



Introduction for Educators

Thanks for subscribing to Ad Fontes Media's CART (Content Analysis Ratings Tool). Our aim is to help you teach students the specific media literacy skill of content analysis. We will provide the framework and tools to use our content analysis methodology, and you will teach age-and-skill-level-appropriate media literacy concepts.

As you have likely discovered, teaching media literacy in our present information environment is difficult. There are several reasons it is difficult. First, there are so very many news sources out there, and it is almost impossible to be familiar with all of them.

Second, there are so many factors that students (and all news readers, honestly) can and should consider when determining whether a source is reliable and/or biased. Learning so many factors can become overwhelming and confusing. Many media literacy curriculums have been developed to teach strategies for considering all these factors, but it can be hard for students to practically integrate these strategies into their daily reading habits.

A third reason it is difficult to teach media literacy is that the skill is highly dependent on two underlying things: 1) reading comprehension skills and 2) existing political knowledge. Of course, each of these underlying things must themselves be taught and learned over time. Some learners, no matter what age, may have challenges with reading comprehension and existing political knowledge.

CART is a software platform designed to guide students through a structured process for considering the most important factors to evaluate the overall reliability and bias of individual news articles, shows, or other pieces of news content. This process is modeled after the methodology used by Ad Fontes Media's own analysts for ranking news sources on the Media Bias Chart.

The platform is designed to be adaptable for use in media literacy lessons for middle school, high school, undergraduate, graduate, and adult education curriculums. We provide the overall process and instructions for how to rate individual articles in a way that allows student analysts of any experience level to arrive at reasonable ratings that they can apply to any piece of news content they encounter. Students and teachers do not need to be familiar with particular news sources in order to create ratings.

Of course, our overall process and instructions may be applied differently based on students' reading comprehension skill level and existing political knowledge. The more skilled and knowledgeable the students are, the more advanced their level of analysis can be. However, the platform is designed so that even students with low reading comprehension skills and no political knowledge can reasonably rate articles and, importantly, improve their reading comprehension skills and political knowledge by rating more articles over time.

The platform is adaptable to various grade levels because it simply revolves around the exercise of performing content analysis of articles. If the entire methodological process that we make available is too detailed for your purposes, you can omit parts of it and simplify it in several ways. For example, the videos walk students through three factors for reliability and three factors for bias, plus overall ratings for each. You can omit some of these factors and/or just focus on overall ratings; the platform does not require that students rate each factor individually.

You, as the educator, also have the flexibility to use the exercise to teach the particular aspects about which your students need instruction; for example, how to differentiate between a fact and an analysis statement, how to use resources to identify whether something is true or false, or what the left and right positions on a political issue are.

Every week, Ad Fontes Media will select six articles about one news topic from sources across the spectrum. They will be rated by Ad Fontes Media's own analyst team and the overall scores will be posted at the end of the week. These articles will be loaded into the platform each week and will be available for your students to rate if you choose, and you can compare your students' scores to our own. These are, of course, optional, and you do not have to use them. Another way you can shorten or simplify the article-rating process is to rate fewer than six articles for a particular assignment.

You also have the ability to add news content from any other source for your students to rate, so you can adapt the platform to use as much as you want, from occasional lessons, to weekly current events, to intensive media literacy units.

You will be able to compare your students' ratings to each other and to our average standard deviations for all articles for grading purposes. These will be displayed in the familiar Media Bias Chart visual format and in table format.

Materials included with your CART subscription:

- 1) User technical guide for using the platform (for students and educators)
- 2) Instructions for Students (PDF document and video)
- 3) Order of Rating Methodology (PDF document)
- 4) How to Rate Reliability guides (PDF written description and videos) for each of:
 - a. Expression
 - b. Veracity
 - c. Headline/Graphic
 - d. Other/Overall
- 5) How to Rate Bias guides (PDF written description and videos) for each of:
 - a. Language
 - b. Political Position
 - c. Comparison
 - d. Other/Overall
- 6) Quick reference guide (PDF written description) for what analysts should consider for each factor

- 7) Optional Analyst Political Position Self-Rating Spreadsheet and instructions for how to have students rate their own political leanings
- 8) Access to all additional written materials and training videos we add over time
- 9) Weekly Q&A Call and recordings about methodology with Ad Fontes Media Founder/CEO Vanessa Otero

We hope you find that using this platform to perform content analysis of articles is a highly effective way to teach media literacy. We look forward to hearing your feedback, suggestions, and success stories.