Media Matters
Literacy & Critical Thinking
Liz Schulze • October 21, 2022

Selected Resources & References

Critical Thinking Lesson Plans/Resources
- Media Smarts – https://mediasmarts.ca/
- The Cinematheque (BC) – https://thecinematheque.ca/learn
- TeachBC (BCTF) – https://teachbcdb.bctf.ca/
- Stanford History Education Group: https://sheg.stanford.edu/
- Freedom House – Freedomhouse.org
- Reporters Without Borders – https://rsf.org/en/
- Global Digital Citizen Foundation (Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking) – https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/category/critical-thinking
- Media Ownership Chart – https://www.vox.com/2018/1/23/16905844/media-landscape-verizon-amazon-comcast-disney-fox-relationships-chart
- Truth in Advertising – https://www.truthinadvertising.org/
- ICPSR (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research) – https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/pages/instructors/teacher-resources.html
- Logic Check – https://www.logiccheck.net/logiccheck-curriculum
- NYT What's Going on in This Picture – https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-whats-going-on-in-this-picture

Critical Thinking Films
- Thought Maybe – https://thoughtmaybe.com/
- Media Education Foundation – https://www.mediaed.org/

Fact Checking
- Media Bias Fact Check – https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/
- FactCheck.org – https://www.factcheck.org/
- Snopes – https://www.snopes.com/
- Politifact – https://www.politifact.com/
- https://www.iste.org/explore/Digital-and-media-literacy/Top-10-sites-to-help-students-check-their-facts

Cybersafety
- Cybersafe BC – https://www.cybersafebc.ca/resources
- Media Smarts – https://mediasmarts.ca/
- Telus Wise – https://www.telus.com/en/wise

BC's Core Competencies

Communication
1. Connect and engage with others
2. Acquire, interpret, and present information
3. Collaborate to plan, carry out, and review constructions and activities
4. Explain/recount and reflect on experiences and accomplishments

C

Creative Thinking
1. Novelty and value
2. Generating ideas
3. Developing ideas

T

Critical Thinking
1. Analyze and critique
2. Question and investigate
3. Develop and design

T

Positive Personal & Cultural Identity
1. Relationship and cultural contexts
2. Personal values and choice
3. Personal strengths and abilities

PS

Personal Awareness & Responsibility
1. Self-determination
2. Self-regulation
3. Well-being

PS

Social Responsibility
1. Contributing to community and caring for the environment
2. Solving problems in peaceful ways
3. Valuing diversity
4. Building Relationships

PS

- Develop a vocabulary to discuss media beyond just basic opinions ("I like/don't like it.")
- Research and present findings.
- Engage in mindful communication and discussions.

- Analyze and critique media, and start to see patterns in our media.
- Create media thoughtfully using one's own ideas (not just templates and mimicry).

- Understand ourselves within our media landscape.
- Self-regulate our usage.
- Communicate responsibly and ethically with others.

BC's Curriculum

Easier connections:
- English/French Language Arts
- Social Studies
- Physical and Health Education
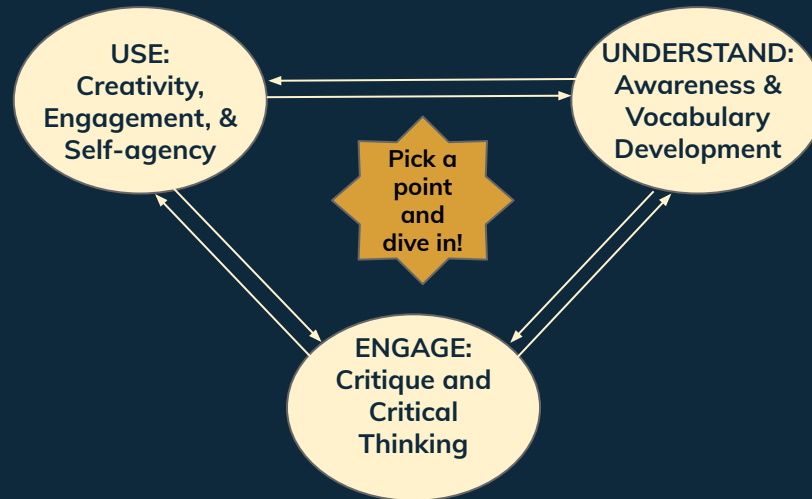- Career Education
- ADST & Arts

More challenging connections:
- Math
- Science

- Exploring and analyzing "stories and other texts."
- Comparing and contrasting different perspectives of events.
- Examining relationships, self-identity, and self-care.
- Goal-setting and career objectives.
- Creating media of one's own.

- Exploring what information is communicated in pictures and videos (online and offline).
- Comparing and contrasting statistics, evidence, and messages from different sources.
- Examining and analyzing bias and motivation in online articles.

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Media Education Activities

USE: Creativity, Engagement, & Self-agency

UNDERSTAND: Awareness & Vocabulary Development

Pick a point and dive in!

ENGAGE: Critique and Critical Thinking

1. Pre-Assessment: Testing the Waters
   - Preliminary analysis of a piece of media
   - Survey/tracking of media consumption in various forms
   - Brainstorm Marathon

2. Experiments and Evidence: Pavlov, Freud, & Early psychological experiments; Neuroscience; Documentaries; Games.
3. Vocabulary Development: Build together, lesson by lesson and/or start with a term that drives a lesson *(ex. Fake news)*.
4. Civil discussion and debate: Reframe opinions and observations into evidence-based discussions.
   - "From what I see here..."
   - "I'm not sure I agree with what *(name)* said. I suspect/feel..."
   - "I'd love to build on what *(name)* shared. I connect with part of it, yet also have other thoughts."
5. Creativity and Media Production
   - Photo editing with Photoshop (online for free: https://www.photopea.com/) – learn about manipulating images and how social media filters work.
   - Video production – learn about screenwriting, shot types, editing techniques, emotional manipulation and juxtaposition.
   - Podcast/audio production – students choose an issue and create a podcast or audio response.
6. Self-agency
   - Set goals and track progress for technology use.
   - Learn about cyber safety and online community building.
   - Reflect upon and discuss the impacts of mass media and social media on one's own identity.

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20 COGNITIVE BIASES THAT SCREW UP YOUR DECISIONS

1. Anchoring bias.

People are **over-reliant** on the first piece of information they hear. In a salary negotiation, whoever makes the first offer establishes a range of reasonable possibilities in each person's mind.

2. Availability heuristic.

People **overestimate the importance** of information that is available to them. A person might argue that smoking is not unhealthy because they know someone who lived to 100 and smoked three packs a day.

3. Bandwagon effect.

The probability of one person adopting a belief increases based on the number of people who hold that belief. This is a powerful form of **groupthink** and is reason why meetings are often unproductive.

4. Blind-spot bias.

Failing to recognize your own cognitive biases is a bias in itself. People notice cognitive and motivational biases much more in others than in themselves.

5. Choice-supportive bias.

When you choose something, you tend to feel positive about it, even if that **choice has flaws**. Like how you think your dog is awesome — even if it bites people every once in a while.

6. Clustering illusion.

This is the tendency to **see patterns in random events**. It is key to various gambling fallacies, like the idea that red is more or less likely to turn up on a roulette table after a string of reds.

7. Confirmation bias.

We tend to listen only to information that confirms our **preconceptions** — one of the many reasons it's so hard to have an intelligent conversation about climate change.

8. Conservatism bias.

Where people favor prior evidence over new evidence or information that has emerged. People were **slow to accept** that the Earth was round because they maintained their earlier understanding that the planet was flat.

9. Information bias.

The tendency to **seek information when it does not affect action**. More information is not always better. With less information, people can often make more accurate predictions.

10. Ostrich effect.

The decision to **ignore dangerous or negative information** by "burying" one's head in the sand, like an ostrich. Research suggests that investors check the value of their holdings significantly less often during bad markets.

11. Outcome bias.

Judging a decision based on the **outcome** — rather than how exactly the decision was made in the moment. Just because you won a lot in Vegas doesn't mean gambling your money was a smart decision.

12. Overconfidence.

Some of us are **too confident about our abilities**, and this causes us to take greater risks in our daily lives. Experts are more prone to this bias than laypeople, since they are more convinced that they are right.

13. Placebo effect.

When **simply believing** that something will have a certain effect on you causes it to have that effect. In medicine, people given fake pills often experience the same physiological effects as people given the real thing.

14. Pro-innovation bias.

When a proponent of an innovation tends to **overvalue its usefulness** and undervalue its limitations. Sound familiar, Silicon Valley?

15. Recency.

The tendency to weigh the **latest information** more heavily than older data. Investors often think the market will always look the way it looks today and make unwise decisions.

16. Salience.

Our tendency to focus on the **most easily recognizable features** of a person or concept. When you think about dying, you might worry about being mauled by a lion, as opposed to what is statistically more likely, like dying in a car accident.

17. Selective perception.

Allowing our expectations to **influence how we perceive** the world. An experiment involving a football game between students from two universities showed that one team saw the opposing team commit more infractions.

18. Stereotyping.

Expecting a group or person to have certain qualities without having real information about the person. It allows us to quickly identify strangers as friends or enemies, but people tend to **overuse and abuse** it.

19. Survivorship bias.

An error that comes from focusing only on surviving examples, causing us to **misjudge a situation**. For instance, we might think that being an entrepreneur is easy because we haven't heard of all those who failed.

20. Zero-risk bias.

Sociologists have found that **we love certainty** — even if it's counterproductive. Eliminating risk entirely means there is no chance of harm being caused.

SOURCES: Brain Biases; Ethics Unwrapped; Explorable; Harvard Magazine; HowStuffWorks; LearnVest; Outcome bias in decision evaluation, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Psychology Today; The Bias Blind Spot: Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin; The Cognitive Effects of Mass Communication, Theory and Research in Mass Communications; The less-is-more effect: Predictions and tests, Judgment and Decision Making; The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; Wikipedia; You Are Not So Smart; ZhurnalyWiki

The Ultimate Cheatsheet for
Critical Thinking

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!

Who

... benefits from this?
... is this harmful to?
... makes decisions about this?
... is most directly affected?

... have you also heard discuss this?
... would be the best person to consult?
... will be the key people in this?
... deserves recognition for this?

What

... are the strengths/weaknesses?
... is another perspective?
... is another alternative?
... would be a counter-argument?

... is the best/worst case scenario?
... is most/least important?
... can we do to make a positive change?
... is getting in the way of our action?

Where

... would we see this in the real world?
... are there similar concepts/situations?
... is there the most need for this?
... in the world would this be a problem?

... can we get more information?
... do we go for help with this?
... will this idea take us?
... are the areas for improvement?

When

... is this acceptable/unacceptable?
... would this benefit our society?
... would this cause a problem?
... is the best time to take action?

... will we know we've succeeded?
... has this played a part in our history?
... can we expect this to change?
... should we ask for help with this?

Why

... is this a problem/challenge?
... is it relevant to me/others?
... is this the best/worst scenario?
... are people influenced by this?

... should people know about this?
... has it been this way for so long?
... have we allowed this to happen?
... is there a need for this today?

How

... is this similar to _____?
... does this disrupt things?
... do we know the truth about this?
... will we approach this safely?

... does this benefit us/others?
... does this harm us/others?
... do we see this in the future?
... can we change this for our good?

A Brief (and incomplete) History of Advertising Approaches

The Rational/Associative Approach

John B Watson (1878-1958)
American psychologist
Fired from his academic post at Johns Hopkins
Moved to US Ad Agency J. Walter Thompson

Walter Dill Scott (1869-1955)
American psychologist
Left Northwestern University to "apply" his trade
Later elected president of the APA in 1919

"Tell him something that will tie him up with fear, something that will stir up a mild rage, that will call out an affectionate or love response, or strike at a deep psychological or habit need."

- Gain the viewer's attention
- Focus the consumer on the message to create positive feelings about the product
- Make the consumer understand and remember the message
- Cause the consumer to desire the product and to take the desired action

The Irrational/Emotional Approach

Edward L. Bernays (1891-1995)
Austrian-American pioneer in the field of propaganda (WWI)
Inventor of the term "Public Relations"
Nephew of Sigmund Freud - heavily influenced by psychoanalysis

"There are invisible rulers who control the destinies of millions. It is not generally realized to what extent the words and actions of our most influential public men are dictated by shrewd persons operating behind the scenes."

"Now "public opinion" stood out as a force that must be managed, and not through clever guesswork but by experts trained to do that all-important job."

(Propaganda, 1928)

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The Individualistic/Identity Approach

Post WWII Advertising Movement (1940s/50s)
- Themes of social progress & conformity
- Mass-production manufacturing techniques
- One's identity comes from fitting in and by having and buying the same things as everyone else

Individualistic Advertising Movement (1960s →)
- What one owns and presents to the world is an expression of one's identity and one's inner self
- Individuality and customization of products becomes mainstream and expected
- Required a radical transformation of manufacturing practices and technologies to meet consumer demand

The Algorithmic Approach

Filter Bubble (Eli Pariser, 2010)
- Intellectual isolation from personalized searches - users become separated from information that disagrees with their viewpoints
- Same products/services/sites recommended repeatedly
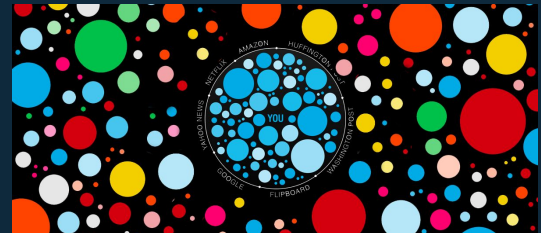
Spiral Model (Social Media & Streaming Services)
- Ongoing testing of new content to retain and increase time spent on a platform
- New products and content are tested, and through the data gleaned from you preferring or rejecting the content, additional products and content are pitched to you in an ever-expanding and ever-more precise model of your preferences

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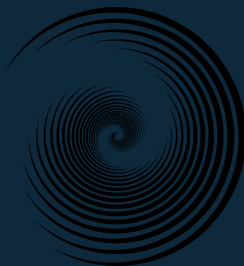
Advertising Analysis

Name: _____   Date: _____

Target audience is

_____

_____

Product identity is

_____

_____

Advertisement (What is the product or service?)	What do you see? (Describe the shot types, colours, product placement, striking images, etc.)	What do you hear? (Describe any music, sound effects, dialogue, or other sounds you hear.)	What does it mean? (Try to identify the values they're selling, the product "identity," their target audience, and what they really mean.)	What do you think? (Share what you think and feel. Do you agree with the message and values shared in this advertisement? Why or why not?)

Advertisement *(What is the product or service?)*	What do you see? *(Describe the shot types, colours, product placement, striking images, etc.)*	What do you hear? *(Describe any music, sound effects, dialogue, or other sounds you hear.)*	What does it mean? *(Try to identify the values they're selling, the product "identity," their target audience, and what they really mean.)*	What do you think? *(Share what you think and feel. Do you agree with the message and values shared in this advertisement? Why or why not?)*

Advertising Analysis

Complex/Challenging Advertisements for Analysis (a few examples)

- Gillette: We Believe: The Best Men Can Be *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuE yP3a0)*
- Always: #LikeAGirl *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjW YDTs)*
- Proctor and Gamble: The Talk *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPl3hZq FaLM)*
- Peloton bike: The Gift That Gives Back *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijof8uw4 OHs)*
- Nike: What will they say about you? *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-UO9v MS7AI)*
- Rainforest Alliance: Follow the Frog *(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iIkOi3s rLo)*
- There are a near-infinite number of options – just sear"Controversial ad" and year in YouTube/Google

CURRENT EVENTS ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

NAME & #: _____   DATE: _____

NEWS EVENT: _____

After choosing one current events news story (no more than a week old), pick **two news agencies (e.g. APTN, The Guardian, CBC, Al Jazeera, BBC, The Tyee, etc.)** that have written an article on this story. Answer the following questions about your story:

ARTICLE 1:

What **news agency** is the source of this story?   _____

What is the **date** of the article: _____

Who is the article's **author**?   _____

ARTICLE 2:

What **news agency** is the source of this story?   _____
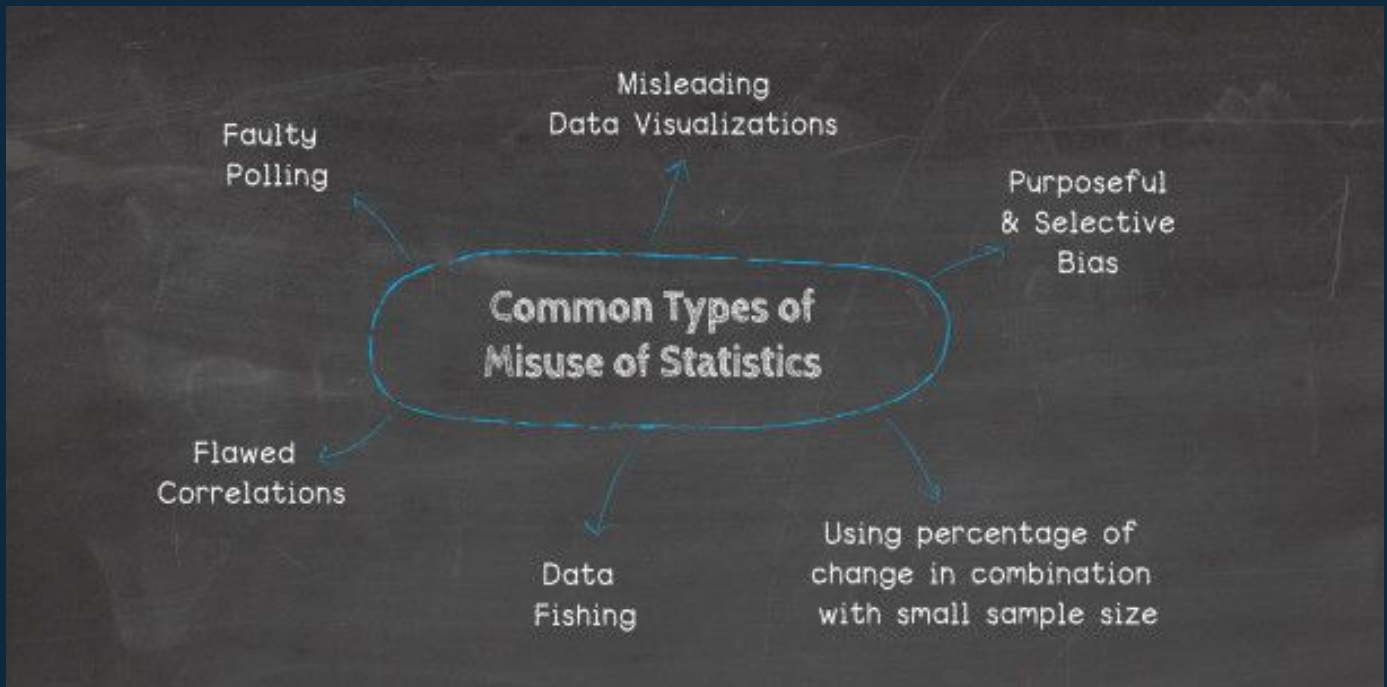
What is the **date** of the article: _____

Who is the article's **author**?   _____

- Summarize your news story in a clear paragraph.
- Whose voices do we hear (consider who are the stakeholders)?
- Whose voices do we not hear (again, consider the stakeholders)?
- Does there appear to be bias in one or both articles? Why or why not? (You must provide specific quotes to support your point)
- Consider what you feel and think about this story. If you were in charge and were able to take action, how would you try to resolve or improve the situation? Defend your choice with clear explanations.

Science & Math

"There are three types of lies – lies, damn lies, and statistics." – Benjamin Disraeli

Source: https://www.datapine.com/blog/misleading-statistics-and-data/

DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT