

Lesson Plan

Journalist for a Day

Book: *Bias in Reporting on Politics*

Series: Focus on Media Bias

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students practice writing objective and balanced articles on topics of their choice.

Supplies

- *Bias in Reporting on Politics* book
- Access to the BBC My World video “What’s the Angle?”: <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/whats-the-angle-bbc-my-world-video/bbc-my-world/>
- Computer access for students
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Read through the *Bias in Reporting on Politics* book, or assign it to students to read on their own. Pull up the BBC My World video in your web browser. Click on the “Student Handout: Informational Article” to the right of the video in the “Support Materials for Use with Students” section.

Activity

As a class, read through the informational article. It talks about journalistic bias and how readers can recognize bias in the news. Invite different students to read each paragraph out loud. Then watch the BBC My World video. While the book focuses on bias in reporting on politics in the United States, the video looks at reporting in Russia. After watching the video, ask students the following questions:

- In the beginning of the video, is Nikita reporting objectively or giving his opinion? How do you know? (Possible Answers: He’s giving his opinion. We know because he speaks in first person, making “I” statements. He talks about his own specific point of view and notes that not everyone might share it. He shares where he is coming from as a teenager in Russia.)
- In the second part of the video, is the narrator reporting objectively or giving an opinion? How do you know? (Possible Answers: He’s reporting objectively. We know because he speaks in third person, taking himself out of the picture. He shares multiple perspectives on Putin, and gives each perspective about equal time.)

Explain to students that they will write articles as if they are professional journalists. Students should choose a topic that they feel strongly about and that is up for debate. It can be a political or social issue, or it can be a local or school-based issue. But for their articles, they must adhere to the code of ethics for professional journalists. They must understand all sides of the debate, write objectively, and provide background context so that readers can form their own opinions on the debate. Students' personal opinions should not be apparent in their writing. Students should use the computers for research on their topic as they write their articles.

Articles should include the following:

- An opening paragraph that introduces the topic and provides some context for the debate
- Supporting paragraphs that go into detail on the different sides of the debate. The number of paragraphs will depend on the number of perspectives, but each perspective should be given roughly the same amount of space in the article.
- A concluding paragraph that summarizes the debate without taking a stand on the issue

Evaluation

Award students points according to the following rubric, for up to 28 points:

- 5 points for an opening paragraph that introduces the topic and provides context for the debate
- 15 points for supporting paragraphs that describe the different perspectives on the debate objectively and in equal measure
- 5 points for a concluding paragraph that summarizes the debate without expressing an opinion
- 3 points for writing that is relatively free of grammatical and spelling errors

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' writing standards, grade 6 (W 6.2).