coverage was? Why? What did you expect?

**4. Student reflection—10 minutes**

Ask students to spend the next 10 minutes writing a response to this prompt, which you can read aloud: "Based on your reading and our class findings, how might you change your K-W-L chart? What did you learn about the

way the media covered these cases? What else do you still need to find out to better understand how the news media perceive such sensitive topics?"

5. *Assessment—after class*

Grade student reflections according to standard news literacy unit rubric provided.

**Differentiation**

For students with additional reading/comprehension needs, keep them paired up for the entirety of the lesson with a student who is a stronger reader. Have this pair complete a combined reflection and updated K-W-L chart.

**Extension**

Ask students to find another example of how media has discussed the sensitive topic of race and police brutality. This time, however, encourage students to expand their search beyond news media. How have celebrities responded via social media? How have musicians incorporated these social issues into their song lyrics and performances? How do artists or political cartoonists create visual representations of these issues? The document of links provided in the original materials can provide a starting place for this exploration.

**Common Core State Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3</a>	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

## 4. IDENTIFYING BIAS IN INFORMATION

**Identifying Bias in Information: Overview**

Students will learn about the ethical mandate that requires news to be free from personal opinion. Students will learn to identify common statements of opinion.

**Objectives**

- Students will examine the importance of writing news in an unbiased fashion.
- Students will evaluate news stories to determine whether statements of opinion are present, and will identify these statements with 80% mastery.

**Length:** 50 minutes

**Resources**

- Class set: Two different local or national news stories (not provided)
- [Class set: Finding Bias](#)
- Optional Bias Quiz: <http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=detecting-bias-quiz>
- Optional Advanced Quiz: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

## Lesson step-by-step

### 1. Building background — 10 minutes

Explain to students that while knowing how to write a news story is important, it's equally important to know that news journalists must approach their stories with an unbiased perspective. Ask: What is bias? What does it mean to be unbiased? Do you think it's possible to keep your opinions out of stories? Respond to answers. Remind students that being unbiased does not mean trying not to have opinions or feelings on things or people, but it means we keep our own perspectives out of news stories so that we can focus on facts and expert opinions. Ask: why would it be bad if we approached stories with our own personal opinions, or our own personal agendas? Explain that all journalists, like doctors, try to work within a code of ethics that tells them to treat all stories and people fairly. This means not inserting their own opinion in their stories.

### 2. Types of bias — 10 minutes

Explain to students that there are many ways (besides putting in your own opinion) to demonstrate bias in a news story. These include the following:

*(Write 1-4 on board without the definition, and stop to ask students what they think each one means. Then, explain. Give examples as necessary.)*

1. **Bias by omission:** leaving out facts that you don't "like" or you don't "think are true." Or, leaving out an important perspective.
2. **Bias by selection of sources:** including sources that only support one view. Including sources that are trying to further their own agenda.
3. **Bias by story selection:** choosing stories that further a cause, or ignoring stories that you don't like or that might cause trouble for friends.
4. **Bias by word choice:** using loaded words or labels that convey certain meanings instead of more neutral terms ("freedom fighter v. terrorist")

*(Bonus activity: Students can take the bias quiz at this website to test what they just learned about bias: <http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=detecting-bias-quiz>)*

### 3. Activity — 20 minutes

Explain that as a journalist, the best way to fight bias in a story is to be aware of your own personal opinions and your own subconscious preferences. This way, you can identify bias that might make its way into your stories or your newspaper.

Pair students up, and pass out copies of the two news stories. Each pair should have both stories, so students can read, compare, and switch with their partner. Using any local newspaper story (or you can use a story from a national news site, like CNN.com—either way you will need half as many stories as there are students in your class), ask students to individually read the story and see if they can identify instances of the four types of bias listed above. (See attached activity sheet.) Then, they should trade their story with a fellow classmate, and see if they come up with the same type of bias for the same story. This activity helps to illustrate how bias is a very personal thing, and we don't all interpret bias in the same way.

The teacher should walk the room and comment on examples students are finding to check for understanding.

### 4. Class discussion and debrief — 10 minutes

After students have swapped stories with their partner and discussed the different examples of bias, come back together as a class to reflect on the activity. Ask and discuss: Was it easy to find all the examples of bias? Did they always find the same ones as their partners? Why or why not? What do they think this says about how personal bias is? What steps could they take as a journalist to make sure that readers don't find bias in their stories?

### 5. Follow-on assessment – take-home assignment

Pass out the attached worksheet (Power of Words: a semantic stylebook) as homework, and ask students to think about which term they think is most fair, or least biased, while they complete the assignment.

*Note:* You'll want to preview this follow-up assignment with students in case they need help understanding the terminology. If they are still confused, remind them that looking up the words and their usages should help inform their decision on which term is most appropriate.

## Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3</a>	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5</a>	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4</a>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

## 5. UNDERSTANDING SOURCE CREDIBILITY

### Understanding Source Credibility: Overview

Students will learn the basic characteristics of trustworthy news sources. They will be exposed to the journalistic process of source selection and will identify the most credible sources based on qualifying information presented. After reading recent news stories, they will appraise the credibility of sources in major ongoing news stories.

### Objectives

- Students will list attributes of credible news sources.
- Students will explain why certain attributes make sources more credible.
- Students will compare and contrast news sources' credibility in recent news reports.

**Length:** 50 minutes

## Resources

[Slideshow: Mistaken Identity](#)

[Class set: Researching Sources](#)

Pair set: Handouts of recent news articles with a variety of sources (prepare before class, enough for half of class since students will work in pairs)

Computer lab access: 1:2 ratio

## Lesson step-by-step

### **1. Building background — 10 minutes**

Today, students are going to learn skills to help them identify credible and trustworthy information in the news media. While many of the tips they'll learn are meant for online news media, they apply in similar ways to traditional print media. Knowing who to trust as a journalist, and as a news consumer, is essential. If we can't believe what we read, the whole system of journalism and information media will cease to be relevant.

Remind students of the **Asiana Flight 214 that crashed upon landing in San Francisco on July 6, 2013**. One of the first reports with details about the crash came from KTVU-TV, a local station that claimed to have the names of the pilots and co-pilots on the flight. Those pilots were identified as (you can write these names on the board):

Capt. Sum Ting Wong, Wi Tu Lo, Ho Lee Fuk, and Bang Ding Ow

Give students a minute to process the names (if they haven't heard about this story), and then ask what's obviously wrong with the situation. Answer: the names are fake. Journalists working on the story claimed to have gotten information from a NTSB intern that these names were verifiable. In fact, the names were fake and offensive. Three people were later fired over this mistake.

Ask students what the reporters should have done differently to make sure this turned out differently. Ask questions like:

- Why should they have trusted or not trusted the intern?
- What questions could they have asked the intern in order to verify the information?
- What other sources could they have used to verify these names?

### **2. An illustrated example — 10 minutes**

[Open slideshow]

Consider this package of information from Storify, a news media curation site, that shows what happened when a man named Eric Snowden was mistakenly named as the NSA security leak instead of the actual whistleblower, Edward Snowden. Eric took it upon himself to compile the Storify thread that shows the many instances of mistaken identity.

Click through the slideshow, and read some of the tweets. Notice how a few people on Twitter started to pick up on the error but that some major media were still getting it wrong.

Once you're finished clicking through the images, ask students: Can you imagine what the ramifications of this kind of error might be? How might evaluating the sources of information have kept this error from repeating itself over and over again?

### **3. Types of sources and evaluating sources — 15 minutes**

After discussing these questions, continue with the slideshow to review three different types of sources that are often found in the news media. As you review each source, ask for students to think of examples of that type that they recently noticed in the news media. For each source, there is an example, definition, and then relevant questions that a news literacy citizen would ask.

Then, review seven important questions students should ask about sources they find in news media. As you go through the questions, you can relate each one back to the Edward Snowden mistakes, pressing students to think about how to apply those questions to that scenario.

#### 4. Applying evaluation tools activity – 15 minutes

Now, pair students up and pass out a variety of news articles. They can be from your student newspaper, local newspaper, or even national news. Pass out the source activity worksheet. Instruct students that they have the rest of class to finish the activity. Review the findings at the start of next class period.

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RST.9-10.9</a>	Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources (including their own experiments), noting when the findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6</a>	Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9</a>	Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

## 6. WHO IS A JOURNALIST?

### Who is a Journalist? OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will explore the differences between citizen journalism and professional journalism, including education, ethical content and judgment. They will consider the benefits and limitations of citizen journalism and how the process may affect the quality of information citizens can consume.

### Objectives

- Students will compare and contrast citizen and professional journalism.
- Students will examine the benefits and limitations of citizen journalism.
- Students will assess the use of citizen journalism in today's media landscape.
- Students will develop their own code of ethics as citizen journalists.

**Length:** 50 minutes

### Resources

[Slideshow: Citizen Journalism](#)

### Extra resources/links

<http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/04/>

[findbostonbombers reddit vs the media in search for boston bombing suspects.html](#)

<http://www.pbs.org/idealab/2013/05/can-citizen-journalism-move-beyond-crisis-reporting127/>

<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/09/your-guide-to-citizen-journalism270/>

### Lesson step-by-step

#### 1. Building background – 10 minutes

Explain to students that today, they're going to learn about social media and try to understand where it fits in with traditional "professional" news media. Ask students:

- Does anyone know what I mean by "citizen journalism?" (write ideas on board)
- Do any of you consider yourselves "citizen journalists?" Why? Why not?
- What do you think makes a citizen journalist different from a professional journalist?

**2. Defining citizen journalism and examples — 15 minutes**

[Open and begin slideshow]

**3. Create the citizen journalist code of ethics — 10 minutes**

Explain that since all of us are media users, there's a good chance that one day we might also be a citizen journalist, even if only for one moment (or one day). So, you'd like for them to create their own code of ethics that they would abide by as a citizen journalist. In pairs, ask students to write a list of 5-7 things they will do as a citizen journalist to make sure that they provide good citizen journalism and not poor or misleading citizen journalism, as in the case of the Boston bombing.

For more information on ethics, please see the lesson "[Just Because You Can, Doesn't Always Mean You Should.](#)"

For each action, they should write a sentence or two explaining why it is important.

**4. Share — 15 minutes**

Have each group stand up and share their list with the class, and use the board to summarize their codes of ethics. Then, as a class, you can create a master code of ethics for citizen journalists using all the contributions of your students.

**Common Core State Standards**

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7</a>	Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2</a>	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9</a>	Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

## 7. EVALUATING WEBSITE CREDIBILITY

### OVERVIEW

Students will learn the key questions they should ask in order to determine the credibility of online news websites.

### Objectives

- Students will understand the key questions for determining a news website's credibility.
- Students will apply the key questions of online credibility to popular news websites.

- Students will analyze the credibility of popular news websites based on their application of the key questions.
- Students will evaluate news websites based on key credibility questions and make recommendations for how news websites could improve their credibility ranking.

**Length:** 50 minutes

### **Resources**

Computer lab or laptop cart: 1:1 or 1:2 ratio

Internet access

[Class set: Website Credibility Ranking Sheet](#)

### **Lesson step-by-step**

#### **1. Introduce the activity — 10 minutes**

This lesson starts students off with an activity, either in a computer lab or with student laptops. For the best learning experience, students should work individually or in pairs. Explain that students will be evaluating news websites based on how credible they seem to the average viewer of the website. When we know what the standards are for excellent, user-friendly, and credible news websites, we will more easily recognize when a website fails to meet those standards and hence should be questioned or examined more closely.

Explain that they will open the website URL you provide them (suggested links found below). They should spend about 10 minutes reading around the site, becoming familiar with the content, exploring different tabs and looking through vital information on the site (for example, the “about us” page). Then, they will evaluate the website using the ranking sheet provided. Finally, at the end of the exercise, they will write a short description of their main findings.

#### **2. Evaluating websites activity — 20-30 minutes**

Pass out the worksheets, and assign each student or pair a URL. To ensure a variety of responses and feedback from your students for the follow-up discussion, we recommend you provide a mix of the following websites so that your whole class covers:

- 2-3 local news websites, including a mix of the online companion site to the local newspaper and local broadcast news websites
- 2-3 state or regional news websites
- 3 nationally-focused news websites
- 2 non-local state news websites

Don't be afraid to assign the same website to two different students who aren't working together. This should make for interesting follow-up discussions depending on whether the students found the websites equally credible in the same ways.

Walk the room as they work, answering questions and keeping them on task. If students are on task, make a chart on the whiteboard that lists all the websites in a row across the top, and leave space in a column under each website for students to write their credibility ranking.

#### **3. Follow-up discussion — 10-15 minutes**

Once students are finished with the evaluations, ask a representative from each group to go list their credibility ranking under the appropriate website on the whiteboard. Once each website has a ranking, go around the



groups again and ask for some key words or explanations that demonstrate the most troublesome issue the students found with their sites (for example, some might say “typos on the website,” or “the site was really hard to read or follow”).

Finally, ask students to now brainstorm on the back of the worksheet what steps they could take to compensate for the credibility qualities the websites were lacking. For example, would they go to another site entirely? Would they leave a comment on the website to correct a fact? What can they do, as the consumer, to get the best experience and most information out of these sites even if they aren’t perfectly “credible” according to the rankings?

### Common Core State Standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1</a>	Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2</a>	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3</a>	Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4</a>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).