



Alienstock

Analyzing Information, Media, and Validity



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Published by K20 Center

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Grade Level	8th Grade	Time Frame	3- class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	Duration	180 minutes

Essential Question

How do different types of articles and media express similar or contradicting ideas about the same topic?
 How do you determine the relevance, reliability, and validity of information?

Summary

This lesson engages students in exploring, assessing, and drawing conclusions about the validity of various media sources through exploration of the 2019 "Alienstock" phenomenon. Students will work independently and in groups to compare and analyze different media sources and evaluate the validity and credibility of each one. Students will then form an opinion about the existence of aliens and create a Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) statement based on the validity of various articles.

Snapshot

Engage

Students watch and compare two news clips about aliens then participate in a Four Corners activity in which they evaluate their opinions on the statement "Aliens exist."

Explore

Students read one of four assigned articles in a group and record notes in a Note Catcher and T-Chart handout.

Explain

Students use the RAVEN strategy to evaluate articles for validity and credibility then report their findings to the class.

Extend

Student groups create Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) statements based on believing or not believing in aliens then present their statements to the class.

Evaluate

Students re-evaluate their opinions on the statement "Aliens exist" in a Four Corners activity and discuss why their opinions did or did not change.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards (6-12)

IDT402: Identify a clear central idea or theme in somewhat challenging passages or their paragraphs

ARG301: Analyze how one or more sentences in somewhat challenging passages offer reasons for or support a claim when the relationship is simple

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.6.R.3: Students will determine the relevance, reliability, and validity of the information gathered.

act.org (6-12)

D&S 301: Building and strengthening the argument. A score in this range indicates that the writer is able to: -Make use of mostly relevant reasoning and examples to support the thesis and arrive at a general or simplistic understanding of the issue -Offer a rationale that largely clarifies the argument -Provide elaboration of ideas and analysis that is somewhat repetitive or imprecise

Attachments

- [Article Note Catcher and T-Chart—Alienstock.docx](#)
- [Article Note Catcher and T-Chart—Alienstock.pdf](#)
- [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning \(CER\) Organizer—Alienstock.docx](#)
- [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning \(CER\) Organizer—Alienstock.pdf](#)
- [Four Corners Mini-Posters—Alienstock.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Alienstock.pptx](#)
- [Source Evaluation Checklist—Alienstock.docx](#)
- [Source Evaluation Checklist—Alienstock.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Article Note Catcher and T-Chart handout (one per student, attached; print two-sided)
- Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) Organizer handout (one per student, attached)
- Four Corners Mini Posters (one set, attached)
- Source Evaluation Checklist handout (one per group, attached)
- Student devices or printed copies of articles
- Poster supplies (or a digital alternative like Popplet, Piktochart, or Canva)

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Classroom Preparation

Prior to beginning the lesson, print out a set of the attached **Four Corners Mini-Posters**. Hang one in each corner of your classroom.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Display **slide 3** and introduce the Essential Questions. Explain to students that they will answer these questions in the lesson.

Display **slide 4** and introduce the Learning Objectives. Let students know that, in this lesson, they will answer the Essential Questions by analyzing the components and elements that make up a valid, credible source.

Move to **slide 5** and ask students what the three displayed images from popular movies or television series (Arrival, Star Trek, and The X-Files) might have in common. Call on volunteers to respond.

Student Sample Responses

- Shows involve a sci-fi setting
- Themes of discovery
- Feature aliens or UFOs

Tell students that these works represent a fascination many people have with the idea of aliens, creatures from other planets.

Ask students if they are familiar with the viral Facebook event called "Alienstock," which called for participants to storm Area 51.

Display **slide 6** and give a brief overview of Area 51 and Alienstock. Discuss with students how the sources covering these topics impact the opinions of the public.

Move to **slide 7** and play the linked [Fox Business News clip](#). After the video, discuss the questions on **slide 8** with the class.

Move to **slide 9** and play the linked [Project Blue Book](#) video, which is a more critical look at unexplained lights in the sky as reported by U.S. Air Force pilots.

After the video, discuss with the class the questions on **slide 10**.

Move to **slide 11**. Introduce the [Four Corners](#) strategy and ask students to form an opinion about the statement "Aliens exist."

Guide students' attention to the Four Corners Mini-Posters displayed in each corner of the classroom.

Ask each student to think about which poster most closely expresses their opinion:

- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Encourage students to consider their own internal reasoning, evaluate their thoughts, and then stand near the poster that matches their opinion the best.

Ask students to share their reasoning with group members who have gathered at the same sign. Once groups have discussed, ask each group to choose a spokesperson who will share their group's thoughts with the whole class.

Optional Modifications for Distance Learning

To make the activities accessible for online or distance learning, you may download all attachments to use this lesson in Google Classroom.

25 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: Article Access

You can choose to provide your students with the links to or paper copies of the articles. If you prefer paper copies, you can navigate to the links below and print copies directly from the website. You may also choose to link the articles in a digital platform like [Google Classroom](#) or [Wakelet](#).

Assign students to groups of four and number them off from one to four in each group. Provide each student with a paper copy of the article assigned to their number or instruct students to navigate to their article online. Students assigned the number one will read article number one below, number twos will read article two, etc.

1. [CommonLit: Will We Know Alien Life When We See It?](#)
2. [CommonLit: Cool Jobs: Reaching Out to E.T. Is a Numbers Game](#)
3. [KUNR: What's The History of Area 51?](#)
4. [The Ohio State University: What is most likely going on in Area 51? Chris Nichols Explains](#)

Display **slide 12** and pass out the **Article Note Catcher and T-Chart** handout to each student. Direct students to the side of the handout with Article Note Catcher chart. Read aloud the instructions on the slide.

Teacher's Note: Quote Citations

You may have students cite the quotes using any method you prefer.

After the instructions and expectations have been reviewed, instruct students to begin reading and filling out their Article Note Catcher. Begin the [15-minute timer](#).

After students have finished reading and filling in their charts, assign students to new groups. Arrange them so that students are in groups with others that read the same article.

Display **slide 13** and review the instruction for the side of the handout with the [T-Chart](#). Encourage students to collaborate with their group members to fill in the chart. Tell them to focus on credible evidence found in the articles as they form their opinions. Begin the [15-minute timer](#).

Teacher's Note: Observation

As groups work, circle the room and listen to students' conversations. Clarify any information from the articles and ask prompting questions as necessary.

25 minutes

Explain

Once groups have completed their T-Charts, pass out a copy of the attached **Source Evaluation Checklist** handout to each group.

Display **slide 14** and review the components of the [RAVEN](#) instructional strategy with students. As you explain the strategy, reference the different sections of the Source Evaluation Checklist. Assist students in understanding that this strategy is used to assess the validity of sources.

Teacher's Note: Examples

You may wish to model how to assess the validity of a source using an example document before students begin the activity.

Display **slide 15** and explain to students that they will go over the checklist as a group and determine if their group's article is valid and reliable or untrustworthy. Explain that the group should review the checklist and determine how each question should be evaluated. Begin the [10-minute timer](#) and allow students time to work.

After students have completed their charts, ask one volunteer from each group to report on whether their article is reliable and valid or untrustworthy. Ask each group to report two reasons as to why the article is credible or not. As groups share out, record their responses on **slide 16**.

Teacher's Note: Validity and Credibility

Remind students that the validity of an article should inform them on the credibility of the information. Students should be able to determine the validity of each source using the criteria provided. Students may find one article less credible than others based on the available criteria.

After all groups have shared, instruct students to return to their original groups. Each group member will now be knowledgeable about a different article.

Display **slide 17** and introduce the [jigsaw](#) activity. Instruct students to take turns sharing the information from and credibility of their articles to the rest of the group. Explain that each student will serve as the expert on their article and summarize it for the others in their group, offering observations about the validity of the article in addition to important information. Instruct all group members to record the information for each article in their T-Charts.

30 minutes

Extend

After groups have discussed all four readings, pass out a copy of the attached **Claim, Evidence, Reasoning (CER) Organizer** handout to each student. Display **slide 18** and introduce students to the [Claim, Evidence, Reasoning \(CER\)](#) strategy. Explain to students how to create a CER statement.

To assist them in understanding how to create a CER statement, direct their attention to the example on the slide and ask them to consider the opposite claim of the one presented on slide 18. Explain that while the evidence may not change, their claim and reasoning can still change. Explain that the opposite claim, “Doing your assignments on a computer is not easier than writing them on paper,” could be supported by the reasoning that everyone may not have access to a computer at home, or some may not have enough experience with computers to use them effectively.

Transition to **slide 19** and introduce the CER activity to students. Tell students that they will use their organizer and notes to work with their group to create their own CER statement based on one of the claims listed on the slide. Students should support their claim using evidence found in the four articles, keeping in mind the validity of each article.

Once each group has finished creating their statements, have each group create a poster or similar representation that displays their CER statement.

Teacher's Note: Poster Options

You may choose to have your students create a poster using poster board or paper, or you may choose to have them create digital posters using an online tool like [Popplet](#), [Piktochart](#), or [Canva](#).

After students have completed their posters, invite each group to present their CER statement to the class using their poster.

Optional Career Connection

Extend students' learning about the career fields of journalism and news reporting using the [K20 ICAP - News Reporter - The Maine Event](#) video. In the video, Johnny Resendiz discusses his job at the KOTV news station. As students watch, have them complete a [3-2-1](#) activity and invite them to share out after the video.

15 minutes

Evaluate

After each group has presented, display **slide 20**. Revisit the Four Corners strategy and explain to students that they will have the opportunity to revise their opinion from the original Four Corners activity. Tell students to move to the corner of the room that indicates whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement, "Aliens exist." Invite any students who changed their minds to share out why their opinion changed.

Display **slide 21**. Facilitate a class discussion using the reflection questions on the slide.

To assess student progress in the lesson, review the Article Note Catcher and T-Chart handouts and the CER Organizers.

Resources

- Boger, P. (2019, September 20). What's the history of Area 51? KUNR. <https://www.kunr.org/news/2019-09-20/whats-the-history-of-area-51>
- Fox Business. (2019, September 20). *Fox Business talks to 'Storm Area 51' attendees in Nevada desert* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysko_2Xavh8
- History. (2019, March 17). *Project Blue Book: Declassified - The true story of the D.C. UFO sightings* | History [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/UKzI3uu_oTQ
- K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Canva. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/612>
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four corners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138>
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- K20 Center. (2022, July 12). *K20 ICAP - News reporter - The Maine event* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=log9HW6LhQE>
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- McKnight Nichols, C. (2023, August 15). *What is most likely going on in area 51? Chris Nichols explains*. Department of History. <https://history.osu.edu/news/what-most-likely-going-area-51-chris-nichols-explains>
- Saey, T. H. (2017). *Will we know alien life when we see it?*. CommonLit. https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/will-we-know-alien-life-when-we-see-it?search_id=25644280