



News, Perspective, Bias - Advanced

Overview

Students think critically about presenter bias and confirmation bias and understand how they can influence public perception. Next, students compare and contrast news stories presented by different outlets and reflect on the importance of recognizing bias and taking multiple perspectives into account when reviewing stories and drawing conclusions about events.

Teacher Background

- [Boston Massacre](#) Encyclopædia Britannica
- [A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston](#) Internet Archive
- [A Fair Account of the Late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England](#) Massachusetts Historical Society

Digital Resources

- [Engraving source record](#)
- [Confirmation bias cartoon](#)
- [Defining Confirmation Bias](#) Facing History and Ourselves video
- [Media Bias chart](#) ad fonts media

Materials

- Computer with Internet access & digital display
- Digital document, white/chalkboard or chart paper

Implementation

Spark Inquiry (15 minutes)

1. Ask students to define bias (showing a preference for one side or version of events over another) and then ask them to relay what they know about the Boston Massacre. Next, give students this brief description of the event: On March 5, 1770, a street brawl in Boston between American colonists and a lone British soldier escalated into a larger incident with deadly consequences.
2. Divide students into pairs and inform them that two narratives were written shortly after the event and based on reports from alleged eyewitnesses, writing the titles of



each in a digital document, on the board, or on chart paper: A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston and A Fair Account of the Late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England. Direct pairs to create two quick sketches of the event, one for each headline. Students may wish to use a dictionary to look up definitions of “massacre” and “disturbance”.

3. Ask for student volunteers to show their contrasting sketches and discuss the bias reflected in them. After each display, ask the rest of the class which title and sketch resonated most with them and why.

Deepen Inquiry (15 minutes)

4. Display the [engraving of a depiction of the “Boston Massacre”](#) that Paul Revere copied from another artist and published not long after the event. Instruct students to look closely at the details and discuss which resonated most powerfully with them and were likely to stick in their memory of what happened and why. Discuss why the event is known to this day as the Boston Massacre.
5. Display this [confirmation bias cartoon](#) and ask students if they can determine the meaning of confirmation bias (the tendency to look for or interpret information consistent with one’s own beliefs), then show the [Defining Confirmation Bias video](#).
6. Discuss how confirmation bias is reinforced through internet searches and social media (i.e., algorithms and people you follow both make it more likely that you are presented with information you like and agree with).

Connect & Act (30 minutes)

7. Ask students to identify how people find out about news and events related to their friends, school, community, and country (e.g., social media, websites, television news, magazines, newspapers, etc.). After, instruct them to brainstorm and then share recent issues or topics they have seen recently on social media that they think showed a clear bias.
8. Display the [Media Bias chart](#), pointing out the labels and key. Inform students that this chart has undergone several iterations based on feedback from a variety of sources.
9. Divide students into groups and challenge them to find articles about one of the issues from sources across the news spectrum. Direct them to review how the different sources relayed the stories via headlines, images and text. If possible, have students look for mentions of the same issues on social media as well.



10. Share student research and discuss why it is important to consider multiple perspectives and the bias of each when reviewing stories and drawing conclusions about events.

Extending Learning

- [Symbols and Propaganda from the Boston Massacre](#) WGBH Forum