

Lesson Plan: How to Critically Analyze News

Lesson Plan: How to Critically Analyze News

written by: Debra M. Bumgarner, MLIS School Librarian
Meadow Glen Elementary School Lexington, SC

STANDARDS:

ELA

Standard 2) Articulate ideas, claims and perspectives in a logical sequence using information, findings, and credible evidence from sources.

Grade Four, 2.2

Discuss the purpose and the credibility of information presented in diverse media and formats.

Grade Five, 2.2

Analyze the credibility of information presented in diverse media and formats.

AASL

1) Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge. (especially the following indicators)

1.1.5 Evaluate information found in selected sources on the basis of accuracy, validity, appropriateness for needs, importance, and social and cultural context.

1.1.9 Collaborate with others to broaden and deepen understanding.

1.2.1 Display initiative and engagement by posing questions and investigating the answers beyond the collection of superficial facts.

1.2.4 Maintain a critical stance by questioning the validity and accuracy of all information.

1.3.1 Respect copyright/intellectual property rights of creators and producers.

1.3.2 Seek divergent perspectives during information gathering and assessment.

1.3.4 Contribute to the exchange of ideas within the learning community.

1.4.3 Monitor gathered information, and assess for gaps or weaknesses.

2) Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge.

2.1.1 Continue an inquiry-based research process by applying critical thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, organization) to information and knowledge in order to construct new understandings, draw conclusions, and create new knowledge.

2.1.2 Organize knowledge so it is useful.

2.1.5 Collaborate with others to exchange ideas, develop new understandings, make decisions, and solve problems.

3) Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our society.

3.1.1 Conclude an inquiry-based research process by sharing new understandings and reflecting on the learning.

3.1.2 Participate and collaborate as members of a social and

intellectual network of learners.

4) Pursue personal and aesthetic growth.

4.2.3 Maintain openness to new ideas by considering divergent opinions, changing opinions or conclusions when evidence supports the change, and seeking information about new ideas encountered through academic or personal experiences.

4.3.1 Participate in the social exchange of ideas, both electronically and in person.

LEARNING TARGETS:

- ***I can demonstrate our Habits of Scholarship while researching a topic and developing a final product.***
 - I can collaborate well with my group while searching for information.
 - I can develop higher-order level questions to further my learning and understanding of a topic.

- ***I can use seven steps of analysis to determine if information is accurate, current, and if the author or source is reliable.***

- I can locate the copyright information at the bottom of a webpage.

- I can verify information using multiple sources and types of media.

- I can determine the credibility of a source. (i.e. History.com vs. a random online source; a new resource vs. an older, reputable source.)
- I can locate the publishing date and use it to determine how current the information is and whether anything may have changed.
- I can verify an author's expertise and background with the subject by checking to see if the author is someone who has dedicated time and effort to learning this subject. For example, a university professor typically has increased credibility versus a hobbyist.
- I can determine if the new information matches my prior knowledge of the topic.
- I can use common sense to determine if information seems realistic (i.e. authentic or probable)?

LESSON OUTLINE:

Explain the following seven steps to students, and provide examples using a legitimate website.

1. Copyright: Students should check the bottom of the webpage to see if the information has been submitted for ownership.
2. Verification with multiple sources: Students must double check the information on a few different web pages. Like in a trial, the more corroborating witnesses, the more likely the truth will be discovered.
3. Credibility of source, such as between [com](#) versus a random unknown source: Students should check if the source has been recently created. Sources that have been around for a while can show reliability over time and be tested by hindsight, whereas recently created sources don't carry much of a track record.
4. Date published: Students should check how recently the page was updated to see how current the information is and whether anything has changed.
5. Author's expertise and background with the subject: Students should check if the author is someone who has dedicated time and effort to learning this subject. For example, a university professor typically has increased credibility versus a hobbyist.
6. Does it match your prior knowledge: Students should check the information to see if it matches up with what they have learned before.
7. Does it seem realistic: Students should use their common sense. Does something seem authentic or probable?

ASSESS THE LEARNING:

#1

Start with a news article from a satirical site, like the Onion. Discuss with the class using the whiteboard/projector

screen. Then, go to Newsala and allow students to read a short article (using the display screen) and decide if it is real or fake. Play *Simon Says* with the students, asking those who believe the news is real to stand up, others to remain seated.

Take it outside of the classroom: The Simon Says-style game has morphed now so that we can challenge other classes. Each class has three students on camera using Skype, then reads three news stories. Only one is fake. Students work in teams to see if they can be the first to prove which of the three is the “fake news.” Classes trade turns between sharing the stories and identifying the fake news.

#2

Play game *To Tell the Truth* with the class:

1. split class into groups of three to research a topic
2. each group will have a chance to become “experts”
3. the teacher or groups should create the questions for the remaining students to ask (so the groups can better determine answers and choose the truthsayers and liar)
4. two members of the group will tell the truth about the topic and one will be giving fake information
5. have the class vote on who the fake source is for each group

FINAL ASSESSMENT IDEAS:

#1

Provide students with a printed copy of news articles (fake

and real) that do and do not meet the seven steps. Have them circle and label the items that make the news article reliable, current, and/or accurate. Also ask that they write a summary of why items do not meet the steps.

#2

Create a rubric with the seven steps that students can use with their next assignment. Use this to evaluate their research to assure that the information is current, accurate, and from a relevant, reliable source.

Lesson Source(s):

"I taught my 5th-graders how to spot fake news. Now they won't stop fact-checking me." *Google Drive copy at https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9I0ma_Fnx700XhrblNoMk9YTVk (<http://www.vox.com/first-person/2017/3/29/15042692/fake-news-education-election>)*