Separating Fact From Fiction

Summary
Students will read an article and will discuss the difference between fact and inference identifying inferences and evidence within the article.

Time Frame
1 class periods of 60 minutes each

Group Size
Individual

Materials
    copies of article from "Weekly World News" (attached)
    highlighters or colored pencils
    resource books to look up facts (optional)
  - student sheet
    (attached)

Background for Teachers
This is a difficult concept for students. This activity is best completed with high interactivity between students and the teacher. Be sure to check for understanding throughout the activity.

Student Prior Knowledge
Knowledge of the nitrogen and carbon matter cycles.

Instructional Procedures
    Make enough copies of the article and student sheet for your classes.
    Read the article from "Weekly World News" out-loud as a class. Pass out a copy to each student.
    You may want to introduce this as a very serious article, see if they can catch on to its absurdity!
    Pass out the student sheet to students. Allow them to read through the background information. You may want to discuss this briefly with them.
    Give students a few minutes to complete step 2 in the procedures and then discuss as a class, do the same for steps 3 and 4, always stopping to discuss between steps.
    Allow students time to answer analysis questions
    Discuss the questions with the students
    Be sure to bring out the importance of identifying fact from fiction from inference.
    Also emphasize the importance of source and bias.
      Allow students time to complete the Extension Activity.
      Allow several groups to share their paragraphs.
      As a class identify the facts, inferences and fiction.

Assessment Plan
Sample Scoring Guide:
Answers to Analysis Questions:
    Answers will vary.

Look for evidence of no bias, facts are observable in nature, conclusions are logical and based on fact. You can also look for appeals to emotions. Getting people emotionally involved is a way to avoid fact. (There may be variance in these answers.)

Inferences themselves can be trusted by definition, but if an inference is not based on solid facts it cannot be trusted. For example it could be logical conclusion but if the fact is faulty the inference is faulty as well.

Tabloids cater to an audience that likes juicy stories, whether or not they are based on fact. Tabloids want to sell the most papers, not provide accurate information.

Carbon cycle.

Global warming, the greenhouse effect. The author does not accurately assess the threat and obviously has little knowledge of the issue.

Answers to Extension Activity:

Paragraphs will vary. Grade for inclusion of required elements.

Bibliography

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