Lesson 4 - Unbiased Research Writing

Standards: National Council for the Social Studies
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6**:** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8: Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Objectives:
SWBAT (students will be able to) understand what bias is and how it can affect citizens.
SWBAT write an unbiased blog post on a modern political issue.
SWBAT research information to present an issue in an unbiased way.
SWBAT read unbiased blog posts from votesmart.org, to try to find bias, and see what unbiased writing looks like.

Subject Matter:
Unbiased research, media bias, blog writing, credible sources

Materials:
- Access to internet
- Laptops/handheld devices/tablets
- Attached worksheet
- Graphic organizer
- Projector

Procedure: (2-3 Days)
Set:
1. Ask students to give examples of biased information.
2. Explain to students that there are many different types of bias that can be found in the news and historical writing (among others).

3. Pull up [this](#) website to show students. This site explains the different types of bias that students will see and be looking for. Go over each type of bias.
4. Click on the "Archives" tab and select "**Wednesday's Example of Media Bias Archive"**. Then select one of the news articles that gives an example of the media being biased and see if students can identify how the media is being biased, and what type of bias it is.

Lesson Essential Question: How can bias from news outlets affect the general population's opinions?

Looking for Bias Activity:
1. Direct students to [votesmart.org](#) on laptops/tablets/handhelds.
2. Instruct students to the bottom of the page under the title "Publications" and to click on the "[Blog](#)" link.
3. Ask students to scroll through a few pages of recent blog posts and to choose one that interests them to read.
4. Remind students that while they are reading these blog posts, they should be asking themselves questions such as "Does this lean left or right? Did the author leave out important information regarding the issue?"
5. Direct students to the worksheet that accompanies this activity. Explain the directions to students.
6. Have students begin reading the blog post. The teacher should monitor progress and answer questions while this activity is being conducted.
7. Once students finish, have them share the blog posts they read and ask if they found bias in an informal manner.
8. Collect the worksheet and grade based on teacher's discretion (participation, accuracy, etc.).
9. Encourage students to give feedback about whether they found bias or not. Do this by clicking the bubble with a question mark, which is located at the bottom right of every page on [votesmart.org](#).

Writing Unbiased Blog Posts:
1. Explain to students that they will be writing their own unbiased and nonpartisan blog post. Instruct students to use credible sources, and explain what makes a source credible.
2. Explain the [C.R.A.P.](#) test to students.
3. Give examples of credible sources, as well as sources that are not credible. See if students can decipher whether or not a source is credible.
4. Pass out the task sheet and ask students to pick an issue that is interesting to them and they would like to write about. This could be a local, state, federal, or even international issue. Explain that they will have to write it in a unbiased and nonpartisan style.
5. Give students time to select an issue, then hand out the graphic organizer to help students gather research information in a single document or ask them to create a Google Document to store their information.

6. It is up to the teacher whether they want to have students use class time to work on this, if they should do this at home, or a mix of both.
7. Set a due date for a rough draft and have students peer edit to look for bias. Then assign a final draft due date.

Close:
1. Restate the LEQ by asking students how bias can affect people's opinions on issues.
2. Take some responses from students until satisfied.
3. Explain that students should always ask questions about credibility, and whether or not a source they are receiving information from is biased.

Assessment:
Formally assess student blog posts using the rubric, formally assess the finding bias worksheet.

Assignment:
Complete blog posts.

Self Reflection:

Finding Bias

Name:_____

Date: _____

Directions: Select a blog post on a topic that interests you from votesmart.org and read it. While reading, you should be paying attention to format. You should also be asking yourself if the information is biased, if the sources are biased, and if there is any important information that the author has left out about this issue.

Blog Post Title: _____

What issue is the author writing about? _____

Please summarize what the blog post you read was about in three or more sentences.

Do you think the author missed any information?

Did you find any bias in the blog? If so, what did you find and how could you make it unbiased?

What have you learned from reading this blog post? Did you find it interesting? Why or why not?

What kind of sources did the author use? Are the sources unbiased and credible?

Writing Unbiased Blogs

Name:_____

Date: _____

Directions: You will be writing an unbiased and nonpartisan blog post of a local, state, national, or international issue. It is very important that your writing is *NEUTRAL* on the issue that you research and that you provide only facts about your issue.

Format:

      The format of your paper should be in the form of a blog. No indents in paragraphs. Your blog should be around 2-3 pages long, or however long it takes to explain your issue in an unbiased manner. At least 2 pages. (10 Points)

Sources:

      You must use credible sources! Government websites and credible news outlets are your best options. It is important to note that no news outlet is perfect, so even if you do use one of these examples, be aware! If you are unsure about a source, please ask your teacher. Please use hyperlinks to cite your sources. If you are unsure how to hyperlink, please ask your teacher. You must have at least 4 different sources. You can use books, websites, magazines, newspapers, etc. (10 Points)

Content:

      The content of your blog must be neutral, unbiased and nonpartisan. It should consist of facts and a neutral interpretation of those facts. You should use statistics in your blog post. Please cite at least two statistics. For statistics, you can look at recent legislation and whether or not it passed, by how many votes, etc. You could also look into Supreme Court cases from the past that have set precedent on the issue. (20 Points)

In total:

- 2-3 pages minimum
- Must be neutral, unbiased, nonpartisan
- Format of a blog (no indented paragraphs, hyperlinked sources) see blogs on votesmart.org for examples
- Credible sources (must have 4 different sources)
- At least 2 statistics

Total: _____ / 40

Graphic Organizer

Name:_____

Date: _____

Key questions, ideas, and topic	Notes and sources

Summary: