

Headlines Shape Views

Analyze how biased reporting can influence public opinion.

CE.9.b “describing the effect biased reporting can have on public opinion;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that frame the bus plan positively or negatively. Number two sentences that explain how this kind of reporting can affect public opinion.

Two Reports, Different Impressions

- ① Before Riverton voters considered a plan to add Saturday bus service, they encountered different reports about it. The Riverton Voice headline read, “Costly Bus Plan Threatens Taxpayers.” Its article began with the plan’s highest estimated cost and quoted two residents angry about taxes. It did not mention that the estimate included buying new buses, although the town could also lease them. By choosing a fearful headline, selected facts, and only one side of comments, the report presented the proposal as a financial danger.
- ② Another outlet, the Riverton Daily, used the headline, “Buses Finally Coming to Every Neighborhood.” It highlighted riders who wanted weekend transportation and described the plan as certain to succeed. However, it did not explain that the proposal still needed a council vote or that some routes might have fewer riders. This report used positive language and left out possible problems. Both reports contained some true information, but each gave readers an incomplete picture. Biased reporting can make one choice seem obviously wise or obviously harmful.
- ③ At a community meeting, several people repeated phrases from the two reports. A taxpayer said the plan would “threaten” everyone, while a student said buses were “finally coming” for all neighborhoods. Some listeners began to support or oppose the proposal before reading the council summary, which listed costs, lease options, expected riders, and possible limits. When reporting emphasizes certain facts, uses loaded words, or leaves out relevant details, it can shape feelings first. Those feelings may influence which policy people support and how they discuss it with others.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What are two choices the Riverton Voice made that could make the bus plan seem like a financial danger?

2 How did the Riverton Daily make the plan seem more positive than it might be?

3 Why can both reports contain true information but still give readers an incomplete picture?

4 According to the passage, how did the reports affect some people at the community meeting?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a school or community proposal. Write a neutral three-sentence news brief about it that includes at least two relevant facts or viewpoints and avoids loaded words or claims that the outcome is certain. Then add one sentence explaining how this balanced reporting could affect public opinion.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that frame the bus plan positively or negatively. Number two sentences that explain how this kind of reporting can affect public opinion. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two choices the Riverton Voice made that could make the bus plan seem like a financial danger?	It used the fearful headline “Costly Bus Plan Threatens Taxpayers” and focused on the highest cost estimate and angry taxpayers. It also left out the lease option.
2	How did the Riverton Daily make the plan seem more positive than it might be?	It used positive language, highlighted riders who wanted service, and described success as certain. It left out the needed council vote and possible low ridership on some routes.
3	Why can both reports contain true information but still give readers an incomplete picture?	Each report selected facts and viewpoints that supported one impression while leaving out relevant information and other concerns.
4	According to the passage, how did the reports affect some people at the community meeting?	People repeated the reports’ loaded phrases and began to support or oppose the plan before reading the fuller council summary. Their feelings could influence the policy they support and how they discuss it.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The school board is considering starting classes 20 minutes later next year. Supporters say students may get more sleep, while some families are concerned about changes to bus schedules and after-school activities. The board will review costs and public comments before voting. Because the brief includes more than one view and avoids loaded language, readers can form opinions using a fuller picture.

Accept equivalent evidence of biased framing, selective facts, omitted details, and effects on opinions or discussion. For Part 3, accept any plausible proposal if the brief is neutral, includes at least two relevant perspectives or facts, and explains how balanced reporting supports a more informed opinion.