

Name: _____

Evaluating Media Sources

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Instructions: Media sources often have very different views about events. Use the “Steps for Evaluating Sources” below for deciding which source(s) are reliable and fact-based.

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 issue. Is evidence repeated, confirmed, repudiated in sources about similar issues?
- 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 him or her insight into an issue? Does the author’s livelihood or professional status depend on convincing someone of his or her point of view?
- 3. Examine the publication.** What do you know about the newspaper, media outlet, etc. that published the source? Does the government influence the media or limit the freedom of the press in the country in which it was published?
- 4. 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.)
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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?
- 7. Identify gaps.** Does the source leave out information that would help you understand more fully? Can you find the missing evidence somewhere else?
- 8. 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?