

## Objectivity and Reporting the News from All Sides

*Objectivity and fairness in reporting the news is the highest goal of journalism, but not all reporters or media outlets do so. Activities ask you to practice evaluating the news from different sides – from different points of view and contrasting political perspectives – as a foundation of critical media literacy learning. Journalism becomes a process of helping readers and viewers to verify truth and reject falsehoods and lies.*

Most of us are taught that **objectivity** in journalism means reporting "unvarnished facts in a very neutral manner" ([Williams & Stroud](#), 2020, para. 1). The reality is and always has been quite different. Historically, newspapers had partisan political perspectives and only when the demands of not alienating readers who bought the paper did many journalists claim they were objectively reporting events.



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Today, with news available 24/7 every day of the year, print newspapers, television news shows, online news sites, and social media platforms do not all present the news in the same way or even as objectively agreed upon and accurate

facts.

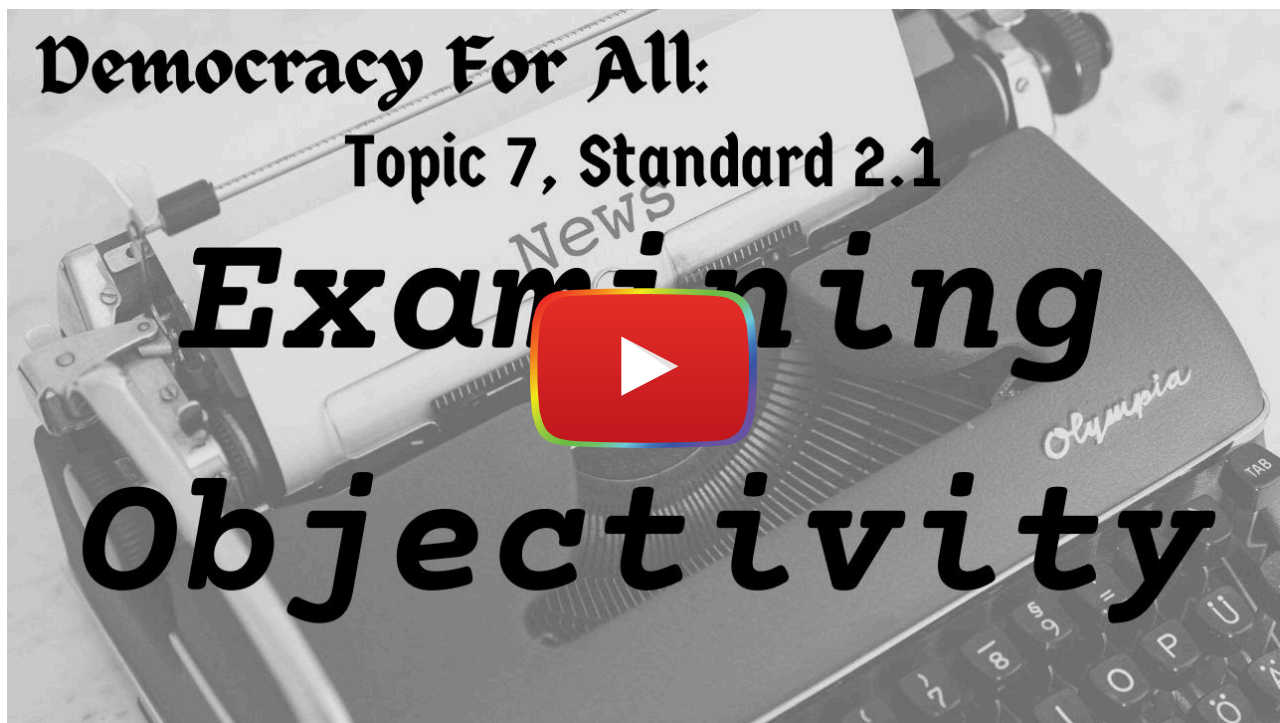
The news we read and view, concluded the authors of the report [Truth Decay](#), is a combination of facts and opinions and neutrality and bias packaged to appeal to different audiences (young, old, affluent, working class) and, in some cases, partisan political perspectives (Democrats, Republicans, progressives, conservatives). The same event is likely to be covered differently by Fox News, MSNBC, *The New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*.



[Infographic: Beyond Fake News](#) | [CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

At the same time, there are those who contend that objectivity is a false concept and reporters should openly state their own points of view for readers and viewers to embrace or reject. For example, rather than give equal space in a news story to climate deniers or Big Lie proponents, journalists have the responsibility to expose misinformation and untruths wherever they find them.

For reporters in an age of online fake and false news, it is necessary to replace objectivity (the term was removed from journalism's Code of Ethics in 1996) with "skepticism" and make online and print journalism, in the words of Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, "a discipline of verification" (*The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, Three Rivers Press, 2017).



[Watch on YouTube](#)

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## Activity 1: Evaluate the News From All Sides

- Select a topic (choose one of the following or another one of interest from [AllSides](#)):
  - [Coronavirus](#)
  - [Facebook banning political ads](#)
  - [QAnon](#)
- Read through the stories featured for your selected topic (at least one left, one center, and one right perspective) and then consider each of the following questions:
  - Which stories most closely follow the [Inverted Pyramid](#) format?
    - Do you think that using the Inverted Pyramid format affects the trustworthiness of the story?
  - How does the perspective differ in each story? Pay close attention to who is quoted in each article.
  - How does the descriptive language differ between the stories?
    - Note at least three adjectives in each story and if and how the use of these descriptors changes from one perspective to another.
  - How do the images used in each story differ? Why do you think the images differ?
  - Who do you think is the audience for each story?
    - How do you think the article's choice of perspective is meant to target that audience?
  - What primary, secondary, tertiary sources are used? How reliable is the content? How did you determine this?
- **Create a presentation, interactive image, or video** to inform your peers and family members about the differences between left-leaning, center, and right-leaning news articles.

### Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Evaluate the News From All Sides](#) by Ramlochan Et al.

## Activity 2: Write the News From All Sides

- Choose a school, local, or national issue that interests and impacts you directly.
- **Write three brief news reports** about the issue featuring three different perspectives (i.e., left, center, right) or points of view (e.g., favorable, unfavorable, objective).
  - Consider: How will you use descriptive language and images in your story in ways that support your perspective or point of view?

## Additional Resources

- [Media Bias Chart](#) (AllSides)
- [Teacher and Student Guide to Analyzing News and Newspapers](#)
- [SmartNews' latest news discovery feature shows articles from across the political spectrum](#)

### Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: History of Newspapers, Then and Now](#)

## Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
  - *Give examples of how a free press can provide competing information and views about government and politics.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T7.2]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
  - Knowledge Constructor
    - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data, or other resources.
  - Creative Communicator
    - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
    - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
    - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
  - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
  - Digital Tools (DTC.a)
  - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
  - Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8



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