

LESSON 15

Bias and stereotypes in digital media

40 minutes

Evaluating Online Content

Outcome 2.7

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

You will learn to spot bias and stereotypes in digital content such as social media posts and advertisements. Through examples and discussion you will practise identifying these even in views you agree with and explore their impact on expectations.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
2.7	Identify examples of bias and stereotypes in digital media content and explore the potential impacts on users and society.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Identify examples of bias and stereotypes in digital media content (LO 2.7)
- Spot bias even-handedly, including in views you already hold
- Explore how repeated stereotypes can shape what people expect of others and of themselves

BEFORE THE BELL

- Write the two discussion prompts on the board ready for the stereotypes activity.
- Optional: mini-whiteboards or scrap paper so students can commit to a private verdict before each class vote.
- Teacher device and board for the interactive activity; optional mini-whiteboards or scrap paper for private verdicts
- A device each, students signed in; the board shows the join code

Bias and stereotypes in digital media

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

3 min	introduction	Start
5 min	content	Examine and discuss
4 min	activity	Hands-on: Bias detective
11 min	activity	Class Play: everyone answers
8 min	activity	How stereotypes shape expectations
4 min	content	Make sense
3 min	content	Reflect
2 min	summary	What you covered

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Item 1, Shows bias "Typical teenager" turns one behaviour into a rule about an entire age group, with no evidence and a negative frame. Plenty of teens use phones a lot; treating that as proof that none of them can concentrate or talk is a stereotype, even if the worry about screen time is a real public debate.
- Item 2, Balanced The image mixes who is shown, the invitation is open, and nothing leans on a joke or rule about which students read. You could still ask for more detail about accessibility, but from what is here the content does not push a stereotype. Balanced does not mean perfect; it means fair enough for the job.
- Item 3, Shows bias The headline and photo treat a whole generation as helpless with tech, without their voices. Some older people struggle with updates; many do not. The same stereotyping pattern students often reject when it hits teenagers is easy to miss when the target is "grandparents". Bias still counts when the audience finds it funny.
- Item 4, Cannot tell from this A headline this thin is not enough to judge. You cannot see who is quoted, who is left out, or whether a stereotype is doing the work. You would need the full piece (and preferably a named source) before calling it balanced or biased.
- Item 5 (extension), Shows bias The page links whole careers to gender through the photos alone. It does not say "boys only" out loud, but the pattern teaches the same idea. A more balanced version would show a mix of people across both sections, or drop the gendered split entirely.
- Item 6 (extension), Shows bias Targeting an audience is normal. The bias call here is the extra claim that real athletes look only like this: the images plus "real athletes" quietly define athletic effort as young and male. A targeted advert can still be fairer by not treating one narrow look as the only serious athlete.

TEACHING MOVES

- Conduct the bias detective as a teacher-led activity: private commit first (mini-whiteboard, scrap paper, or fingers-on-chest), then class vote, then reveal.
- Default to four detective items; treat Items 5 and 6 as optional extension only.
- For the stereotypes discussion, use the two board prompts; keep the personal angle as quiet think unless a student volunteers. Sentence starters are in the step 4 teacher notes if the room goes quiet.
- If a student names a real person, group, or incident, thank them, restate the mechanism only, and move on.
- During the make sense section, capture useful student phrases on the board.
- Limit the reflect section to pair talk if the class appears fatigued; do not require sharing on the second bullet.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students may equate bias solely with content they disagree with: Emphasise that bias can exist in liked material.
- Students may treat "Cannot tell from this" as a fake option: Item 4 is built so that verdict is the best call.
- Difficulty identifying missing groups in examples: Use targeted questions to highlight representation.
- Viewing the reflection as requiring written responses: Clarify it is a verbal discussion only.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Offer the sentence starters in step 4 teacher notes for the two board prompts.
- Extension: Run detective Items 5 and 6, or invite students to suggest an additional invented example.
- Support: Allow paired discussion during the reflect section for quieter students; never require the private think to be spoken.