MY WORLD LESSON #10

How Do Journalists Earn Trust?
Overview

Students investigate why trust and transparency are important to journalism and news outlets. Students watch the BBC *My World* video, “How Do Journalists Earn Trust?” and explore the different techniques journalists can use to be transparent and build trust in their audience. Students look at examples of mistakes and wrong information that news organizations have reported and read about various ways news outlets can correct errors. They explore transparency and accountability in news by determining what kind of adjustment to make for different kinds of errors. Students discuss the role of trust and transparency in how news outlets deal with mistakes.

**Target audience:** English and Language Arts, Social Studies, Media Studies. Ages 11–14.

**Class time:** 45-60 minutes

**Student handouts:** “Setting the Record Straight” Example sheet, “To Err Is Human” Informational article, Guided Practice, Check Your Media Literacy Assessment.

**Materials:** Computer or tablet with internet connection.

Class structure and pacing

1. 5 minutes Class warm-up discussion
2. 10 minutes *My World* video: “How Do Journalists Earn Trust?”
3. 10 minutes Informational article “To Err Is Human”
4. 5 minutes Whole-class discussion of focus questions
5. 10 minutes Guided Practice
6. 10 minutes Media Literacy Assessment

Procedure

1. Open with a discussion about which news sources students use, including friends, family, or a school newsletter, as well as social media and traditional news sources. Invite them to discuss which sources they trust and why.

2. Then conduct a peer reading of the examples of adjustments on “Setting the Record Straight.”

   - **Open by discussing the nature of the errors in each example:**
     - Which mistake do you think was the most serious? Why do you think so?
     - How did each news organization handle their errors?
     - Are there any similarities between the way they handled their mistakes?

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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- **Investigate** the nature and range of mistakes and wrong information in the news.
- **Examine** the types of retractions and apologies that news organizations issue.
- **Evaluate** the seriousness of various mistakes and misinformation in journalism.

**LESSON VOCABULARY**

- **acknowledge** v. to admit the truth or existence of (something)
- **addendum** n. additional material
- **clarification** n. a statement that makes an account more understandable
- **plagiarism** n. the act of claiming someone else’s work as your own
- **retraction** n. the withdrawal of a report or part of a report
- **transparent** adj. public, easily seen
- **unpublish** v. to remove from the internet
Lesson 10: How Do Journalists Earn Trust?

■ Explain that by the end of this Lesson, they will be able to:
  ◦ Understand the importance of transparency in how media outlets respond to errors in the media.
  ◦ Evaluate the seriousness of a range of errors, from small mistakes to significantly wrong information.
  ◦ Recognize the ways that news outlets respond to different types of errors.

3. Present the My World video segment, “How Do Journalists Earn Trust?” to introduce students to the concept of how journalists increasingly explain to news consumers how they researched a story, and the different techniques for doing that.

■ Divide the class into small groups. Have groups do the following:
  ◦ Briefly discuss the most memorable content in the video.
  ◦ Evaluate the techniques a journalist can use to show their research.
  ◦ Discuss how useful you thought the different options were.
  ◦ Ask students to share their observations and create a class list ranking the different techniques.

4. Point out to students that news organizations earn trust by addressing errors they make. Analyze the different methods of addressing news errors by having students read the informational article, “To Err Is Human.” Instructional options are:

■ Read as a class. Stop after each section to note and compare the concepts students learned about in the video and example sheet, such as:
  ◦ Types of mistakes
  ◦ Examples of adjustments

■ Read the entire article in pairs and discuss the question, “How do journalists make and correct errors?”

5. Guide students’ analysis of the information in the video and article through whole-class or small-group discussion of focus questions. Ask students:
  ◦ What does trust mean to you? What does transparency mean?
  ◦ How does transparency help build trust?
  ◦ How do news organizations demonstrate transparency?

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TIPS FROM
Microsoft Education

Create engaging learning experiences tied to this Lesson with the following free Microsoft Education tools:

Utilize Flipgrid with this Lesson
Guide students’ analysis of how media trust is earned as shared in the video and article by posting focus questions in Flipgrid for students to share individually or in small groups. Continue the conversation on Flipgrid!

Facilitate collaborative learning
Copy the guided practice into OneNote Class Notebook where students can apply their learning while collaborating in teams to identify the news story error and the type of adjustment needed. Free education collaboration tools are at your fingertips with Office 365.
6. Provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned through Guided Practice in identifying ways to adjust news stories with errors.
   ■ Return to the “Setting the Record Straight” list. Guide students to identify the type of adjustment (correction, clarification, retraction) modeled in each example.
   ■ Direct students to complete the Guided Practice handout by applying what they have learned from the lesson.
   ■ Allow students to work in pairs as they discuss the best kind of adjustment for each error.

7. Assess what students have learned and provide them a chance to express their views about types of mistakes and corrections journalists make.
   ■ Direct students to complete the assessment handout.
   ■ Allow students to consult their notes if needed for short answers.
Lesson 10: How Do Journalists Earn Trust?

Extend and connect

ELEMENTARY/PRIMARY
(ages 6–10)
Explain that there are different levels of errors that journalists and news organizations can make. Some are less important, like spelling or grammar mistakes. Others are more important, like information that is found to be wrong or assumptions that are misleading. Show students the corrections page (online or print) of a newspaper. Discuss with students the importance of each correction the paper lists for the week.

HIGH SCHOOL/SECONDARY
(ages 15–18)
Discuss with students the problems that might arise if a news outlet publishes stories with false information. Ask students to conduct an internet search to find examples of journalists who included false or inaccurate information and then share the examples with the class. Encourage discussion about the effects these actions might have on readers or viewers.

EDUCATION STANDARDS

Media Literacy
ISTE 2c Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
ISTE 3b Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.

CCSS English and Language Arts Reading Information
RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
RI.9–10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Social Studies
RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
RH.9–10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
Setting the Record Straight

One way that news outlets earn our trust is to correct any honest mistakes they might make as they quickly report unfolding news events. Corrections, clarifications, and retractions are done on the basis of good will, and do not mean the news outlet admits any breach of the law or compliance standards. Read these examples of journalistic corrections.

From *BBC Radio 4*:
Original broadcast: 5 June 2019
Correct: 11 June 2019
As part of our D-Day coverage we mistakenly referred to an army vehicle as a World War Two Land Rover. In fact, Land Rover did not start production until 1948, after the Second World War. ¹

*Correction*

From *BBC One and BBC News Channel, News at Ten*:
Original broadcast: 9 January 2019
Correct: 10 January 2019
The headlines reported the Prime Minister as saying that her plan was the only realistic one and the only way to avoid “crashing out” of the EU without a deal. We should clarify this phrase was used in the debate by several MPs but not by the Prime Minister. ¹

*Clarification*

From *Journal of Bioresource Technology*:
Published May 2018: “Corn stover pretreatment by metal oxides for improving lignin removal and reducing sugar degradation and water usage.”
Retracted September 2018: This article contains some flaws in experimental method/protocol used. The major issue is that the filtration aperture (cheese cloth) used for solid and liquid separation after biomass pretreatment was not well controlled over the research period. Using used-cheese-cloths with varied aperture size unintentionally caused a large variation in mass recovery and chemical composition of treated biomass. New cheese cloth should be used each time to assure reproducibility. ²

*Retraction*

From *National Public Radio*:
“Hurdles Remain As The Final Countdown Begins For The 2020 Census”
Corrected on March 4, 2019
Clarification: A previous version of this story described the 2020 census as the first online U.S. census. It would have been more accurate to say it will be the first census in which all households will have the opportunity to reply online. In 2000, there was an online option, but it was only for the short form and only in English. The Census Bureau says 63,053 households were counted using only the online option. ³

*Clarification*
From *The New York Times*:
An obituary on Sept. 20 about Hiroshi Yamauchi, the longtime president of Nintendo, included a quotation from a 1988 New York Times article that inaccurately described the Nintendo video game Super Mario Bros. 2. The brothers Mario and Luigi, who appear in several Nintendo games, are plumbers, not janitors.⁴

*Correction*

From *The Guardian*:
Oxfam estimates that 26 people, not 62 as we said, have the same wealth as 3.6 billion people (How inequality is growing worldwide, 9 September, page 10, Journal).⁵

*Correction*

Sources:
1. https://www.bbc.co.uk/helpandfeedback/corrections_clarifications/
To Err is Human

Journalists are human, and they can make mistakes. There are a variety of reasons why a news story might contain errors. Most are unintentional. These include:

- Incomplete research
- Inaccurate information from sources
- Pressure of deadlines
- Assumptions about people or events
- Poor editing, copy editing, or proofreading

What happens when a news outlet gets the news wrong? A reputable outlet will try to acknowledge and fix its errors. It can do so in three ways, shown in the chart.

**Note:** The examples in the chart are fictitious; any likeness to actual people or organizations is coincidental.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Clarification</th>
<th>Retraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When Used</td>
<td>to fix a typographical error, misspelling, or other factual mistake</td>
<td>to explain a statement that might cause misunderstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td><em>Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misspelled the mayor’s name. It is Martina Mc Cleary, not Martin Mc Cleary. We apologize for the mistake.</em></td>
<td><em>This story has been updated to clarify that Alonsan’s UK computer systems and databases were not affected by this data breach.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Print newspapers will usually print corrections, clarifications, and retractions. Online news, television news, and radio will put adjustments on their websites or write an addendum (update) with a link to the original story. Many news outlets will also “unpublish” a story. Unpublishing, or deleting a news story completely, can be the result of plagiarism, legal problems, or requests by sources or subjects. Sometimes an author will request a retraction upon discovering the premise of an article is flawed, such as when a scientist discovers a flaw in a reported experiment. The way a news outlet treats mistakes is a good indication of its trustworthiness or credibility. The same can be said of journalists. Responsible journalists seek to report the truth supported by facts and evidence.
Most reputable news organizations have open policies about when and where to issue corrections, clarifications, and retractions, in an effort to be as transparent as possible. Some have departments that oversee these adjustments. Others have forms available for readers or viewers to notify the organizations of errors they notice in news stories. Often, a correction, clarification, or retraction will be accompanied by an apology or explanation. Apologies and explanations help to enlighten readers about how the mistake was made, and they build trust between readers and news outlets.

Image Caption: Some news mistakes have gone down in history. One, captured on the front page of the Vancouver World of April 15, 1912, stated: “Titanic Sinking; No Lives Lost.” Actually, over 1500 people died.
**Directions:** Read each excerpt from a news story and the error in the story. Then identify the type of adjustment needed—correction, clarification, or retraction—and write the statement a news outlet might make to adjust it.

These examples are fictional. Any likeness to the real world is coincidental.

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<th>News Story</th>
<th>Error</th>
<th>Type of Adjustment Needed</th>
<th>Possible news outlet statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>The infrastructure report was submitted to Congress early in March.</td>
<td>The report was submitted on February 12.</td>
<td>correction</td>
<td>A reporting error resulted in the incorrect date of the infrastructure report submission. The correct date was February 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lawsuit was dismissed.</td>
<td>Lawyers for the defense found that the plaintiff had a history of suing companies without cause.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The men arrested have been identified as John Robbins, a self-employed electrician, and Stephen Wills, his assistant.</td>
<td>John Robbins was not involved in the incident in any way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes MacRae is running for town board in Milltown. The election will be on Wednesday, November 7.</td>
<td>MacRae is running for town supervisor. The date of the election is Tuesday, November 7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobias affect nearly 9% of Americans. This chart shows the ten most common phobias.</td>
<td>The chart was based on inaccurate data from the PhobiaBank.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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### Answer key

**Directions:** Read each excerpt from a news story and the error in the story. Then identify the type of adjustment needed—correction, clarification, or retraction—and write the statement a news outlet might make to adjust it.

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<tr>
<td>The lawsuit was dismissed.</td>
<td>Lawyers for the defense found that the plaintiff had a history of suing companies without cause.</td>
<td>clarification</td>
<td>The story was updated to clarify the reasons for the lawsuit dismissal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The men arrested have been identified as John Robbins, a self-employed electrician, and Stephen Wills, his assistant.</td>
<td>John Robbins was not involved in the incident in any way.</td>
<td>retraction</td>
<td>We apologize for incorrectly stating that John Robbins was arrested. He was never a suspect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes MacRae is running for town board in Milltown. The election will be on Wednesday, November 7.</td>
<td>MacRae is running for town supervisor. The date of the election is Tuesday, November 7.</td>
<td>correction</td>
<td>An editing error resulted in the wrong race and date in our article on the local election. Mercedes MacRae is running for town supervisor, and the election will be held on Tuesday, November 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobias affect nearly 9% of Americans. This chart shows the ten most common phobias.</td>
<td>The chart was based on inaccurate data from the PhobiaBank.</td>
<td>retraction</td>
<td>The chart in our article on common phobias in the United States was based on faulty data from the PhobiaBank. We apologize for the error and have removed the chart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Which of the following practices does not increase the transparency of a journalist or news outlet?
   a. acknowledging an error
   b. revealing the way a story was investigated
   c. citing anonymous sources
   d. explaining a trusted research source

2. What is the best response by a news outlet to a story that contains an incorrect date?
   a. correction
   b. clarification
   c. retraction
   d. unpublishing

3. What is the best response by a news outlet to a story about a stock market event that explains the event badly?
   a. correction
   b. clarification
   c. retraction
   d. unpublishing

4. Why might a news outlet issue a retraction?
   -
   -
   -

5. What are three reasons there could be an error in a news story?
   -
   -
   -

6. Match each type of adjustment with the error that would trigger it. Write the number of the error in the blank.
   - correction
     1. Story that refers to a payment made by a betting company to an NBA coach that neglects to mention that such payments are legal.
   - clarification
     2. Story that gives the wrong position for a player on a football team.
   - refraction
     3. Story that uses a quote that is discovered to have been made up.
7. Why might a news source include an apology with a correction, clarification, or retraction?

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8. REFLECT Think about the ways in which news sources react to mistakes they make. Then write a paragraph explaining how you might apply their methods to your own life. Provide examples.

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Answer key

1. Which of the following practices does not increase the transparency of a journalist or news outlet?
   - **a.** acknowledging an error
   - **b.** revealing the way a story was investigated
   - **c.** citing anonymous sources
   - **d.** explaining a trusted research source

2. What is the best response by a news outlet to a story that contains an incorrect date?
   - **a.** correction
   - **b.** clarification
   - **c.** retraction
   - **d.** unpublishing

3. What is the best response by a news outlet to a story about a stock market event that explains the event badly?
   - **a.** correction
   - **b.** clarification
   - **c.** retraction
   - **d.** unpublishing

4. Why might a news outlet issue a retraction?
   *Answers will vary. Possible response: A news outlet might issue a retraction if data included in a graph or chart is found to be inaccurate.*

5. What are three reasons there could be an error in a news story?
   *Answers will vary. Possible response: An error could be the result of a journalist’s bias, lack of proofreading, or pressure from deadlines.*

6. Match each type of adjustment with the error that would trigger it. Write the number of the error in the blank.

   - **2** correction  1. Story that refers to a payment made by a betting company to an NBA coach that neglects to mention that such payments are legal.
   - **1** clarification  2. Story that gives the wrong position for a player on a football team.
   - **3** refraction  3. Story that uses a quote that is discovered to have been made up.

7. Why might a news source include an apology with a correction, clarification, or retraction?
   *Answers will vary. Possible response: A news organization might apologize if an error injures someone’s reputation, or they might apologize to try to rebuild readers’ trust.*

8. REFLECT  Think about the ways in which news sources react to mistakes they make. Then write a paragraph explaining how you might apply their methods to your own life. Provide examples.
   *Answers will vary. Possible response*