

SciJourn Read-Aloud



Attributed Sources: Why are they There?

Science writers include various sources of information in news articles to provide voices from different perspectives. Not only does this enhance credibility, it also provides a balanced viewpoint.

There are three basic reasons a source might be included in a story.

Financial	Professional	Personal
Sources that have a financial interest in the topic. Can include funders of research, those who stand to make or lose money, and those who might have an impact on the amount of money that might be spent, saved, or lost.	Sources that are included based upon professional expertise. These might include experts who can expand or comment on the discovery, theory or technology, relevant organizations or companies, as well as those who may have expertise in fields related to the topic.	Sources that are included based on personal interests or links to issues the topic affects. This is common in health and medical stories. These might include patients, friends or relatives of victims, those with personal experiences, or sources that might have an opinion based upon topic interest.

Find a science news article. Sources might include:

www.sciencenews.org, www.sciencenewsforkids.org, www.discovery.com, www.sciencedaily.com, www.livescience.com, www.ScientificAmerican.com, www.nytimes.com/pages/science, www.sciencenow.sciencemag.org, www.scijourner.org (the official news site of SciJourn)

During a read-aloud / think-aloud, identify the sources that are attributed in the news article. It will be helpful to list the sources on the board or highlight them on a smart board. Together with the class, ask the following questions:

- Why do you think each of these sources were included in the story. Was it due to financial reasons, professional expertise, or a personal interest in the topic? Are any sources included for more than one reason?
- How balanced between the three are the sources? How balanced *should* they be?
- How are the sources connected? For example, are they from the same research group or organization? Did they collaborate on the research? Are they linked by funding? Are there any apparent conflicts of interest?

If all of the sources were eating in a restaurant, would they be sitting at the same table, or would they be scattered about?

Next, find and read a science press release. Sources might include:

www.eurekalert.org, www.futurity.org, www.sciencedaily.com

Identify the sources attributed in the press release and ask the same questions.

Then, read an article written from the press release. (To locate, google the first sentence of the press release. Look for news outlets like *The New York Times*, *CNN*, etc.)

How do the sources included in the article differ from those in the press release?