



Lesson Plan

Polarization and Bias

Lesson Overview

This **two-part** lesson introduces and improves students' understanding of bias and polarization. In this lesson, students will define polarization, identify its causes and consequences, and analyze its relationship to society. Students will then define bias and identify its relationship to polarization.

Level: 9th - 12th grade

Estimated Time: 3-4 45-minute class periods

Skills:

- News media literacy
- Critical analysis
- Critical reading

Objectives:

Part 1

- **Define** polarization
- **Identify** the causes and effects of polarization
- **Analyze** the relationship between polarization and society

Part 2

- **Define** bias
- **Identify** the root of personal bias
- **Analyze** the relationship between bias and polarization

Recommended Tools:

- [AllSides Perspective Blog - Polarization](#)
- [AllSides Red Blue Translator™](#)
- [AllStances™](#)



AllSides™

Step-by-Step Guide

Part 1

In Class:

- Ask students what they know about polarization. Write their responses on the board.
- Introduce the concept of polarization as the division of people into sharply contrasting groups with viewpoints that seem irreconcilable. Examples:
 - Pepsi (vs) Coca-Cola
 - TikTok should be banned because it is dangerous and might share user information with China (vs) TikTok is a valuable source for social connection across the globe
- Divide students into small groups and ask each group to create a list of areas in which they think polarization exists. This can be small-scale (like soda) or large-scale (like politics).
- Once each group has completed their list, ask them to share their responses. Write their polarization “divides” on the board. You may consider the following discussion questions:
 - Why do these divides exist?
 - Can disagreement be healthy?
 - When do you think disagreement becomes polarization? Where do we draw the line?
 - In what ways do you think polarization affects society negatively? Can you think of an example?

Assessment:

Students will complete a brief writing assignment or questionnaire about polarization in an area of their choosing:

- Have each student identify an **area of polarization** to explore. Students may want to use [AllStances™](#) or the [AllSides Red Blue Translator™](#). They should include:
 - Topic
 - Explanation of different views on the issue
 - Prediction about ways in which disagreement around this issue could lead to polarization

OR

- Provide **evidence of polarization** around this issue that already exists
- Explain how polarization around this issue could impact society (families, communities, churches, organizations, cities, states, etc)
- Brainstorm suggestions for finding common ground between both sides



Part 2

In Class:

- Ask students what they know about bias. Have they heard of the word? In what context are they familiar with this term?
- Introduce the concept of bias as prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or idea. Bias can be both intentional and unintentional. Examples:
 - Fans of a sports team support players because they represent their hometown
 - A teacher favors a student who happens to be their son or daughter
- *At AllSides, we believe that everyone is biased, and that's okay! Being aware of our personal biases helps us understand ourselves and others better.*
- Ask each student to think about one area in their life where they feel biased toward something or someone. Students should include:
 - What they are biased towards
 - Why they are biased
 - How that bias shows up in their behavior, speech, or thoughts
- Allow time for students to share their responses with the class.

Assessment or Guided Discussion

- In what ways do you think bias affects relationships? How do you think bias can draw people together?
- Do you think bias can push people apart?
- How do you think bias and polarization are related?