

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Unit Overview

Pre- and Post-Visit News Literacy Activities

We believe that your visit to the Newseum, along with this unit of study on media literacy, will help you and your students better understand the role of the free press, our role as news consumers and how to identify reliable sources of information. The ultimate goal is to build students' media savvy, encouraging them to become critical consumers of information.

How can I distinguish facts from rumors?

What news can I trust?

Is Wikipedia a reliable source?

By actively participating in this unit, including pre-visit activities, a Newseum experience and post-visit activities, students will come to understand why not all information is trustworthy. Students also learn a set of tools – the information consumer's questions – they can employ to deconstruct and evaluate any information source.

Our guiding question in this unit – **How can I judge the reliability of information?** – engenders a number of additional questions to keep in mind as you embark on your Newseum visit:

- What is the role of the free press in our society?
- What is our role as news consumers?
- Why is being “media savvy” important?
- How can we identify reliable sources of information?

We appreciate your willingness to share with your students the benefits of experiencing the elements of the First Amendment and journalism that the Newseum brings to life.

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

National Standards of Learning

National Center for History in the Schools, National Standards for U.S. History (5-12):

Content	Standard
The student understands contemporary American culture. 7-12 Explain the influence of media on contemporary American culture. [Explain historical continuity and change]	U.S. History, Era 10, Standard 2D
The student understands cultural trends of the second half of the 20th century. 5-12 Assess the influence of television, the Internet, and other forms of electronic communication on the creation and diffusion of cultural and political information worldwide. [Formulate historical questions]; 7-12 Analyze connections among electronic communications, international marketing, and the emergence of popular “global culture” in the late 20th century. [Obtain historical data from a variety of sources]	World History, Era 9, Standard 2F

Center for Civic Education, National Standards for Civics and Government (5-8 & 9-12):

Content	Standard
Political communication. television, radio, the press, and political persuasion. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.	II.E.3.
Political rights. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding political rights.	V.B.2.
Scope and limits of rights. Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the proper scope and limits of rights.	V.B.5.

National Council of Teachers of English: Standards for the English Language Arts:

Content	Standard
Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).	3
Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.	6

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

National Council for the Social Studies, Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, Middle & High School:

Content	Standard
b. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference	(I) Culture
g. apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good	(V) Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
a. examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare	(VI) Power, Authority, & Governance
b. identify and interpret sources and examples of rights and responsibilities of citizens	(X) Civic Ideals & Practices

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Pre-Visit Activities

Dear Educator,

We are looking forward to welcoming you and your students to the Newseum for the “Believe It or Not” Learning Center class. The two activities in this packet will introduce your students to central questions we will explore together in more depth during your visit: What is freedom of the press? How do the news media balance their rights and their responsibilities? What happens when the news media make mistakes?

In this packet, you will find the following activities:

Freedom of the Press and You

Your students become reporters-in-training and conduct interviews to find out how people get news and how they share information with the world. This activity will also teach them about the First Amendment and the idea of a free press.

When the News Media Make Mistakes

Freedom of press doesn’t promise perfection. Learn what happens when the news media make mistakes by exploring corrections across a variety of news sources.

We hope these activities help you and your students get excited about your upcoming field trip. We look forward to seeing you soon!

— Newseum Education Staff

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Freedom of the Press and You

Rationale/Main Concept: This activity will help students think about how freedom of the press shapes our daily lives. We all are media consumers – using TV, radio, the Internet, and more. And we all share information with the people around us through e-mails, letters and websites, so freedom of the press — as protected by the First Amendment — is important to all of us. Students will practice their reporting skills by interviewing people about their media and publishing habits.

Time: 30-minute worksheet (to be completed as homework), plus 20 minutes of class discussion

Materials:

- Copies of “Freedom of the Press and You” interview worksheet (1 per student, included in this packet)
- Copies of the First Amendment (1 per student, included in this packet)

Procedure:

- Ask your students: If you send an e-mail to family members telling them about what you did last weekend, is that publishing information? Or if you put up a post on MySpace or Facebook, is that publishing information? What if you share a comment on a Web site that asks you to rate movies? Explain to students that in today’s world, there are many ways to spread information, and when we use any of these tools, we are publishers.
- Because we are publishers, we should all know about freedom of the press. Freedom of the press is one of five First Amendment freedoms guaranteed to all Americans and everyone in this country. Read/show students the text of the First Amendment.
- Ask students what they think freedom of the press means. What does press mean? Who does it include? [Make sure students name a wide array of media: cable news, public access TV, talk radio, weekly news magazines, online newspapers, etc.] What does it mean that the press is free? Discuss your students’ ideas. Sum up the discussion by telling them that freedom of the press means the government can’t stop us from publishing information, even if powerful government officials don’t like that information, or even if it is upsetting or unpopular.
- Tell the students they are going to do some reporting and get more information about how people in their community consume and publish information and how they use freedom of the press.
- Hand out the “Freedom of the Press and You” interview worksheets.

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

- After students have completed their interviews, discuss what they found as a class. Possible guiding questions: Where are people getting information about their families? Where do they get information about their town? Where do they get information about events in other countries? Did they find people using a large variety of sources or just a few? Where do people share information about their families or their own lives? What types of publishing seem to be most popular among the people your students interviewed? Are people of different ages using different ways of sharing information or getting their news?
- Ask students what they think our country might be like if we did not have freedom of the press. Would it be easier or harder to get information about the people and the world around us? How might the answers of the people they interviewed change if we were not free to publish information? [Possible ideas: There might not be as many places to get information, or there might be fewer articles in newspapers or fewer stories on TV news. You might not be able to write whatever you want on your MySpace or Facebook page. You might not be able to find information about some topics, such as wars or people protesting against the government.]

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Freedom of the Press and You

We all consume and publish information every day — we watch TV and read news online. We share information on our Facebook or MySpace pages, in e-mails and in letters. Your task is to interview someone about where they publish information and the sources of published information they use. You'll discuss your answers as a class to learn more about how freedom of press affects people in your community.

Name of person you are interviewing: _____

Age of person you are interviewing: _____

Other important details about this person (their job, hobbies, where they live, etc.):

Ask the person you are interviewing these questions:

Where do you get information about what's happening in your city or town? Why do you use this source(s)?

Where do you get information about what's happening with people in your family? Why do you use this source(s)?

Where do you get information about what's happening in foreign countries? Why do you use this source(s)?

NEWSEUM

BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Where do you get information about what's happening in Congress or other political topics?
Why do you use this source(s)?

How do you share information about what's happening in your life with your friends and family?
Why do you use this type(s) of communication?

Do you use different information sources at different times of the day? Where do you get news in the morning? During the work/school day? During the evening?

In the United States, we have a free press, which means we are free to share any information, even if it is unpleasant or unpopular. The government cannot control which information we are and are not allowed to share. How do you think your life would be different if we did not have a free press?

What else do you want to ask your subject about? Do you want to know more about the media they use when they're at work? Or while they're commuting? Do you want to know more about any of the answers he or she gave you? Use your own paper to write additional interview questions.

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

When the News Media Make Mistakes

Rationale/Main Concept: In this activity, students will have the chance to explore what happens when the news media make mistakes by looking at the practice of corrections. Through guided discussion and a worksheet-based activity, students consider why news mistakes happen and what could be done to prevent them, then work as a class to develop their own policies for what different forms of media should do if they discover they've made an error.

Time: 30-minute worksheet (can be completed in class or as homework), plus 30-40 minutes for class discussion

Materials:

- “When the News Media Make Mistakes” worksheet (1 per student, included in this packet)
- A newspaper, magazine or online news site with a corrections section
- A large collection of news media (newspapers, magazines) and/or Internet access (if completing the worksheet in class)
- Copies of the “Regret the Error” Accuracy Checklist (1 per student, available as a PDF at: <http://businessjournalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Accuracy-Checklist-for-Journalists-03.08.12.pdf>)

Procedure:

- Ask your students, do you think the people who report the news ever make mistakes? Do they ever get the facts about a story wrong? Yes. Why might this happen. [Discuss students' ideas. Possible answers: deadline pressure, human error, miscommunication, etc.]
- Ask your students if they know what members of the news media – reporters or editors who work for newspapers, magazines, TV shows, radio shows, etc. – do when they realize they've made a mistake. [Discuss ideas.] Explain that many media organizations issue something called a correction. [Show an example of a correction in a newspaper, magazine or website. Read the correction aloud.] A correction explains the mistake that was made and gives the correct information.
- Ask your students if they are familiar with the First Amendment. [If they have completed the first activity in this packet, they should have some knowledge.] The First Amendment is part of the Bill of Rights, which is part of the Constitution. It includes five freedoms. Ask your students if they can name all five. *Religion, speech, press, assembly and petition.*
- Tell students that they'll be focusing on freedom of press for today's activity. Ask, what do you think freedom of the press means? What does press mean? Who does it include? [Make sure students name a wide array of media: cable news, public access TV, talk radio, weekly news magazines, online newspapers, etc.] What does it mean that the press is free? Discuss your students' ideas. Sum up the discussion by telling them that freedom of the press means

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

the government can't stop us from publishing information, even if powerful government officials don't like that information, or even if it is upsetting or unpopular.

- Freedom of the press does not say you can only print something if it's 100 percent true or only if it's 100 percent correct. Freedom of press protects the media's right to publish any information, even false or incorrect information. Could a reporter go to jail for printing a story that wasn't true? *No*. With a few exceptions, you can't get in trouble for making mistakes in what you publish. But most members of the try hard to get their facts and stories right. They want to publish good information. And that's why, if they find they've made a mistake, they often issue a correction.
- You're all going to get a chance to examine some corrections more closely, think about what happened to make these corrections necessary and discuss what could have been done to avoid them. [Distribute copies of the "When the News Media Make Mistakes" worksheet. Have students work in groups to complete the worksheet in class using the collection of media you've assembled or assign it as homework. Note: Corrections generally appear on page 2 of a newspaper's front section and near the table of contents or letters to the editor page in magazines.]
- After students have completed their worksheets, ask them to share some examples of corrections they found.
- Pass out copies of the Accuracy Checklist from the website "Regret the Error," available at: <http://businessjournalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Accuracy-Checklist-for-Journalists-03.08.12.pdf> (PDF). Have students share more examples of corrections they found and try to figure out which of the "Final Checks Before Submission" from the Accuracy Checklist could have prevented each error.
- Ask students what they think of the Accuracy Checklist as a tool for reporters. Is it helpful? Do these seem like reliable ways to avoid making mistakes? Would doing these things stop all errors? Why or why not? [Prompt: Do the facts ever change at the last minute, or after a story is published?] Which of these checks do you think is the most important? Why? What else should reporters do to make sure their stories are correct?
- Discuss how the corrections they found were presented. Where in the publications or on the websites were they published? Were they easy to locate? Was the print big or small?
- If you were an editor, how would you publish corrections? As a class, create a corrections policy for one of the following types of news media: TV show, radio show, newspaper, magazine, online news site. Things to consider:
 - What will your corrections look like?
 - Where/when will they be published?
 - Will you treat all mistakes equally?
 - Who do you want to see the corrections?

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

- Will you give the name of the reporter who made the mistake?
 - Will you reprint the original story with the corrected information?
 - Will you notify people directly affected by the error (i.e. someone who was misquoted or misidentified)? Etc.
-
- [You might want to start by making a list of issues you would need to consider, then crafting a policy that addresses as many of them as possible. Example of a policy for a TV news show: Air major corrections (multiple errors in a story and/or errors that change the meaning/ interpretation of a story) at the start of the show for maximum exposure. Show minor corrections (1 or 2 errors in a story that don't significantly alter the story's meaning) at the end of the show. Show video clips from the original stories when discussing corrections so viewers can recall the story you're referencing. Always contact individuals who may have been affected by the mistakes personally before airing the correction.]

Name: _____ Date: _____

When the News Media Make Mistakes

Find three news media corrections. You can look for corrections in your local newspaper, on online news sites, or on the blog "Regret the Error" (www.regrettheerror.com). For each correction, answer the questions below.

Correction 1

Who made the mistake? (Name of the newspaper, magazine, etc. and/or the name of the reporter or editor)

What did they get wrong?

How could they have avoided this mistake?

Correction 2

Who made the mistake? (Name of the newspaper, magazine, etc. and/or the name of the reporter or editor)

What did they get wrong?

How could they have avoided this mistake?

Correction 3

Who made the mistake? (Name of the newspaper, magazine, etc. and/or the name of the reporter or editor)

What did they get wrong?

How could they have avoided this mistake?

Post-Visit Activities

Dear Educator,

We hope you enjoyed your recent visit to the Newseum. Your students should now be ready to look at the media they use – be it TV, print, or the Internet – with a more critical eye and the tools to evaluate what they see, read and hear.

In this packet, you will find the following activities:

Putting the Consumer's Questions to Work

In this exercise, students revisit the concepts and tools they learned in “Believe It or Not?” and practice applying the “consumer’s questions” to a variety of media.

Time to Talk Back

Students go from media consumers to media creators. Freedom of press means there’s a diverse array of ideas and opinions to be found in the media. In this activity, students learn how their own freedom of press can empower them when they encounter media that leaves them unsatisfied.

These activities will extend your Newseum experience after you’ve returned to your classroom. Your students will apply and expand on concepts presented in the pre-visit activities and “Believe It or Not?” class.

We hope you enjoyed your visit and that you find these activities a helpful way to build on your experiences here.

— Newseum Education Staff

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Putting the Consumer's Questions to Work

Rationale/Main Concept: In this activity, students will practice applying the “consumer’s questions,” the media literacy tools they learned in their “Believe It or Not?” Newseum class. Working individually or as groups, students will go beyond their Learning Center experience by applying the questions to a range of media. The lesson culminates with a discussion of how they can apply the concept of the consumer’s questions in a time-efficient and practical manner as they come into contact with diverse media on a daily basis.

Time: 30-minute worksheet (can be done in class or as homework), plus 20 minutes for class discussion

Materials:

- Copies of the “Putting the Consumer’s Questions to Work” worksheet (1 per student, included in this packet)
- Internet access (if completing the worksheet in class)

Procedure:

- Review what your class learned in their “Believe It or Not?” session at the Newseum. What is the media? What/who is a media consumer? What are the six “consumer’s questions”?
 - Who made this?
 - How was this made?
 - Why was this made?
 - When was this made?
 - What is this missing?
 - Where do I go from here?
- Go over what each of the consumer’s questions means.
 - Who made this?
 - Who are the authors? (Professional journalists? Citizen journalists? Average Joes? Qualified experts? Consider both those named and those unnamed.)
 - How was this made?
 - What tools/techniques were used?
 - How does it try to get my attention?
 - Why was this made?
 - What is the reason for its existence? (To inform? To get attention? To make money? To change my mind? To reinforce my beliefs?)
 - When was this made?
 - Is it current? Outdated?
 - Has enough time passed to verify the facts?
 - What is this missing?
 - Is this the whole story?

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

- What perspectives aren't represented?
- What questions aren't answered?
- Where do I go from here?
 - Where can I find verification of these facts?
 - Where can I find other perspectives on this topic?
- Ask your students, why are the "consumer's questions" useful? Why do we care about the answers to these questions? [They help us analyze media so that we can help decide which sources are trustworthy and which are not.]
- As a class, choose a topic that you are all going to investigate further, using the consumer's questions to evaluate the information you find. It could be something you are studying in school or a random topic that interests them (possible ideas: a historical topic, a current news story, a celebrity, an animal, a scientific or technological question, etc.). Brainstorm a list of ideas, then vote on one.
- Hand out copies of the "Putting the Consumer's Questions to Work" worksheet. Tell your students they will each need to find two sources of information (websites, articles, books, etc.) that relate to this topic and analyze them using the consumer's questions.
- Have your students to fill out the worksheet in class (they can work individually or in small groups) or as homework.
- When students have completed their worksheets, have a class discussion about what they found. Invite students to describe the information sources they chose, whether they think they are reliable sources, and why or why not.
- Additional discussion questions:
 - Does a pattern emerge of the types of information sources that generally seem trustworthy and those that generally do not?
 - What types of visual or written clues help you determine if a source of information is trustworthy or not?
 - Which of the consumer's questions is the most important to apply/answer? Why?
 - Which of the consumer's questions is the most difficult to apply/answer? Why?
- In life, it's not practical to stop and fill out a worksheet with answers to these questions every time we come into contact with information. How should we analyze information sources on a daily basis?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Putting the Consumer's Questions to Work

Topic your class is investigating:

Find two sources of information relating to this topic. These could be websites, articles (online or in print), books, video clips, etc.

Information Source 1

Name/title of source of information: _____

Briefly describe this source (example: This is a video clip about penguins.):

Where did you find this information?:

Apply the consumer's questions to your source of information.

Who made this source? _____

How was this source made? _____

Why was this source made? _____

When was this source made? _____

What is this source missing? _____

Where do I go from here? _____

NEWSEUM

BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Name: _____ Date: _____

After answering the consumer's questions about source 1, do you think it is trustworthy? Why or why not?

Information Source 2

Name/title of source of information: _____

Briefly describe this source (example: This is a video clip about penguins.):

Where did you find this information?:

Apply the consumer's questions to your source of information.

Who made this source? _____

How was this source made? _____

Why was this source made? _____

When was this source made? _____

What is this source missing? _____

Where do I go from here? _____

After answering the consumer's questions about source 2, do you think it is trustworthy? Why or why not?

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

Time to Talk Back

Rationale/Main Concept: In this activity, students go from consumers to creators. After finding an example of a news story or opinion article they disagree with or that raises questions in their mind, they create their own media – blog posts, articles, videos, podcasts, etc. – to explain their own point of view and fill in the holes. Students experience the importance of freedom of the press by exercising their own ability to engage with published content and share ideas they believe are important.

Time: 45-minute activity (or longer, depending on the scope of projects chosen; can be done in class or as homework), plus 45 minutes of class sharing and discussion

Materials:

- Copies of “Time to Talk Back” worksheet (1 per student, included in this packet)
- A variety of media tools for students to create their own projects – computers, cameras, video recorders (needs will vary according to the projects students pursue)

Procedure:

- Ask your students if they agree with everything they see on TV, read about in newspapers/magazines or hear on the radio. For example, have you ever heard a commercial make big promises that you doubt are true? [Discuss responses.] Have you ever seen a news story that painted someone you like/admire in a negative light, or someone you dislike in a positive light? [Discuss responses.] Do you ever have unanswered questions after reading a news article or seeing a story on TV? [Discuss responses.]
- Remind your students that at the Newseum, they learned about the First Amendment and freedom of the press. Ask your students to define what freedom of press means. *Freedom of the press means the government can't stop us from publishing information, even if powerful government officials don't like that information, or even if it is upsetting or unpopular.*
- Freedom of the press means everyone here in America is free to publish their ideas. That means that sooner or later, you are bound to encounter ideas you disagree with or that make you wonder what other ideas and answers are out there. But the good news is that freedom of press not only protects others' freedom to publish their ideas, but your freedom to publish your ideas, too!
- This activity is going to be all about talking back. You're going to seek out a news story or opinion article – any type of media is fine, TV, radio, newspaper, online, etc. – with which you disagree or that leaves you with unanswered questions. And then you're going to create your own project that talks back.

NEWSEUM BELIEVE IT OR NOT?

- Make a brainstorm list on the board of possible media students could use to talk back. [Examples: blog entry, vlog, column/article, cartoon, etc.]
- Allow students to work on their project in class, or assign the project as homework.
- When students have completed their projects, have a classroom forum to share their creations. If possible, show videos or play audio for the whole class and/or make copies of written pieces so that other students can read them. If you have a class blog, you could publish their efforts there. [If you don't, you could create a blog to publish your students' pieces using a free host like Blogger.]

Name: _____ Date: _____

Time to Talk Back

Find a news story or opinion article that you disagree with or that leaves you with unanswered questions. Maybe it's a story that leaves you wondering what happened before or after the events depicted. Maybe it's an opinion piece (by a columnist or editorial board) where you disagree with the opinions expressed and conclusions reached. It could be a political cartoon, a local news segment, a radio report – anything that makes you stop and say, "Hm. I don't think so," or "I need to know more."

You are going to create your own project to share your opinion. You could make a video, write a news article, write a blog post, etc.

Use this sheet to start planning your project.

Title of your news story or opinion article: _____

Where did you find this story/article? _____

What is this story/article about? _____

Why do you want to talk back to this story/article? List the ideas with which you disagree or the questions left unanswered.

What ideas would you like to share in response to this story/article? What do you want people who see/read/hear your project to learn?

What medium will you use to share your message? _____