

THE  
CRITICAL  
CURRENT

Presented by Deborah Park and April Salas  
SAUSD SPARK CONFERENCE - June 12th, 2018

[bit.ly/SparkCC](http://bit.ly/SparkCC)

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2005



Luca Bruno / AP

2013



Michael Sohn / AP



# What is the Critical Current?

The Critical Current was created to be an enrichment program designed to foster critical thinking skills through current events. However, over the course of three years, many of the strategies used in this program evolved into tools that have been implemented in classrooms across content areas, promoting critical thinking and news literacy among AVID, EL, and GATE students with great success!



# 5 strategies...

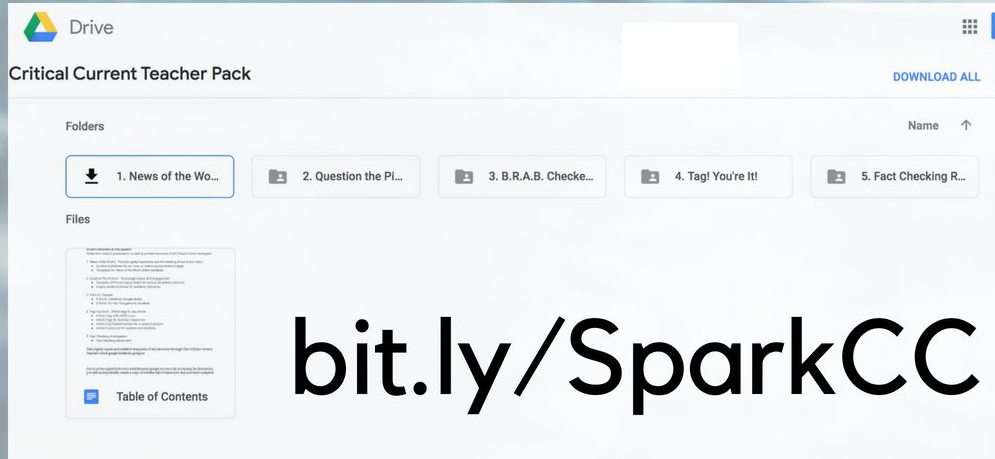
- 1 News of the World - Current Event Image Connection**
- 2 Question the Picture - Image analysis and inquiry**
- 3 B.R.A.B. - Credibility Checker + Tic-Tac-Toe**
- 4 Tag! You're it! - Article Tags**
- 5 Fact Checking Report Card**

[bit.ly/SparkCC](http://bit.ly/SparkCC)



# Access the folder with all the templates!

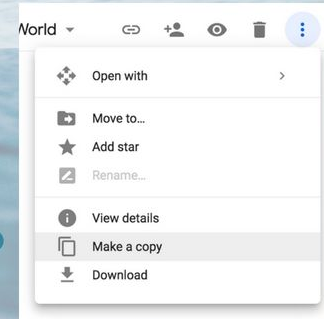
Be sure to make a COPY of the entire folder and SAVE IT TO YOUR DRIVE, so that you have access to all the templates and can directly write on them, delete words, and change it to fit the needs of your content and your students. You can only EDIT a copied file, so please COPY them into your drive!



[bit.ly/SparkCC](https://bit.ly/SparkCC)



ADD TO DRIVE



**Make a  
copy.**



# 1 News of the World

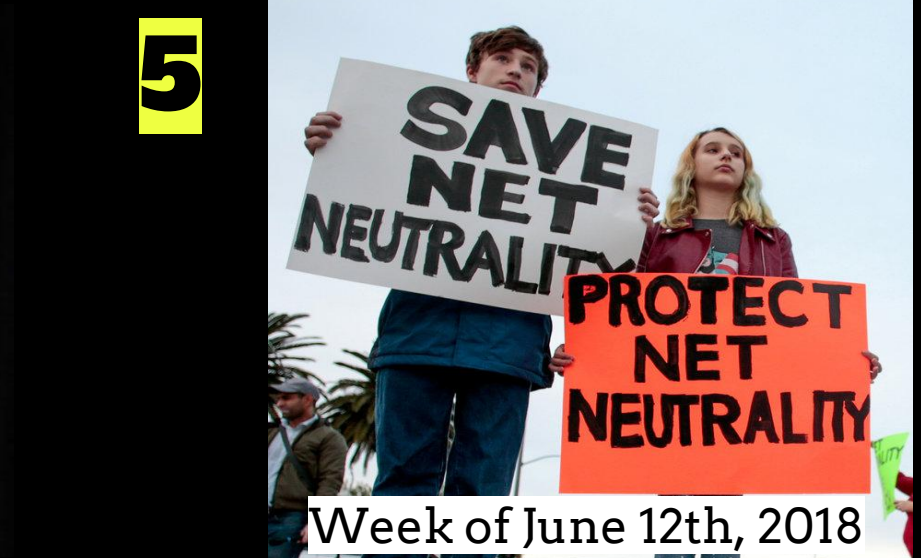
**Purpose:** To expose students to current events and encourage them to read the newspaper for fun.

**Impact:** Kids will be better at composing argumentative essays that require evidence from the real world. They will also find topics discussed in content courses to be more interesting or engaging because they have real-life connections.

**Keep in mind:** Include multiple perspectives, and be careful of being politically biased (be objective). Make sure pictures stick to the facts. Subscribe to the Morning Briefing from the New York Times to save tons of time. Scaffold by providing students with time in the beginning, and watch them grow throughout the year!

**Extend:** Fact checking exercise, you can create thematic layouts, or even have students create them for stories, novels, units, topics, research projects, etc...









1



2



3



4



5



6



7

April 24th, 2018





May 1st, 2018



May 3rd, 2018





1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



Week of December 19th - 23rd, 2016

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



November 7th, 2016



8



12

9



10



11



Standing Rock Indian Reservation  
Landmark - Cannon Ball, ND  
4 others have been here



These templates are editable and included in the Teacher Pack (google folder).

[Click here to access the folder](#)  
with News of the World  
graphic organizers and slide  
templates!

**News of the World** WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEK IN OUR COUNTRY AROUND THE WORLD?  
BE INFORMED ABOUT THE WORLD YOU LIVE IN!  
BEING AWARE MAKES YOU EMPOWERED.

Directions: View the slide of current events images on the screen. Then, identify each news story by writing down the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, and WHERE for each news story.

<b>1 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>2 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>3 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:
<b>4 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>5 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>6 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:
<b>7 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>8 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>9 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:
<b>10 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>11 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>12 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:

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<b>4 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>5 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>6 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:

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<b>5 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>6 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:	<b>9 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:
<b>8 / Who:</b> What: When: Where:		

# *Directions for creating your News of the Week slide.*

1. Find pictures and drag/drop them into the slides. Tip: Subscribe to the New York Times Morning Briefing - This will save you tons of time! After resizing the image, be sure to click on "ARRANGE" and select "ORDER" ⇒ "SEND TO BACK" in order for the numbers to be layered over the images.
2. For the first few weeks, give kids time to research the stories before you have them label the news stories. This can be done by providing kids with 10-15 minutes to scan news sources and identify what current events the images refer to.
3. Give clues when pictures are vague. This is easy to do with country flags or symbols.

Embed timers onto the slides to create an exciting and competitive atmosphere! Simply copy and paste any of the timers below onto your slide! They are videos that are timers when you click "play."



Providing prizes like tickets, stickers, stamps, HW passes, candy, etc... really motivates kids to start reading the news on a daily or weekly basis. You will see a dramatic increase in what your kids know and how often they read non-fiction texts independently!



**1**

**2**

**3**

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**6**

Week of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018



**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

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Week of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018

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**11**

**12**

Week of ,2018



## 2 Question the Picture!

**Purpose:** To provide students with the language of inquiry and encourage students to ask higher level questions based on events that are of interest to them.

**Impact:** Students will be encouraged to use the academic language as they dive into higher level thinking skills. The images also expose them to current events and get them interested in the world around them.

**Keep in mind:** Depending on how familiar students are with the image, the teacher may choose to or not choose to provide some context for image, document, or video. The teacher can do this by putting the flag of the country or giving some sort of image clue, without giving out the entire story. This can serve as a great hook for a new unit. Using the Bloom's Taxonomy Inquiry Sentence Frames, the teacher may limit the students to a specific category of questions (ie. comprehension, synthesis, analysis etc.)

**Extend:** Have students use the GATE icons to apply to the given images. Students may also choose to investigate the images, artifacts, and other documents on their own to find out the actual story behind the images.

## Bloom's Taxonomy Inquiry Sentence Frames

*Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation*

### Knowledge

What is...?  
Can you select?  
Where is...?  
When did \_\_\_\_ happen?  
Who were the main....?  
Why did....?  
How would you describe...?  
When did....?  
Can you recall...?  
Can you list the three...?  
How would you explain...?  
How did \_\_\_\_ happen...?  
How would you show...?

### Comprehension

How would you compare...?  
How would you contrast...?  
Will you state or interpret in your own words...?  
Which facts showed...?  
State \_\_\_\_ in your own words.  
What is the main idea of...?  
How would you summarize...?  
How would you rephrase?  
What might happen if...?

### Application

How would you use...?  
How would you solve \_\_\_\_ using what you learned?  
What would result if...?  
Who do you think...?  
What if you changed...?  
How would you show...?  
How does this relate to...?  
This reminds me of....

### Analysis

How is \_\_\_\_ related to \_\_\_\_?  
Why do you think....?  
What conclusions can you draw...?  
What can you infer...?  
Why did \_\_\_\_ changes occur?  
What is the theme of....?  
How is this similar to...?  
What was the problem with...?

### Synthesis

How many ways can you...?  
Would it be better if...?  
How would you have dealt with...?  
What way would you design...?  
How would you improve...?  
Suppose you could...What you do?  
Can you create a new...?  
How can you imagine...?

### Evaluate

Do you agree with...?  
How would you feel it...?  
What choice would have made...?  
What you recommend...?  
What is your opinion of...?  
Is there another solution?  
Which is more important...?  
What are the pros/cons of...?

**Click the worksheet  
to make a copy of it!**



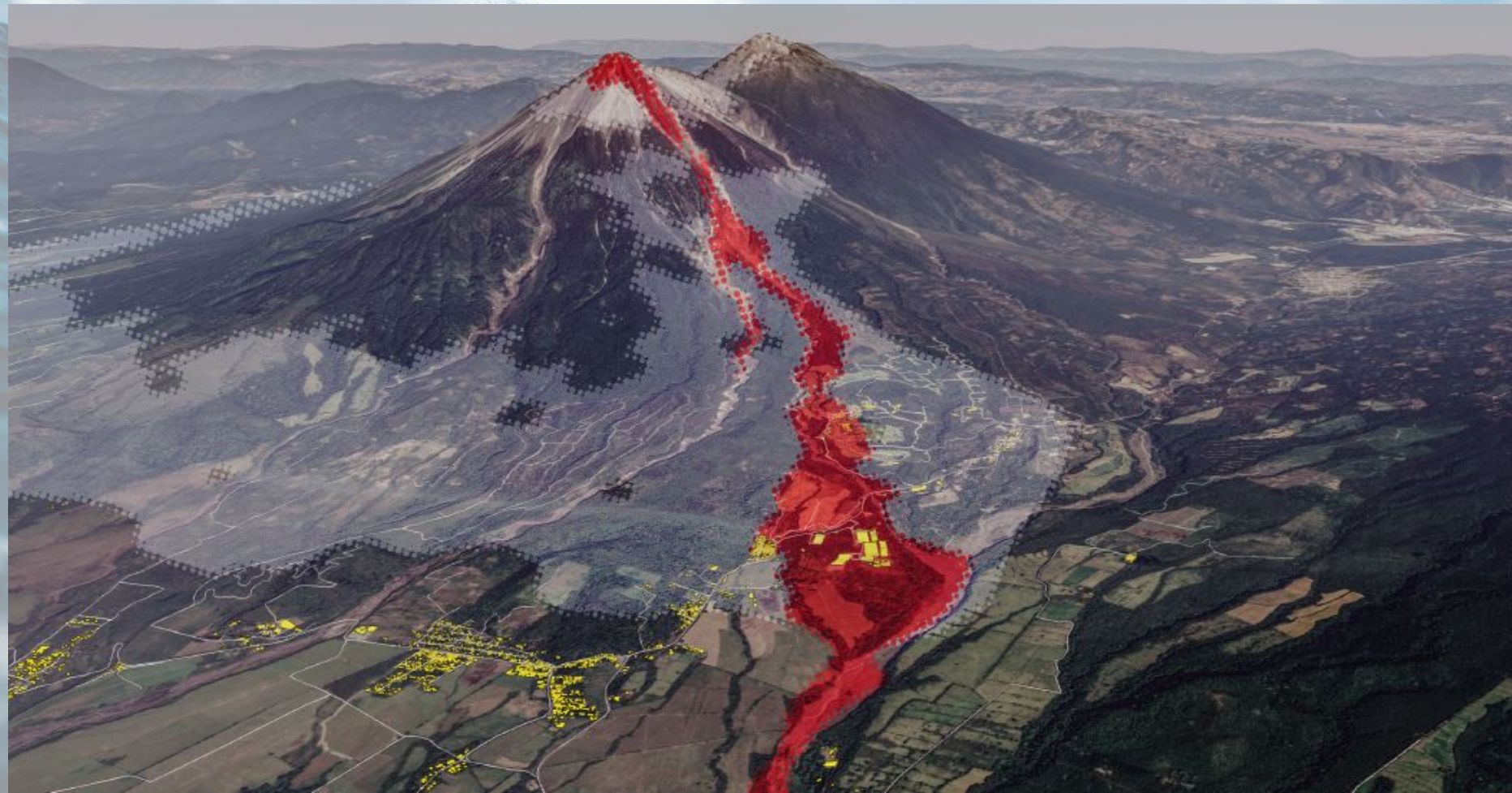














## The Rate



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Bloomberg**QuickTake





# 3 B.R.A.B. Credibility Checker

**Purpose:** Students will evaluate the credibility of sources and apply these skills when they research and read informational texts.

**Impact:** Students will be more mindful and literate in determining the difference between biased/fake information and objective/accurate sources. Students will also be more actively filtering when they read, which improves critical thinking skills. Students no longer become consumers of information, but sifters and evaluators of information.

**Keep in mind:** Students need to have access to databases and sites where they can find good articles. Provide kids a resource list (included in our pack), and provide students with scaffolds, such as a lesson on the differences between different types of online sources (blogs, editorials, news articles, or research studies).

**Extend:** Use the B.R.A.B. checker to help filter out poor sources for student-generated projects, or research assignments.


# B.R.A.B.

**Background, Relevancy, Accuracy, and Bias**

The Middle Schooler's Guide to Conducting Credible Research

## Our Dilemma...

In today's society with the abundance of information available at our fingertips, it's easy to accept all information as truth. However, we must be aware that not all sources, especially online, are equal in quality and therefore, credibility.



"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture next to it."

—Abraham Lincoln

## Imagine for a Moment...

Imagine for a moment that you are famous football player who makes millions of dollars a year. During a game, you injure your knee and will now require surgery. You're nervous because your career is very important to you and your livelihood (\$\$) is on the line if the surgery goes wrong. When it comes to choosing a doctor to perform the surgery, what kind of doctor would you choose?

## Before You Choose Your Surgeon, Consider...

- Surgeon's University training
- Specialization or area of expertise
- Type of doctor (surgeon, general practice, etc.)
- What other doctors say about him/her
- What other patients say about him/her
- Successful surgeries that he/she has completed
- Research this surgeon has done in their field in their area of expertise

Why do these matter? These matter because they determine the quality and care you will receive. You need only the best quality of doctor for the best of health. Quality determines credibility, and credibility counts.

## Quality is also important when it comes to academic research!

Quality matters when selecting which documents to use in your research. To determine quality and credibility, you can use the following acronym:

# B.R.A.B.

Background Relevancy Accuracy Bias

## Relevancy

Relevancy is how appropriate the information you find online is to the topic of your research and/or how recent or up-to-date the information is. Consider the following:

- The article/information was published (first written) in the past few to ten years. The exception is if it's a classic work with primary sources in history or looking at how information has changed over time.
- The article has been updated in the past 1-2 years.
- The website type should be related to what you're specifically studying.

David is doing a media on news in society. He finds an MySpace has been on students are using it.

Would you consider this?

## Let's Play Tic-Tac-Toe

Greatest information for the author can be found on this website.	The web page is ad free.	The web document contains lots or more points of view or perspectives on the topic.
THEY ARE MISSING SOME DETAILS ON THIS WEB DOCUMENT	THE ARTICLE AND/OR AUTHOR LISTS OTHER WEBSITES WHERE FROM WHERE THEY GOT THEIR INFORMATION (THROUGHOUT THE ARTICLE OR LISTS AT BOTTOM OF WEBSITE)	THE WEBSITE URL OF THIS WEBSITE ENDS IN EITHER .edu .gov .org .edu

## Accuracy

Accuracy is the quality of being correct and is especially important to obtain facts. To find out if the information is accurate, you can use the following:

- The information is published by a credible source (journal, newspaper, etc.)
- The information is published by a credible source (journal, newspaper, etc.)
- The information is published by a credible source (journal, newspaper, etc.)

## Let's Practice...

After researching the following questions, use the B.R.A.B. Tic-Tac-Toe game to determine if the information is accurate or not.

1. Research the following: "The world's largest city is New York City." Is this true or false? If false, what is the correct answer?

2. Research the following: "The world's largest city is New York City." Is this true or false? If false, what is the correct answer?

## Bias

Bias is prejudice in favor or against a thing, person, group, or idea. Bias is considered to be unfair. There is always some bias in information, however, you should be able to check off many of the following items to ensure that there is as little bias as possible in the articles you are using.

- The article is not published by a political party, religious group, or corporation trying to sell something.
- There are no ads on this webpage.
- The website URL ends in .edu, .gov, .org which shows that it is not for profit.
- The article/information has MORE facts than opinions (highlight with different colors facts and opinions).
- The article does NOT use emotion to appeal to readers.

## Let's Practice...

Tony is looking up information on whether or not schools should require kids to take art. He finds an article published online by a group of art teachers that are in favor of the idea and list many reasons why they believe art education should be required in schools. They have little research to support their claims, but their ideas sound good. **Is there a chance that there might be bias in this article? Explain your thinking.**

# B.R.A.B.

Background Relevancy Accuracy Bias

## B.R.A.B Tic-Tac-Toe

Directions: In groups of 3-4 students, identify a website that will assist you in answering the following question:

**Should students be required to study the arts in school (i.e. art history, painting, music etc.)?**

After ten minutes, pick one website on the topic that you will use for this game. Take out a colored-marker or your teacher may give you beans. When your teacher says go, you will try to identify each element on your tic-tac-toe board using your chosen website. Cross off each square once you find that element OR place a bean on top of that square. Once you fill up an entire line (vertical, horizontal, diagonal), your teacher will verify your findings.

Note: At any point, you may find another website on the same topic if needed, BUT you have to clear off your board each time and start over.

<p><b>Contact information for the author can be found on the website.</b></p>	<p>The article was published by a researcher who has a background, including a specialized degree, in the subject of the article</p>	<p>The web document contains two or more points of view or perspectives on the topic.</p>
<p>There are MORE FACTS THAN OPINIONS ON THIS WEB DOCUMENT.</p>	<p>The web page is ad free.</p>	<p>The article was published in the past five years.</p>
<p>The website url of this website ends in either .edu .gov .org .edu</p>	<p>THE ARTICLE AND/OR AUTHOR LISTS OTHER WEBSITES WHERE FROM WHERE THEY GOT THEIR INFORMATION (THROUGHOUT THE ARTICLE OR LISTS AT BOTTOM OF WEBSITE)</p>	<p>The web document has been updated in the past year or two.</p>

Click here to access the B.R.A.B. google slides

Click here to access the B.R.A.B. Tic-Tac-Toe Game



# 4 Tag! You're it!

**Purpose:** Students will interact with informational texts beyond the annotation process. They will break the text apart, analyze its purpose and credibility, and engage in a reading-writing process that ensures their comprehension of the text.

**Impact:** Students will thoroughly understand articles and use these skills as they read other informational texts and fictional works. They will grow into active readers.

**Keep in mind:** This does not take the place of annotations. It is an additional “tag” that should be digitally OR physically attached to the original article.

**Extend:** Use this to assess students’ reading comprehension of the articles, and incorporate it into PBL assignments that require student-generated scholarly research.







# Fact Checking Report Card

**Purpose:** Students will practice responsible digital citizenship by fact-checking claims through corroboration and multiple-perspectives.

**Impact:** Students will be critical readers of the news and be engaged viewers of media. They will become news literate citizens who question, investigate, and research multiple viewpoints that challenge their beliefs.

**Keep in mind:** Students need good resources and clear instructions, including access to multiple fact-checking sites, as well as an understanding that many sites are biased. Students **MUST** know the difference between a **FACT** and a claim. This assignment is for articles on controversial topics that can be disputed. Keep in mind that this is an advanced activity that requires scaffolding and a solid understanding of multiple perspectives, political bias, and the evaluation of claims.

**Extend:** This report card can be tied to a specific unit or lesson where there are two conflicting viewpoints on a controversial issue (argumentative piece, philosophical chairs, Socratic seminars).

## [Click here to access the Fact Checking Report Card](#)

# Fact Checking Report Card

- Source List A:**
- Fox News
  - The Wall Street Journal
  - The Economist
  - The National Review
  - The Federalist

Source lists come from the Pew Research Institute and Journalism.org

**Source List B:**

- CNN
- NPR
- MSNBC
- The New York Times
- PBS
- BBC
- Huffington Post

**Source List C:**

- Yahoo News
- Google News
- ABC News
- NBC News
- CBS News
- Newsela
- Associated Press

**Directions:** Your teacher will give you a news headline or topic to research. Review the headline, read the article with the class, and of the author's claims for that story. Then, judge or evaluate how accurate the claims are by reading the same news story in any List A, Source List B, and Source List C. Finally, evaluate how true or false the claim is and give it a grade. Be sure to include an your judgement of the article. You can also use a fact checking site (such as PolitiFact, Snopes, or FactCheck.org) to evaluate an be sure that the fact-checking site includes neutral language and provides unbiased sources to support their claims. Sometimes may include biases as well.

Remember, that a **fact** is something that cannot be changed and cannot be argued against while a **claim** is what a person may something whether it is true or false.

**Example:**

1. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April of 1865 by John Wilkes Booth. (This is a FACT.)
2. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April of 1865 to keep African-American slaves from gaining U.S. citizenship

**Article Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Author's Claim #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fact Checking - Source List A**  
Source name: \_\_\_\_\_  
False      Partly True      True

**Fact Checking - Source List B**  
Source name: \_\_\_\_\_  
False      Partly True      True

**Fact C**  
Source name: \_\_\_\_\_  
False

<b>Author's Claim #2:</b> _____ _____ _____								
<b>Fact Checking - Source List A</b> Source name: _____			<b>Fact Checking - Source List B</b> Source name: _____			<b>Fact Checking - Source List C</b> Source name: _____		
False	Partly True	True	False	Partly True	True	False	Partly True	True

<b>Author's Claim #3:</b> _____ _____ _____								
<b>Fact Checking - Source List A</b> Source name: _____			<b>Fact Checking - Source List B</b> Source name: _____			<b>Fact Checking - Source List C</b> Source name: _____		
False	Partly True	True	False	Partly True	True	False	Partly True	True

Based on the three sources from Lists A through C, what grade would you give this article? Be sure to include your evaluation of the truthfulness of each of the three claims to grade this article.

An "O" means it is outstanding and the article is truthful with verifiable claims. An "S" means it is satisfactory, and has some truths, but some unsupported claims. An "N" means that it needs improvement, as it has several unsupported or unverified claims. Finally, a "U" means unsatisfactory, which means that the article is full of false claims and cannot be read to inform people of facts.

Please check only ONE of the following scores:

☐ Outstanding

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Needs Improvement

☐ Unsatisfactory

Explain your reasoning. Justify your response to the previous question.

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# Critical Current Workshop Time

Use the templates in the folder to incorporate one strategy to fit with your content or unit next year. You can edit, adjust, or rewrite the strategies to match your teaching style or lesson!