

Media Literacy Guide

A guide on how to read and interpret news stories

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson time: 20 minutes



Overview

In today's media-driven world—through television, online platforms, or social media—the ability to access, analyze, and critically evaluate information is essential for a healthy democracy. Informed citizens are better equipped to participate in decision-making, hold power accountable, and contribute to public discourse, ensuring a more transparent, just, and connected society. Media literacy empowers students to create, reflect, and take action, using the power of information and communication to make a meaningful impact.

How do I practice media literacy?

- **When you read any information, the first thing to ask yourself and look into is, where is the article from and is the content trustworthy?**
 - In order to do this, look at who the author/writer is and see if you recognize the news medium. Is it important to distinguish if it is on a platform or a news source, and if it is on a platform, to find out the source of the information.
 - Platform: a distributor of news (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
 - News Source: Originator of news
- **Next, determine what type of story you are reading.**
 - Figuring out the type of story will help you distinguish if it is direct information, opinion, or something else. This gives you more information on how to digest the information.

Types of Stories

- **Breaking News / Briefs:**
 - This is news of the moment – and really important to check sources on.
- **News Story:**
 - These are reports on anything from city council meetings to stories on education issues to environmental policy.
- **Profile:**
 - These stories are deep dives into understanding a key member of the community.
- **Community, Entertainment and Events Information:**
 - This news source serves as a connector in the community, sharing details about arts, entertainment calendars, and community and non-profit events.
- **Investigative Reporting:**
 - These are stories that help expose community problems, with extensive reporting and use of data mining techniques, which sometimes involves uncovering information that powerful forces want hidden.

Types of Stories cont'd.

- **Opinion / Op-Ed / Community Voices:**
 - Articles that express personal views, often written by outside contributors like community members or experts. These are distinct from news reporting.
- **Editorials:**
 - Opinion pieces written by a publication's editorial board, representing the newspaper's official stance on an issue.
- **Columns:**
 - A type of story where the writer covers news, but with a strong personal voice and perspective.
- **Question & Answer (Q&A):**
 - Stories featuring on-the-record interviews with public figures or interesting individuals, presented in a question-and-answer format with a brief introduction.
- **Series:**
 - These are a group of stories under the same theme, event, or topic.
- **Promoted Content / Advertising:**
 - Stories created by the advertising team and paid for commercially. They should be clearly marked to distinguish them from news content.

Additional terms to help interpret news and information:

Beats:

These are areas assigned to a reporter for regular coverage, area of reporting or news coverage, including: Environment, Health, Sports, Education, Housing & Development, Arts & Culture, Food & Dining, and Politics & Government.

Source:

A person, record, document, or event that provides the information for a story.

News Outlet:

Publications that uphold editorial standards for accuracy, objectivity, and professionalism. They provide in-depth, fact-checked reporting, which can be published in print or online.

- Examples: Lookout Eugene-Springfield, The Daily Emerald, The Oregonian, The Register-Guard, New York Times, and the Washington Post.