

Teacher: Amy Ripperger
Subject: Social Studies
Topic: Teaching Media Literacy
Grades: 10-12
Duration: 3 Days (45min periods)

Rationale: The goal of the Social Studies is to help our students become equipped and engaged citizens, at both the national and global levels. A time-honored tradition in high school Social Studies courses is to assign current events. This lesson on media literacy, however, isn't your average current event assignment! In our era of "fake news" and media bias, it's hard to know where to turn for accurate information that paints the whole picture. Students are even less equipped, in some ways, than adults in navigating the information that comes our way on an almost constant basis from new, traditional, and diverse media outlets. I created these two lessons on media literacy in an attempt to address some of these concerns in my classroom. Lesson one focuses on helping students analyze legitimacy in news reporting by identifying where a news story may fall along a credibility spectrum. Lesson two focuses on identifying bias in the news and introduces students to a website called mediabiasfactcheck.com. I implement these lessons early in the school year in order to enrich our discussions of current events throughout the course.

Lesson Plan #1 (Legitimacy):

Class: Any Social Studies classroom in grades 10-12. (This lesson is intended to be used early in the year, as an introduction to our ongoing current event assignments.) *1-2 day lesson*

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to identify key terms related to media literacy (e.g. credibility, fake news, hard news, etc). Students will be able to evaluate a news story for legitimacy and identify where it falls along a spectrum of credibility.

Anticipatory Set: Introduce this lesson with a short think-pair-share discussion on fake news. What have students heard on social media or in the "news" that they find hard to believe or were surprised when it turned out not to be true? How does this mistrust make it difficult to believe the real news? Why is it important to sift through rumor, exaggeration, and falsehood in the news? Explain our objective of finding truth amid the murky waters of exaggeration and sensationalism, particularly in "news" that is consumed through social media. Reinforce our classroom ground rules for conversations that may get controversial or heated. *10-15 min*

Conversational Ground Rules:

1. Respectful tone
2. Don't interrupt
3. No yelling, name-calling, or other attacks

4. Ask clarifying questions
5. Try out other points of view before stating your own opinion
6. What is said in the classroom stays in the classroom

Input: Pass out the “How Do I Know it’s True?” worksheet (see below) and direct students to the terms listed in question #3. Discuss these terms while completing the matching together as a class. Next, direct students to bring up a sample news story on their laptop, iPad, or cell phone. This year, my class used a BBC story about the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore in the summer of 2018. Give students 10-15 minutes to read through the news story. Have students summarize the article in their own words, using 5-7 sentences in the space provided for question #2. (It may also be appropriate to assign this news article summary as homework in advance. Students who may need to take more time reading and writing up their summaries may then move at their own pace.) *30 min*

Check for Understanding: As students are writing, walk through the room and check to make sure they are including the main ideas in their summaries. Correct any misunderstandings of the event itself. Provide outside context for the news story if necessary.

Guided Practice: Bring the class back together and work through questions #4-5 as a large group, using the overhead and white board. Demonstrate what these questions are looking for in the text and model this method of credibility analysis. Ask questions often to check for understanding. As a class, determine where the article falls along the spectrum of credibility. After arriving at a consensus, ask individual students to agree/disagree and explain their reasoning. *25 min*

Independent Practice: Give students another copy of the worksheet and explain that they will practice using the credibility spectrum with another article for homework. When I use this lesson in class, I often like to find a soft news story from an entertainment website about the same event we just read about in class in order to help students see a clear difference between hard news and soft news. **No assessment rubric is needed. Students will be scored on their accurate and individual completion of the credibility analysis worksheet.**

Student Handout:

Name _____

How Do I Know it's True?

Evaluating credibility in news stories

It's fake news! Read all about it! Our heads spin these days with sensational headlines, clickbait, and yellow journalism. And even the real stuff is called into question, because yes, from time to time, the real guys get it wrong. So how do I know that what I'm reading for "news" is really true? The answer lies in evaluating an article's credibility, accuracy, and bias. The template below will look specifically at **credibility**.

1. Select a current event news article and identify in MLA format below:

Example:

Olewe, Dickens. "Why Landlocked Ethiopia Wants to Launch a Navy." *BBC News*, 14 June 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44369382>.

2. Read the article. As you're reading, think about where the story takes place (look it up if you need to), what action is happening, and who the key players are. **In your own words**, summarize the article below (5-7 sentences):

3. Now we start digging into the terms. Get to know these terms by matching them with their correct definition (Hutton, 2018):

_____ Accuracy	A. Stories that rely on sensational, eye-catching headlines and provide little evidence to support (clickbaiting, sensationalism, fake news)
_____ Credibility	B. News that may be accurate but not entirely relevant; often entertaining. The focus of the article seems to be on interpreting/analyzing the facts, not merely reporting them.
_____ Fake news	C. How well a news story aligns with reality
_____ Hard news	D. The extent to which a source is perceived as accurate, reliable, authoritative
_____ Soft news	E. An intentionally humorous report of the news that may include fabrication or exaggeration, not intended to be informational
_____ Yellow journalism	F. News that impartially reports only the critical information and facts (no opinion)
_____ Satire	G. “News” stories that are so inaccurate they are completely unreliable. Often intended to skew the reader to a particular viewpoint. Often raw opinion rather than the hard reporting of facts.

4. Next, we can assess your news article for credibility. Answer the following questions regarding your article. Each answer is worth points, which you will add up and use to plot your article along the Spectrum of Credibility:

A. **Is the reporting in the news article hard news, soft news, or somewhere in between?**

_____ points

Hard news: 3 points
Soft news: 1 point
In-between: 2 points

is

points

*Note: While soft news doesn't have to be fake news, the risk for inaccuracy is greater because it incorporates the "human element" through opinion, analysis, prediction, and entertainment. In order to counteract the threat of inaccuracy, soft news should incorporate multiple points of view. If your article a soft news story, **give it an additional .5 point** if two (2) or more differing opinions are expressed. Circle the .5 if awarding.*

B. Did the journalist do solid research? Put a tally mark below each time one of the following sources is used:

____ Written document

____ Interview

____ Direct quote

____ Data/numbers

____ Survey/poll

____ Credited pictures

____ Other

Then, count the tally marks and award the following points.

points

7+ sources: 3 points

4-6 sources: 2 points

0-3 sources: 0 points

C. How credible is the news/media outlet over time?

points

- Does this news website have a long history as a news source?

Yes: 1 point

No: 0 points

points

- If the article contains commentary, analysis, or opinion, is it specifically labeled as commentary, analysis, or opinion?

Yes: 1 point

Hard news: 1 point

No: 0 points

points

- Does this news website pass the sobriety test? In other words, are the headlines on the main page clear and sober or emotional and sensational?

Sober: 1 point

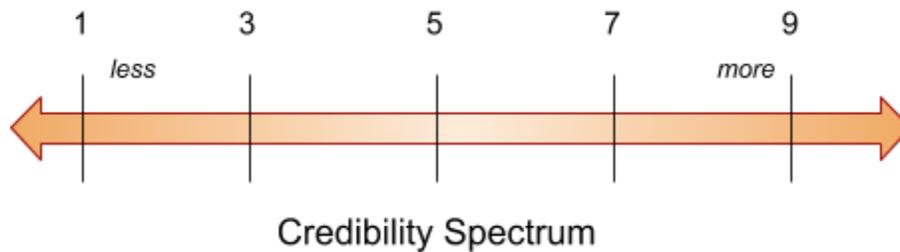
Sensational: 0 points

points

- Are the advertisements on this news website few and appropriate or visually overwhelming clickbaits?

Appropriate: 1 point Overwhelming: 0 points

5. Finally, tally the points from Question #4's boxes and draw an "x" on the line below. This identifies where your story falls along the Credibility Spectrum. The farther to the right, the more credible and accurate the source!



total points



Lesson Plan #2 (Bias):

Class: Any Social Studies classroom in grades 10-12. (This lesson is intended to be used early in the year, following the lesson on legitimacy, as an introduction to our ongoing current event assignments.) *1 day lesson*

Lesson Objectives: Students will be able to distinguish bias from credibility. Students will be able to identify, using the Media Bias Fact Check website, where a media outlet falls along the spectrum of political bias and use that knowledge to develop a fuller understanding of news events.

Anticipatory Set: Conduct a quick verbal review to remind students of terms used in the previous legitimacy lesson: accuracy, credibility, fake news, hard news, etc. Write these words up on the board for visual reference. Remind students that they will need working knowledge of these terms throughout the year on current event assignments, as well as being held accountable to the terms in class discussions. *5 min*

Input: Move the discussion into the new knowledge portion of the lesson. Remind students (refer to the introduction of the credibility spectrum worksheet if necessary) that media literacy requires analysis of three things: legitimacy, accuracy, and bias. Because we have already learned about legitimacy, this lesson will focus on **bias**.

Give students one minute to brainstorm and write down all they media outlets they can think of. In order to encourage each student to participate, go around the room and have each student share one media outlet until all have been written up on the board. Examples: CNN, Foxnews, NBC, *The Des Moines Register*, *USA Today*

Next, teach these main points about bias:

- Bias is the “extent to which a news story or outlet can be perceived as picking a side or shaping the facts to support a specific point of view” (Hutton, 2017).
- Bias is NOT credibility or accuracy. Bias is the human element in every story and impossible to eradicate.
- Questions to ask yourself to identify bias in a news story:
 - Are opinions expressed as hard fact?
 - How are the facts presented?
 - Are diverse sources referenced?
 - Is cherry-picking or sensationalism present?
 - Is the commentary overwhelming the hard facts?
 - On a personal note, do I agree or disagree with the political bias present?
 - What are my own personal biases?

Finally, introduce the Media Bias Fact Check website here:

<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/center/>. While I do not expect students to conduct their

own bias analyses of media outlets (except perhaps in a Government class) like they will need to do with the legitimacy spectrum, I still want students to have an understanding of where media outlets typically fall along the political spectrum. Encourage students to brainstorm ways this bias may affect reporting and why they need to consider bias as they read a news story. *25 min*

Check for Understanding: Have each student use their laptop, iPad, or cell phone to pull up the Media Bias Fact Check website that I just showed them. As a class, select 3-4 media outlets that we wrote up on the board earlier in the lesson. Give students a few minutes to explore the site and look for where these 3-4 outlets fall along the political spectrum. As time permits, have students turn to a neighbor and compare answers. Are they using the site correctly? Move around the room and check for understanding here. *10 min*

Evaluate: Use a ticket out the door to have students answer three questions: *5 min*

- What is bias?
- Using the Media Bias Fact Check site, identify a media outlet and its general bias that you were SURPRISED to find out about.
- Why is it important to understand both your own bias and that of a media outlet or news story as you consume news?

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