



Reflect on personal biases

Students benefit from becoming aware of their own biases as news consumers. Personal backgrounds and life experiences — as well as factors like race, ethnicity and gender — impact how we see the world, and how we perceive news. Help students develop the habit of reflecting on how their own biases may shape their perceptions of news reports and opinion pieces.

Establish ground rules for discussion

Remind students that the objective of discussing current events is not to “win” an argument. Instead, help students focus on facilitating conversations where they can disagree respectfully about controversial topics.



Brainstorm ground rules for discussion as a class. These rules could include:

- Listen actively and attentively.
- Critique ideas, not the person who shared them.
- Do not interrupt another speaker.
- Ask clarifying questions; don't assume.

Approach news reports as texts

News coverage — like primary source documents, short stories, poetry and other class texts — offers rich opportunities for discussion and analysis. Remind students to approach news stories as they would other texts in class: closely and critically, evaluating each piece of information and any supporting evidence.

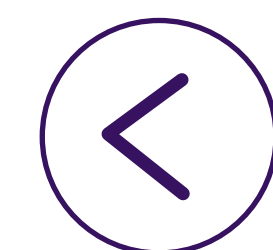


Focus on journalism standards

Centering discussions of news articles on the [standards of quality journalism](#) can help build common ground. Even those who disagree about controversial issues or which news sources are reliable can agree that credible news coverage should aspire to standards, such as fairness, accuracy and transparency.



Ask students to read a news article with credible newsgathering sources (including eyewitnesses, experts, officials and documents) and these questions in mind: *Where is information coming from? How many different sources are there? Are any relevant voices or perspectives missing? This approach can sharpen the focus of a class conversation and help move students beyond kneejerk reactions to a story topic.*



HOW TO TEACH NEWS LITERACY IN polarizing times

The challenges of teaching news literacy in today's polarized climate — including charged reactions from students and parents over controversial current events — also present opportunities for learning and growth. These eight strategies can help you teach the most important stories and issues of the day while navigating social and political divides to make classroom conversations worthwhile.



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Emphasize facts

It's important to remind students that facts exist, and to make sure that students understand [the difference](#) between matters of fact and matters of opinion. Misinformation commonly circulates about controversial topics and current events, so it's crucial that students recognize the importance of basing their viewpoints on verified, accurate information.

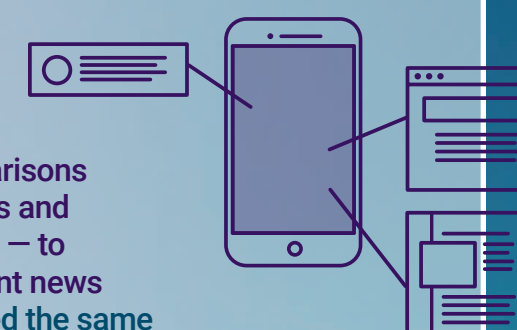


Consult diverse news sources

Encourage students to diversify their media diet by turning to a variety of credible news sources that take journalism standards and ethics seriously, and by exploring opinions from various perspectives and points of view. It's easy to fall into partisan news bubbles, especially on social media. Challenge students to seek out multiple sources and perspectives — not just the ones they typically consult and agree with or that confirm their existing views.



Use coverage comparisons — including headlines and [breaking news alerts](#) — to consider how different news organizations [covered the same topic](#). What similarities or differences do students notice?

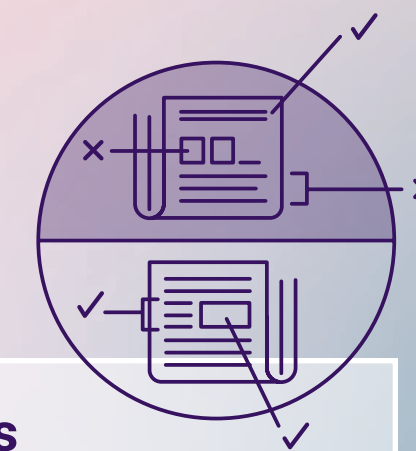


Focus on specifics

Focusing the conversation on specific parts of news coverage may help avoid fights over the news organization or topic itself. For example, use students' perceptions of bias in news coverage as a starting point and ask them to concentrate on particulars, such as headlines, captions or word choices. Pose questions like, “Could this have been more accurate or fair?” or, “If you were going to revise this news report, what changes would you make?”



Have students [compare wording](#) in breaking news alerts on a big story. Or, ask them to focus on how news organizations [label coverage](#) of major developing stories.



Embrace ambiguity

Many of the richest topics in news literacy don't have clear-cut answers, but that shouldn't dissuade you from tackling these topics with students. Embracing ambiguity makes room for tough questions and meaningful discussions without the need to weigh in with definitive answers. News literacy aims to teach students how to think — not what to think — about news and other information.



Pose provocative, open-ended questions, such as, “What qualifies as propaganda, and who decides? When people claim coverage ‘leans’ one way or the other, what do they mean? Who decides what does and doesn't count as bias in news? Which news coverage is the most fair and accurate about a particular subject? How can we know if someone intentionally shared false information?”

