

Critically Thinking About Media Reporting

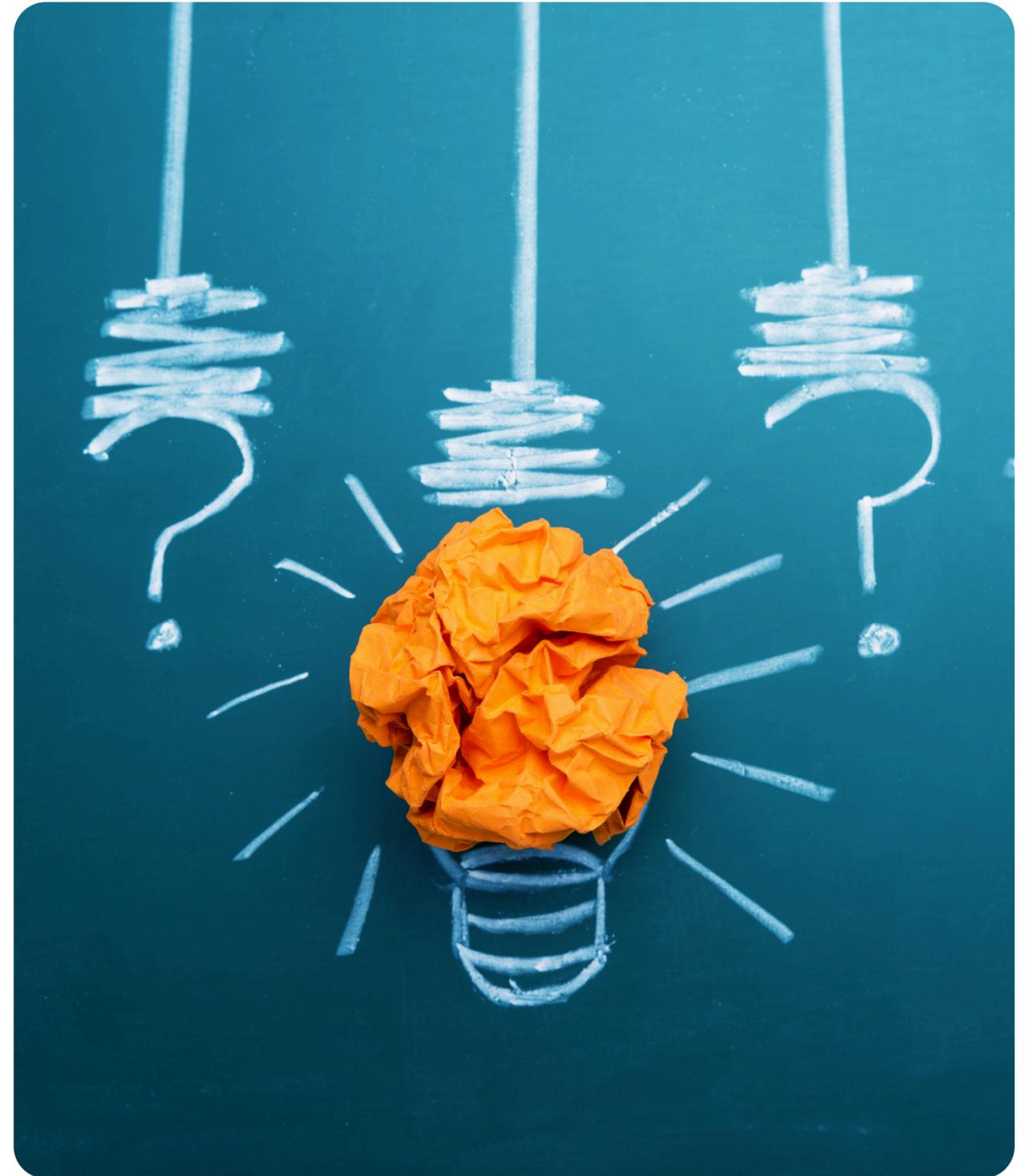
Years 9-10 English



What is critically thinking about media reporting?

Critically thinking about how different forms of media communicate their messages is important for uncovering authors' motivations, intentions and accuracy.

It also helps us identify the impact of representations and whether we are being manipulated to agree with a perspective, or adopt a particular worldview – about an event, issue, topic, place, individual or group of people.

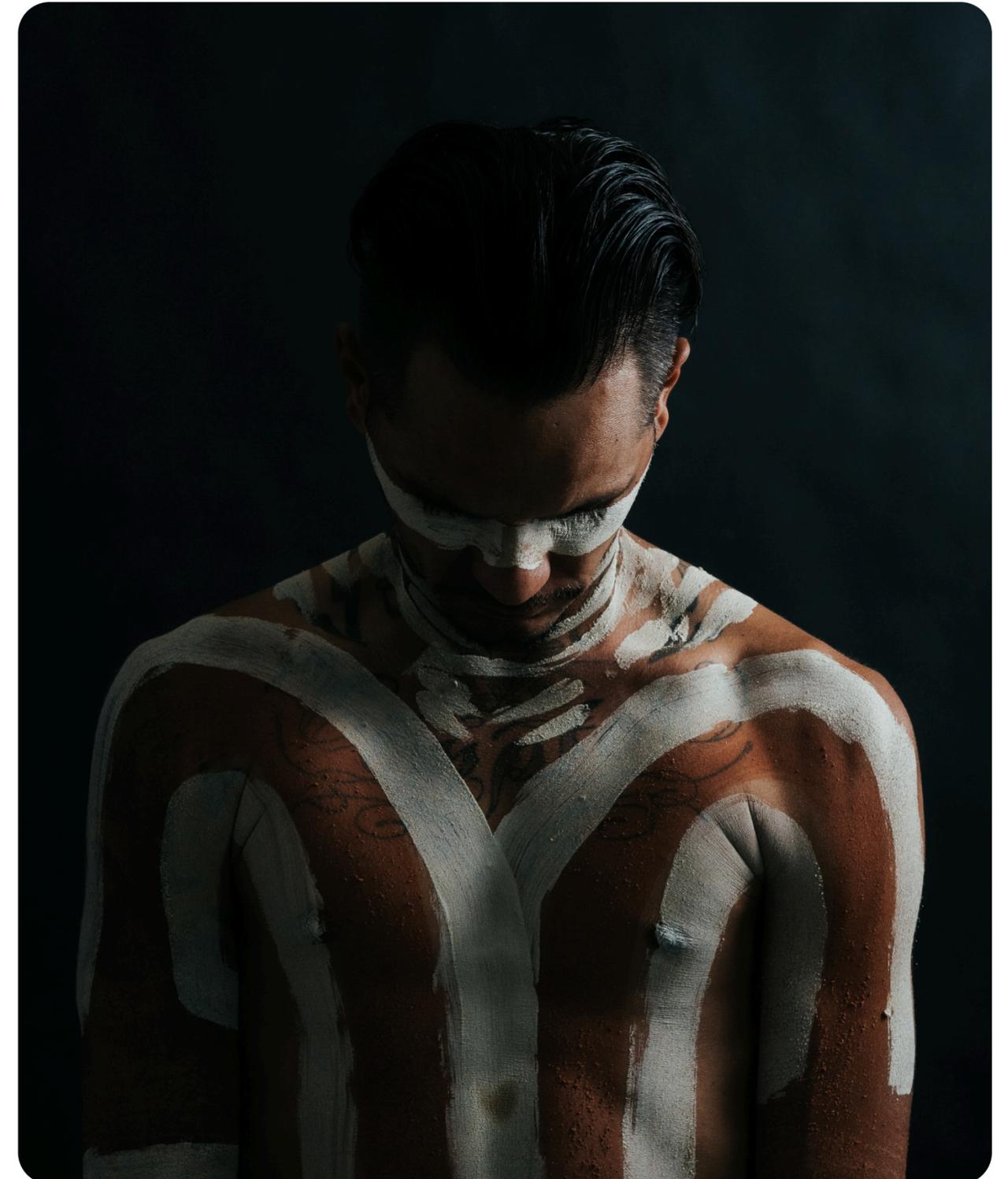


The portrayal of First Nations people in the media

In the context of critically examining the portrayal of First Nations peoples in the mainstream media, previous studies have identified three main ways they have been misrepresented:

- 'through distorted reporting of Indigenous histories and behaviours;
- through the marginalisation of Indigenous voices;
- through the prioritisation of non-Indigenous perspectives on Indigenous issues.'

Source: [All Together Now, 2021](#)



Critical questions we can ask

We know that media reporting can misrepresent individuals, groups and issues. Therefore, [The Australian Media Literacy Alliance \(2022\)](#) recommends that whenever we consume, share or create any media - 'an advertisement, a news story, a film or television program, a YouTube video, a video game or a social media post', we should ask ourselves some **critical questions**:

- **Author(s)**: who made this media and why did they make it?
- **Intended audience**: who was the media made for and how are they likely to respond to it?
- **Representations**: how are people, communities, experiences, places or ideas portrayed in the media, and what are the impacts of this?
- **Technologies**: what technology was used to produce, access and circulate this media? Does the technology gather personal data from users?
- **Languages**: how does this media communicate using images, sounds and written text?
- **Relationships**: what kind of relationships are being developed through the distribution and use of this media?



Language features and devices used in media reporting

Although we know that asking questions is important for critically thinking about media reporting, there are also some language features and devices you should pay close attention to when you are reading, listening and viewing media:

- the difference between fact and opinion
- bias
- strength-based versus deficit language
- inclusion and exclusion of perspectives.

The use of these language features and devices in media communication affects the message and, consequently, how we interpret it. Let's take a closer look.



The difference between fact and opinion

The difference between fact and opinion is:

- a **fact** can be proven as either true or false.
- an **opinion** is a point of view or expression of feeling. It cannot be proven true or false, however, it can be contested based on supporting evidence.



Bias

Bias is the tendency to support or oppose a particular person, group, thing or idea in an unfair way. It is when personal opinions and feelings influence a judgement, sometimes without reason or awareness. Biases can be positive or negative.



Language

Strength-based language focuses on what a person can do and their positive qualities and strengths.

Deficit-based language focuses on what a person can't do or (perceptions) of what they lack the ability to do.



Persectives

The **inclusion of perspectives** in the media means that those who are directly involved, affected or have expertise in the subject reported **do**:

- have their voices (stories, experiences and views) included and represented
- are valued – they are not ‘spoken for’ or ‘about’, but are the storytellers.

The **exclusion of perspectives** in the media means that those directly involved, affected or with expertise in the subject reported, **do not** have their voices (stories, experiences and views) included and represented.

Intentional or not, when perspectives are excluded, it implies these voices are not valued and has wider implications for representation in society. The exclusion of perspectives in the media often affects marginalised, disempowered groups. Read [here](#) for a discussion about First Nations peoples’ perspectives in mainstream media.

