



**Social Studies
School Service**

www.socialstudies.com

Downloadable Reproducible eBooks

Thank you for downloading this eBook from
www.socialstudies.com

To browse more eBook titles, visit
<http://www.socialstudies.com/ebooks.html>

To learn more about eBooks, visit our help page at
<http://www.socialstudies.com/ebookshelp.html>

For questions, please e-mail eBooks@socialstudies.com

Free E-mail Newsletter—Sign up Today!

To learn about new eBook and print titles, professional development resources, and catalogs in the mail, sign up for our monthly e-mail newsletter at
<http://socialstudies.com/newsletter/>

Propaganda and Critical Thinking

By Lawrence Stevens

Shoshana Muhammad, Editor
Dr. Aaron Willis, Project Coordinator
Melissa Kaplan, Editorial Assistant

Social Studies School
Service
10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232
<http://socialstudies.com>
access@socialstudies.com
(800) 421-4246

© 2005, revised by Social Studies School Service

10200 Jefferson Blvd., P.O. Box 802
Culver City, CA 90232
United States of America

(310) 839-2436
(800) 421-4246

Fax: (800) 944-5432
Fax: (310) 839-2249

<http://socialstudies.com>
access@socialstudies.com

Permission is granted to reproduce individual worksheets for classroom use only.
Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 0-89550-160-0

Product Code: RIM102

Propaganda & Critical Thinking

Introduction

Critical thinking can be taught in any subject. It is important that students learn how commonly used propaganda techniques work and are applied in a variety of situations.

The first chapter teaches about 20 basic propaganda techniques. The chapters on advertising, news, and politics show how the techniques can be used in those areas to influence people. The chapter on statistics shows how numbers can manipulate people's opinions. The chapter on evidence provides guidelines on how to evaluate evidence.

Each unit in this valuable resource contains student handouts, exercises, and reinforcement activities. The first page of each unit has an introduction, lesson plan ideas, and a description of the unit's contents. Student handouts include descriptions of propaganda techniques and how they are used in each medium, along with information on various aspects of the media, politics, and evidence. Exercises allow students to use what they have learned from the handouts and apply it to given situations or problems. Activities ask students to find information and evaluate various media and the propaganda techniques they use.

p. 2 Propaganda Techniques

Twenty commonly used techniques are described on two student handouts. One exercise asks students to examine ads, and there are four different reinforcement tests.

p. 10 Advertising

This unit includes student handouts with information on television and advertising statistics, plus four activities that require students to evaluate ads.

p. 16 News

This unit includes student handouts, a current events reporting form, exercises on evaluating news transcripts and facts and opinions, plus four activities that get students to analyze major TV news outlets and specific TV and print commentaries.

p. 29 Politics

This unit includes one student handout, an exercise on campaign money, and activities on voting and bias in editorials.

p. 36 Statistics

This unit demonstrates how statistics can be used to persuade and includes student handouts on what to watch for when assessing numbers, exercises on percentages and group interests, and an activity on which kinds of statistics tend to appear in particular types of publications.

p. 44 Evidence

This unit explains how to evaluate evidence and includes a student handout, exercises on reading witnesses and experts, and an activity on evaluating the accuracy of statements.

Propaganda Techniques

Introduction

All students should be able to identify standard propaganda techniques that can be used to manipulate our spending habits, ideologies, and political behavior.

Emphasize to students that propaganda begins with a conclusion. Any evidence available that will support that conclusion will be used, and any related information that could possibly disprove the conclusion gets thrown out the window.

Propaganda is persuasion, plain and simple. Students should thus become effective critical thinkers in order to distinguish fact from fiction, recognize bias, and come to their own conclusions.

Contents

- Student handouts listing 20 propaganda techniques and respective examples.
- Four tests in which students must identify propaganda techniques from given examples.

Lesson Plan Ideas

- Propaganda techniques can be taught as sponge activities at the beginning or end of class.
- Propaganda techniques can be used to analyze political points of view in history and political science.
- Students can make up their own ads using various propaganda techniques. Other students can try to identify the techniques used in their classmates' ads. Students can make up poster-sized print ads or assemble TV or radio ads. This can be done as an individual or group activity.
- TV ads, news programs, and political speeches can be recorded from TV. They make a rich resource for examination of propaganda techniques.

Propaganda Techniques Handout

1. *Join the bandwagon*

Definition: This approach attempts to make you want to do something because “everybody else” is doing it. According to this approach, it doesn’t make any difference whether something is good or bad—you should do it or buy it because thousands of others or all of your friends have done it.

Example: “Try Goody Toothpaste. You will enjoy it just like millions of others have.”

2. *Just plain folks*

Definition: You should do something or buy something because average ordinary people like you are doing or buying it.

Example: “Come on down to the working-man’s furniture store.”

3. *The snob appeal*

Definition: This is the reverse of the “just plain folks” approach. This approach makes you think that you will become wealthy or achieve higher social status if you buy a certain product.

Example: “Smoke Cough Ciggies like Reginald Butler III of Rolling Hills.” (A picture shows Reginald sitting in a Rolls Royce in front of his mansion.)

4. *Sex appeal and fun*

Definition: You should do or buy something because it is fun or will make you more attractive to the opposite sex.

Example: “Use Sweet Breath Freshener and get kissed again and again.”

5. *Cheapie/Freebie*

Definition: You should buy or use something because it is very inexpensive, or because you will supposedly get “something for nothing.” As a general rule in sales, nothing is ever free—the cost is just hidden.

Example: “Moe’s store is having a going-out-of-business sale! Everything is marked down 40% [after being marked up 30%!]”

6. *The big cheese*

Definition: You should do or buy something because a famous person (or someone you look up to) also does or buys it.

Example: “Buy Chewy Lipstick because supermodel Marilyn DeVille wears it.”

7. *Technical words*

Definition: This approach tries to get you to buy something by using scientific-sounding words or formulas in the ad.

Example: “Buy Blitzo Mouthwash, with the clinically tested formula XR-7.”

8. *Emotional words*

Definition: This approach uses words that evoke certain feelings or emotions.

Example: (a) “Buy Rhythm Jeans, the jeans that have soul.” (b) “For total relaxation and comfort, buy Shakey’s Vibrating Chair.”

9. *Slogans*

Definition: A slogan is a catchy phrase used to describe something. If you hear it often enough, you might remember it and buy the product as a result.

Example: “Buy Clubfoot Shoes, the shoes that champs wear.”

10. *The good guy*

Definition: This approach tries to lead you to believe that if you buy a certain product, you will be helping out the world.

Example: “Shallow Oil has spent millions to prevent oil spills in our oceans. This is just another example of the people at Shallow Oil helping you to live a better life.”

Propaganda Techniques Handout

11. *Hasty generalization*

Definition: A person jumps to a general conclusion about members of a group based upon just a few examples he or she has seen.

Example: “My girlfriend and sister have both been in car accidents. This proves that all women are poor drivers.”

12. *Faulty analogy*

Definition: If two things are similar in one or two respects, some might conclude that they are similar in all respects. Be careful not to confuse this with the hasty generalization.

Example: “The Ford Granada looks much like the Mercedes, therefore the Ford must be just as good as the Mercedes.”

13. *Non sequitur*

Definition: The conclusion of the argument does not logically follow the statements preceding it.

Example: “I haven’t missed a single class this year; therefore, I should get an A.”

14. *Ad hominem*

Definition: Instead of appealing to logic or the merits of the argument, a person attacks his or her opponent.

Example: “Don’t listen to her. She’s crazy.”

15. *Attacking the straw man*

Definition: A person distorts an argument by restating it falsely or by exaggerating its consequences. Thus, the argument becomes easier to attack.

Example: “The senator says we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can’t understand why he wants to leave us completely defenseless like that.”

16. *Rationalization*

Definition: To rationalize is to provide plausible but untrue reasons to justify or explain behavior, actions, or ideas..

Example: I failed the test because the teacher is mean and doesn’t like me.

17. *Conservative/Liberal/Radical*

Definition: People use these words to appeal to appeals to political prejudices.

Example: “This bill is just another liberal attempt to spend your hard-earned tax dollars.”

18. *Causal Oversimplification*

Definition: Something that is more complicated than it appears is explained by using only one or two probable causes.

Example: “She dumped me because I was late a few times.”

19. *Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc*

Definition: Because one thing follows another, a person claims that the first thing caused the second.

Example: “I bought lucky shoe strings, and the next day I won the race.”

20. *Appeal to Pity*

Definition: Using sympathy to get people to act favorably towards you

Example: “I know I shouldn’t have gotten an F on the test, but my father just died and I broke my leg.”

Propaganda Exercise

Examine the ads below. Describe the product and the propaganda techniques used.

“Get all night relief from Releve. Don’t worry about pain again. If that back pain is getting you down, do what most people do. Use Releve with Cokenal 7, the super pain reliever.”

“Joe Spindusky, owner of Spin’s sandwich shop, loves to surprise. That’s why he’s brought back a classic—the super-sized Spinburger with bacon and melted cheese. That’s why people keep coming back to Spin’s.”

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

1. Join the bandwagon
2. Just plain folks
3. The snob appeal
4. Sex appeal and fun
5. Cheapie/freebie
6. The big cheese
7. Technical words
8. Emotional words
9. Slogans
10. The good guy
11. Hasty generalization
12. Faulty analogy
13. Non sequitur
14. Ad hominem
15. Attacking the straw man
16. Rationalization
17. Conservative/Liberal/Radical
18. Causal Oversimplification
19. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc
20. Appeal to Pity

Propaganda Techniques Test (1)

Directions

Indicate which techniques are being used in the following statements.

1. "Come on. Let's go. It's only five bucks to get in."
2. "Hey, check this out—a Bumper Bass with an Advent Amp. Costs \$2500. Really nice, eh?"
3. "Charlotte, you just have to go. Everybody is going to be there."
4. "Come on, Mom. Please let me. All the other kids get to do it. Their parents let them do it. Why do I have to be different?"
5. "She really acts stuck up all the time. You'd think her parents have money or something. I wouldn't have anything to do with her myself. She just isn't like the rest of us."
6. "You don't want a cigarette? What's wrong—you scared?"
7. "My sister has a new Mustang. She lets me drive it."
8. "We've got to get over there. Everything's on sale for half price!"
9. "I wouldn't wear those A-Mart tennis shoes. They're cheap. I only wear Adidas®. They're the ones that started putting stripes on shoes."
10. "He thinks he's always right just because he gets straight A's. My father says that some people are too smart for their own good. They don't have any common sense."

Propaganda Techniques Test (2)

Directions

Indicate which techniques are being used in the following statements.

1. **A:** "Wow! That's a nice car." **B:** "You bet! It's got double blow-back headers with catalytic converters."
2. "Jones is the name and selling cars is my game."
3. "Now you know you shouldn't have hit that boy. Now I'm going to have to punish you. It's for your own good, you know."
4. "I don't like that. It's icky."
5. "Don't pay any attention to her. She's crazy."
6. "I wouldn't do that. I saw some kids do it on that TV show, 'Weird Stunts.'"
7. "That's a real nice hairdo. It's the latest. Just like Britney Spears."
8. "Stay away from that guy. He's a freak."
9. "Don't feel bad. I'm sure she didn't mean anything by it. She calls all the boys she knows jerks. That's how she shows she likes them."
10. "Bad news. Definitely bad news."

Propaganda Techniques Test (3)

Directions

Indicate which techniques are being used in the following conversations.

1st Person: When you smoke a pack of cigarettes, you take two minutes off your life.

2nd Person: I didn't know that.

1st Person: That's right. Two packs takes four minutes off your life.

2nd Person: You mean I could die as much as a year early?

1st Person: Sure.

1st Person: I don't think I'll vote for the Governor.

2nd Person: Why not? He's done a good job.

1st Person: He hasn't done anything that I can see. Unemployment is high, and the cost of living has gone up.

2nd Person: Well, he favors setting up colonies in space, which is an amazing idea.

1st Person: You know, that teacher is tough. Homework every night.

2nd Person: She's so mean. I got a B when I should have gotten an A.

3rd Person: She's grouchy all the time because Mr. Bowman won't take her out.

1st Person: The president is just not coping well with the nation's problems.

2nd Person: Isn't that the truth? All he does is take vacations.

3rd Person: Well, I'm sure he tries at least.

Propaganda Techniques Test (4)

Directions

Indicate which techniques are being used in the following conversations.

1st Person: I think the future of the country is in space.

2nd Person: Why do you think that?

1st Person: Well, we can't solve our problems here.

2nd Person: I don't know about that.

1st Person: Look, here people are always fighting. There are people starving in the streets. That can all be solved if we create space stations.

1st Person: You know, kids are getting more and more dumb.

2nd Person: Do you really think so?

3rd Person: I'll go along with that. Kids get into more trouble these days. Stupid things, you know.

1st Person: You can tell from the test scores. They're going down each year.

1st Person: You're not going to school anymore?

2nd Person: That's right. I decided to quit and get my head together. You know what I mean.

3rd Person: I heard they threw you out.

2nd Person: Nah, I just thought I'd lay back a while and take it easy.

1st Person: Come on. You have to help me out.

2nd Person: Why?

1st Person: Because I'm your friend, your buddy.

3rd Person: Can't you see that he needs a ride? Look, it's raining outside.

1st Person: I can't walk in this rain. I'll get wet.

Advertising

Introduction

Advertising permeates our lives. Increasingly, kids are becoming brand-name conscious at an earlier age. It is critical for students to understand how advertisers manipulate them.

Students may acknowledge the persuasive effect that advertising has, but many will not admit that it influences them personally. Advertisers especially target teens because teens spend most of their own income (or their parents') on heavily advertised consumer products.

In this unit, students will learn how to evaluate the quality of information from ads, realize the effect that advertising has on consumers, and become knowledgeable about marketing techniques used by companies.

Contents

- Student handout with statistics on television viewing and advertising spending
- Four activities on evaluating advertising:
 1. Students find ads and describe the propaganda techniques used in them.
 2. Students observe products advertised on television and when and when these ads air.
 3. Students compare car ads in commercials to consumer evaluations.
 4. Students will take surveys on the popularity of everyday items and compare the results to those from consumer magazines.

Lesson Plan Ideas

Since advertising pervades our society, there should be no problem in getting source materials for evaluating propaganda techniques.

- Playing ads recorded from TV and radio are a big hit, and students love analyzing their messages. You can also have students bring in ads from magazines and other printed materials.
- Have students create their own television, radio, or print ads.
- Have students watch some of their favorite movies or television shows. Tell them to watch for product placement and have them count how many noticeable brands are featured.
- Schools often make endorsement deals with big companies. Have students see how many different products they can find advertised on campus.
- Maslow's Hierarchy is a great way to study the relative importance of people's needs. Have students apply Maslow's Pyramid to ads they see in various media.

Student Handout

Television Viewing

- Time per day that TV is on in an average U.S. home: 7 hours
- Amount of television the average American watches per day: 4 hours
- Percentage of U.S. families with 3 or more TVs (2003): 50%
- Percentage of children ages 8–16 who have a TV in their bedroom: 56%
- Percentage of children age 6 and under who have a TV in their bedroom: 36%
- Percentage of television time that children ages 2–7 spend watching alone and unsupervised: 81%
- Number of TV commercials viewed by American children a year: 40,000
- Number of TV commercials seen by the average American by age 65: 2 million
- Age by which children can develop brand loyalty: 2
- Percentage of toy advertising dollars spent on television commercials in 1997: 92%
- Amount spent on television ads directed at young children in 1997: \$1.3 billion
- Percentage of local TV news broadcast time devoted to advertising: 30%

Advertising Dollars

- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise on broadcast television: \$42 billion (a 0.3% decrease from the previous year)
- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise on cable television: \$19 billion (a 15% increase from the previous year)
- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise on radio: \$19 billion (a 1% increase from the previous year)
- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise on the Internet: \$5 billion (a 15% increase from the previous year)
- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise in newspapers: \$44 billion (a 2% increase from the previous year)
- Total amount of money spent in 2003 to advertise in magazines: \$11 billion (a 4% increase from the previous year)

What do these numbers say about various media, consumer habits, and advertisers' marketing strategies?

Sources: "Television Viewing," RealVision project, TV-Turnoff Network, 2000; "Advertising Dollars," Universal McCann 2004 Statistical Summary

Advertising Activity 1

Directions

Select two or three television ads that run during a particular show or program. Describe the product being advertised, the overall ad, and the propaganda techniques used.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

1. Join the bandwagon
2. Just plain folks
3. The snob appeal
4. Sex appeal and fun
5. Cheapie/freebie
6. The big cheese
7. Technical words
8. Emotional words
9. Slogans
10. The good guy
11. Hasty generalization
12. Faulty analogy
13. Non sequitur
14. Ad hominem
15. Attacking the straw man
16. Rationalization
17. Conservative/Liberal/Radical
18. Causal Oversimplification
19. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc
20. Appeal to Pity

Advertising Activity 2

What's on TV

The purpose of this activity is to identify differences in the number and kinds of ads that appear at different hours of a typical weekday. Generally, commercials last from 15 to 60 seconds.

The members of your class or group should all select different stations and hours at which to watch television. Use the chart below to record your information.

Compare the information collected. What differences exist in the types of products advertised at different time periods and on different stations?

Add up the total amount of time spent on advertising during a one-hour period. Does the amount of time or number of ads vary from station to station, or from time period to time period?

Show	Station	Time slot for show	Length of Ad	Product advertised

Advertising Activity 3

What's the Best?

Watch car ads on TV. List the cars advertised and the reasons given for why people should buy them. Next, check *Motor Trend*, *Consumer Reports*, *Popular Science*, or any similar magazine that rates new cars and see what they say is the best buy. (Edmunds.com on the Web is also a good source for car evaluation.) How do their choices compare with what the ads tell you?

Car	Advertising appeal in the commercial	What independent sources say about the car

Advertising Activity 4

Do a Survey

Ask people which brand of each item listed below they think is the best, then fill in their answers on the chart. Ask them to give reasons for each of their selections. Is it a product advertised on TV?

When you're close for compiling information for each category—you might also want to keep track of how many people select a particular product—check *Consumer Reports* or a similar magazine to see what it says is the best buy.

Product	Why is it the best?	Consumer magazine's best buy
Orange juice		
Breakfast cereal		
Toothpaste		
Detergent		
Shampoo		
Cell phone provider		

News

Introduction

Many people argue that young people are not very well informed about current events, probably because the majority doesn't read newspapers or watch the news.

Encourage students to read newspapers and news magazines, and to watch news broadcasts on television. Set aside a portion of classroom time each week for discussing current events. If possible, you should also make a variety of newspapers and magazines available to your students.

Contents

- Student handouts on sources of news, misinformation, and statistics
- A current events reporting form
- Four activities on evaluating the news:
 1. Students identify propaganda techniques used in news shows.
 2. Students compare network and cable news stories.
 3. Students compare local news programs.
 4. Students compare television news stories with those printed in local newspapers.
- A fact vs. opinion exercise on recent politics—great for generating class discussion.

Lesson Plan Ideas

- Distribute a variety of editorials, letters to the editor, and short news stories to the class. Students, working alone or in groups, will have to distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Headlines attract readers to a story, but they can sometimes be misleading. All too often, this is the only part of the story that a reader really remembers. In this unit, students will create their own headlines. Cut stories from the newspaper and remove the headlines. Place limits on the number of words that can be used. (A form is provided.)
- Students should learn to distinguish trivial stories from important ones. Give the class a number of stories and have students evaluate the relative importance of each one and explain the reasoning behind their evaluations.
- Have students compare the stories in several weekly or monthly news magazines for a given month. Are the same stories covered? Are different slants given to the stories?

Student Handout

Sources of News

Standard TV

There are five major networks: ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, and PBS. Each has its own nightly news show. There are also TV news magazines such as 60 Minutes, 20/20, Dateline, Frontline, and Nightline.

Cable TV

Cable has 24-hour, 7-days-a-week news channels. The most famous is probably CNN which first aired in 1980. CNN is credited for having introduced 24-hour news coverage and for having reporters on the scene as news broke; on the standard networks, viewers had to wait until evening news programs. CNBC first aired in 1989, and MSNBC aired in 1996. FOX News also aired in 1996, and many have viewed it as controversial ever since—the channel describes itself as “fair and balanced,” but there have been allegations of conservative bias.

The problem with the 24-hour format is that there is usually not enough news to fill up the broadcast day. FOX News, for example, only broadcasts 15 hours of live programming, filling the rest of the broadcast day with reruns (according to Nielsen ratings). Feature stories and opinion shows, such as Larry King Live or The O’Reilly Factor, discuss current political and social issues with guests who represent a range of views across the political spectrum.

Newspapers

There are many newspapers that are read and respected across the nation. The *New York Times* is probably the best-known, having won 90 Pulitzer Prizes since 1918. There are also regional papers, such as the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Chicago Tribune*. Local newspapers are good for staying informed on city- or town-specific issues.

Magazines

Standard news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* are published either weekly or monthly. There are also magazines that reflect different political philosophies, such as the liberal *Nation* and the conservative *Weekly Standard* and *National Review*. Magazine articles are usually more in-depth than newspaper reports since print reporters have a longer time to work on stories.

Radio

There are thousands of radio stations across the country. Many of them carry talk radio shows that feature highly opinionated hosts discussing current issues. These hosts tend to use a lot of standard propaganda techniques. Some well-known examples of conservative talk radio hosts include Rush Limbaugh and Larry Elder, while liberal networks such as Air America and Pacifica carry hosts like Amy Goodman.

Tabloids

Tabloids are usually sold in grocery stores. They tend to emphasize “sensational” news stories such as murders or anything involving celebrities. The information contained in such papers is often unreliable.

The Internet

The Internet provides many news sources, but most sites have little or no fact-checking. TV networks have Web sites containing stories also broadcast on TV. There are also “newszines” such as *Slate* and the *Drudge Report*. *Slate* is run by journalists. Matt Drudge, creator of the *Drudge Report*, has been criticized for publishing fabricated stories. There are also “blogs” (short for “Web log”) which offer personal commentary from a wide range of people.

Student Handout

How the news can keep you misinformed

News editors select what news you can read, see, or hear. They decide which stories are more important than other ones.

Ways reporters can err

Newspaper and TV reporters may sometimes make errors when providing coverage of a story. Possible errors include:

- Quoting random or uninvolved bystanders (the people with the least knowledge of the issue)
- Picking the most sensational thing a person says and quoting it
- Quoting only one person from “both” sides, assuming that there are only two sides to a given story
- Quoting someone with a financial interest in the issue and failing to expose how that interest might bias that person’s views
- Misrepresenting the identity of people being quoted
- Failing to check facts or verify quotes
- Not gaining sufficient background knowledge before reporting on an event or issue
- Reporting facts about an issue only as quoted opinions rather than standing behind the facts and printing them as such

Ways news editors can mislead readers

- Writing a headline that may not be relevant to the story so readers have no idea what the article is really about
- Failing to make sure that parts of the article don’t get rearranged or cut out by accident when the article is laid out
- Changing the content of an article when they don’t know the issue and without consulting the writer

Types of Statements

Pure opinion

These are statements that have no factual support and represent an individual view. Example: “It’s too hot outside.”

Mixed opinion and fact

Many statements offer a mix of opinion and fact.

Example: “It feels hotter today than it was yesterday.” (While it seems that the statement might be an opinion, the temperature for both days can be measured and compared.)

True fact

The statement can be measured and proven.

Example: “The temperature is 106 degrees.”

Arguable or verifiable fact

This is a statement that people might argue about but can be verified.

Example: “This is the hottest it’s ever been on this day.”

Student Handout

Media Ownership

What we know about the world and politics comes mostly from the media—TV, radio, newspapers, the Internet, magazines, and books.

Media ownership is usually concentrated in one of three ways: oligopolies or monopolies, large-scale ownership, or conglomerates. (Public TV, or PBS, and National Public Radio, or NPR, are exceptions: stations get funding from the government and from individual contributions.) The problem with such concentration is that a small group of people can decide what news and shows the rest of us can see, read, or hear.

The airwaves used by broadcast TV and radio networks—ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX—are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Major networks like these get their main source of revenue through advertising. Cable stations get revenue from both cable companies and advertisers.

The Columbia Journalism Review offers a Web site (<http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/>) that lists everything major media companies own: book publishers, magazine publishers, newspapers, television and radio stations, film studios, and more. Visit the site to get an idea of how concentrated media ownership can become.

News as a Business

Traditionally, news was presented by networks as a public interest; however, news operations have grown expensive. Reporters have to be paid to travel the world to cover news; expensive equipment and new technologies are needed for stations to keep up with competitors. Hence, the public service aspect of the news often comes in conflict with the basic goal of the broadcast media—to make a profit.

Cable TV puts additional pressure on traditional networks. Cable news channels do not hire many reporters, presenting more opinion/editorial content than “hard news.” They also tend to emphasize sex and violence in their coverage, which attract high ratings and higher rates for advertising.

Television News Facts

- Percentage of time devoted to stories about crime, disaster, and war: 54%
- Percent increase in network news coverage of homicides between 1993 and 1996: 721%
- Percent increase in number of violent scenes per hour on 10 major channels from 1992 to 1994: 41%
- Percentage of time devoted to public service announcements: 0.7%

Newspaper Facts

- Percentage of adults (in top 50 markets) that got their news in 2003 from newspapers: 54%; from primetime TV: 38%
- Number of daily U.S. newspapers printed in 2003 (morning, evening, Sunday editions): 2373
- Daily U.S. newspaper circulation in 2003: more than 55 million for morning and evening editions; more than 58 million for Sunday editions
- Who reads newspapers the most? White males, age 55 and older, with college degrees, and a \$75,000+ household income (according to readership demographics in 2003)

Sources: “Television News Facts,” RealVision project, TV-Turnoff Network, 2000; “Newspaper Facts,” Newspaper Association of America

Current Events Reporting Form

Directions

Find a current news story. Indicate from which media you found the story (i.e., television, radio, newspaper, magazine, Internet), the name of the source (i.e., the television network or radio station, the name of the newspaper or magazine, etc.), the date of the publication or release, and the title of the story. Next, briefly summarize the story in the space provided below.

Media:

Source:

Date:

Title:

News Exercise

Directions

Identify propaganda techniques by reading an excerpt from a TV news program's transcript.

Host: The government is a bunch of idiots. They don't know what the common folk are thinking. I'll tell you what the common folk want is a tax cut. That's what. Money in their pockets so they can decide what they want to spend it on. That's my opinion. I'm just looking out for you.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

1. Join the bandwagon
2. Just plain folks
3. The snob appeal
4. Sex appeal and fun
5. Cheapie/freebie
6. The big cheese
7. Technical words
8. Emotional words
9. Slogans
10. The good guy
11. Hasty generalization
12. Faulty analogy
13. Non sequitur
14. Ad hominem
15. Attacking the straw man
16. Rationalization
17. Conservative/Liberal/Radical
18. Causal Oversimplification
19. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc
20. Appeal to Pity

News Exercise

Fact and Opinion

Directions

Below are some statements about political and social issues. There are four types of statements:

1. True statements with well-documented facts.
2. Arguable statements which use facts that are not well-documented but can be proven true or false with further research.
3. Pure opinions which have no factual support.
4. Statements which mix fact and opinion.

Decide which statements are factual and which are opinions. Mark **F** for a truly factual statement, **AF** for an arguable fact, **O** for an opinion, and **FO** for a statement that contains a mix of fact and opinion.

1. ____ George W. Bush is a great president.
2. ____ The U.S. debt is increasing rapidly.
3. ____ Civil rights have improved since the 1960s.
4. ____ Tax cuts will increase tax revenue, which in turn will reduce the debt.
5. ____ Recent government policies have relied heavily upon borrowing.
6. ____ Many Americans disapprove of President Bush.
7. ____ President Bush's policies only favor the wealthy.
8. ____ U.S. tax policy has shifted so that the wealthy pay less than they did before.
9. ____ President Bush has changed American politics.
10. ____ John Kerry would have made a better president than George W. Bush.
11. ____ Unemployment is at an all-time low.
12. ____ More troops in Iraq will help bring peace to the area.
13. ____ The U.S. has done a lot to help the people of Iraq.
14. ____ Most Muslims do not like the U.S.
15. ____ Under the Bush administration, the poor are increasing their incomes.
16. ____ Saddam Hussein did not pose a threat to the U.S.
17. ____ The U.S. does not have enough soldiers in Iraq.
18. ____ The U.S. will lose the war in Iraq.
19. ____ The U.S. will be forced to withdraw from the war in Iraq.
20. ____ The U.S. should never have fought the war in Iraq.
21. ____ There have been more U.S. casualties in the war against Iraq than there were in the Persian Gulf War.
22. ____ The war with Iraq was unnecessary.
23. ____ Same-sex marriage was an issue in the 2004 presidential election.

News Activity 1

Directions

Find a popular news show on one of the cable news networks, or if you can, find a transcript of a show on the network's Web site. Copy a short part of the commentary or dialogue from the program, and identify any propaganda techniques used.

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

1. Join the bandwagon
2. Just plain folks
3. The snob appeal
4. Sex appeal and fun
5. Cheapie/freebie
6. The big cheese
7. Technical words
8. Emotional words
9. Slogans
10. The good guy
11. Hasty generalization
12. Faulty analogy
13. Non sequitur
14. Ad hominem
15. Attacking the straw man
16. Rationalization
17. Conservative/Liberal/Radical
18. Causal Oversimplification
19. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc
20. Appeal to Pity

News Activity 2

Comparing News

Directions

In this activity, you will compare news broadcasts. Ideally, you should work with a partner or two to compare news coverage from programs airing on the same evening.

Each national network—NBC, ABC, and CBS—has a national news program for 30 minutes each weekday. Each local TV station also has a local news program that usually lasts 30 to 60 minutes. PBS also has a one-hour news program. Cable offers even more news on stations such as CNN, FOX News, and MSNBC.

List the news stories presented on each station on a given date. Keep a record of the amount of time each station spent presenting each story.

Questions

1. Did any of the stories have a particular slant or message? If so, what was it?
2. Did the networks cover the same stories? List similarities and differences in story coverage.
3. Was there any difference in how the stories were covered? Were the same points emphasized in each station's story?
4. Was there any difference in the amount of time spent on advertising?
5. How many stories dealt with politics or political issues on the national level?
6. How many of the stories dealt with international politics or issues?
7. How many of the stories dealt with human interest, sports, entertainment, natural disasters, etc.?
8. Did the shows have editorial comments? What points did the editorials make?

News Activity 2

Comparing the networks

Station	Time	Story	Time	Story
ABC				
CBS				
NBC				
PBS				

News Activity 2

Comparing the cable stations

Station	Time	Story	Time	Story
CNN				
FOX				
MSNBC				
CNBC				

News Activity 3

Comparing local news programs

Directions

Do the same type of comparison with local news broadcasts as you did with the national networks. (Depending on where you live, you might have more stations to evaluate.) Some independent stations have local news, and sometimes a public broadcasting station offers news as well. You should compare all available stations in your area.

1. List the stories each station reports. Using a watch, time each story. Time only the actual reporting of the story and not any chit-chat that might come before or after the story.
2. Categorize the stories and record their times.
 - Local politics/economy
 - Environment
 - Pollution
 - Sports/Weather
 - Entertainment
 - Social/Human interest
 - Advertising
3. What percentage of each news show's time period was spent on ads? What percentage was actually spent on news?
4. How many anchors or reporters were involved in the newscast? Describe their styles: did they joke around a lot, or were they serious and straightforward? How many times did they comment about the stories before or after they were presented?
5. How many of the stories involved on-the-scene reporting?
6. How many of the stories involved interviews with people?
7. In stories involving some kind of conflict, did reporters present only one point of view, or did they offer multiple perspectives?
8. Did the news shows have any feature stories? If so, what were they about? (A feature story is different from a news story in that it does not focus on immediate news. A story about a local artist would be a feature story because it could be done at any time. In contrast, a bank robbery is of immediate interest.)

News Activity 4

Comparing TV news with the newspaper

Directions

On a given evening, compare the news from your local morning newspaper with news from one of the network TV news shows.

1. List the stories featured on the TV news.
2. List the stories featured in the local paper. Use only the stories in the section covering national and international news.
3. Select a story featured on the front page of the newspaper and also featured on the network news. Write down the basic facts as presented by each source. Is there any difference in the reporting?

Newspaper	Television News

Politics

Introduction

Students should understand that our lives are influenced daily by politics. A variety of factors influence opinion, such as race, gender, age, religion, socioeconomic status, education, and family origin.

While politicians are supposed to represent the people, most Americans do not trust government. They believe politicians do not always tell the truth, don't respond to citizens' needs, and allow the government to intrude on individuals' privacy.

People usually fall into one of the following categories when it comes to their attitudes toward government: believers, supporters, skeptics, and critics. Have students discuss these categories and explain with which one they would use to categorize themselves.

Contents

- Student handout describing the basics of politics
- An activity in which students will find and recognize people and groups based on their political philosophies
- Four exercises in which students will identify political bias in legislation and editorial opinions

Lesson Plan Ideas

Politics is a daily event. There is always an issue in the news that politicians and news pundits are discussing.

- The editorial page of a newspaper makes a good source of material for evaluating propaganda techniques.
- Talk shows can easily be recorded for classroom evaluation. They are usually filled with examples of propaganda techniques.
- Take a single issue on a given day and have students examine how the various media report it.
- Have students make lists of their daily activities and determine which have been influenced by politics.

Student Handout

Politicians make our laws and affect our lives in many ways. They want others to support their views, and they want voters to vote for them. The propaganda techniques they use can sometimes persuade or mislead voters. In theory, the politicians we elect are supposed to represent their constituencies. In reality, they may represent many other interests.

Special interest groups

Special interest groups are private organizations devoted to a particular view or issue. They get their messages across to the public by supplying information they think should be public knowledge, building a positive image of the group, and promoting a particular public policy.

To shape the public's attitude, these groups use many propaganda techniques. Well-funded groups often hire lobbyists to influence politicians to work in their favor.

Money rules

The usual rule of thumb is that the more money a group spends on lobbying, the more political influence it will have. You can often tell who a politician will support by looking at which groups have contributed to his or her campaign. Special interest groups can be a major source of campaign funds. Political action committees (PACs) raise funds and then distribute them to the party and politicians that will most likely further the group's goals. These goals are not always in the public's best interest.

It takes enormous amounts of money to get elected to public office, primarily because of population growth. Politicians have to reach an increasing number of constituents. The main way to do this is through television advertising, which is very expensive.

Follow the money

The Internet provides extensive information about campaign contributions to candidates. The Federal Election Commission, an independent regulatory agency, discloses campaign finance information to oversee funding for elections and to enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act.

How to find out about votes

The Internet also contains information about how legislators vote—especially senators and representatives. The site www.congress.org lists which congressmen voted “yea” or “nay” on recent bills.

Political philosophies

In American politics, conservatives have historically been in favor of low taxes, small government, limited involvement in foreign affairs, and balanced budgets.

Liberals, on the other hand, have historically believed that government should take responsibility for solving many fiscal and social problems. Liberals also believe that government should not limit civil rights or interfere with individuals' privacy.

Political Spending (2004)

- \$1.3 billion was spent on political ads
- 88% on TV ads
- 6% on radio
- 3% on newspapers
- 2% on cable TV
- 1% on the Internet

Races on which the most money was spent (2004)

- Presidential race—42%
- Congress and Senate—27%
- State and local ballot issues—17%
- Local campaign spending—14%

Sources: TNS Media Intelligence/CMR study, November 2004

Politics Exercise

Directions

Money talks in politics. Look at the examples below of the money legislators received from various sources. How would these legislators be inclined to vote on the given bills?

<p>LEGISLATOR A'S MONEY SOURCES: Alex Spinos, a real estate developer—\$50,000 Real Estate Association—\$10,000 Building Trades Unions—\$5,000</p>	<p>LEGISLATOR B'S MONEY SOURCES: Nature Conservation Society—\$2,000 Citizens Against Growth—\$5,000</p>
<p>BILL 101</p>	<p>BILL 101</p>
<p>BILL 201</p>	<p>BILL 201</p>
<p>BILL 301</p>	<p>BILL 301</p>

LEGISLATIVE BILLS

Bill 101—Provides a tax break for contractors who build affordable housing.

Bill 201—Requires that no tree older than 50 years be cut down to make way for a new building development.

Bill 301—Requires that developers pay for the cost of all new schools.

Politics Exercise

Directions

In this exercise, you must make an educated guess about how a legislator might vote on a variety of issues, given the kind of voters in his district and the kind of financial support he received during the campaign.

How legislators vote is strongly affected by the people and interests who contribute campaign money to them, and by the voters in their districts.

Occasionally, a legislator will vote against the interests of his constituents or his contributors, but if he does so too often, he may not be reelected.

How do you think Congressman Angelo Serventi would vote on the issues, given the information about his district and his contributors below? Use a "Y" to indicate a yes vote and an "N" to indicate a no vote. When legislators want to duck an issue, they often are absent when the vote is taken.

Description of the District

This district is 60 percent Democratic and 40 percent Republican. Mr. Serventi, a Democrat, is newly elected and won with only 52% of the vote.

Most of the Democratic voters in the district are workers in the large steel and rubber factories. They belong to powerful labor unions.

Most of the workers are Catholic and have high school educations. They are social conservatives. They do not like welfare.

The district's increasing crime rate and inflation are the two top issues with the voters.

Contributors

Steelworkers' Union	\$5000
U.S. Steel Company	\$3000
Chamber of Commerce	\$1000
Democratic Central Comm.	\$1000
Rubber Workers' Union	\$2000
Union Oil Company	\$1000
National Rifle Assoc.	\$1000
The Police Officers Assoc.	\$1000
Democratic Women's Club	\$2000
The American Rubber Co.	\$6000
The AFL-CIO COPE	\$10,000

PREDICT THE VOTE ON THE ISSUES

1. A law which restricts union picketing at construction sites.

VOTE:

2. A law which will place a tax on imported steel from Japan.

VOTE:

3. A law which will provide for federally funded abortions.

VOTE:

4. A large increase in welfare payments.

VOTE:

5. A law which will restrict the sale of guns.

VOTE:

6. A law which will allow oil companies to set whatever prices they want.

VOTE:

Politics Exercise

Directions

How would the people below vote on the following bills? Indicate how they might vote by marking “Y” for yes and “N” for no. If you cannot tell how they might vote, use “DK” for don’t know.

AB 212: Provides for unemployment checks for convicts released from prison. The check would be based upon the type of work done in prison and would last six months.

AB 117: Provides for an increase in taxes on large cars. The purpose of the tax is to discourage the use of large cars.

AB 167: Provides for a reduction in taxes to businesses which use their profits to modernize their factories and increase productivity.

AB 134: Provides financial assistance to elderly and poor people so that they can insulate their houses and apartments.

AB 189: Provides for emergency aid to farmers who lost crops due to bad weather. Aid would be in the form of low-interest loans.

LEGISLATOR

1. Ray Van Polen, 47, farmer. Borrowed money shortly after high school to start his own farm. Started with 10 acres, now owns 750 acres. Republican. Represents farm area.

2. Mike Daugherty, 27, lawyer. Represents an area that is made up of poor and working class people. Many minorities. Law practice is primarily defending criminal cases. Democrat.

3. Amos Farley, 65, businessman. Millionaire, Democrat. Started business from scratch. Now employs 135 people making camper tops. Represents a suburban area with many upper income families. Very religious.

4. Sandy Garcia, 35, housewife. Represents a central city area that has many old and poor people. Devout Catholic. Husband is a carpenter.

5. Terry Hedbury, 35, insurance salesman. Represents a middle income area. Republican. His district is conservative.

AB	AB	AB	AB	AB
212	117	167	134	189

Politics Exercise

Directions

Identify the political bias of the editorials below and what interests they are defending or promoting. Use the key lists below to identify the biases of the editorials. Select the number indicating the political bias and as many letters as needed to describe which groups' interests are being promoted.

Philosophy

1. radical
2. liberal
3. moderate
4. conservative
5. reactionary
6. cannot tell

Interest Group

- A. the poor
- B. the aged
- C. teens
- D. labor
- E. small business
- F. large business
- G. women
- H. welfare
- I. criminals
- J. dissenters
- K. immigrants
- L. conservationists
- M. oil companies
- N. consumers
- O. car companies
- P. utilities
- Q. car owners
- R. taxpayers

Gas Rationing Needed

Even though most Americans won't like it, the president should institute gas rationing now.

People will complain that gas rationing is unfair and unnecessary, but the inconveniences that go with gas rationing are minor compared to constant inflation and living at the mercy of foreign powers who control the flow of oil.

If the OPEC countries decided not to sell oil to America, the country would be thrown into a tailspin from which it would never recover.

We use too much oil and we waste too much as well. That is why we urgently need gas rationing

Eliminate Inventory Tax

Each year businessmen must pay a tax that no one else must pay called an inventory tax. Store owners and their employees must work overtime to count the goods on hand, for which they will be taxed.

The tax actually gets passed on to the consumer. It's just another way for the government to dip into your pocket without you knowing it.

This tax should be abolished. It is not only unfair to business people, burdening them with extra work, but it is unfair to the consumer as well.

Nuclear Power

A small group of people opposed to nuclear power is making it very difficult for America to survive.

This group's muddleheaded concern for the environment threatens America's economic future.

The only way in the near future that we can decrease our dependence on foreign oil is to use nuclear power.

Politics Activity

Directions

Find examples of each of the political philosophies listed below, using either people or groups that have recently been in the news that would fit under each philosophy.

Radical: Wants rapid, fundamental, extreme change.

Liberal: Believes in using the power of government to help people and reform society.

Moderate: Has views that fall somewhere between liberal and conservative.

Conservative: Opposed to rapid changes in government and society.

Reactionary: Wants to restore conditions back to those of a previous era.

Radical	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Reactionary

Statistics

Introduction

Statistics are often used in propaganda. Sales pitches and economic arguments in particular make frequent use of statistics, but they also appear in advertising, politics, and anything else needing some kind of proof to back up its assertions.

People tend to believe that numbers make claims seem proven and scientifically studied. Numbers also simplify larger ideas and make them easier to understand; for example, people can readily grasp the concept of “4 out of 5.”

It is best that students view statistics with a critical mind and question the information. Numbers, as students will see in this unit, can be very deceptive.

Contents

- Student handout describing statistical tricks and techniques and how to spot them
- An activity in which students find and evaluate something using percentages
- Four exercises about various statistical techniques and using numbers to promote group interests

Lesson Plan Ideas

- Have students search for ads that use statistics. They can present them in class or in a report. Have students determine the basis for the numbers being used.
- Below are some great quotes about statistics. Discuss them with the class and (if relevant) have students do further research on the persons who made the quotes and the context in which they made them.

“The pure and simple truth is rarely pure and never simple.” —Oscar Wilde

“First get your facts; then you can distort them at your leisure.” —Mark Twain

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damn lies, and statistics.” —Benjamin Disraeli

- Have students survey five friends and/or family members about one particular topic. Allow them to discuss their findings the next day in small groups. Were there noticeable differences? Do the findings depend on the people surveyed? Was there any bias in the answers?

Student Handout

Statistics are sometimes used to put a “good face”—or a “bad face”—on things. It all depends on whom the producer of the statistics is trying to persuade. You can use numbers to make yourself look good or you can use numbers to make someone or something else look bad.

Many people believe that numbers don't lie. Numbers may not lie but people do, and people often distort numbers for their own purposes.

One should remain aware of people's motives and judge their use of statistics accordingly. This does not necessarily mean that people always use inaccurate numbers, nor does it invalidate statistics-based arguments. It does mean, however, that you should view any statistics with a critical eye.

The Bad Sample

People often try to use statistics to persuade others. Advertisers come up with slogans like “75% of the people tested did not get cavities when they used Gloopy Goopy Toothpaste.”

Politicians like to show that a majority of the voters are going to vote for them or agree with them. In fact, most big political campaigns have two sets of pollsters: one to tell the candidate what the public really thinks, and the other to come up with statistics to tell the public what the candidate wants them to think.

The Post Hoc Fallacy

When two random sets of statistics are used together, it is called a statistical correlation. For example, insurance companies—who base their rates on such correlations—have found that smokers have more car accidents than non-smokers. Many insurance companies therefore give breaks on rates to non-smokers.

It may seem like a logical conclusion to say that smoking causes accidents. Just because one smokes, however, does not

mean that smoking increases the chances of having an accident. This is the Post Hoc Fallacy: assuming that A (smoking) causes B (accidents). Just because there is a statistical correlation, one should not jump to the conclusion that one thing caused the other.

Beware of Percentages

The use of percentages raises many questions. For example, take a statistic like, “70% of doctors surveyed recommended Blitzo Night Drops to make you sleep better.”

What does 70% actually mean? Does it mean 700 out of 1000 doctors, or does it mean 7 out of 10 doctors? And how were the doctors selected?

What Is Your Base?

Another trick often used with percentages is to change the number that acts as the base of the percentage.

Stores often do this when they have sales. For example, say a store advertises a “50% off sale.” What does that mean? 50% off of what? All the store has to do is move the old price up and then put the item on sale at a discount price. An \$8 item repriced at \$10 and sold at 50% off is really only a 37.5% discount.

Student Handout

The Scientific Method

People often find statistical studies more convincing if they are “scientific” studies.

You will notice that in some ads that use statistics, research has often been done by an “independent” laboratory. Just because an ad says a lab is independent, however, doesn’t necessarily mean that it is. Unless the lab has no financial or personal ties to the company that makes the product, or the firm that created the ad, it can’t be considered “independent.”

The Graph

Graphs provide a quick way to show trends and don’t require a lot of reading. They can, however, be easily manipulated to fool people.

Graphs can be drawn to emphasize dramatic increases or declines, or to show almost no change at all.

Some graphs also omit vital information. Like any other statistic, approach graphs with skepticism.

Different Kinds of Averages

There are three different kinds of averages. What most people think of as an average is actually called the **mean**. You calculate the mean by adding together individual items in a group, and then dividing by the number of items in the group.

The **median** is the number that you get by counting halfway through the group. The **mode** is the most frequent number that the group shares.

These different kinds of averages will generate different numbers, thus people often choose the one that best supports their argument.

Questions to Ask About Statistics

1. Who Says So?

Look for bias. What kind of publication do the statistics appear in? What is the point of the statistics—are they trying to persuade or sell something? Make sure the authority—if there is one—stands behind the information.

2. How Do They Know?

Is the sample big enough? Is it a fair sample? Is it possible that researchers conducted many studies until they got the information they wanted? Are the differences mentioned really significant?

3. What Is Missing?

Is there mention of any possible errors? Has any other information, such as comparisons, been left out? Is the mean used when it should have been the mode or median?

4. Did Somebody Change the Topic?

Are “post hoc” arguments used? Did the definition of something change? Do the statistics manipulate percentages? Are clear questions asked?

5. Does It Make Sense?

Watch out for averages that seem too precise and too well-rounded. Be careful of predictions and assumptions.

Conclusion

People have a tendency to believe statistics because they seem to be precise and scientific. There are many ways of using statistics to deceive and manipulate, so watch out for them in politics and advertising.

Statistics Exercise

Directions

See if you can figure out what is wrong with the percentages below. Indicate what you think might be wrong with the percentages by using the questions directly below. Fill in the corresponding letter.

- A. What sample do the statistics use? Is it too large or too small? Does it accurately reflect the population that it is supposed to involve?
 - B. Did the researchers conduct the survey many times until they got the results they wanted?
 - C. What base is used to calculate percentage increases? Did the base change?
 - D. Sometimes percentages are just created to make things sound more scientific. Does the percentage make sense?
-
1. ___ 80% of the housewives surveyed indicated that they needed a stronger kitchen cleanser. (They were surveyed in front of a plumbing shop where they were buying boric acid.)
 2. ___ Prices slashed 50%. (The price was \$7.50 and is now \$5.00.)
 3. ___ 60% of the voters surveyed will vote for Bill Jones. (The survey was taken in a five-block area around Bill Jones' house.)
 4. ___ In the last week, there has been a big shift in favor of candidate Smith. The number of people going to vote for him has increased by 50%. (Last week they found that 100 people were going to vote for Smith; this week 150 people. There are 10,000 voters in the district.)
 5. ___ We found that there was a 60% chance of rain tomorrow. (The weatherman noticed a storm front approaching.)
 6. ___ Our profits increased by 23% last year. (The profits went from \$10 million to \$13 million.)
 7. ___ Of the \$100 million we have invested, our profits are only 13%. (Their gross income, however, was \$26 million with a \$13 million profit.)
 8. ___ 75% of the housewives surveyed thought that Sloppy Peanut Butter was superior to any other brand. (The survey was taken 45 times.)
 9. ___ 90% of the dentists surveyed thought Toothy Floss was the best dental floss. (3000 surveys were sent out. Only 10 were returned and 9 favored Toothy Floss.)
 10. ___ The car's performance has been improved by 50%. (How do you judge a car's performance—speed, gas mileage, few repairs needed?)

Statistics Exercise

Directions

Statistics are often used to promote the interests of the group publishing the statistics. In this exercise, identify which group published each statistic. The statistics are in the left column, and the interest groups are listed on the right.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. ____ 3 out of 4 toothpaste users use Pepsidenture toothpaste. | A. Cigarette manufacturer |
| 2. ____ People who use dental floss every day have 37% less cavities. | B. Dental Association |
| 3. ____ Each cigarette you smoke takes one minute off your life. | C. Toothpaste manufacturer |
| 4. ____ Each cigarette has only .05 mg. of tar and .011 mg. of nicotine. | D. Lung Association |
| 5. ____ Children who don't eat candy have 50% fewer cavities. | E. Candy manufacturer |
| | F. Association of nutritionists |

6. ____ Oil profits are up 450%. Answers may be used more than once.

7. ____ This car gets 33 mpg in town and 47 mpg on the highway. **A.** Oil company

8. ____ Mobile Oil spent \$100 million exploring for new oil last year. **B.** Car company

This year we are spending \$1 billion. **C.** Consumer protection group

9. ____ You can get a \$500 rebate on this car if you buy now.

10. ____ The cost of a gallon of gas at the pump has gone up 120% this last year. The cost of a gallon to the oil companies has gone up only 95%.

11. ____ Our company employs 17,600 people. Next year we will hire even more to refine, research, and explore for oil.

Statistics Exercise

Directions

The kind of publication in which a set of statistics appears can provide clues as to how the statistics might be distorted. In the exercise below, match up the statistics with the publication in which it would most likely appear.

PUBLICATION

1. ___MOTORCYCLE NEWS. A magazine for motorcycles.
2. ___BUSINESS REVIEW. A magazine aimed at small businessmen.
3. ___TEEN VIEW. A magazine aimed at teenage females.
4. ___UP THE REVOLUTION. An anti-government, anti-establishment magazine directed at youth.
5. ___UPBEAT. A journal about rock-and-roll music.
6. ___DOWN WIND. A magazine for owners of power boats.
7. ___JOCK. A journal for male athletes.
8. ___CAFE. A magazine for gourmet diners.

STATISTIC

- A. American businessmen pay 40% of their income in taxes.
- B. People who go boating have 10% fewer heart attacks than those who don't.
- C. The average American male is 100 pounds overweight.
- D. Over 20 million Americans ride motorcycles.
- E. Americans spend \$150 billion eating out each year.
- F. 75% of American millionaires pay no income tax.
- G. Six million Americans buy the latest hit records.
- H. American girls spend \$145 a year on makeup.

Select the statistics most favorable to each interest group.

1. ___Organized labor (just beginning negotiations with management)
 - A. Wages increased 10% last year.
 - B. The cost of living has gone up 18% in the last year.
 - C. The profits of the company went down by 7% this last year.
2. ___A weekly news magazine (trying to sell ad space to companies)
 - A. Circulation went down by 2 million last year.
 - B. The average income of a reader of the magazine is \$41,000.
 - C. The average American spends 3 hours a day watching TV.

Statistics Exercise

Directions

Decide which average would be best for each individual to use.
Circle the best answer.

Averages

1. Homer Hartley owns a fleet of delivery trucks. For tax purposes, he must report the average amount of mileage the trucks travel. The higher the average, the more he will save on taxes.

MEAN

MEDIAN

MODE

Truck 1	15,000 miles
Truck 2	27,000
Truck 3	33,000
Truck 4	15,000
Truck 5	22,000
Truck 6	37,000

MEAN

2. Pedro Chavez wanted to tell his uncle how well he was doing playing basketball. He wants to give the best possible information because if his uncle thinks he played well, he will send him money.

MEDIAN

MODE

Game 1	0 points
Game 2	0 points
Game 3	0 points
Game 4	1 point
Game 5	15 points
Game 6	10 points
Game 7	2 points

MEAN

3. "Fast Eddie" Jones liked to brag to his friends about how much money he made gambling in the school bathroom. To hear Eddie tell it, he was getting rich. Which average should Eddie use to prove his point?

MEDIAN

MODE

Week 1	\$10	Week 4	\$5
Week 2	\$200	Week 5	\$10
Week 3	\$200	Week 6	\$5

Statistics Activity

Directions

Percentages are often used to deceive. Find an article or an advertisement that uses percentages in a newspaper or magazine. Copy or cut out and paste the article below, then answer the questions below about the percentages in the article or ad.

- A. What sample was used? Is it too large or too small?
- B. What base was used to calculate percentage increases? Did the base change?
- C. Sometimes percentages are just created to make things sound more scientific. Does the percentage make sense?

Evidence

Introduction

How we handle evidence can affect our lives in a variety of ways. Do we believe everything that we are told? Are some sources more credible than others?

Evidence should be the obvious or key factor in determining truth. Students must first consider the actual evidence at hand: Is it real or fabricated? Is it familiar or strange? How easy or difficult is it to understand the information presented?

In court cases, jurors often have to rely upon the testimony of witnesses. In addition to eyewitnesses and character witnesses, there are “expert” witnesses who have specialized knowledge in a particular field that may help the case. Again, students need to know how to evaluate the credibility of these “experts.”

Contents

- Student handout describing standards for evaluating evidence
- An activity in which students must find an article where an expert is interviewed and evaluate his or her judgment
- Four exercises that ask students to evaluate witnesses, experts, and statements

Lesson Plan Ideas

- Hold a mock jury selection process known as *voir dire*. Ask for volunteers to be “lawyers” who will come up with and pose questions to the jurors (the rest of the class). Have the lawyers select a certain number of jurors, and then allow everyone to discuss the process. What did they think of the kinds of questions that were asked? Were the questions obviously looking for some sort of bias? Why were certain students picked over others?

Student Handout

Evaluating the Media

Cable news often fills its air time with “pundits” and “experts.” Increasingly, television blurs the line between news based upon facts and news based upon opinions. Viewers must evaluate what they are told and ask themselves a number of questions about these “experts”:

- How much do they really know about the subject?
- What qualifies them as experts?
- Where do they get their information?
- Are they being paid by someone to convey a particular point of view?
- Do these experts leave out important information?
- Do they present only one point of view?

Evaluating Statements and Opinions

For opinions to have any validity, they must be supported by facts. Here are four different ways to characterize statements:

- True beyond a reasonable doubt. The evidence is overwhelming.
- Probably true. There is sufficient evidence to indicate the truth of the statement.
- Unsupported, but probably not false. You can't tell from the evidence given.
- Provably false. Reliable evidence contradicts the statement.

Evaluating Evidence

Here are some factors to consider when evaluating evidence:

Physical Limitations

How well a person sees or hears an event may be influenced by their physical abilities.

Physical Conditions

The conditions under which evidence is gathered can also influence our understanding of the evidence.

Expertise

How much a person knows about a subject influences his or her ability to observe and understand. The more we know about a subject, the better we can evaluate what someone tells us.

Prejudices

Prejudices or biases come in all shapes and forms. People have political, cultural, religious, intellectual, and racial biases. These biases can influence our interpretations.

Memory

How well does a person remember? Over time, people tend to forget things. Psychological studies indicate that people are more likely to remember positive experiences.

Evidence Exercise

Directions

Evaluate the following person's reliability as an expert or witness.

A store clerk was just held up by a person carrying a shotgun. The store clerk wears glasses but wasn't wearing them at the time of the holdup. His vision is 20/300.

Physical Limitations

Physical Conditions

Expertise

Prejudices

Memory

Evidence Exercise

Directions

What is the problem with each of the observations below? Fill in the blanks with the corresponding letters.

- A.** The person cannot see well or has some other disability that would prevent him or her from seeing properly.
- B.** The conditions might be unfavorable. It might be too dark or the person might be too far away or in the wrong position to see clearly.
- C.** The person might not know enough about what he or she is seeing to understand it.
- D.** The person might have prejudices about what he or she is seeing or might not like the person he or she saw.
- E.** The person might be under emotional stress at the time. He or she might be too excited to see clearly.
- F.** The person might find it hard to remember what he or she saw. People usually remember things as they wish they were, not as they actually were.

1. On a bright, clear, sunny day, a person driving across the desert sees a round, silver object moving across the sky. The person concludes that it is a flying saucer.

1. _____

2. Tellie saw two men leave a jewelry store just after it had been robbed. They walked by her about 15 feet away. The time was 5:30 p.m. Tellie has excellent eyesight.

2. _____

3. Ernie McAfee thought the referees at the football game were blind when they declared the pass receiver out of bounds. McAfee saw the play clearly and thought the receiver was in bounds. He was sitting in row 96 of the stadium and had drunk six beers.

3. _____

4. It was summer time and John Lobos saw a robbery. It was late in the afternoon and John was 10 feet away from the bank's door. John had to squint while looking into the late afternoon sun as he saw the robbers leave the bank.

4. _____

5. Six months ago Susan had seen a vicious mugging on the street. Now the police had apprehended a suspect. They want Susan to identify him.

5. _____

Evidence Exercise

Directions

Evaluate the “experts” in the situations described. Use these guidelines.

- A. They know a great deal.
- B. They know a great deal but have a personal interest.
- C. They know only a little bit.
- D. They know only a little bit but have a personal interest.
- E. They know nothing about the subject.
- F. They know nothing about the subject but have a personal interest.

1. Dr. Sid Patterson said today that taking Vitamin B cures warts. Miller is a professor of languages at State University. Miller has been taking Vitamin B for a long time in large doses. He believes that large amounts of vitamins will cure almost any illness. He discovered that Vitamin B cured warts in experiments he conducted on students at the university.

2. Mr. M. L. Yankolvich, an eccentric inventor, announced today that gamma rays can be beneficial for your complexion. Yankolvich never graduated from high school. He became wealthy and famous as the inventor of an all-purpose kitchen knife.

3. Dr. Ernest Lobich, an expert on Middle Eastern Affairs, says that the United States must recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization to reach a peace accord in the Middle East. Lobich, who holds a Ph.D. from Harvard, is the executive director of the Arab-American Friendship League.

4. Dr. Lester Albright today said that American breakfast cereals are highly nutritious. Albright, an expert in nutrition, said that American cereals are enriched with a variety of vitamins that make them very wholesome. Albright is the director of the General Meals research department. General Meals makes 50 percent of the breakfast cereals on the market.

5. Tom Lever, a famous pitcher for the Nashville Nine, declared today that the new lighter baseball will ruin pitchers’ arms. Lever, who holds a M.A. in athletic kinesiology, says that experiments prove that the ball will require a pitcher to put more leverage into throwing it. This will result in more strained arms, Lever claims.

6. Thomas Mackey, the head of the State Student Association, declared that if the new graduation requirement considered by the state legislature went into effect, students would leave school in large numbers. The new graduation requirements will make it impossible to graduate if a student fails a class.

Evidence Exercise

Directions

Rate the statements below. Indicate whether you think they are:

- A.** True beyond a reasonable doubt.
- B.** Probably true.
- C.** Unsupported, but not provably false.
You can't tell from the evidence given.

- D.** Probably false.
- E.** False beyond a reasonable doubt.

1. Capitalism is a superior way of life to communism.

1. _____

2. The United States has a higher standard of living than Russia.

2. _____

3. Doctors make more money than people in any other occupation.

3. _____

4. Children are physically bigger than they were 40 years ago.

4. _____

5. Coal mining is a dangerous job.

5. _____

6. There is more violence now than there was 100 years ago.

6. _____

7. China has a larger population than any other country.

7. _____

8. Russia and the United States are nearly equal in military power.

8. _____

9. Americans are changing their habits of consumption.

9. _____

10. It rains less in the summer than in the winter in North America.

10. _____

Evidence Activity

Directions

Find an article or news interview in which an “expert” is asked about a particular topic. Copy or cut and paste the statement used below, and then evaluate his or her expertise on the topic. Next, evaluate the expert and the expert’s statements.

The Experts

- A. They know a great deal.
- B. They know a great deal but have a personal interest.
- C. They know only a little bit.
- D. They know only a little bit but have a personal interest.
- E. They know nothing about the subject.
- F. They know nothing about the subject but have a personal interest.

The Statement

- 1. True beyond a reasonable doubt.
- 2. Probably true.
- 3. Unsupported, but not provably false. You can’t tell from the evidence given.
- 4. Probably false.