

Lesson 3: Bias

Time Needed: 1-2 class periods depending on the activity options you choose

Materials: *(optional but recommended)*

- Web Activity link found on the teacher web page for this lesson
- Student internet access -OR- a classroom computer and projector with internet access

Handouts:

- Reading (5 pages; class set)
- Practice Activity (4 pages; class set)
- Web Activity (2 pages; class set)

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Define and describe common types of bias found in the news
- Recognize journalists' tools that combat bias
- Analyze word choices that reveal bias
- Analyze a story's framing for bias
- Compare how different news outlets have framed the same issue

Fillable PDF handouts are available as an alternative to paper. Find them on the web page for this lesson.

Step by Step

- ANTICIPATE** by asking students, "Is the news biased?" (Yes, this is a loaded question.) Draw out students' explanations for how they answered the question. How do they recognize bias? What does it look/sound like? What kinds are there?
- DISTRIBUTE** the reading to the class.
- READ** with the class, pausing to discuss. Alternatively, have students read in groups or independently.
- DISTRIBUTE** the Practice Activity and review the directions as appropriate.
- ALLOW** students time to complete the Practice Activity.
- DISCUSS** the answers with the class for a deeper analysis of the material.

WEB ACTIVITY (INDIVIDUAL OR WHOLE CLASS)

- ARRANGE** for student online access -OR- set up a computer and projector in your classroom.
- COPY** the Web Activity student access link so you can send students there if they are working individually. If you're using this as a whole-class activity, be sure to follow the student access link to access the slides.
- DISTRIBUTE** the Web Activity handout to the class.

WHOLE CLASS:

- PROJECT** the Web Activity. Follow the link on each slide and read or analyze the website material as a class. Discuss answers to the questions on the slide and have students fill out their handouts as you work through the activity slides together.

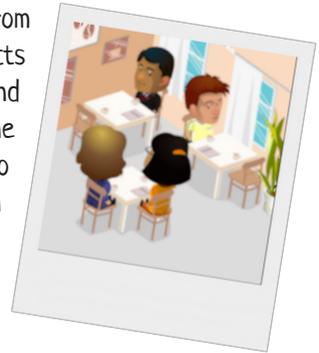
INDIVIDUAL:

- ASSIGN** students to complete the web activity and handout independently or in pairs.

Men.



It's been two days since a bomb exploded in a U.S. city several states away from you, killing twenty-eight people and injuring 107 more. The two female suspects are still on the loose. Journalist Becca Jones is eating lunch at her desk and studying a photograph that was sent to her a few minutes ago by someone claiming the two bombing suspects are innocent. The "proof" is this photo supposedly showing the two women having coffee in another state when the bomb went off.



Even zoomed all the way in, Becca can't tell if it's them. The photo is too unclear. But wow—she would love to prove the two women didn't bomb that building. All this hype about "female" bombers, when everyone knows *men* are the ones with violent tendencies? September 11, Oklahoma City, the Unabomber... Men, men, men.

Like that guy last night who screamed at her from his car when she didn't quite make it across the crosswalk before the light turned green. Jerk.

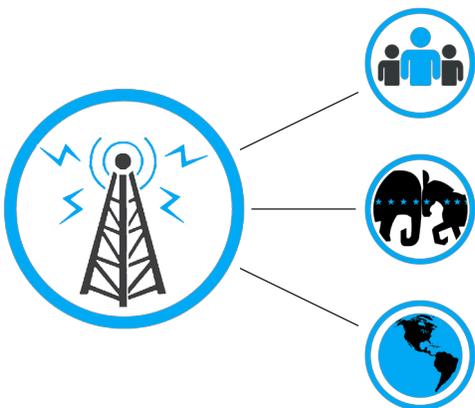
Prejudice, Partiality, and Preconceptions

Sounds like Becca has some preconceived notions about gender, hm? Favoring or supporting one thing over something else is often called **bias**, and we're all biased about lots of things. We can't help it. On a personal level, biases are connected to our core values and fears: Someone with a deep sense of patriotism may be biased against other cultures. Someone who fears the police may be biased against the official version of events after an incident. Bias often stems from personal experience. Maybe the patriotic person is a war veteran, and maybe the person who fears the police questions officers' motives because people in their neighborhood are often stopped for no clear reason. Maybe our journalist, Becca, had a violent father or boyfriend, or maybe she volunteers every weekend at a women's domestic violence shelter. People are usually aware of their biases that are based on personal experience.



Bias can also be passed down from one generation to the next as kids grow up watching how people talk and behave. This is where most **inherent bias** comes from—bias that's so ingrained you don't even realize it's there (unless you're on the receiving end). Inherent bias can be hard to notice, but it *can* be noticed.

You can be biased about pretty much anything. (Chocolate, strawberry, or vanilla?) Here are three common forms of bias that show up in the news:



Social bias is about favoring or disfavoring groups of people based on factors like race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, looks, disability, weight, age, etc.

Political bias is about supporting or opposing a political party or ideology, such as Democrat vs. Republican or conservative vs. liberal.

Cultural bias is a preference or intolerance for something based on your society's cultural standards—for example, a bias toward democracy or against raising horses for meat.

The Bias Boogeyman ~~man~~ *person*

Becca the journalist is obviously biased about men and violence. Now, she’s working on a developing situation where two *women* are accused of violence, and she has questionable evidence that the women might be innocent. Is that a recipe for journalistic disaster?

People worry a lot about bias in the news, and they fear bias for a variety of reasons. One is the uneasy feeling that a news report might be manipulating them with hidden bias, or that maybe the news outlet’s bias is skewing the truth in some way. Is the reporter telling the whole truth? Is something being left out or slanted in a way that distorts the truth? At the same time, many people *choose* bias by only following news sources that are biased toward their own point of view. Some do this to protect themselves from biased reporting because they think only news sources that share their point of view are trustworthy.

Are they right? Should we all be afraid—*very* afraid—of bias? That’s one approach, but you’re probably better off learning how to identify bias so you don’t *have* to fear it. Unlike “fake news,” recognizing bias is not about identifying information that isn’t true. Your mad bias-detecting skills are about understanding how news providers can influence the way you think about information that *is* true. Being able to recognize and analyze bias helps you determine whether facts are being skewed. That gives you the upper hand.



Biased... Yet Objective?

Bias is part of being human. And guess where the news comes from? Humans. Journalists, producers, news directors... all human.* It would be unreasonable to expect journalists to be completely objective because nobody can push aside 100% of their personal views. But that’s actually okay because journalists are expected to use *methods* that are objective. Methods based on journalism standards give journalists accepted procedures to follow that help minimize the effect of bias on their reporting.

The table below lists four tools journalists use to help their reporting stay objective along with the bias-detecting skills you’ll need in order to recognize when these tools have been used.



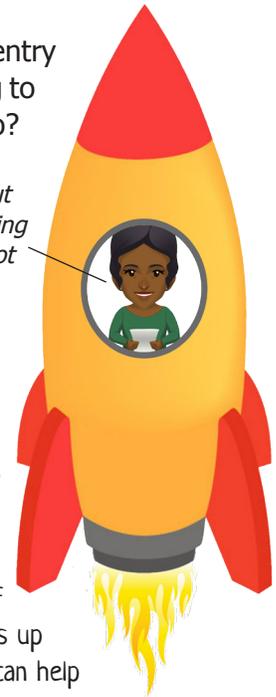
JOURNALIST’S TOOL	YOUR SKILL
VERIFICATION	DETERMINE HOW THE INFORMATION IN THE STORY WAS VERIFIED.
FAIRNESS	IDENTIFY WHERE THE STORY ADDRESSES MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.
AWARENESS	LOOK FOR STEREOTYPES OR ASSUMPTIONS THE REPORTER MIGHT NOT HAVE CAUGHT.
FRAMING	NOTICE HOW A STORY IS FRAMED AND COMPARE THE FRAME WITH OTHER VIEWPOINTS.
WORD CHOICE	SPOT WORDS AND PHRASES THAT PROVOKE EMOTION OR PASS JUDGMENT.

Verify, Verify, Verify

Imagine a scientist saying, “I don’t know if this new material will really survive re-entry into the atmosphere, but it would look awesome on the side of a rocket, so I’m going to trust my calculations and skip the testing.” Would you go to space in that rocket? No? Even people who agree the material looks amazing wouldn’t trust its safety without testing. The process of testing is an objective method that’s unrelated to anyone’s personal opinion.

Now, imagine Becca saying, “I don’t know if this blurry photo really shows the two suspects having coffee in another state when the bomb went off, but women just don’t *do* things like bomb buildings, so I’m going to trust the photo.” Would *you* trust the photo? Would you trust it if you agreed that women don’t usually bomb buildings? Hopefully not, because the photo hasn’t been verified. In journalism, verification is the “testing” that proves something is true. And when something is true, it’s true regardless of how you feel about it.

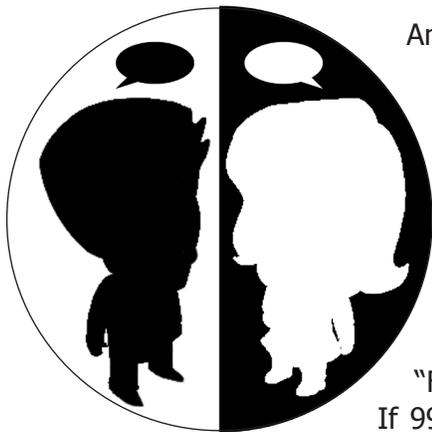
Questions about this rocket’s testing process have not been verified.



In one corner of the photo, through the coffee shop window, there’s a delivery truck with a phone number on the side. The number is legible, and Becca does a quick check of the area code. It matches the city where the photo was supposedly taken. Becca picks up the phone and calls a digital photography specialist she often works with to see if he can help find any more clues about exactly where the photo was taken.

Becca may be super annoyed by all the hype around the women suspects, and she may be totally convinced that the real bombers are men. But as a journalist, she’s not going to believe the claim about the photo until she’s proven exactly what it shows. If she learns something worth reporting, her story will include the markers of verification and transparency you learned to identify in Lesson 1.

Tell All Sides



Another way journalists avoid bias is by telling all sides of a story. The various opinions and experiences around an issue are what make up the *whole* story, so journalists seek out people who represent different views. Fair, balanced reporting is a standard of journalism. But when is a story fair and balanced? The bombing victims are getting tons of news coverage, so does fair reporting mean the bombers should get an equal amount of air time? Your gut is probably telling you “no,” and that’s correct. The news isn’t expected to be a platform for wrongdoers.

“Fair and balanced” doesn’t always mean equal in other situations, too. If 99 members of the U.S. Senate vote for a bill and one member votes against it, “fair and balanced” doesn’t mean news reports should spend the same amount of time covering that one member’s objections as it spends covering the reasons everyone else approved. Mentioning the Senator’s objection would probably be enough (and even that might not be considered necessary).

Be on the lookout for fair and balanced reporting by watching or listening for different perspectives in a story. Do they even offer different perspectives? If not, can you figure out why? If they do tell more than one side, *how* do they tell it? Sometimes, you can spot bias because the person quoted or interviewed for one side of an issue is presented as irrational or put in a negative light. Also, think about what perspectives might be missing even when more than one side has been presented.



Assumption Awareness

In the process of putting a story together, a journalist will make all kinds of decisions—which experts to interview, which parts of the interviews to quote in the story, what examples to use that people can relate to, how to word the information... Almost every line of a news story involves a decision, and each decision is an opportunity for bias to sneak in. To deal with this, journalists always need to be questioning their own assumptions. That's how they can catch hidden biases in their own perspectives that might end up woven into the story. This kind of self-awareness helps journalists cleanse their stories of bias they may not have noticed at first.

You should question their assumptions, too. Learning to identify assumptions is a complex skill, but a simple way to start is just by asking the question: What is this assuming about ____? You can insert anything into that blank space—a person, attitude, political party, branch of government, way of life, or even the intended audience for the news piece. (“What is this story assuming about *me*?”) An assumption won't always be there, but if it is, you won't notice if you don't ask.

How You Frame It

When people admire a piece of artwork hanging on the wall, they focus on what's inside the frame. Most people don't notice the frame at all. News stories also have a frame that most people don't notice. Obviously, it's not a physical frame (unless it's that photo of you winning the science fair your grandmother clipped from the local paper). A news story's frame is the angle the journalist takes in telling the story.



There's almost always more than one way to look at an issue or event—more than one possible aspect to focus on. If you were doing a report on polar bears, for example, there are a lot of different angles you could take: threats to the bears' natural habitat, places where the bears are thriving, the well-being of polar bears in zoos, or ways polar bears adapt to their environment, to name a few. In the news, a journalist frames a story by deciding what to emphasize, usually right at the beginning. Compare these two examples:

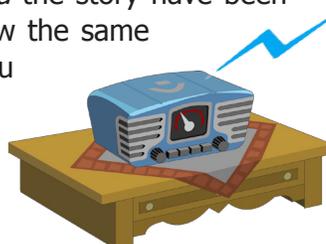


With the two bombing suspects still on the loose tonight, panic is rising as investigators turn the city upside down in their hunt for the two dangerous women.

Investigators are leaving no stone unturned tonight in their systematic search for two women suspected of setting off Tuesday's bomb.

Biased Framing?

Framing isn't the same as bias. Framing can just be about a story's structure and focus—the decision to take a fear-based or neutral approach to the story, for example. But if a news story *is* biased, it will usually be framed from that biased perspective. To see through the frame, first identify it. What's the angle or emphasis? Then, watch for other viewpoints or aspects of the issue in the rest of the story. How else *could* the story have been framed? If you're not sure, check to see how the same story is being told by other news providers. You can piece different frames together to get a more complete and unbiased picture of the issues.



Another strikeout tonight as the weary city ends Day 3 of law enforcement's fruitless search for the two bombing suspects, prompting social media rants from citizens frustrated with a massive police presence that may have let the bombers slip through its fingers.

Careful Choice of Words

When bias is present, there's almost always a dead giveaway: the words that are being used. Consider these two ways of describing the same development:

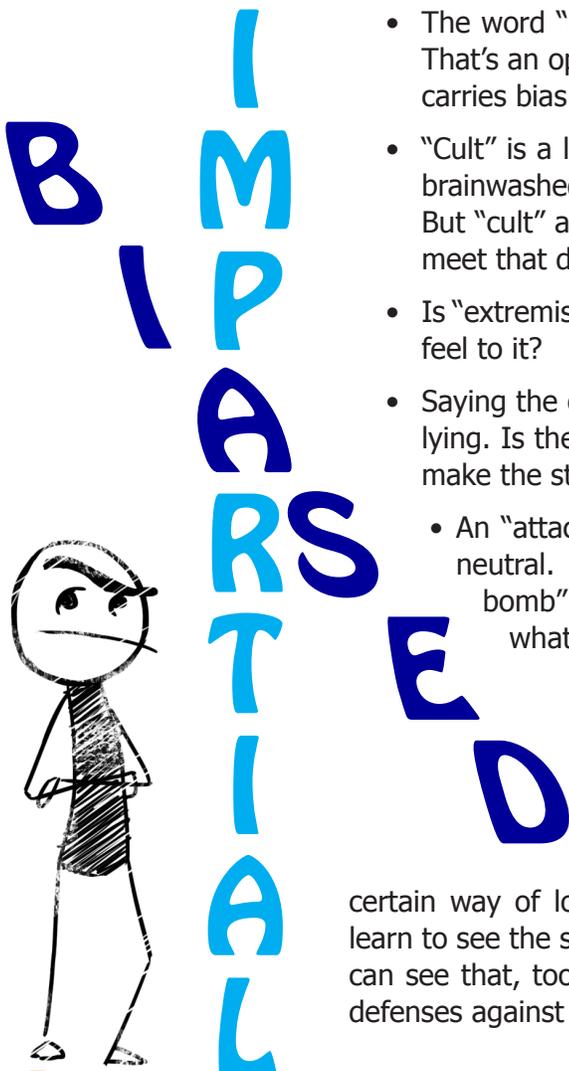
Late this afternoon, we tracked down a member of the same bizarre cult the two suspects belong to, who claimed she knew nothing about plans for an attack.

Late this afternoon, we spoke with a member of the extremist group the two suspects belong to, who said she was not aware of plans to set off a bomb.



Notice anything? Which one seems more biased? Why? The individual words used in a news story can give it a whole extra layer of meaning. If you think these word choices happen by accident, think again—they're *choices*, and news writers consider these choices very carefully. In the above example, the first description has several word choices that give it a meaning that is biased at best, misleading at worst:

- The phrase “tracked down” implies some kind of chase, as if the person being tracked has something to hide. Is that a fair and accurate portrayal of the person, or is that the news outlet’s bias against the group the bombers belong to? If it’s bias, does it matter? Does a fringe group deserve to be treated without bias?



- The word “bizarre” is basically the same as saying the group is weird. That’s an opinion. Dropping an opinion into a news story almost always carries bias along with it.
- “Cult” is a loaded word in our society that brings up mental images of brainwashed people engaging in unusual or even dangerous behavior. But “cult” also has an actual definition. Does the suspects’ group really meet that definition?
- Is “extremist group” more neutral than “bizarre cult”? Is there a different feel to it?
- Saying the group member “claimed” she knew nothing implies she was lying. Is there any evidence of that, or is the news outlet just trying to make the story more dramatic?
- An “attack” is a hostile act of aggression. “Set off a bomb” is more neutral. In this case, “attack” is probably accurate, but “set off a bomb” is less dramatic and tends to keep the attention more on what the person said rather than the bombers’ motives.

Pay Attention

Most of us would prefer to make up our own mind based on the facts. We don’t want to be manipulated. Without this kind of close observation, you might not even notice how a news story is steering you toward a certain way of looking at an issue or event. But by paying attention, you learn to see the slant that’s being put on the story. Or, if there’s no slant, you can see that, too. Learning to notice word choices is one of your strongest defenses against bias.

A. Framing the Story. News sites often include the first line of an article along with the headline. The headline and first line can frame the story all by themselves. Consider these two examples about the Boots on the Border Act of 2017:

House votes to allow lie detector exemptions for Border Patrol hiring

The House passed bipartisan legislation on Wednesday to waive lie detector test requirements for prospective Customs and Border Protection workers, part of an effort to help speed agency hiring.

by Christina Marcos, *The Hill*, June 7, 2017

House passes bill to allow some border and customs job applicants to skip polygraph test

The House voted 282 to 137 Wednesday in favor of a bill that would allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection to waive a mandatory lie-detector test for applicants from law enforcement or the military, raising alarms that the move will weaken standards at the agency.

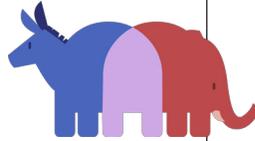
by Marla Sacchetti, *Washington Post*, June 7, 2017

1. Fill in the chart to compare the articles more closely. For each description, copy the exact text from the paragraphs.

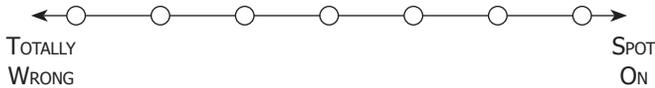
What words describe...	<i>The Hill</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>
...the bill's passage?		
...what the bill would do?	Headline:	Headline:
	Paragraph:	Paragraph:
...the people who would get a waiver?		
...the reason for the bill?		
...concerns about the bill?		

2. Use the examples and the chart in part 1 to answer these questions about word choice and framing.

A. When this bill passed, the House had 238 Republicans and 193 Democrats. Knowing that, consider the word "bipartisan" used by *The Hill*.



- How accurate do you think it is to say the bill was "bipartisan"?



- Explain what you think using this word suggests about how the organization views the bill:

B. Consider the word "skip" in the *WaPo* headline.

- What is it about the word "skip" that suggests bias?

- What do you think using this word suggests about how the organization views the bill?

C. Consider the phrases "waive a mandatory lie detector test" and "waive lie detector test requirements." Do you think these phrases imply anything different that might suggest a certain view of the bill? If not, why not?



D. Consider the phrase "raising alarms."

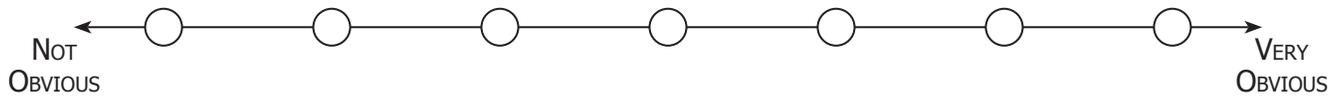
- The author could have chosen to write "raising concerns" instead. How does "alarms" give a different impression than "concerns"?

- What do you think choosing the word "alarms" suggests about the author's or organization's view of the bill?

B. Front Page News. A big story usually comes with several related stories. On a news site, these normally appear below the main story and have smaller headlines. Taken together, the main and related headlines can give you a pretty good idea of whether a publication has bias toward a particular perspective on an issue. Check out how these two big players presented the same story:



1. First, look *only at the main headline* for each news outlet. Ignore the smaller headlines. *Based on the main headlines alone*, how obvious is the difference in viewpoint between the two outlets?



Explain what you see in these two headlines that led to your decision:

2. Now look at the main and smaller headlines together. These two news outlets framed this development very differently. Describe each outlet's main focus. What angle is each one taking on the story?

CNN.com

FoxNews.com

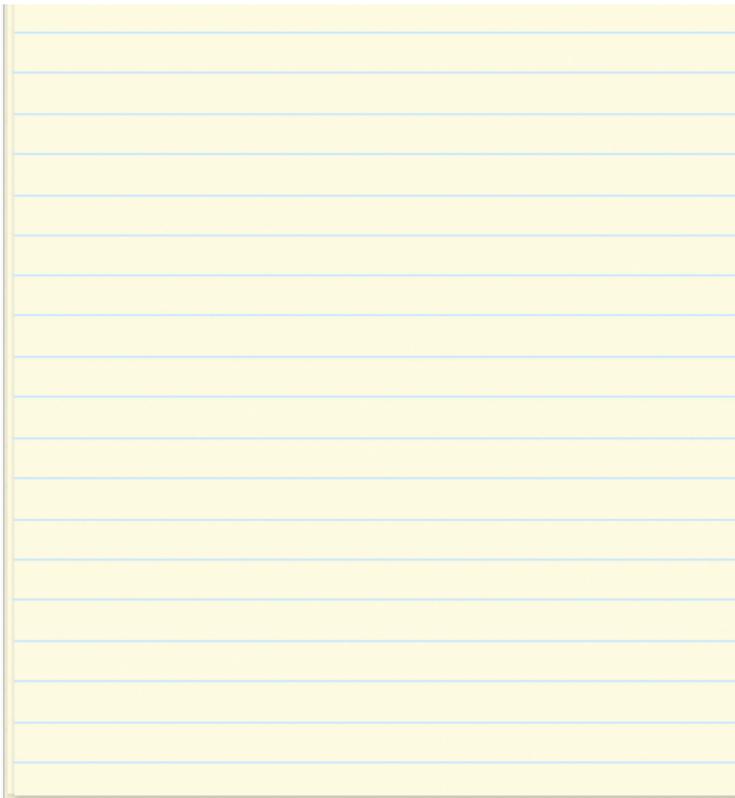
C. Scrub the Bias. Each story below is based on the same real-life event—but takes a very different view. Edit them to remove the bias and give them a neutral viewpoint.

1. Mark up this paragraph as if you were giving feedback to help the author remove the bias. Circle or underline problem phrases and make comments in the margin to point out what should change.

Two Offensive Linemen, One Wide Receiver, Zero Respect for America or Law Enforcement

Dallas, Texas — In a flagrant display of disrespect for both their country and law enforcement, three members of the Dallas Cowboys offense refused to stand during the national anthem before the divisional playoff against the Green Bay Packers. While the rest of their team, the entire opposing team, and the entire stadium stood to honor America and the heroes who have died defending it, the three men knelt on the ground and stared defiantly at the field in front of them. “I don’t like it,” said tailback Matt Davis, who comes from a long line of law enforcement officials. “They’re my teammates, and I respect their right to express their opinions, but I don’t like it.” All three were allowed to play despite their protest and the disruption it caused. The Cowboys suffered a season-ending loss to the Packers, 32-10.

2. Up for a challenge? Re-write this article without the bias. Give it the most neutral viewpoint you can. If you need to add material (interview, additional facts, etc.), go ahead.



Players Exercise Free Speech, Refuse to Stand for Anthem

Dallas, Texas — In the wake of recent police brutality, three Dallas Cowboys exercised their free speech rights last evening by kneeling instead of standing during the national anthem. The bold move was a solemn display of solidarity with recent victims of police violence, especially five unarmed black men killed by police over a two-month period. The three champions of human rights knelt quietly, keeping their somber gazes on the field despite a backlash from the stands. “I give `em props for making a statement,” corner Mike Samuelson told reporters. “Somebody’s got to call attention to what’s been happening, and they’re out there doing that on national television.” Despite strong performances by the three players, the Packers won, 32-10.

WEB ACTIVITY

SLIDE 1: WORD CHOICE BUFFET

Headline #1: _____

Headline #2: _____

How word choices affect its meaning:

How word choices affect its meaning:

SLIDE 2: BIASED AGAINST EVERYONE?

1. The author suggests there's a difference between having skills to detect bias in the news and how we actually judge bias. Explain what you think this means.
2. Explain the "hostile media effect":
3. Do you see people "self-stereotyping"? Do *you* self-stereotype? How do you think it affects the way you or others view what happens in the world?

SLIDE 3: OOPS. THAT WAS BIASED.

1. Why was Yvonne Brill a newsworthy person?
2. Compare the opening line from the first draft and the revised version. How did they change the emphasis?
3. Explain what kind of bias was present in the first version.

WEB ACTIVITY P.2

SLIDE 4: COVERING THE PREZ

- Did any of the major news providers in the Figure 6 graph take a positive tone in a majority of their Trump coverage during his first 100 days?
 Yes No
- Fox News is widely recognized as having a conservative perspective and a generally favorable view of President Trump, yet even they had slightly more negative than positive-tone coverage. Can you think of anything that might explain this?
- The Figure 8 graph measures _____

- On which issue did Fox and the other networks have the closest percent of negative-tone coverage?
Issue: _____
Percentage point difference: _____ points
- On which issue was there the biggest difference?
Issue: _____
Percentage point difference: _____ points
- Explain how the Figure 8 graph shows that the data about Fox from the Figure 6 graph could be misleading if Figure 6 was the only graph someone had.

SLIDE 5: TELL IT LIKE IT IS?

- Look at the three examples of passive voice in the first paragraph. What's missing when events are worded this way?
- The author suggests that news outlets use the phrase "officer-involved shooting" because law enforcement wants to be perceived as without fault. Think of two other reasons this phrase might be used in news stories.

Alternative Reason #1:

Alternative Reason #2:

- Explain whether you agree that the phrase "a police officer shot a civilian" comes across as blaming the police officer.

A. Framing the Story. News sites often include the first line of an article along with the headline. The headline and first line can frame the story all by themselves. Consider these two examples about the Boots on the Border Act of 2017:

House votes to allow lie detector exemptions for Border Patrol hiring

The House passed bipartisan legislation on Wednesday to waive lie detector test requirements for prospective Customs and Border Protection workers, part of an effort to help speed agency hiring.

by Christina Marcos, *The Hill*, June 7, 2017

House passes bill to allow some border and customs job applicants to skip polygraph test

The House voted 282 to 137 Wednesday in favor of a bill that would allow U.S. Customs and Border Protection to waive a mandatory lie-detector test for applicants from law enforcement or the military, raising alarms that the move will weaken standards at the agency.

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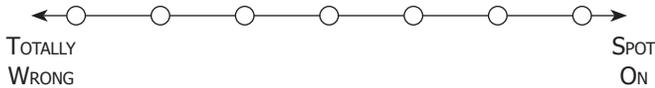
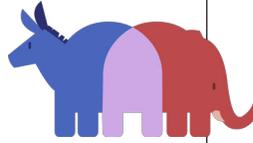
1. Fill in the chart to compare the articles more closely. For each description, copy the exact text from the paragraphs.

What words describe...	<i>The Hill</i>	<i>Washington Post</i>
...the bill's passage?	<i>The House passed bipartisan legislation on Wednesday</i>	<i>The House voted 282 to 137 Wednesday in favor of a bill</i>
...what the bill would do?	Headline: <i>allow lie detector exemptions for Border Patrol hiring</i>	Headline: <i>allow some border and customs job applicants to skip polygraph test</i>
	Paragraph: <i>waive lie detector test requirements</i>	Paragraph: <i>waive a mandatory lie-detector test</i>
...the people who would get a waiver?	<i>prospective Customs and Border Protection workers</i>	<i>applicants from law enforcement or the military</i>
...the reason for the bill?	<i>to help speed agency hiring</i>	<i>[doesn't give a reason]</i>
...concerns about the bill?	<i>[doesn't mention a concern]</i>	<i>the move will weaken standards at the agency</i>

2. Use the examples and the chart in part 1 to answer these questions about word choice and framing.

A. When this bill passed, the House had 238 Republicans and 193 Democrats. Knowing that, consider the word "bipartisan" used by *The Hill*.

- How accurate do you think it is to say the bill was "bipartisan"?



- Explain what you think using this word suggests about how the organization views the bill:

Accuracy: Answers will vary, but students may point out that only 10 Democrats voted for the bill, which some may consider not particularly bipartisan.

Org's views: Answers will vary, but students may consider the numbers and conclude that the organization wants the bill to sound widely popular and therefore likely supports the bill.

C. Consider the phrases "waive a mandatory lie detector test" and "waive lie detector test requirements." Do you think these phrases imply anything different that might suggest a certain view of the bill? If not, why not?

The difference is very subtle here, so accept all reasonable answers.

Taken in the context of other word choices in both excerpts, one could suggest that "waive a mandatory lie detector test" sounds a bit more accusatory and places more emphasis on the fact that the test has always been required. That would suggest bias against the bill.

Students might also say they are just two different ways of saying the same thing and they don't imply anything different.

B. Consider the word "skip" in the *WaPo* headline.

- What is it about the word "skip" that suggests bias?

"Skip" is informal and implies that the person doing the skipping doesn't value what is being skipped. Saying someone else is "skipping" something can suggest they don't value something important.

- What do you think using this word suggests about how the organization views the bill?

Using "skip" in this context suggests the agency doesn't value polygraph tests and also suggests the agency is being unreasonable, which suggests the news organization does not support the bill.



D. Consider the phrase "raising alarms."

- The author could have chosen to write "raising concerns" instead. How does "alarms" give a different impression than "concerns"?

Answers will vary, but an "alarm" occurs when there is an emergency. It gives the impression of an urgent situation, whereas "concerns" doesn't imply urgency.

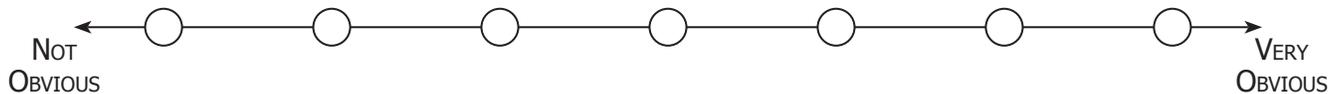
- What do you think choosing the word "alarms" suggests about the author's or organization's view of the bill?

It suggests that the news organization does not support the bill.

B. Front Page News. A big story usually comes with several related stories. On a news site, these normally appear below the main story and have smaller headlines. Taken together, the main and related headlines can give you a pretty good idea of whether a publication has bias toward a particular perspective on an issue. Check out how these two big players presented the same story:



1. First, look *only at the main headline* for each news outlet. Ignore the smaller headlines. *Based on the main headlines alone*, how obvious is the difference in viewpoint between the two outlets?



Explain what you see in these two headlines that led to your decision:

Accept any reasonable answer. Students may say the headlines alone don't suggest much of a difference in viewpoint, or they may point to the words "quit," "no deal," or "drops out" as suggesting a viewpoint one way or the other.

2. Now look at the main and smaller headlines together. These two news outlets framed this development very differently. Describe each outlet's main focus. What angle is each one taking on the story?

CNN.com

The CNN sub-headlines focus on the world's negative reaction and how this move would affect America's standing in the world. Students may also point out that the words "abandons" and "we're out" suggest a negative view of the move and a negative focus on the story.

FoxNews.com

The Fox News sub-headlines focus on how this move could affect the U.S. economy. Both headlines also focus on the climate deal as being bad for America. In that sense, these sub-headlines suggest a positive view of the move.

C. Scrub the Bias. Each story below is based on the same real-life event—but takes a very different view. Edit them to remove the bias and give them a neutral viewpoint.

1. Mark up this paragraph as if you were giving feedback to help the author remove the bias. Circle or underline problem phrases and make comments in the margin to point out what should change.

*** Suggest analysis below. Students may come up with additional issues.*

Two Offensive Linemen, One Wide Receiver, Zero Respect for America or Law Enforcement

Choose a more fact-based opening

Dallas, Texas — In a flagrant display of disrespect for both their country and law enforcement, three members of the Dallas Cowboys offense refused to stand during the national anthem before the divisional playoff against the Green Bay Packers.

Shows opinion; bashes the subjects

"refused" makes them sound defiant

Implies the 3 don't honor America and its heroes

While the rest of their team, the entire opposing team, and the entire stadium stood to honor America and the heroes who have died defending it, the three men knelt on the ground and stared defiantly at the field in front of them. "I don't like it,"

Emphasizing that the rest stood makes them sound defiant

Assumes an unverified feeling on their part

said tailback Matt Davis, who comes from a long line of law enforcement officials. "They're my teammates, and I respect their right to express their opinions, but I don't like it." All three were allowed to play despite their protest and the disruption it caused. The Cowboys suffered a season-ending loss to the Packers, 32-10.

Add a quote from the other viewpoint or find a more neutral quote

Were they protesting? If so, against what?

Paints Cowboys in a negative light

Indicates a negative view of what they did

2. Up for a challenge? Re-write this article without the bias. Give it the most neutral viewpoint you can. If you need to add material (interview, additional facts, etc.), go ahead.

*** Suggested rewrite below. There are many possibilities, and a completely neutral tone is hard to achieve!*

Players Kneel During National Anthem

Dallas, Texas — Three Dallas Cowboys knelt during the national anthem last night instead of standing as is customary. The players intended the move to call attention to several recent incidents in which people have been killed during interactions with law enforcement.

While the three knelt, many people in the stands shouted and booed at them. Some cheered. The players themselves said nothing.

Among the other players, reactions were mixed. "I give 'em props for making a statement," corner Mike Samuelson told reporters. His teammate, tailback Matt Davis, said, "I respect their right to express their opinions, but I don't like it."

The game proceeded without interruption. The final score was Green Bay 32, Dallas 10.

Players Exercise Free Speech, Refuse to Stand for Anthem

Dallas, Texas — In the wake of recent police brutality, three Dallas Cowboys exercised their free speech rights last evening by kneeling instead of standing during the national anthem. The bold move was a solemn display of solidarity with recent victims of police violence, especially five unarmed black men killed by police over a two-month period. The three champions of human rights knelt quietly, keeping their somber gazes on the field despite a backlash from the stands. "I give 'em props for making a statement," corner Mike Samuelson told reporters. "Somebody's got to call attention to what's been happening, and they're out there doing that on national television." Despite strong performances by the three players, the Packers won, 32-10.

WEB ACTIVITY

SLIDE 1: WORD CHOICE BUFFET

Headline #1: _____

Headline #2: _____

How word choices affect its meaning:

How word choices affect its meaning:

Students' headlines and explanations will vary.

SLIDE 2: BIASED AGAINST EVERYONE?

1. The author suggests there's a difference between having skills to detect bias in the news and how we actually judge bias. Explain what you think this means.

Answers will vary, but students should explain that just because someone has learned how to detect bias doesn't mean that's the only way they actually decide whether they think something is biased.

2. Explain the "hostile media effect":

People on both sides of an issue feel that a neutral story is biased against them.

3. Do you see people "self-stereotyping"? Do you self-stereotype? How do you think it affects the way you or others view what happens in the world?

Answers will vary.

SLIDE 3: OOPS. THAT WAS BIASED.

1. Why was Yvonne Brill a newsworthy person?

Answers will vary, but students may say it's because she was a rocket scientist, one of the early female rocket scientists, or a brilliant rocket scientist.

2. Compare the opening line from the first draft and the revised version. How did they change the emphasis?

The first draft emphasized Brill's homemaking/parenting skills. The second draft emphasized that she was a rocket scientist.

3. Explain what kind of bias was present in the first version.

Gender bias. Many would argue that if Brill had been a man, the Times never would have led with his cooking skills and his merit as a father.

WEB ACTIVITY P.2

SLIDE 4: COVERING THE PREZ

1. Did any of the major news providers in the Figure 6 graph take a positive tone in a majority of their Trump coverage during his first 100 days?

Yes No

2. Fox News is widely recognized as having a conservative perspective and a generally favorable view of President Trump, yet even they had slightly more negative than positive-tone coverage. Can you think of anything that might explain this?

Accept all reasonable answers.

3. The Figure 8 graph measures *It measures a news outlet's percentage of news reports on Trump that have a negative tone. It compares Fox News with other outlets.*

4. On which issue did Fox and the other networks have the closest percent of negative-tone coverage?

Issue: *Economy*

Percentage point difference: *13* points

5. On which issue was there the biggest difference?

Issue: *International trade*

Percentage point difference: *68* points

6. Explain how the Figure 8 graph shows that the data about Fox from the Figure 6 graph could be misleading if Figure 6 was the only graph someone had.

Answers will vary, but students may say that the "In Unison" graph could make you think that Fox was a lot more positive than other outlets on all issues, whereas this graph shows that Fox had a lot of negative coverage on some issues. It appears that in the "In Unison" graph very positive coverage by Fox on some issues offset very negative coverage on other issues.

SLIDE 5: TELL IT LIKE IT IS?

1. Look at the three examples of passive voice in the first paragraph. What's missing when events are worded this way?

None of these examples says who the actor was (who was doing the action).

2. The author suggests that news outlets use the phrase "officer-involved shooting" because law enforcement wants to be perceived as without fault. Think of two other reasons this phrase might be used in news stories.

Alternative Reason #1:

Accept any reasonable answer.

Alternative Reason #2:

Accept any reasonable answer.

3. Explain whether you agree that the phrase "a police officer shot a civilian" comes across as blaming the police officer.

Accept any reasonable answer.