**Evaluating Media Sources**

*Introduction*: Around the world, people rely on the media to keep them informed about the most important issues that affect them, their families, and their neighbors. There are many types of media sources, including articles, editorials, social media posts, and videos. The information provided by the media helps people form opinions and ask tough questions of their governments. In a democracy, where the interests of the public are supposed to define how the government acts, this information is vital to ensuring that a country functions well.

In this activity, you will examine sources addressing President Trump’s executive order. Through-out the lesson, consider how each author might answer the following two key questions:

* Is the executive order a good idea?
* How is this executive order similar to and different from past U.S. immigration policies?

**Part I: Reading Your Sources**

*Instructions*: Read your assigned sources. While you are reading, underline two opinions and circle two statements that the source presents as facts. Then fill in the chart below. Note that you may not be able to identify two facts and two opinions in some of the shorter sources.

* **Source A:** <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/president-trumps-executive-order-will-keep-america-safe/article/2613510>
* **Source B:** <https://twitter.com/UNHumanRights/status/826034077056823296>

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Author & Date** | **In favor of or against order?** | **Main Argument** | **Facts Used****(choose two)** |
| **Source from Set A** | - [Rep. Brian Babin](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/president-trumps-executive-order-will-keep-america-safe/article/2613510) - [January 31, 2017](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/president-trumps-executive-order-will-keep-america-safe/article/2613510) | In favor | President Trump has begun his presidency doing exactly what he promised the American people he would do. | - The authority of President Trump to make these orders is well established in law.- Sixteen years after the 9/11 attacks, many of the safeguards recommended by the 9/11 Commission have still not been implemented. |
| **Source from Set B** | - Zeid Aa'ad Al Hussein- January 30, 2017 | Against | Discrimination on nationality alone is forbidden under Human Rights law. |  |

**Part II: Evaluating Sources**

*Instructions*: Media sources have very different views about President Trump’s executive order. Use the “Steps for Evaluating Sources” below for deciding which source(s) are reliable and fact-based. Be prepared to explain to your classmates. If you cannot answer the questions in a particular step for your sources, leave that space blank.

**Steps for Evaluating Sources:**

**1. Cross-check the facts.**

Which statements were presented as facts in the sources? Check these facts. What is the origin of the fact? Can you find and confirm the fact outside of this source? What other sources support or verify the fact? Do you think the source you used to verify the fact is reliable? For example, seek out other sources that are dealing with the same questions or issue. Is evidence repeated, confirmed, repudiated in sources about similar issues?

*Source from Set A:*

*Source from Set B: “Discrimination on nationality alone is forbidden under #humanrights law”*

[*https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/human-rights-act/article-14-no-discrimination*](https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/human-rights/what-are-human-rights/human-rights-act/article-14-no-discrimination)

**2. Examine the background of the author.**

For example, does the author have professional expertise or scholarly knowledge? Is the author a politician? What other experiences has the author had that might give him or her insight into an issue? Does the author’s livelihood or professional status depend on convincing someone of his or her point of view?

***Source from Set A:*** Author from source A is Brian Babin (born March 23, 1948) is an American dentist, politician and member of the Republican Party who has served as the U.S. Representative from Texas's 36th congressional district since January 2015.

***Source from Set B:*** Author from source B is Zeid bin Ra’ad Zeid al-Hussein, who is the current United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Zeid is the son of Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid, Lord Chamberlain of Jordan. He studied at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he gained a PhD in 1993.

**3. Identify bias.**

What is the point of view of the source? For example, is the source one-sided? Sources that only advocate for one particular point of view can be useful to understand that specific perspective. But when bias distorts or falsifies information, the source should be checked carefully. (Be sure to have verified the facts you identified in your source.)

***Source from Set A***: The article was published in the Washington Examiner, which is an online magazine. This weekly publication is politically influenced by conservative circles in politics and government-related fields. So, it is expected that the magazine will publish information in accordance to their political alignments.

 ***Source from Set B:***  The author of the tweet is part of the UN for Human Rights. Hence, even though he is not necessarily against the current Trump’s political alignment, he is against the violation of the Human Rights.

**4. Figure out the purpose of the source.**

Why was it created? What do you suspect the author hopes readers will take away from the source? For example, editorials or op-eds are designed to make a case for or against a certain policy.

***Source from Set A***: The main purpose of this source is to support President Donald Trump’s actions of accomplishing his campaign promises, which according to him, will keep America safe.

***Source from Set B:*** This tweet’s purpose is to clarify the point of view of the UN in relation to President Donald Trump’s Executive Order.

**5. Identify the intended audience.**

Who do you think the author’s intended audience is? For example, is the source published in a news outlet that claims to be objective? Or does it come from a news outlet that claims to write from a certain perspective, such as a conservative or liberal point of view?

***Source from set A***: As the article was published by a conservative magazine, it is expected that it will be in favour of the current President’s decisions, as well as editors will select articled to be published which are intended for conservative readers, who must be their frequent audience.

***Source from Set B:*** The intended audience of this tweet is all of his followers on the Twitter profile, as well as those people who seek to be more informed about the topic, especially those who are against the violation of Human Rights.

**6. Identify gaps.**

Does the source leave out information that would help you understand more fully? Can you find the missing evidence somewhere else?

***Source from Set A:***

***Source from Set B:***  Even though the source does not explain the circumstance or the origin of the tweet, it is easily understandable since the topic is mostly well known by inhabitants of mos countries.

**7. Investigate further.**

Seek out different types of sources that are looking at this issue. For example, can you find video sources, images, statistics, first-person accounts of events, blogs, or newspaper articles that are not editorials or opinion pieces?

***Source from Set A:***

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/10/americans-still-support-donald-trumps-immigration-ban-poll-shows/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/02/u-s-public-opinion-supports-the-trump-immigration-order-it-backed-japanese-internment-camps-too/?utm_term=.7ccb5bb04f7e>

***Source from Set B***:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/us/politics/appeals-court-trump-travel-ban.html>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/02/03/report-federal-judge-refuses-block-trump-immigration-ban/97466178/>