

Copy and paste the following on a new google doc to share with your group members and Ms. Vasich ([molly.vasich@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:molly.vasich@mpls.k12.mn.us)). Write your responses in a different color.

**Group member names:**

**Identifying Bias in Headlines, Part I.**

In October 2010, two candidates from the state of Delaware for the American Senate, Chris Coons and Christine O'Donnell, held a debate. As the candidates discussed the role of religion in state education, O'Donnell questioned whether the US Constitution separates church and state, an issue which is addressed by the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

Below are five headlines (a-e) from newspapers and news networks that reported the debate.

- a. Christine O'Donnell stumbles on First Amendment, *San Francisco Chronicle*.
- b. In debate, O'Donnell gets a lesson on First Amendment, *The Seattle Times*.
- c. ABC News exclusive: Christine O'Donnell stand her ground on First Amendment statement, blames media for distortions, *ABC News*
- d. O'Donnell questions separation of Church, State in Senate debate, *Fox News*
- e. Christine O'Donnell blanks on First Amendment, *CNN*

- 1. Rate each headline for bias from 1 to 5, where 1=hardly biased and 5=extremely biased.
- 2. Explain your ratings by referring to specific use of language from the headlines.

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**Linguistic (language) Devices Used in Journalism, Part II.**

Directions: Read the definitions of linguistic devices and answer the follow up questions using full sentences.

**1. Emotive Language:** language that reflects the emotional tone of the writer and instigates an emotional response from the reader. It is also known as loaded language.

**Follow up question:**

In the headlines above about Christine O'Donnell, there are words and phrases like *stumbles*, *gets a lesson*, and *blanks*. Would you consider these phrases "emotive"? Why or why not?

**2. Euphemisms:** words or phrases that are substituted for more direct words or phrases in an attempt to make things easier to accept, milder, less offensive, or less embarrassing. For example, instead of saying that someone has *died*, we say they have *passed away*.

**Follow up question:**

Match the euphemisms found in war reporting with their meanings. These examples reveal how language can be used as a tool by governments and journalists to manufacture consent and, in this case, justify wars.

a. collateral damage	1. bombing
b. to neutralize	2. to kill

c. friendly fire	3. torture
d. air campaign	4. death of civilians
e. enhanced interrogation	5. accidental killing of soldiers on the same side

**3. Vague Language:** Words that may mean something different to one reader or another. Writers may use such words to avoid honest reporting while readers can make false presumptions if they do not identify vague language. Examples of vague language: *a lot, frequently, far away*

**Follow up question:**

Can you come up with three or more examples of commonly used vague language?

**Identifying Bias in News Headlines, Part III**

Directions: In your group, look at how different news sources report the same events. Choose a news story and find five different headlines on it. Compare and Contrast the headlines. Is there bias in any of the headlines? How is language used to achieve certain effects?

**1. General summary of news story:**

**2. Five headlines (a-e) from newspapers and news networks (put the name of the news source in italics after the headline- see example above):**

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

**3. Rate each headline for bias from 1 to 5, where 1=hardly biased and 5=extremely biased.**

**4. Explain your ratings by referring to specific use of language from the headlines. How does the language in each headline achieve certain effects? Use the terms in Part II to describe the language in the headlines.**