LESSON PLAN · FREE TO COPY AND ADAPT

How the same news becomes five different stories

One 50-minute lesson on news framing, built around a real story from the morning you teach it. Suitable for roughly ages 14 and up.

Uses readtheprism.com — free, no advertising, no accounts, no sign-ups, and nothing for students to install.

What students should leave with

- That two outlets can report the same verified facts and leave a reader with opposite impressions — without either one lying.
- That the work is usually done by specific words: a verb that assigns blame, a number stated flatly rather than attributed, a person named or left out.
- That noticing this is a skill they can practise, and that it applies to the sources they already trust — not only the ones they don't.

Before the lesson (about five minutes)

1. Open readtheprism.com and pick one story from the front page. Choose one where the coloured dots under “How each outlet covered it” are spread out rather than bunched — that means the outlets genuinely diverged.
2. Read its “What happened” box yourself so you can answer factual questions.
3. Glance at the story to check it suits your class. It is real news and is sometimes grim.

You need a projector or one shared screen. Students do not need devices, though the lesson is better if they have them.

The lesson

0–5 MIN

Ask before showing

Put one question on the board and take answers without comment: “If two newspapers report the event and you come away believing different things, has either of them lied to you?”

Most classes split. Keep the disagreement — you will return to it at the end.

5–15 MIN

The facts, alone

Project the story’s “What happened” box only. Read it aloud. Ask students to write down, in one sentence, what they think about the event.

Collect two or three aloud. They will already differ — which is the point, and worth naming: the difference so far is coming from the students, not the coverage.

15–30 MIN

Five lights on the same facts

Now move the spectrum slider through all five positions, reading each framing aloud. Do not say w you agree with.

Ask, after each one: What did this version put first? What did it leave out that the last one had? Wh does it treat as having caused the event?

If a position is blank, say so plainly: it means no outlet in that story framed it that way, and Prism w rather show a gap than invent one. That is worth a minute of discussion on its own.

30–42 MIN

The word audit

Scroll to “How each outlet covered it”. Each headline carries the quoted words that placed it on the spectrum.

In pairs, students pick two outlets and find one word or phrase that does the most work — the sing change that would most alter a reader’s impression if you swapped it. Then they swap it and read t headline back.

“Crackdown” for “new rules”. “Admitted” for “said”. “Clashes broke out” for “police charged the crow The passive voice is the one to hunt for: it lets a sentence describe something happening with nob doing it.

42–50 MIN

Back to the opening question

Return to the board question. Ask who has changed their mind, and why.

Close on the distinction the whole lesson rests on: selection and emphasis are not lying. Every ac of anything selects. The skill is not catching liars — it is noticing what a truthful account chose to p first.

Discussion questions, if you have longer

- Is a headline that is technically accurate but leaves a false impression a lie? Does your answer change if the outlet knew?
- Whose job is it to notice framing — the reader’s, the editor’s, or a regulator’s?
- Can an account have no framing at all? What would that even look like?
- Pick the outlet you trust most. Find one framing choice it made here. Was it the choice you would have made?

Exit ticket

Two sentences, handed in:

1. One word from today’s story that changed its meaning, and what it changed.
2. One question you still have about how this story was covered.

What to tell students about the AI — please don’t skip this

The factual account and the five framings on Prism are written by an AI model from the headlines and summaries the outlets publish. This matters for the lesson in two directions, and students should hear both.

- It can be wrong. Treat every summary as a claim to check, not a source to cite. The outlet links are the real sources and reading one is always the next step.
- The framings are a teaching device, not a measurement. They show how an event tends to be framed from each position. They are not quotations, and they are not what any real outlet, party or person said.
- The placements describe writing, not people. Prism says what words do, never why a newsroom chose them. That distinction is worth teaching in its own right — it is the difference between criticism and accusation.

If you want to go further

- The framing quiz — a real headline, five choices, scored instantly. Works as a five-minute starter for the next lesson. readtheprism.com/quiz
- The Weekly Framing Report — the week's widest disagreements, written up. Assignable as reading. readtheprism.com/weekly
- The headline tracker — headlines outlets rewrote after publishing, before and after. readtheprism.com/headlines
- Backgrounders — plain-language explainers on each political tradition, for when a student asks what one of the labels means. readtheprism.com/backgrounders

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