

**(Language Arts)****Title:** Your Angle on the Story**Grade Ranges:**

K-4  
 5-8  
 9-12

**Subject Tag:**

Journalism  
Family and Consumer Sciences

**Synopsis:**

Working in groups, students will cover one current events story from different perspectives. This project will work as a game — groups of students will work on the same story but each student within that group will be given a secret identity. The secret identity will determine how each student tells the story. Students will present their work at the end of the lesson, and others will try to guess what angle the story has been told from.

**Keywords:**

perspective, bias, current events, news, coverage, angle, magazines, media, media literacy, purpose, presentation, representation, point of view, communication

**Body:**

As a lead up to the main exercise, pick a story that is currently prevalent in the news. Find five different articles about this story. (You could also have your students do this part if you have time and access to these sources.) Links are suggested below for some alternative and mainstream sources of news, or you could use magazines and newspapers such as *Time*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Extra!*, and a local paper. Make sure that the credits are included with the articles. If there are advertisements on the page, leave these on as well. Also look for press coverage from other countries if appropriate.

Put students in groups of approximately five. Give them time to review the different articles. As a class, discuss each article and ask:

- ◆ What is the message?
- ◆ Who is presenting the message?
- ◆ What is the purpose of this message? (Keep in mind that the advertisements may give you a clue to the purpose and presentation of this material.)
- ◆ What values are represented in this article?
- ◆ What seems to be left out of this article?
- ◆ How does it compare to the other articles about the same topic?

If students haven't figured it out already, tell them that all information is presented by someone with a point of view and a purpose. Their intentions need not be malicious — people filter information through what they know, what they believe, and what they need.

For the next part of the lesson, students will cover news issues themselves, in small groups. Within the small groups, different people will be given specific identities to take on in covering the story. For instance, if a new housing development is being constructed in a town that was formerly a small town of farmers who have been there for generations, different people will have very different opinions about this phenomenon. A realtor trying to sell or rent space in this new housing complex will present the story one way, whereas a farmer losing family land to the development will have a different perspective. Even different farmers will see the situation differently; some might feel like they are losing their land, while others are happy to sell for large profits or other reasons. Allow for questions and remind students that they will need to keep their identities a secret from the other students as there will be time to guess at the end of the lesson.

Break students into groups of four to six. You can let them pick their own topic or assign them a topic. It will be easiest and most relevant if the topic is something extremely local, such as the food in the lunchroom. Each group should have a different topic. The topics will determine what identities you assign. The identities must be those of people who will have a vested interest in the issue. Have students write newspaper articles from these perspectives, without saying how they are involved with the issue. If possible, allow students a chance to conduct interviews on their subjects. Their articles should follow standard newspaper format.

When everyone has completed their articles, have them present them to the entire group. Have all students read their articles out loud until the whole group has read. Once an entire group has read, ask the other students to guess the identity of each person in that group. Have students explain how they see the identity revealed in the article.

### **Related Links:**

#### **The Nation: Your Favorite Media Sources**

<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20020107&s=letter> *The Nation* asked readers to write in with information about their favorite alternative media sources. This is an indispensable list; it is a long and detailed list of many different types of media sources, including comments by readers and links to sources on the web.

#### **New York Times**

<http://www.nytimes.com/>

Probably the most prestigious newspaper in the United States

#### **Salon.com**

<http://www.salon.com>

This is a relatively fashionable web-based news source. It originated during the Web boom (1995) and carries advertisements selling cars, credit cards, and computers among others. According to Salon.com, the site has won most major web awards.

## U.S. News and World Report

<http://www.usnews.com>

This weekly news magazine covers national and international stories.

### Features:

- Contains special education tips
- Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- Requires Internet access for students to complete

### Objective:

Students will examine different current events stories from different perspectives to help them discover that all media and messages come from specific perspectives and are presented to serve certain purposes.

### Standards:

**NY: 3** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation. **4** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

**NYC: A3a.** Gather information to assist in completing project work. **A3b.** Use on-line sources to exchange information for specific purposes. **E1c.** The student reads and comprehends informational materials to develop understanding and expertise and produces written or oral work that relates new information to prior knowledge and experience and extends ideas. **E2b.** The student produces a response to literature that advances a judgment that is interpretive, analytic, evaluative, or reflective; and supports a judgment through references to the text, references to other works, authors, or non-print media, or references to personal knowledge. **E3b.** The student participates in group meetings. **E5b.** The student produces work in at least one literary genre that follows the conventions of the genre.

**CT: 1 . Reading and Responding.** Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts. **2 . Producing Texts.** Students will produce written, oral and visual texts to ex-press, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences. **4 . Exploring and Responding To Texts.** Students will use the language arts to explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.

**NJ: 3.1** All Students Will Speak For A Variety Of Real Purposes And Audiences. **3.3** All Students Will Write In Clear, Concise, Organized Language That Varies In Content And Form For Different Audiences And Purposes. **3.4** All Students Will Read Various Materials And Texts With Comprehension And Critical Analysis.

### Prerequisite Skills:

1. Ability to work in a group
2. Knowledge of the key elements of journalistic writing
3. Some experience interviewing others

**Time Required:**

three hours

**Technology and Materials Needed:**

1. Five articles from different sources, with different points of view on one topic. make sure to include mainstream and alternative sources since most mainstream news comes from the same group of sources.
2. Notebooks
3. Pens
4. Time and space to gather information
5. Internet access is helpful

**Procedures:****Assessment Criteria:**

1. Do students see a difference in the articles that you present?
2. Are students able to present materials from the perspectives of the roles that they have been given? Are the presentations of the same information sufficiently different?

**Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:****Review Comments:**

Review links, especially the *Nation* link as this is most likely to change.