



MEDIA AND COLD WAR AMERICA



AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FROM THE GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Media and Cold War America

by

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GHS Newspapers in Education digital insert is supported by



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TEAR DOWN THIS WALL: GEORGIA IN COLD WAR AMERICA

From virtual and in-person programs and events for the public, to new classroom resources and training opportunities for teachers, GHS will examine some of the most significant events, people, and movements of the second half of the twentieth century as we mark the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Cold War. With the rise of mass media and television, the late 20th century was characterized by ideological competitions that were carried out locally, nationally, and internationally, including the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the Space Race.



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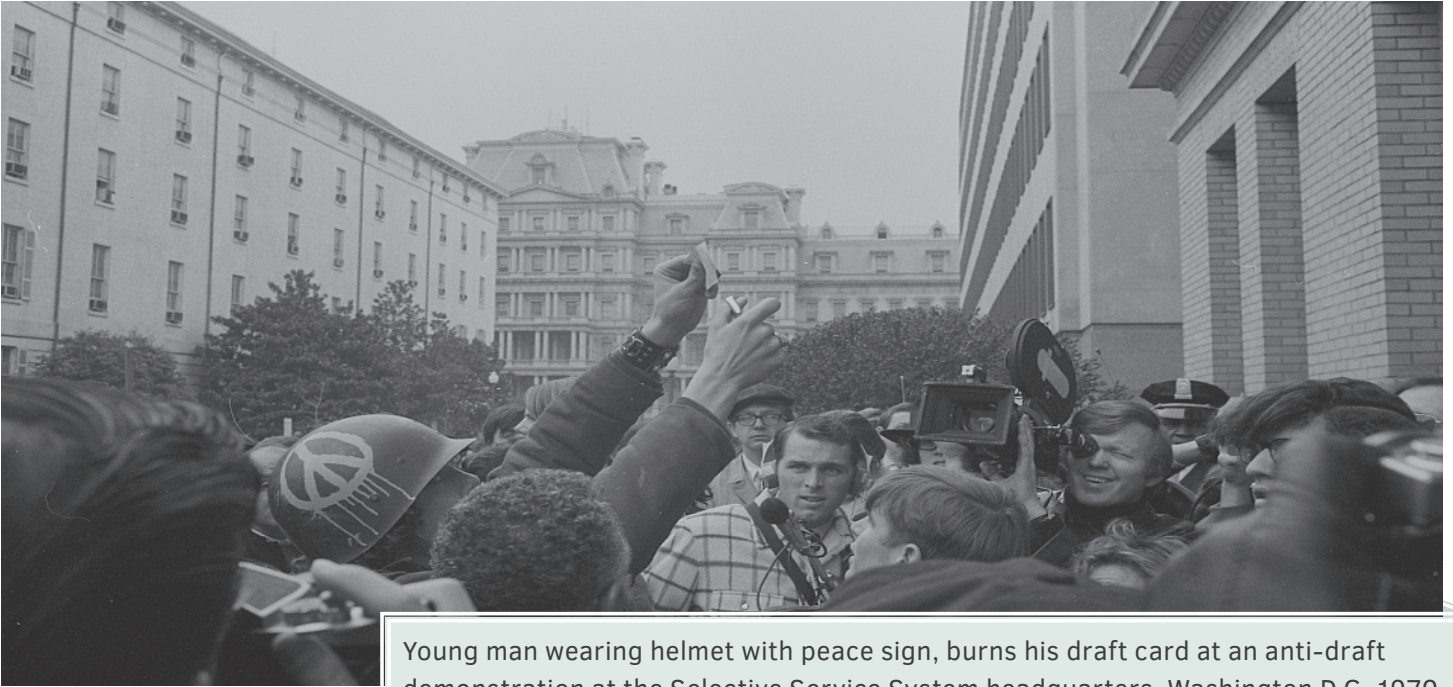
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MEDIA AND COLD WAR AMERICA



Young man wearing helmet with peace sign, burns his draft card at an anti-draft demonstration at the Selective Service System headquarters, Washington D.C, 1970. [19 March] Photograph. *Library of Congress*.

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TO HISTORY?

MEDIA LITERACY:

Media literacy is the ability to analyze, evaluate, and create various forms of communication.

MEDIA LITERACY AND SOCIAL STUDIES:

Media literacy is a set of real-world skills for navigating a complex media landscape that includes newspapers, radio, television, film, and social media. Media literacy requires curiosity, research, and problem solving and promotes critical thinking. It supports the development of smart consumers who are able to manage a wide variety of information and helps people become engaged and effective citizens.

HISTORICAL LITERACY:

Historical literacy is the practice of studying the past through various perspectives and points of view. Like historical literacy, media literacy aims to help learners question dominant stories, conduct effective research, and form evidence-based conclusions.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Media literacy was first introduced during the rise of mass media and television in the 1960s as traditional education shifted from solely focusing on ancient and classical texts to also using current events and popular culture to teach lessons.

Over the last 50-60 years, media literacy has evolved from a time when students who brought newspapers to class would have them confiscated by a teacher, to a time where most students have access to overwhelming amounts of information via the internet and technology in classrooms on a daily basis.

TYPES OF MEDIA AND HOW THEY ARE DIFFERENT:

NEWSPAPER - Print media is the oldest form of media and includes newspapers, magazines, books, newsletters, and comics. Printing dates to the 15th century with the invention of the printing press. Traditionally print media has been more accessible to the wealthy classes who, through education, have been more likely to be literate and able to afford the sophisticated technology required to create print media. Through developments in technology and education, print media has become more and more accessible to people in the mid-late 20th century.



RADIO - Radio is a type of broadcast media that brings news broadcasts and entertainment such as music and sporting events directly into people's homes through



The Radio Concert, ca. 1923. March 28.
Photograph. *Library of Congress*.

wireless technology. Radio technology became available in the early 20th century and it helped to popularize American culture such as baseball and jazz music.



TELEVISION - Television is also a type of broadcast media through which local and national news programs can broadcast news and entertainment through images of events from around the world into people's homes. Television was developed as an American technology that allowed people to see rather than just hear their news. With the rise in popularity of television during the post-World War II era, American's roles as consumers have



become even more significant as companies purchased more and more advertising during television programs. Television also influences elections as people can see and hear candidates speak directly.

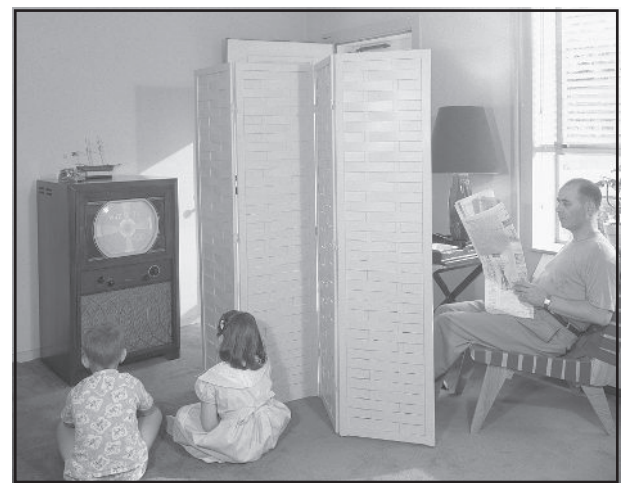
SOCIAL MEDIA/INTERNET - The internet is a more recent form of media that connects people from around the world through interconnected computers and devices that have access to a broadband internet connection. The internet is much faster and more efficient than traditional forms of media, bringing news and messages to people instantly. The internet provides a platform for any user to share their message around the world.

SPOT THE AD ACTIVITY >

An advertisement promotes a product, service, or event. A brand is a type of product or service produced by a particular company under a particular name featuring distinctive colors, fonts, imagery, or designs that distinguishes one seller's product from another. Think about where you see advertisements. You might see them on television, billboards, the internet, and in magazines. Think about some of your favorite brands. Maybe your favorite car brand is Mercedes-Benz, or favorite soda brand is Coca-Cola.

Look at the two images and decide which one is the advertisement. Consider these questions:

- How can you tell which one is the advertisement?
- Can you find a brand name? What does that tell you?
- Can you always tell if it's an advertisement or not?



Top: "What Motorola TV means to your family!" *Saturday Evening Post*, 1951. John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History.

Bottom: Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc, photographer. Hilda Kassell, E. 53rd St., New York City. Father reading newspaper, two children viewing television. United States New York New York State New York, 1950. Photograph. *Library of Congress*.

TELEVISION AND THE COLD WAR



THE COLD WAR: After the end of World War II in 1945, the Cold War emerged between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (USSR). There was no direct military action between the US and the USSR during the Cold War, but the countries engaged in an arms race to build up military power and participated in proxy wars around the globe. Each nation represented different beliefs or ideologies about governing and economic practices. The competition between the two nations lasted for 45 years resulting in indirectly limiting the rival nation's influence, the development of new technologies, and social and cultural changes.

POST-WWII POPULARITY: Televisions and television networks had a limited availability prior to World War II during the late 1930s and early 1940s, and during the war television production was suspended. In the period immediately following World War II, television production re-emerged and by the 1950s its popularity exploded.

In 1949 there were less than 100,000 television sets in operation in the United States. By 1953, that number had risen to approximately 20 million and each of the major networks, NBC, ABC, and CBS were up and running. By 1965, 94 percent of homes had a television and the number of television stations had increased from nine after World War II to 500 by 1960.

Immediately following World War II, the United States experienced an economic boom resulting in more Americans spending more money on consumer goods such as automobiles and small appliances, like televisions. Televisions easily replaced radios in households as a source of entertainment. Television also became an excellent platform for advertisements where companies seeking to sell products could reach a large audience.

NEWS COVERAGE OF THE VIETNAM WAR: The Vietnam War was the first televised war. For the first time, television news programs broadcast images and scenes of war directly into Americans' homes. Some American journalists traveled to the front lines reporting what they saw, heard, and experienced.

Famously, journalist Walter Cronkite, known as "the most trusted man in America" for not allowing his personal beliefs



"Walter Cronkite and CBS camera crew interview the commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines during the Battle of Hue City.; 2/20/1968; General Photograph Files of the US Marine Corp, 1927-1981. *National Archives at College Park, MD.*

to influence his job of reporting accurate news, traveled to Vietnam to cover the war for the CBS Evening News. When he returned, he announced live, on-air that he believed the war was in a stalemate. When the news reached President Lyndon Johnson of Cronkite's message, he remarked, "If I've lost Cronkite, then I've lost middle America." President Johnson was referring to the impact of television and news coverage of the war on American public opinion.

Since Americans could witness the atrocities of war on their television screens, many were outraged and opposed to the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Television coverage of anti-war protests fueled changes in public opinion during the war as well.

Another event broadcast live on television and radio was the Vietnam draft lottery on December 1, 1969. For the first time since World War II, the Selective Service System of the United States conducted a draft lottery. Men born between 1944-1950 were eligible to be drafted into the military to serve in the Vietnam War. Multiple draft lotteries were held between 1969-1975.

PROPAGANDA AND THE SPACE RACE:

Space was an important frontier during the Cold War. Known as the "Space Race," the United States and the Soviet Union competed to surpass each other to claim superiority in science, technology, and spaceflight. Although the Space Race has origins in the military arms race, both countries often portrayed their efforts as humanitarian and scientific.

Both states utilized print and broadcast media to assert their claims to superiority in spaceflight. The Soviets were successful in sending the first satellite, known as *Sputnik*, into space as well as the first cosmonauts—or Soviets who travel in space. In 1961 the Soviet cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, was the first man in space. The Soviets also sent the first woman into space, Valentina Tereshkova, in 1963.

Despite the American media suggesting that the Soviets were winning the Space Race in the early 1960s, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the independent government agency responsible for the American space program, succeeded in making the United States the first country to land astronauts—or Americans who travel in space—on the moon and claimed victory in the Space Race.



Berezovsky, "Glory to the Communist Party," 1962. Communism's triumph and space travel. *From the Museum of Cosmonautics, Moscow.*

FACT OR OPINION ACTIVITY >

A fact is something that can be proven or verified, while an opinion is a view or judgment formed about something, not necessarily based on fact or knowledge.

Newspaper articles or news broadcasts can contain both fact and opinion and often there is not a clear distinction between the two. Although news stories should

not contain opinions, there are parts of the newspaper where opinions are allowed, including editorial columns and letters from the public. Similarly, specific editorial segments on broadcast news and commentary from hosts and guests on news entertainment programs represent the hosts' or guests' opinions instead of journalistic reporting.

Read the statement to the left by the National Science Board regarding the launch of the Russian satellite or *Sputnik*, in 1957. Identify the facts versus the opinions. How can you tell whether a statement is a fact or an opinion?

STATEMENT PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD REGARDING THE RUSSIAN SATELLITE

The significance of the Soviet accomplishment in exploring outer space has been considered at length by the Board of the National Science Foundation. The Board regarded this as a great scientific and technical achievement; and urged that it be recognized as such. The Board further considered it an impressive demonstration of the strong position of Russian science and education.

This event is dramatic evidence of the rapidly accelerating pace in the advance of science and technology. As such it challenges this nation's determination to strengthen its present scientific position, and to make provision for future scientific progress.

The Board urged that both short and long range steps be taken continually to improve our scientific position.

For the short term, the nation should utilize its scientists and engineers even more effectively, support their efforts better and select more wisely and with greater discrimination among the many things which our nation wants and needs.

We must recognize that our nation's future rests in major degree upon the soundness of our system of education and our people's respect for scientific endeavor, based upon an understanding of its importance in the modern world.

Statement prepared by the National Science Board Regarding the Russian Satellite, 1957. *Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum.*

The Space Race has had a lasting impact on the United States and the world through scientific study and the creation of new technologies such as artificial limbs, GPS technology, wireless electronics, and LED lighting.

TELEVISION AS A TOOL FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: While the Cold War played out internationally through the Vietnam War and the Space Race, the Civil Rights Movement was taking place at home in the United States. The United States was heavily criticized by the Soviets for claiming to be a democracy based on equality while Jim Crow laws in the South enforced racial segregation and inequality.

The Civil Rights Movement was a mass movement protesting segregation and discrimination based on race in the United States. Relying heavily on non-violent protest, members and groups of the Movement staged sit-ins, boycotts, and marches to influence change. These non-violent events were sometimes met with anger and violence from White southerners, including local and state police, who were attempting to reinforce white supremacy under Jim Crow laws and maintain the status-quo.

Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement understood the power of media and many White journalists came to the South from northern cities to cover protest events and share what they experienced and witnessed with the rest of the country. When images and videos of peaceful protestors being attacked by police during events like the Voting Rights March of 1965, in Selma, Alabama, were broadcast on the news, it was the first time many Americans were confronted with the violence and discrimination connected to segregation. Media coverage of such events helped Civil Rights activists influence the passage of important laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, passed after the violence at the Voting Rights March in Selma.



Photograph of President Lyndon Johnson Signing the Voting Rights Act as Martin Luther King, Jr., with Other Civil Rights Leaders in the Capitol Rotunda, Washington, DC; 8/6/1965; Johnson White House Photographs, White House Photo Office Collection; *Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX.*

ASSESSING THE AUDIENCE ACTIVITY >

Propaganda is a method of spreading information and ideas with bias. Propaganda as a governmental and media tool first became common in the United States during World War I when posters and media were published to support troop enlistment, sway public opinion towards the war, and vilify the country's enemies. Propaganda as a political tool aims to spread particular points of view and seeks support or favor from its audience.

Analyze the poster and try to answer the following questions:

- What is the poster “selling” or what is its overall message or point of view?
- Who is the target audience for the poster?
- What objective facts are included in the message?
- What subjective opinions are included in the message?
- What symbols, words, phrases, or design elements are used to “sell” the message?
- What details illustrate biases in the message or point of view?
- Is the message clear? Would the intended audience support the message, why or why not?



Irakli Toidze, “In the Name of Peace,” Soviet space travel and support for peace. *From the Museum of Cosmonautics, Moscow.*

NOTABLE MOMENTS IN TV HISTORY DURING THE COLD WAR

During the Cold War, television made it possible for Americans to witness significant national and international events outside of their local communities, yet from the comfort of their living rooms:

THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT (1955): Newscasts on television were one of the first places Americans witnessed discrimination and even violence towards Black Americans under the rule of Jim Crow laws. Members of the Civil Rights Movement utilized media attention to garner understanding and support of non-violent protests such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In 1955, activists including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks led a city-wide bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in response to segregation on public transportation. This boycott lasted a little over a year during which protestors either walked or took part in a volunteer carpooling system to avoid the need to use city buses.



Dan Weiner, photographer. Photograph of Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott, 1956. *National Archives.*

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS (1962): The Cuban Missile Crisis was one of the most dangerous confrontations of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Americans could tune into the evening news and witness each country make movements toward nuclear war. In 1962, the Soviet Union installed nuclear missiles in Cuba located just 90 miles from the United States. In response President John F. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade of Cuba and demanded that the Soviets remove any existing missiles, destroy missile launch sites, and return Soviet ships en route to Cuba back home. On October 22, 1962, President Kennedy directly addressed the American public through broadcast media to describe the ongoing event and potential nuclear threat. This became a defining moment of the Cold War for many Americans and created feelings of hysteria and fear over the threat of nuclear war. In response, American children regularly participated in “duck and cover” bomb raid drills and some people even

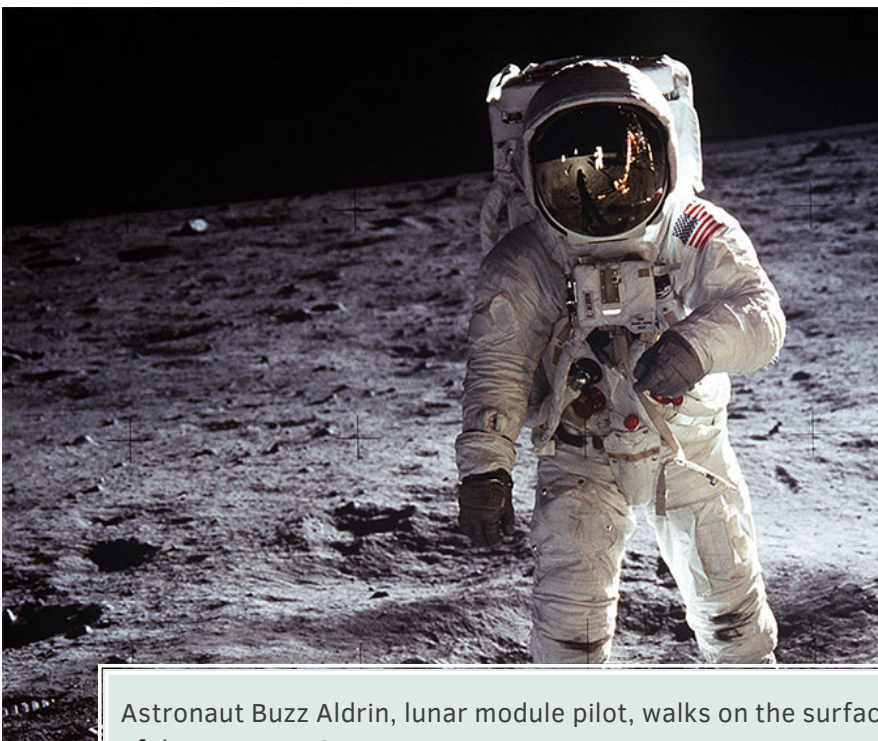
built bomb shelters. Ultimately the event ended without conflict when the two countries came to an agreement in which both removed nuclear weapons from launch sites near the opposing country.

THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY (1963): On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Official reports point to Lee Harvey Oswald as the lone culprit of this crime, although he was killed before he could be brought to trial, which has resulted in many questions and conspiracy theories surrounding the assassination. Americans learned of the assassination almost instantly and watched the aftermath play out through televisions in their homes. Historians credit this moment in American history as the point when television newscasts took over newspapers as the prime source of news for the American public.

THE TET OFFENSIVE (1968): During the Vietnam War (1955-1975) the United States supported the Republic of South Vietnam in battling the communists who controlled North Vietnam and a communist-friendly military organization called the Viet Cong. American support of South Vietnam was influenced by the American policy of containment, that assumed if South Vietnam fell, Communism would continue to spread in the region.

In 1968, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong staged a series of attacks on the Vietnamese lunar new year holiday called Tet. This military strategy consisted of over 100 coordinated attacks on separate cities, towns, and military installations in South Vietnam. The overall goal of the Tet Offensive was a military failure as both sides suffered enormous casualties, but images of the events being waged on American televisions marked an important shift

in American public opinion during the war. Television news coverage of the violence toward American soldiers and South Vietnamese civilians eroded American support for the Vietnam War.



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin, lunar module pilot, walks on the surface of the Moon. NASA.

THE MOON LANDING (1969): On July 20, 1969, an estimated 650 million people watched as two American astronauts, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, became the first people to land on the moon. As one of the biggest television events in history the moon landing was not only a milestone in broadcast history, it also cemented American superiority in the Space Race.

The Space Race was a scientific and technological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union as part of the Cold War. It resulted in many technological innovations ranging from satellites to household items such as athletic shoes, portable computers, and scratch-resistant lenses. The impact of many innovations made in technology during the Space Race are still felt today.

EVALUATING SOURCES OF MEDIA

When learning new information, it is important to consider where the information is coming from—what is the “source information?” Sources of information should be reliable and appropriate for what you are learning about. Whether you are reading a newspaper, watching broadcast news, or scrolling through the internet or social media, the quality and validity of the information directly reflects the people or organization who provided it. Evaluate sources of information by assessing who made it and why.

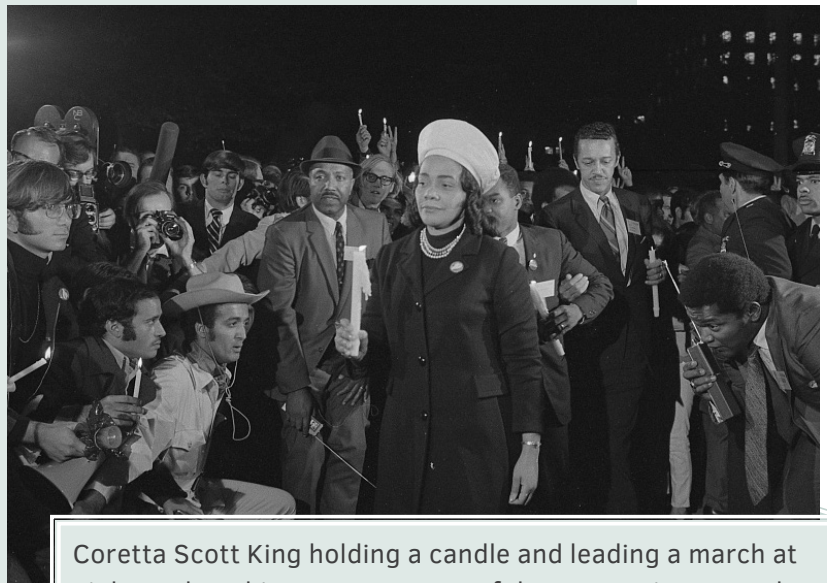
Steps for Evaluating Sources

- 1.) Identify the author, creator, or publisher. What are the author’s qualifications for writing about the subject? Is the author trustworthy?
- 2.) Assess the author, creator, or publisher’s point of view. Is the information based on facts or opinions? Are they trying to persuade you? Is the information biased—or unfairly for or against someone or something?
- 3.) Consider when the information was published. Is it recent or old? How recently was it updated? Is there newer information available?
- 4.) Look for other sources of information within the source. Is there a bibliography provided? Where did the creator get the information? Does the creator present a balanced view providing information from all sides of an issue?
- 5.) Identify the audience for the information. Who was the information created for? Is it for kids or adults? Who would most likely read this information?
- 6.) Verify the information by finding other sources that support or challenge it. Can you find the information somewhere else? Are there other sources that support the information, or do they contradict it? The best information will be corroborated—or verified—by more than one source.

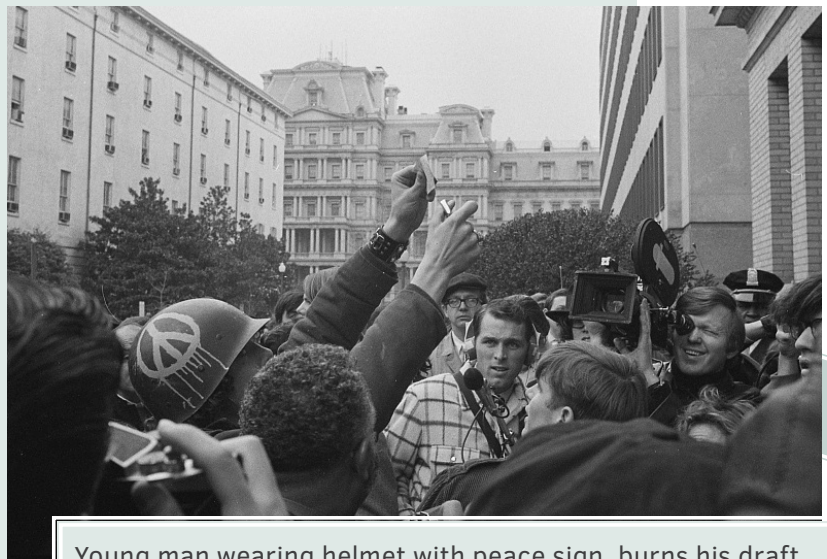
PRACTICE EVALUATING SOURCES OF MEDIA >

Conducting research requires finding credible sources of information in order to gather evidence and data to answer the questions you have. It is important to first consider where your source of information is coming from and decide if it is a reliable source.

Follow the steps for evaluating sources of media for one or more of these primary sources related to the Vietnam War. Are these sources credible or trustworthy? Do they have bias—how do you know if they do? What other sources of information might you need to look for to corroborate or confirm the information in each source?



Coretta Scott King holding a candle and leading a march at night to the White House as part of the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam which took place on October 15, 1969. Washington D.C., 1969. *Library of Congress.*



Young man wearing helmet with peace sign, burns his draft card at an anti-draft demonstration at the Selective Service System headquarters, F St. N.W., Washington, D.C., 1970. [19 March] Photograph. *Library of Congress.*



The old and the young flee Tet offensive fighting in Hue, managing to reach the south shore of the Perfume River despite this blown bridge; 1968; *Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Record Group 306; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.*

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About the Georgia Historical Society

Georgia Historical Society (GHS) is the premier independent statewide institution responsible for collecting, examining, and teaching Georgia history. GHS houses the oldest and most distinguished collection of materials related exclusively to Georgia history in the nation.

Whether through hands-on activities with primary sources in the GHS Research Center, in-school presentations by GHS staff, or curriculum aligned with state and national education standards, the Georgia Historical Society enables students of all ages to experience history beyond the textbook.

About the Georgia History Festival

The *Georgia History Festival* is the signature K-12 educational program of the Georgia Historical Society. A variety of public programs, in-school events, and educational resources bring history to life for students of all ages and encourage Georgians to think critically about the world in which we live and the future we hope to build. The *Festival* kicks off in September to coincide with the school year and culminates in February, the founding month of the Georgia colony, with Founding City events like the popular Colonial Faire and Muster living-history program held at Wormsloe State Historic Site, Savannah's colorful Georgia Day Parade, and the annual Trustees Gala.

For more information about GHS's educational programs and resources visit georgiahistory.com.



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