

This Article Needs Attention from an Expert

A lesson to explore the credibility of Wikipedia content

Lesson Plan: This Article Needs Attention from an Expert

Overview

This lesson plan scaffolds critical understanding by engaging young people in finding and discussing an article of quality questioned by Wikipedians as a means for teaching them to be critical evaluators.

In this lesson, there are two useful scaffolding tools. The first is that part of their job has been done for them - an Editor has already marked the page with a “Bias” or “More information needed” label. The second, somewhat hidden but important to understand, is the Article:Talk page on which Editors discuss the kinds of changes that are needed to make the article more thorough. The following lesson makes use of these scaffolds to engage students in talking about information quality and credibility on Wikipedia as a means for helping them gain the critical tools needed to be successful independent Wikipedia readers.

Instructional Goals:

- To engage students in advanced search queries
- To engage students in learning more, and more deeply, about Wikipedia
- To equip students with tools for investigating Wikipedia content

Time: 45-55 Minutes

Materials:

- Computer and projector
- One computer per student or group (helpful, but not required)

Planning ahead:

1. Read through the list of content templates
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Template_messages/Cleanup#Expert_needed on this page, and select 1-2 that you would like students to focus on.
2. Experiment with Google or Bing searches to find articles that are labeled with the most relevant portion of the template(s) you’ve selected. Samples:
 - a. [site:en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Template_messages/Cleanup#Expert_needed) “needs attention from an expert” [[wiki sample](#)]
 - b. [site:en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Template_messages/Cleanup#Expert_needed) “The neutrality of this article is disputed” [[wiki sample](#)]
3. Open one sample in a web browser, projected for the class to see (turn the screen off, however, until needed for Activity 2)
4. Print a sufficient number of handouts



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Activity 1: Do Now

Time: 10 Minutes

Instruct the students to take out a sheet of paper and free-write for five minutes. Ask students to write about all the ways they can verify that information they find on Wikipedia is actually correct. Ask them to indicate how they can know that information might be biased, incomplete or otherwise incorrect.

Over the final five minutes, ask students to share their responses. Lead a discussion about how information can be identified as accurate or biased, based on their preexisting understanding.

Activity 2: Introducing content boxes

Time: 5-10 Minutes

In this activity, you will introduce students to content boxes. Display the page you had found online using search tools (see Planning Ahead). Ask students to take a minute to look at the page. After students have had some time to digest the information on the screen, ask for them to describe how the alert/template box might be used.

Questions: Who put it there? How did they know to put it there? Why is it there?

Activity 3: Exploring Content Preparation

Time: 5 Minutes

Now that students have had a chance to be introduced to the search box, split them into groups (if desired) and ask for them to turn on their device(s). Also, hand out the worksheet (attachment).

Ask your students: how can they use advanced search syntax to search for pages only on Wikipedia that contain the exact content messages you have decided to use (Planning Ahead). If they don't know, walk them through the site: and exact phrase "" operators on Google or site (url:) and phrase (""") operators on Bing.

When they have found an article of interest, ask them to read the article, and complete the worksheet -- essentially a free-write and response.

Activity 4: Puzzle (if time allows)

Time: 20 Minutes in total

Activity 4a: Group Work

Time: 10 Minutes

Instruct students to read the article they have selected and, with their partners, explore and



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identify strengths and weaknesses within the article. These strengths and weaknesses include dimensions of quality, bias, citations, poor claims or references.

Activity 4b: Discussion

Time: 10 Minutes

By now, students should have read their article and spotted areas of strength and weakness. Now, ask them to make some additional recommendations to improve the article. What are 2-3 things they could do to improve its overall quality? This might include evidence they could find, wording they could change, and so on.

Engage the class in a discussion. What trends and similarities emerge across groups?

Activity 5: Introducing the Talk page

Time: 5 Minutes

A final tool that exists on Wikipedia is the Talk page. The Talk page is where editors discuss the content they're writing in the Article, and may contain a deeper explanation of an article's strengths and weaknesses.

Ask: Did anyone notice that articles also have a Talk page? Raise your hand, if so -- what is the Talk page for? What information can you find there?

Instruct teams or students to take a few minutes to look at the talk page for their article. Have they learned a little more about the controversy behind the article's content?

Discuss: What else, new or additional, did you learn by reading the content of the Talk page? Did this help or hinder?

Activity 6: Wrapping up

Time: 5 Minutes

Now it's time to wrap up, and discuss what students can take away from this exercise to apply elsewhere. Ask: What can you learn from this exercise that you can apply to information you read on Wikipedia, or elsewhere on the web?

Engage the class in a discussion. What can they take away from the dialogue to help them spot credible or non-credible claims in information they read on Wikipedia or other websites?



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This Article Needs Attention from an Expert: Handout

Directions: Use the front and back of this page to note/reference sentence or information on the Wikipedia page you have selected to review. Options are:

- May be of high quality (HQ)
- May be biased (B)
- May contain a claim of dubious nature; requires citation (RC)
- May cite a poor reference or citation (PC)

Samples:

- Like all mammals, whales breathe air, are warm-blooded, nurse their young with milk from mammary glands, and have body hair (HC)
- Whales are known to not like people because people are mean to them. (RC)



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