

Understanding News Media: Who's Telling the Story?

Professional journalists make every attempt to report objectively using the available facts. However, despite this ideal, even when sticking to “just the facts,” all writing contains some bias. After all, a writer only includes the details he or she *feels* are the most important. If two people write about the same event, their reports will be different. In some cases they can be very different.

◆ Point of View ◆

A position from which something is observed or considered.

An example of this would be two reports about a baseball game between the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox. While each would include the same basic facts, for instance, which team won and how many runs were

scored, the report in a New York newspaper would be very different from a story running in a Boston area publication. Does that mean that one of the stories is incorrect? No, it just means that each reporter is writing from a unique point of view and for his or her own audience of readers.

◆ Bias ◆

Mental tendency or inclination

Even in articles of everyday events, reporters and editors are affected by who they are - their age, gender, and race - and their life experiences. Yet, professional journalists strive to represent the entire range of individuals and groups that make up their communities. Obtaining news and opinions from multiple sources and increased diversity among news staff are two ways news organizations are striving toward the ideal of fair and objective reporting.

Next installment: *The First Amendment*

Newspaper Activities:

- ◆ Look through recent editions of the newspaper (print or online) for articles written by female writers. How do you think the news coverage would be different without female contributors?
- ◆ Look for an article about an event you attended. Does the report include everything you remember? If you wrote this story how would it be different?
- ◆ Look for stories about young people. Do you think they are fair and accurate? Why or why not? Did you find any articles written by kids your age?

For more about bias go to www.tinyurl.bias2011