

Understanding Bias in the News

THE NEWS IS NEVER NEUTRAL

It's *always* a constructed story. News is shaped by decisions about what to report, whose voices to include, and how to frame events. These decisions reflect the **values**, **power** structures, and **politics** of the people and organizations producing the stories

01 Whose Perspective is Being Told?

Every news story highlights certain perspectives while sidelining others. Coverage of labor strikes, for example, might focus on corporate executives' warnings about "economic disruptions," while worker-focused coverage emphasizes demands for fair wages and safe conditions. **The perspective chosen determines how the audience interprets the issue**, shaping public opinion in ways that align with the storyteller's priorities.



Question...

Whose voices are being prioritized in the news, and what effect does that have?

02 What's Left Out?

News often omits **critical context**, focusing on surface-level events rather than **underlying causes**. For instance, coverage of protests frequently emphasizes property damage or clashes with police, while neglecting to explore the systemic inequalities—such as racial injustice or climate inaction—that drive people to protest in the first place. **Without this context, audiences are left with a distorted understanding of events**



Question...

What background or context is missing, and how does that affect the narrative?

03

The Cultural Lens of the Outlet

Every news organization operates within a cultural and ideological framework that shapes its reporting. Immigration, for example, might be framed as a "crisis" overwhelming borders; or as "families seeking refuge" from violence; or as a "source of economic growth and cultural progress," depending on the outlet's political orientation. **The framing shapes how audiences perceive the issue**, directing sympathy or suspicion.



Question...

How does the language used by a news outlet influence your perception of events?

04

Who Decides What's Newsworthy?

Editors and producers decide what gets reported and what doesn't. These decisions often prioritize **sensational stories** or **topics that align with the outlet's interests**. For example, natural disasters in wealthier nations tend to receive more coverage than equally devastating events in poorer regions, shaping global attention and resources. The stories that are left out shape what audiences see as important—and what they don't.



Question...

What stories are being ignored, and why might that be?

05

Follow the Money

News **organizations depend on funding**, whether from advertisers, donors, or owners. This financial dependence often influences what stories are told and how they are framed. Environmental reporting, for example, might be softened to avoid upsetting fossil fuel industry advertisers. **The pressure to appeal to funding sources can subtly (or overtly) bias the coverage.**



Question...

How might the funding source of a news outlet affect the stories it tells?

THE TAKEAWAY

The news is not a mirror of reality—it's a lens shaped by decisions about what to include, what to exclude, and how to frame events. By questioning whose voices are amplified, what context is missing, and who benefits from the narrative, we can develop a more critical understanding of the stories trying to shape our present and future