

# Teacher Guidance Exercise 2: Comparing Sources

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1. Make notes on the reports. What are they saying? What kind of sources are they? Make notes using the WHAT TO ASK questions on the Source Analysis page.

<u>BBC Report: Opinions</u>	<u>Washington Post</u>	<u>The Guardian: Interviews</u>
<p><i>Public opinion – the BBC are meant to be impartial but they have deliberately chosen certain people to talk to, and left others out.</i></p> <p><i>What does this tell the students about the bias of the reporting here?</i></p> <p><i>Eyewitness accounts – discuss how reliable eyewitness accounts are. Do people always remember things correctly? Are people’s views affected by their own prejudices, upbringing, social circle, their age, etc? How does that impact their opinions?</i></p>	<p><i>This is an American paper reporting on the UK riots for an American audience who are not living through the riots first-hand. They are explaining what the British media are saying, and coming to their own conclusions.</i></p> <p><i>Get the students to think about the opinion of the journalist writing the report. This is not written for a UK audience primarily, but because it’s online, the writer is aware that people from the UK might read it. How balanced is it? What is the bias here? What conclusions (if any) does the report come to? What does the journalist want the reader to think about?</i></p>	<p><i>This is a Left-wing newspaper that usually portrays the working classes in a positive light. Can the students see the bias here in the people they’ve chosen to interview?</i></p> <p><i>Many different people took part in the riots from all walks of life, including young professionals (see other reports at the time). What is the <b>demographic</b> interviewed here? What impression does this give of the rioters and is it fair/balanced?</i></p> <p><i>What impression does The Guardian want you the reader to have of the riots, and can you trust this edited version of events?</i></p>

2. What do the sources tell you about the riots and the people who rioted? Make notes on the differences in the stories, and jot down WHY you think they are different. Do the sources agree on anything? If so, what? Why do you think they agree?

	<b><u>BBC Report: Opinions</u></b>	<b><u>Washington Post</u></b>	<b><u>The Guardian: Interviews</u></b>
<b>What do the sources tell you about the riots and the people who rioted?</b>	<p><i>The BBC gives certain members of the public space to voice their opinions. Get the students to read it carefully and make notes on who is speaking, and if they can guess age/sex/gender/social class etc from the opinions given.</i></p> <p><i>Get the students to make notes on who the members of the public thought the rioters were. This may mean reading between the lines. If someone says “he ran past me with a TV”, the view is that men wanting to rob shops were part of the riots. The person might <b>imply</b> that these men were young, and fit (therefore not disabled, fit to work). This will make the students think about the bigger questions relating to the topic: How does this fit in with popular opinions about crime and criminality? Should protestors be classed as criminals?</i></p>	<p><i>The Washington Post summarises points of view from different sources, so it’s a source reporting about other sources! This is what a historian basically does. The students should decide whether they trust the Washington Post’s ideas and conclusions, and see if they agree with them based on the BBC opinions and the Guardian interviews.</i></p> <p><i>Was the American journalist there at the time of the riots, or are they just reporting on them based on what they’ve read about them? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?</i></p> <p><i>The other reports offer a NARROW, PERSONAL perspective (interviews and opinions of one person at a time). This is a report looking at lots of aspects.</i></p>	<p><i>The Guardian chose to interview certain people – who? Why?</i></p> <p><i>Who did they <b>not</b> interview? [We will never know the stories that are not recorded – so we will never have the full picture]. Guiding question for students: How does this affect us when we look at the sources here?</i></p>
<b>Make notes on the differences in the stories, and jot down WHY you think they are different.</b>			<p><i>The students should <b>compare and contrast</b> the interviews in the Guardian (what the rioters say about themselves) with the opinions reported in the BBC. Does what is being said here <b>contradict or support</b> the Washington Post’s view?</i></p>

<p><b>Do the sources agree on anything? If so, what? Why do you think they agree?</b></p>			
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**3. WHY do you think the reporters CHOSE to interview certain people? How do those opinions fit with the agenda/bias of the report?**

**Remember that with newspapers, the journalists and editors DECIDE what to include and what not to include in a report or story. For everything that goes in, there are other stories that do not get included. For every picture used in a newspaper report, there are other pictures that do not get seen.**

<u><b>BBC Report: Opinions</b></u>	<u><b>Washington Post</b></u>	<u><b>The Guardian: Interviews</b></u>
<p><b>This is all about getting the students to identify BIAS based on what they read.</b></p> <p><b>Get them to think CRITICALLY about the media, and treat the media reports as a historical source.</b></p> <p><b>Use the WHAT TO ASK questions on the Source Analysis page for guidance.</b></p>		

> Why do you think this is? How does this affect YOUR OPINION of what you've read?

The students need to show they have their OWN opinions, not just repeating what they've read.

4. Do you think that it's a GOOD idea to compare the London Riots with the Chartist Movement? Why/Why not?

Ultimately, this is the students' own views. No right or wrong answer as long as it's properly justified.

The issues here are:

1. *Different society context (but that doesn't mean the basic problems in society were not the same in 2011 as they were in 1839)*
2. *Different forms of protest – organised and peaceful vs. organic and violent*
3. *Riots never spread to Wales – so can't compare geographically, as there were no riots on this scale in Cardiff/Aberystwyth/Wrexham/Pembroke e.g.*
4. *Different means of spreading news – no social media in 1839 but still managed to mobilise thousands of people! Social media = instant access, so people can act on impulse and violent actions can gain momentum while people are still angry. If you have to send out letters, or spread news by word of mouth / flyers and posters, it's going to be a longer process to gather people together. Fair to compare based on this fact?*