

Lesson Title	Fact and opinion within the media		
Lesson Plan Number	5	Age Range/ Year Group	15-18 years
Resources	Learning Outcomes		
1. Resource Sheet 1. Two newspaper articles about Obama. 2. Resource Sheet 2. Task 1 – What is the difference between facts and opinions within the media? Task 2 – Can we believe everything that we see or hear? 3. Resource Sheet 3. Task 3 – Is the same story written in the same way by every newspaper? 4. Resource Sheet 4. Task 4 – How can we take more care in terms of how we react to news stories? 5. Resource Sheet 5. Task 5 – What responsibility do we have in terms of the media?	By the end of this lesson students will be able to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the relevance of the difference between fact and opinion within the media. • Distinguish between fact and opinion within the media. 		

LESSON INTRODUCTION

This lesson encourages students to distinguish between fact and opinion within the media (and to appreciate the need to do so). Students also consider that cultural misunderstandings can be created by the media, and that people should handle the media’s interpretations of events in a responsible manner.

STARTER (10 mins)

- Ask a student to explain the difference between fact and opinion.
- Ask students to read task one. Next, ask them to decide which headlines seem factual and which seem opinion-based.

Answers: FACT - 2, 4, 5, 8 & 9. OPINION – 1, 3, 6, 7 & 10.

- Ask the following questions:
 - How did you decide which headlines were which?
 - Which headlines told you something about a journalist’s opinions?
 - Which headlines were probably linked to biased stories?
 - Are facts always interpreted in the same way by different people?
 - Do you think that most of the headlines that you see in real life are based upon fact or upon opinion?
- Praise those who respond.
- Ask students to read task two. Encourage students to comment.
- An example of a constructive response might be:

“I thought that the quote made a lot of sense. It made me think about the fact that I often look at photographs in the newspaper without even bothering to read the stories. I suppose that the photographs are probably chosen because they represent journalists’ opinions rather than because they present balanced facts.”

MAIN ACTIVITY (15 mins)

- Ask students to get into groups of three or four and give each group the three newspaper articles.
- Ask students to read through task three and to complete the table. Explain to students that they should put ticks and crosses into the table (which they can expand upon in writing if they so wish).
- Ask spokespersons from a few groups to explain what their groups learnt from the activity.

Example of a good response:

“We realised that newspaper 1 portrayed Obama as a powerful, positive and intelligent force; someone who deserved respect and who was hardworking. The way that the story was written made you feel that he was going to put a lot of effort into his role and that he was a good man to take on the job of US President. Newspaper 2 made Obama seem like a different person. He came across as a lazy and underhand character who did not know his own mind. It was a very prejudiced story and it made Obama out to be stupid. Filling in the table made us realise how many hidden messages there are in certain newspaper articles.”

SUMMARY (15 mins)

- Show students task four.
- Encourage students to work individually on the task (filling in their answers on the sheet).
- Invite students to share their answers with the class.

Prompt questions might include:

- Which minority groups seem to have lots of negative things said about them in the media?
- Why is it important to challenge media-created stereotypes?
- How might members of minority groups feel about the way in which they're treated by the media?
- What effect might opinion-based journalism have on cultural misunderstandings?

A good answer might be:

“For question 3, I put that men always seem to be portrayed as violent in newspapers. This is damaging to their reputation and very unfair. The great majority of men sort out problems with their mouths rather than with their fists.”

- Ask students to think carefully about the personal pledge in task five.
- (Students might be encouraged to take the personal pledge home with them to act as an anti-extremism tool).

Useful vocabulary that might be written on the board to prompt thought includes:

BALANCE, BIAS, EXTREMISM, FACT, FREEDOM OF SPEECH, MINORITY GROUPS, MISUNDERSTANDING, MYTH, INFLUENCE, OPINION, RIGHT, RESPONSIBILITY, STEREOTYPE etc.





EXTENSION/FOLLOW UP IDEAS

Look at three news websites this week and compare the ways in which they present the same stories.

Decide which of the websites relies most heavily upon fact, and which relies most heavily upon opinion.

Be ready to show/explain your findings to the other students next lesson.

CHECK THE WEB

1. www.extremenews.org.uk for thought-provoking material about how extremism can be tackled (through the media and otherwise).

NATIONAL CURRICULUM LINKS

KS4: 1.1.b, 1.2.a, 2.1.a, 2.1.b, 2.1.c, 2.1.d, 2.2.a, 3a, 3f, 3g, 4a, 4b, 4c & 4i.

BARACK OBAMA'S ALL-ENCOMPASSING INAUGURAL SPEECH.

Yesterday evening saw Barack Obama's acceptance speech; a monumental historical moment for the world's most powerful nation. Obama's words caught the attention of millions of citizens the world over, its emotional references to America's past and future tugging at the heartstrings of many.

During the speech, Obama confidently portrayed America to fellow citizens as 'a place where all things are possible'; leaving no uncertainty about the fact that he believes his nation to be one of democratic principles.

His address was to 'young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled' citizens alike and his assertion was that America is a united nation rather than one divided into 'red' and 'blue' states.

He implored American citizens to reject cynicism and fear and to trust that, with him at the helm, they could look forward to a rosy future.

The new President's gratitude towards those citizens who had queued for hours in order to cast their vote was highlighted. He also thanked many political colleagues during his acceptance speech. Those mentioned included Senator McCain, Governor Palin, David Plouffe, David Axelrod, and his trusted campaign partner Joe Biden. Gratitude was also expressed towards his wife and his daughters, and it was stated that a new puppy would grace the doors of the White House as a result of their support.

The key to the success of Obama's speech was the sense of wonder that he conjured up. He adroitly led his supporters between multiple images of hope; from the modest beginnings of his campaign in Des Moines, to the Iraq war, to mortgage payments, and to new jobs. Furthermore, he did not shy away from the 'enormity of the task that lies ahead'.

Obama's intelligent words were delivered with aplomb. The carefully constructed speech maintained a sincere tone and did not patronise. Mention was made of the fact that, as their new President, he would not only welcome the opinions of those with whom he disagreed, but that he already fully anticipated 'setbacks and false starts'. He also coined a phrase that will stay with many American citizens from today onwards (Obama supporters or otherwise): 'we cannot have a thriving Wall Street while Main Street suffers'.

Last night, Obama proved to the globe that his future will not be one of 'pettiness and immaturity'; rather it will be built upon 'humility and determination'. In the words of Obama himself, 'This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations.'

05/11/2008

{Article based on:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article5086178.ece?token=null&offset=0&page=1}.


WHO IS BARACK GOING TO BACK?

YOU CAN'T PLEASE ALL OF THE PEOPLE ALL OF THE TIME MR PRESIDENT!

These days, when **political correctness** frightens the life out of all of us, the majority is pushed to the bottom of the pile and **minority groups are favoured**.

This certainly seems to be the message from the **new American President's** speech!

Obama was quick to focus on **gay, Asian** and **black** people straight away in his speech yesterday, and then tried to persuade all American listeners that they live in a united nation. How can any intelligent man talk about everyone being **the same** in one breath but make a point of mentioning skin colour and sexuality **five seconds before**?

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS GONE MAD!

In the good old days (when people were allowed to make jokes about two men kissing, and when people were allowed to say that **mixing up people of different religions can cause problems**), a politician won votes because he was the **best man for the job**. Now, the only way to secure a vote is to read out a tick list which contains **disabled people** and people with **different coloured skin**!

AS BAD AS BUSH?

Obama does not seem like the brightest button in the box. During his speech he not only talked about getting a **puppy** at the White House but spoke about his **dead grandmother**, neither of whom will have much influence over American politics! He was also too busy talking about not having much money at the beginning of his campaign to **say anything useful**.

WE GOT LOST HALFWAY THROUGH YOUR SPEECH!

Barack Obama might have had many people in tears last night, but a careful look at what he said shows that **he didn't actually say much at all**. By the time he had finished talking about the **friends** who had helped him to win, how long the **voting queues** were, **dead politicians** from the past, and **God**, there was no time left to actually tell the world what he might change!

WHAT NEXT?

America has already led the world into one **pointless war** recently, and now it seems that the new President is in danger of doing the same. One particular threat from his speech makes alarm bells ring: **'To those who would tear this world down – we will defeat you.'** Just what we need then – another **trigger-happy politician** who wants to prove what a clever boy he is by **starting a war!**

05/11/08

{Article based on:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article5086178.ece?token=null&offset=0&page=1}.}

TASK ONE. What is the difference between facts and opinions within the media?

Lots of people think that everything that they read in the paper or see on the television is true. The reality is that there is a huge difference between fact and opinion.

Look at the following ten headlines. Which five seem to represent fact? Which five seem to represent opinion?

1. Lazy vicar makes stupid decision about the cemetery!
2. Local baker closes down due to recession!
3. Hardworking teacher kicked out of job due to selfish immigrant neighbour!
4. Government announces plans to encourage recycling at home!
5. New six-lane motorway to be built soon!
6. Crazy tax increase used to pay for greedy fatties!
7. Teenagers more arrogant than ever!
8. Scientists prove caffeine causes headaches!
9. Cats live longer in certain areas of country!
10. . Government adviser has fantastic taste in clothes!

TASK TWO. Can we believe everything that we see or hear?

Even very intelligent people can sometimes find it hard to tell the difference between fact and opinion within the media.

Read the quote below. Think about whether you are sometimes fooled by what the media tells you.

{The following is taken from www.extremenews.org.uk}.

“News is a business. Extremism is news and it’s good for business! The media is often quoted as being the source of something factual and yet surprisingly the phrase ‘don’t believe everything you read in the paper’ is also well established. We have an ability to suspend our inquisitive nature and accept something in the media as true when normally we might question the content or the basis of what is being said, this is despite knowing we wouldn’t especially trust what we read or heard.”

‘Extreme News’ website.



TASK THREE. Is the same story written in the same way by every newspaper?

It is really interesting to see that the same story is usually written very differently by different journalists.

Look at your three newspaper articles and use them to fill in the table below.

SUMMARY OF STORY: _____

	Newspaper 1: <input type="text"/>	Newspaper 2: <input type="text"/>
1. Is the person's cultural background necessary to the story?		
2. Is all of the information in the story relevant?		
3. Is the information balanced?		
4. Can the reader tell what the journalist's opinion is?		
5. Is the story representative of everyday life?		
6. Might the story promote racism?		
7. Is the language in the article sensationalist?		
8. Does any of the information seem exaggerated?		
9. Is the article aimed at a particular type of reader?		
10. How do I feel about the story now that I've read two different versions?		

TASK FOUR. How can we take more care in terms of how we react to news stories?

The fact that it is often hard to distinguish fact from opinion within the media means that cultural misunderstanding can very easily arise.

Finish the following sentences. The first two have been done for you.

A. The media sometimes gives the message that **Christians**...attack doctors who carry out abortions... In reality, the huge majority of Christians...do not attack anyone!

B. The media sometimes gives the message that **Muslims**...refuse to talk to non-Muslims...In reality, the huge majority of Muslims...associate with lots of type of people!

C. The media sometimes gives the message that men.....
.....In reality, the huge majority of **men**.....
.....!

D. The media sometimes gives the message that **French people**
.....In reality, the huge majority of French people
.....!

E. The media sometimes gives the message that **teenagers**
.....In reality, the huge majority of teenagers
.....!

F. The media sometimes gives the message that **atheists**
.....In reality, the huge majority of atheists
.....!

G. The media sometimes gives the message that **women**
.....In reality, the huge majority of women
.....!

H. The media sometimes gives the message that **German people**
.....In reality, the huge majority of German people
.....!

I. The media sometimes gives the message that **immigrants**
.....In reality, the huge majority of immigrants
.....!

J. The media sometimes gives the message that **black people**
..... In reality, the huge majority of black people
.....!





Fact and opinion within the media

TASK FIVE. What responsibility do we have in terms of the media?

Most young adults take an interest in the news. However, not all of them think carefully enough about how the news is chosen or presented.

Look at the ‘personal pledge’ below. From now on you might choose to look at your pledge whenever you interact with the media.

MY PERSONAL PLEDGE.

From now on, whenever I read a newspaper/internet article or access the news on television/the radio, I will....

E.g. Think about alternative interpretations of the facts.

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

- 3. _____
