Evaluating Media Sources

Introduction: Around the world, people rely on the media to keep them informed about the most important issues that affect them, their families, and their neighbors. There are many types of media sources, including articles, editorials, social media posts, and videos. The information provided by the media helps people form opinions and ask tough questions of their governments. In a democracy, where the interests of the public are supposed to define how the government acts, this information is vital to ensuring that a country functions well.

In this activity, you will examine sources addressing the decision to begin an impeachment inquiry into President Trump. Throughout the lesson, consider how each author might answer the following two key questions:

- Is the decision to begin an impeachment investigation into President Trump appropriate?
- Does President Trump's conduct meet the Constitutional standard for impeachment?

Part I: Reading Your Sources

Instructions: Read your assigned sources. While you are reading, underline two opinions and circle two statements that the source presents as facts. Then fill in the chart below. Note that you may not be able to identify two facts and two opinions in some of the shorter sources.

	Author & Date	In favor of or against impeachment inquiry?	Main Argument	Facts Used (choose two)
Source from Set A **Source #:**				
Source from Set B **Source #:**				

Part II: Evaluating Sources

Instructions: Media sources have very different views about the decision to begin an impeachment investigation into President Trump. Use the "Steps for Evaluating Sources" below for deciding which source(s) are reliable and fact-based. Be prepared to explain your decision to your classmates. If you cannot answer the questions in a particular step for your sources, leave that space blank.

Steps for Evaluating Sources:

1. Cross-check the facts. Which statements were presented as facts in the sources? Check these facts. What is the origin of the fact? Can you find and confirm the fact outside of this source? What other sources support or verify the fact? Do you think the source you used to verify the fact is reliable? For example, seek out other sources that are dealing with the same questions or issues. Is evidence repeated, confirmed, or repudiated in sources about similar issues?

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

2. Examine the background of the author. For example, does the author have professional expertise or scholarly knowledge? Is the author a politician? What other experiences has the author had that might give them insight into an issue? Does the author's livelihood or professional status depend on convincing someone of their point of view?

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

3. Identify bias. What is the point of view of the source? For example, is the source one-sided? Sources that only advocate for one particular point of view can be useful to understand that specific perspective. But when bias distorts or falsifies information, the source should be checked carefully. (Be sure to have verified the facts you identified in your source.)

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

4. Figure out the purpose of the source. Why was it created? What do you suspect the author hopes readers will take away from the source? For example, editorials or op-eds are designed to make a case for or against a certain policy.

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

5. Identify the intended audience. Who do you think the author's intended audience is? For example, is the source published in a news outlet that claims to be objective? Or does it come from a news outlet that claims to write from a certain perspective, such as a conservative or liberal point of view?

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

6. Identify gaps. Does the source leave out information that would help you understand the issue more fully? Can you find the missing evidence somewhere else?

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B:

7. Investigate further. Seek out different types of sources that are looking at this issue. For example, can you find video sources, images, statistics, first-person accounts of events, blogs, or newspaper articles that are not editorials or opinion pieces?

Source from Set A:

Source from Set B: