

BIAS

Bias is prejudice about or leaning towards something.

An author shows bias by leaving out information or by altering facts to force the reader to have a certain opinion about a subject, or to convince the reader to take a certain action.

Critical reading requires that a reader recognize bias in writing. Without this recognition, the reader may become the victim of the writer's propaganda. To identify bias in a passage or article, the reader must read through the material and ask, "What does the writer want me to think or to do?" Bias is often present in editorials, advertisements, religious publications, and political materials.

There are several common devices or techniques used by writers of propaganda and biased material. Some of these are"

1. **USE OF WORDS FOR EMOTIONAL EFFECT**

Words like "commie," "racist," "hippie," "liberal," "pinko," and others are used to promote either a positive or a negative response in the reader.

2. **REFERENCE TO GREAT MEN**

Politicians often refer to famous men in the history of our country in order to gain support for their ideas.

3. **FLATTERY**

The writer may use praise to try to gain a positive reaction from the reader.

4. **STACKING THE CARDS**

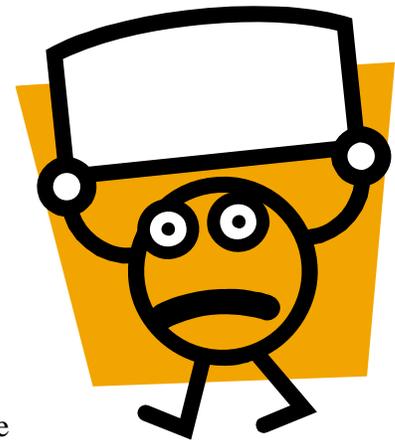
Instead of giving an objective description, the writer may give evidence to support only one side of a question and may deliberately omit any opposing ideas.

5. **BANDWAGON**

A writer might suggest that everyone is doing something or thinking in a certain way and that the reader should do the same.

6. **PLAIN FOLKS**

Many politicians and advertisers try to appeal to common people. Politicians attempt to make voters identify with them by presenting themselves as ordinary people.



BIAS – PRACTICE EXERCISES

EXERCISE I. Read the following letter to a local newspaper in which the writer argues that Fairlawn Park should not be turned into a baseball field. Note the “negative” terms that are used to influence the reader.

Citizens of the Fairlawn Park area look with alarm at the diabolical plot to change a beautiful spot into a baseball park. If this malicious plan is carried out, the lovely trees in the park will be chopped down. Values of the property within the area will drop sharply as the park fills with the filth and debris of the bulldozers and other equipment. Later the shrieks of the young ruffians who take over the park will destroy the peace and quiet of the neighborhood. Obviously no one cares about the poor citizen who has slaved to pay for his home and to keep up with his taxes.

1. In this passage, the author shows bias against
 - a. homeowners and taxpayers
 - b. citizens of the Fairlawn Park area
 - c. a baseball field in the park
 - d. more trees in the park

Did you find the following terms used to sway the mind of the reader?

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. alarm | 6. debris |
| 2. shrieks | 7. filth |
| 3. malicious | 8. diabolical |
| 4. destroy | 9. poor |
| 5. ruffians | 10. slaved |

EXERCISE II. Read each paragraph; then, choose the best answer to the question that follows to find out if you can identify bias.

New cars are not built as well as they used to be. Owners of new cars in 2002 have more complaints about their automobiles than in past years. In fact, the recalling of new cars by their makers is becoming a routine practice in America. Instead of insisting upon safe, well-designed products, carmakers seem more concerned with throwing together shoddy automobiles and making a profit. Invariably, new cars need parts replaced almost as soon as the warranty expires. Unfortunately, people need transportation, so they continue to buy new automobiles.

2. The author shows bias against
 - a. new car owners
 - b. foreign car manufacturers
 - c. car repair shops
 - d. automobile manufacturers

BIAS – PRACTICE EXERCISES

Everyone who cooks should own a food processor. This marvelous invention is now being used by over 12 million vegetarians, compared with only half that number a couple of years ago. Vegetarians rarely have a weight problem since most vegetables are low in calories and contain little or no fat. They do not suffer a build-up of cholesterol in the bloodstream as they grow older. Some doctors have suggested a link between vegetarianism and longevity. As Americans become more health-conscious, vegetarianism will certainly become more popular.

3. The author show bias for
 - a. eating more vegetables
 - b. avoiding cholesterol
 - c. eating “health foods”
 - d. becoming a vegetarian

America is certainly a strong military power; it now has the nuclear power to destroy the entire world. We are not the only country that has this capacity. The threat of nuclear war affects all of us.

4. The author seems biased against
 - a. American military power
 - b. other countries
 - c. nuclear arms
 - d. the world.

An independent insurance agent works directly for you, not for a large, anonymous organization. The agent must provide you with the best policy at the lowest price if he is to remain in business. The agent’s job is to help you find a policy that suits your needs. This may cover your life, health, home, or automobile. Independent insurance agents are free to recommend the best policy, regardless of which insurance company provides it.

5. The author show bias in favor of
 - a. using an independent insurance agent
 - b. selecting an insurance policy on your own
 - c. avoiding low-cost insurance policies
 - d. buying insurance from a well-known company

The entire so-called science of parapsychology is simply a clever fraud. The attention of parapsychologists is focused on false claims that fall outside the bounds of normal human experience, including extrasensory perception. These parapsychologists know about as much about real science as the town drunk. In truth, their experiments have been shown to be impossible to replicate, which is a fundamental qualification for a science.

6. The author shows bias against
 - a. scientists
 - b. experimentation
 - c. parapsychologists
 - d. the town drunk