

LESSON 16

Filter bubbles and your feed

40 minutes

Evaluating Online Content

Outcome 2.6

Outcome 2.7

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Build the feed an app would build for an invented person, post by post, from the three signals a recommender uses. Then swap feeds and find the story that would never reach somebody else's person, proving it from what is on their screen.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
2.6	Investigate the role of algorithms in how information is presented online
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

- Explain how personalised feeds can narrow what you see and amplify bias (LOs 2.6, 2.7)
- Build a feed for an invented person from what a recommender would learn about them
- Find the story that never reaches that person, and name one thing personalisation does well for them

BEFORE THE BELL

- Put the five personas on the board: Dara (GAA highlights, skips anything over a minute, gym accounts); Leila (cooking and skincare, saves everything, never opens news); Tomás (gaming and phone reviews, skips talking heads); Aoibhe (animal rescue and horse riding, two local pages); Marek (football and music from three countries, watches long explainers).
- Put the six newsroom stories on the board too, and leave both up: an all-weather pitch decision, a change to Junior Cycle marking, a river closed after a pollution test, a study on teenage sleep, a phone launch with a bigger battery, a flooding appeal two counties away.
- One device per pair with the maker open. Without devices, pairs draw the feed as five or six boxes down an A4 page; the swap and everything after it are unchanged.
- Keep asking one question as you circulate during the build, because answering it for every post is what turns a decorated phone screen into a model of how a recommender works: which signal put that post there? Watch time, coming back to it, or what similar people watched.
- Aim for every persona to be claimed at least once, so the swap has variety.
- Personalised feed and filter bubble written on the board
- The five personas on the board; one device per pair with the maker open; paper feeds as the fallback

Filter bubbles and your feed

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

4 min	introduction	Start
5 min	content	Examine and discuss
14 min	activity	Hands-on: build your persona's feed
9 min	activity	The story that never reaches them
5 min	content	Make sense
2 min	content	Reflect
1 min	summary	What you covered

TEACHING MOVES

- Leave the meaning of filter bubble until the second step rather than opening with it as a warning. Pupils find the narrowing for themselves once they have built a feed, and if they are told first they spend the build looking for what you already said.
- Call time on the build at eleven minutes so no feed is half-made when they swap.
- In the swap, hold the evidence rule: a pair must point at something on the feed in front of them, not at what they think the person is like.
- Every pair also names one thing the feed does well. This unit teaches bias even-handedly or not at all, and a lesson that only lists costs teaches side-picking.
- Leave the board sentence up for the close: one-angle feeds can strengthen assumptions even when every post looks ordinary.
- Keep the full five minutes of Make sense; if the build ran long, cut a pitch or two from the swap step instead.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Building a fair and balanced feed because it feels nicer. Ask whether the app would do that, or whether they would.
- Decorating a phone screen rather than modelling a recommender: send them back to the three signals.
- Vague evidence in the swap ("she wouldn't like it"): make them point at a post.
- Claiming every story reaches everyone: ask them to order the six by how likely, and the argument returns.
- Finishing on costs only, with no benefit named.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: the five personas are one line each and pairs pick, so nobody stalls inventing a person.
- Support: the two sample feeds in the hands-on notes give a stuck pair the shape to copy. Give it to one pair, never to the board.
- Extension: build the same person's feed as it would look after they watched one long news explainer all the way through, and say what changes.
- Extension: name a seventh story that would reach every one of the five personas, and say why.