

Reading: Evaluate the Author's Credibility

Practice

Credible means “able to be believed or trusted.” When you **evaluate the author’s credibility**, you judge whether he or she is knowledgeable and fair—whether what he or she writes can be believed or trusted.

- **Knowledge** Imagine that you read a report on science by a fifth-grade student. You will probably decide that this writer is not as credible as an experienced scientist.

- **Fairness** A **biased** writer is one who has formed opinions before looking at the evidence.

A credible author has a good knowledge of his or her subject. A credible author avoids bias and presents a balanced view. To evaluate an author’s credibility, ask yourself: How much does the writer probably know about the subject? Does the writer show bias, or does the writer give strong support for his or her opinions?

A **Read each item. Write *Knowledgeable* if the writer described is probably knowledgeable about his or her topic. Write *Lacks Knowledge* if not.**

1. _____ Al Cherry reviews art for a large newspaper. He has written art reviews for twenty years. He studied art at college and in graduate school. He teaches art history classes at the local college.
2. _____ Alexandra Thomas reviews art for a newspaper that is given away free in local supermarkets. Alexandra works at the bank. In college, she studied business. She writes reviews for the paper as a favor to her cousin, who owns the paper.

B **Read each item. Write *Biased* if the item describes a likely case of bias. Write *Unbiased* if it does not.**

1. _____ George Jones, a movie reviewer, is a good friend of Jack Smith, a director. He writes a review of Jack’s latest mystery movie. In the review, he says the movie is “full of suspense.” Most viewers agree, though, that the movie is boring.
2. _____ Ned Farmer, a book reviewer, knows the writer Ashley Miller personally. Ned does not like her at all. Ned writes a review of Ashley’s new book. In his review, Ned lists three good points about the book. He also lists two important flaws. He gives examples to support each of his judgments.

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Assess

A For each question, circle the letter of the best answer.

1. What does it mean to say an author has *credibility*?
A. The author writes well. C. The author is paid well.
B. The author's writing
may be believed. D. The author knows what is popular.

2. Which is the best definition of *bias*?
A. a good assumption C. a logical argument
B. an opinion formed before
looking at the evidence D. a lengthy quotation presented
to support an opinion

B Read each item. Write **Knowledgeable** if the writer described is probably knowledgeable about his or her topic. Write **Lacks Knowledge** if not.

1. _____ Bret Landers used to work as a guide for people on fishing and hunting trips. He has won a number of fishing trophies and has invented a special fishing lure of his own. He writes reviews of books on fishing for a sports magazine.

2. _____ Last month, Chad Holmes started surfing. So far, he loves the sport. He got excited when he heard that there was a new book on the topic. He bought a copy and read most of it. Then, he posted his review of the book on his Web site.

C Write **Biased** if the item describes a likely case of bias. Write **Unbiased** if it does not.

1. _____ Susan Green, a book reviewer, writes a review of Sam Black's new history book. In her review, she says that Sam's book is "full of mistakes." However, she does not give any examples of these mistakes.

2. _____ Abby Lock, a book reviewer, is a big supporter of the mayor and his ideas. Samantha Ward, a reporter, is a strong critic of the mayor. Samantha writes a book about ways to make the city better. Abby writes a negative review of the book. In her review, she writes that "Ward thinks our city is a terrible place to live." In fact, the book says, "Life in our city could be improved," not that it is a terrible place to live.