Worksheet 3.3: Detecting bias in texts

This worksheet supports the ‘Reading strategy’ feature on page 104 in Chapter 3 of the IB English B coursebook.

What is ‘bias’?

What do you think we mean by ‘bias’, or when we say that something or someone is ‘biased’?
Use the space below to write your own brief definition of what ‘bias’ means.

Bias means ...

To be biased means ...

Now look in a dictionary, or go to an online dictionary (such as the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary) and find a definition of ‘bias’.

- How does your definition compare to the dictionary definition?
- How well do you understand the meaning of ‘bias’?
- How well do you think you would be able to spot bias in a text?
- What is the opposite of ‘bias’ or ‘biased’?

Identifying bias in texts

- As you read a text, look out for signs of bias, and look for examples.
- Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very balanced and unbiased, and 5 is extremely biased.
- As you come across examples of either biased or balanced, objective language, use a copy of the grid on the next sheet to write out each example. Add an appropriate number from the scale of 1 to 5 alongside each example, to indicate how biased, or balanced, you feel the author is in writing this.
- When you have found as many examples as you can in the text, add up the scores in the right-hand column. The higher the score, the more biased you feel the text is overall.
- You may find it helpful to write a summary of the key points where the author shows bias, or where they show balance in their opinions.

You can use this grid with any type of text, written or spoken, that you are studying. The completed grid may be a useful revision tool.
Assessing a text for bias

Name of text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples from text</th>
<th>Score 1–5:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Objective/non biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Extremely biased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL