

LESSON 8

Exploring balance

Learning objective

To evaluate whether reporting is balanced or not

Learning outcomes

- Consider how different people may feel about a contentious news story
- Identify views represented or not represented in unbalanced news reports
- Recognise some features of balanced reporting
- Choose examples of reporting that demonstrate balance

Curriculum links

- **English (reading):** drawing inferences; identify features of texts
- **English (oracy):** take part in discussions
- **PSHE:** learn about how text and images in the media and on social media can be manipulated or invented

See 'NewsWise and your curriculum' for a more detailed breakdown of how this lesson links to your national curriculum objectives.



This lesson focuses on the NewsWise value: **balanced**.

Journalist training school context

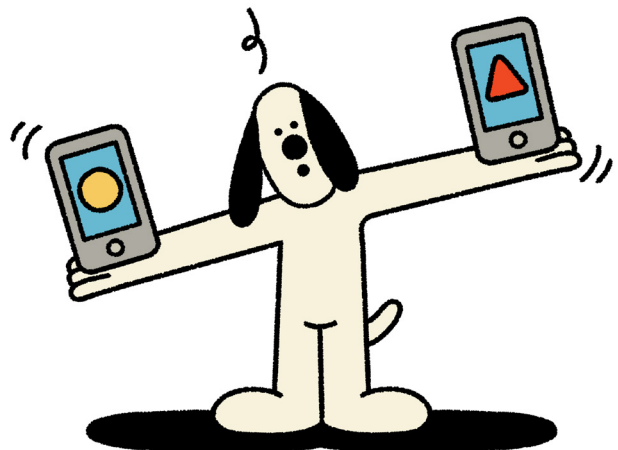
Journalists should make sure that their reporting is balanced. If they do not represent the views of everyone involved in a story, their reporting could be biased.

Core knowledge/skills

- Responsible journalists should strive to reflect everyone's views about a news story
- Sometimes details that are factual can be presented in a way that is intended to guide a reader to think or feel a certain way. Similarly, certain facts can be omitted while others are made more prominent to achieve a similar effect.
- Journalists should avoid using descriptive and emotive language when reporting news. Instead they should be focussed on reporting facts.
- Journalists should include quotes in their reporting that represent more than one perspective on a story to ensure they are telling the whole story.

Starter/baseline assessment [5 mins]

1. Tell pupils that changing just one word in a headline can change a story entirely.
2. Use lesson slides to work through the 'Complete the headline' activity. Outline each scenario and allow partners or small groups to discuss what the missing word could be in each headline. Encourage discussion about how the story might change when particular words are used. *Why do you think that word would be used? How might the story change if... were used instead?*



Learning activities

Activity 1 [20 mins]

1. Use lesson slides to give pupils an outline of the story. (Do not read the full report at first.)
2. Model looking at one of the **Character profiles**, considering what you know about them and how they may feel about the story.
3. Pupils to work in pairs to decide how each of the characters would feel about the story (ie who would agree with what happened and who would be against it.)

Activity 2 [20 mins]

1. Explain to pupils that the words used by a journalist can affect how people understand a story. For that reason, responsible journalists must be careful about the language they use in their reporting. They want the reader/viewer/listener to understand the facts of a story instead of thinking or feeling a certain way.
2. Remind pupils that a news story should be balanced. This means that different sides of the story should be included, to show that different people are affected in different ways, especially if there is disagreement.
3. Hand copies of **Unbalanced report 1** to each pair. Read the report aloud to the class while they follow.
4. Ask questions to check pupils' understanding of the story. *What happened in this story? What are the 5Ws of this story? Why did people think that...?*
5. Lead a class discussion around whose point of view is represented. Ask:
 - *Whose point of view is shown in this report?*
 - *Whose point of view is **not** shown in this report?*
 - *How do you know?* (Pupils may point out that only one person is quoted or that some things are described in a way that is based on emotions rather than facts. You can also encourage them to reflect on the character profiles from Activity 1 to support their inference.)

Plenary [10 mins]

1. Reminding pupils that news must always be reported in a balanced way and should share multiple perspectives on a story, use the lesson slides to present three options for how quotes could be used in writing a balanced version of this report. Pupils vote on the version which they believe is balanced.
2. Lead a class discussion around the questions:
 - *Why might it be a problem if we read news reports that are unbalanced?*
 - *Why might somebody only show one point of view in a report?*

Questions for assessment

- *How can you tell if a news report is unbalanced?*
- *Why should a journalist not use descriptive or emotive language when they are writing a news report?*
- *Why should a journalist include quotes from more than one person in their news report?*
- *Why should responsible journalists share news stories that are balanced?*
- *Why might it be a problem if we only see news that does not give us all the facts?*

Extension opportunities

- **Unbalanced report 2** to be used with more confident readers during Activity 2. For example, half the class could listen to **Unbalanced report 1** read aloud while others work independently on **Unbalanced report 2**.
- Pupils use both reports to find and record all of the arguments for and against. They could also be challenged to choose the most and least persuasive arguments on each side.

Resources checklist

- Lesson slides: Comparing how facts are presented
- Unbalanced report 1
- Unbalanced report 2
- Character profiles
- Highlighters or colouring pencils (optional)
- Number fans or voting cards (optional)