

“He Said, She Said” - Reliable Sources

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Journalism – English Language Arts

Overview & Purpose

When researching an issue or an idea, students often find more than one set of facts or opinion about the same topic. Discerning the validity of data or information can become very complicated when sources go to great lengths to prove that their take on an issue is the best, the most valid or corners the market on truth. Students need to be taught the difference between propaganda, advertising, public relations and factual reporting.

In this digital age of instant information, opinion and blog content coming across the Internet, student reporters or writers have an even tougher job to trace the “source behind the source” to get at the facts and present them objectively. This lesson presents materials and activities for students to dig deeply to find and analyze primary news sources, evaluate credibility and draw conclusions about news items to improve their “news literacy”.

State Common Core Curriculum Standards

www.isbe.net or www.corestandards.org

This lesson applies the State Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Social and Emotional Learning, Grades 9-12. Teachers are aligning their teaching and curriculum with these new federal and state learning performance standards to produce a common achievement outcome for all students. *Scroll down to bottom of lesson plan for individual standards and their relevance to this lesson.*

Materials/Sources for Teaching the Lesson

Video: News Literacy Project Trains Young People to Be Skeptical Media Consumers, PBS News Hour, Jeffrey Brown, 12/13/11 (Time: 6:53), <http://video.pbs.org/video/2176439791>

Webinar – “*REALLY? Teaching Students to Ask Critical Questions,*” taught by Al Tompkins of the Poyner Institute, can be accessed at the following link:

<http://rtdna.na4.acrobat.com/p20421528/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>.

Newspaper Stories & Editorials: The *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* newspapers or other local newspaper.

Internet Stories: Google search engine, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook or other Internet or Email source.

News Literacy Units – Teaching units relating to news literacy from The Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York. Visit www.newsliteracy.org, then click on Unit 7 - Truth and Verification, or <http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/>

www.schooljournalism.org (formerly [hsj.org](http://www.hsj.org)), an ASNE-sponsored website, contains numerous lesson plans on news literacy and other journalism topics. The following link is for teacher resources and lesson plans: <http://www.schooljournalism.org.php53-3.dfw1-2.websitetestlink.com/teachers/>

Learning Links for the Classroom

In this section of the lesson plan are classroom teaching options, discussion and question/answer prompts and journaling and writing assignments for assessment and evaluation of student learning and knowledge.

Definition of Validity

Assertions, arguments, conclusions, reasons, data or intellectual processes that are persuasive because they are well founded and grounded in fact. What is valid is based on or borne out by truth, logic, fact or has legal force - a valid claim.

Teach 1

News Literacy Video Review

Have students watch the news literacy video cited above. Then conduct a reflection discussion with them based on the following questions.

Discussion

Q – How can you tell if something someone tells you is fact or fiction?

A – By going on-line to check the primary source of the information, seeing what their funding source is and what their agenda is.

Q - What primary sources might be credible?

A – Someone who experienced a situation personally, a university or research institution without a vested interest (like funding from a tobacco company), the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), police department. Are there others?

Q – Are newspapers and television news always valid?

A – Usually, but it’s always good to examine the source in a story to determine if they have a vested interest in promoting their viewpoint, ie., selling an idea or an item.

Q – Is the Internet always a good source of factual information? Why or why not?

A - Some information that is passed on in cyberspace is opinion, based on very few facts. Example: Ten people were attacked by sharks off the Florida coast today. To verify, Google the Coast Guard, local on-line newspapers or the Associated Press. Example: Teen epidemic of rare and fatal skin disease from sun over-exposure. To verify, go to Centers for Disease Control (CDSC). Before forwarding information, check valid sources.

Teach 2

Questions to Get the Facts

REALLY? Teaching Students to Ask Critical Questions

Some of this material has been compiled from news literacy lessons from the American Society of News Editors, high school lesson website, www.schooljournalism.org, formerly hsj.org (see link above and click on News Literacy). When students read or hear a news report, the first word that should come to mind is “REALLY?” – with a question mark indicating the skeptic’s voice.

Is this REALLY the story? Is this REALLY the whole story? Is this REALLY physically possible? Is this REALLY what I need to know? What do my readers and listeners REALLY want to know? Use these five questions to focus on this intersection of skepticism, curiosity, openness, reporting, critical thinking and knowledge.

1. Who said it?
2. Can I trust the source?
3. Is that person biased on this subject?
4. Am I biased on this subject?
5. Where can I get reliable information to help me frame my opinion?

To see how these questions work with real stories, check the webinar, *REALLY? Teaching Students to Ask Critical Questions* taught by Al Tompkins of the Poyner Institute.
<http://rtdna.na4.acrobat.com/p20421528/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>.

Teach 3

Find the Facts Activity

Ask your students to find articles in the local newspaper that are based on fact, and that are objective (presents all sides of an issue) as well as articles, columns or editorials that are opinion-based. There are legitimate places in the newspaper for both kinds of stories and writing. But opinion pieces are clearly marked as Opinion or as Columns, and they present an individual or an editor's views. News stories that are factual are usually in the first section of the newspaper, and features that are factual are often in the subsequent sections, like travel, food, fashion, sports, entertainment.

Discussion

Have each student present both types of articles, and tell whether they are factual or opinion. See if the class agrees. Discuss why selected articles help us with our First Amendment right to free speech and to participate in our democracy.

Teach 3

Find the Facts On-Line

Ask your students to find statements, articles or videos on YouTube, Google, Twitter, Facebook, or in their email, that are fact and opinion and to verify how they decided on factual content.

Discussion

Ask for volunteers to present their material, but not to tell which is fact and which is opinion. Ask the class to vote on each, and then tell how they know which is fact, and which is fiction. The student presenter can tell how he or she verified each piece.

Assessments

Research 1

Assign students to find sources for a story on illegal immigration, giving the facts about how many people cross the U.S. borders illegally each year and any economic impacts this may have, and opinions about how illegal immigration should be dealt with. Have students list their sources in two columns, fact and opinion. Ask for volunteers to present their findings to the class.

Research & Writing 2

Assign students to find sources to support an opinion that they have about whether teenagers should be allowed to drive earlier than age 16 and whether boys or girls should be able to drive earlier. Have

several students write a one-page article on their opinion and ask for volunteers to read their articles. Show them that facts can be used to support both sides of an argument. Ask them how to discern which set of facts is most credible.

State Common Core Standards

www.isbe.net or www.corestandards.org

Links Lesson Plan 1, News Literacy: “He Said, She Said,” - Reliable Sources

This lesson applies and reinforces the following selected Common Core Curriculum Standards for English Language Arts and Social and Emotional Learning, Grades 9-12. Teachers are aligning their teaching and curriculum with these new federal and state performance standards to produce a common achievement outcome for all students. To find other common core standards that may apply to this lesson, visit www.isbe.net or www.corestandards.org.

Grades 9-10

English Language Arts

Reading for Informational Text

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. 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.
3. 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 connections drawn between them.
4. 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. 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).
6. Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
7. 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.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Writing – Text Types and Purpose

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 1. a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 1. b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.
 1. c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 1. d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 1. e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing

6. 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.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

9. b. Apply *grades 9–10 Reading standards* to literary nonfiction (e.g., “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”).

Social Emotional Learning Standards

Early High School

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Standard B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

2B.4a. Analyze the origins and negative effects of stereotyping and prejudice.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Standard A: Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.

3A.4a. Demonstrate personal responsibility in making ethical decisions.

3A.4b. Evaluate how social norms and expectations of authority influence personal decisions and actions.

Standard B: Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.

3B.4a. Evaluate personal abilities to gather information, generate alternatives, and anticipate the consequences of decisions.

3B.4b. Apply decision-making skills to establish responsible social and work relationships.

Standard C: Contribute to the well-being of one’s school and community.

3C.4a. Plan, implement, and evaluate one’s participation in activities and organizations that improve school climate.

3C.4b. Plan, implement and evaluate one’s participation in a group effort to contribute to one’s local community.

Grades 11-12

English Language Arts

Reading for Informational Text

1. 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.

2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the

text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).
5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.
6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
7. 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.
8. Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).

Writing - Text Types and Purpose

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 1. a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 1. b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
 1. c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 1. d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 1. e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing

6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. 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, to demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.
 9. b. Apply *grades 11–12 Reading standards* to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses]”).

Social and Emotional Learning Standards

Late High School

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Standard B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.

2B.5a. Evaluate strategies for being respectful of others and opposing stereotyping and prejudice.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Standard A: Consider ethical, safety and societal factors in making decisions.

3A.5a. Apply ethical reasoning to evaluate societal practices.

3A.5b. Examine how the norms of different societies and cultures influence their members' decisions and behaviors.

Standard B: Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.

3B.5a. Analyze how present decision making affects college and career choices.

3B.5b. Evaluate how responsible decision making affects interpersonal and group relationships.

Standard C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

3C.5a. Work cooperatively with others to plan, implement, and evaluate a project to meet an identified school need.

3C.5b. Work cooperatively with others to plan, implement, and evaluate a project that addresses an identified need in the broader community.

For additional Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) lessons that relate to journalism, visit www.lionsquest.org. Lions Clubs International, Oak Brook, IL, has developed a set of lesson plans to teach social and emotional learning skills to teens, including listening, interviewing, questioning, communicating, researching, ethics and decision-making.