Media Literacy Mini-Lesson #5

EVIDENCE

To tell a story as accurately as possible, journalists need **evidence**: sources that provide the who, what, where, when, why, and how about a particular event.

EVIDENCE CAN BE...

- **eyewitness testimony**
- **primary sources, like photographs, notes, and letters**
- **claims of experts based on their observations and gathered data**

Journalists use evidence to back up their sources.

Skeptical readers might not take a source's word as fact. To tell the most accurate and compelling version of the story, journalists look for additional evidence to *corroborate*, or support, what they learn from sources.

Is evidence the same as "proof"?

No!

Have you ever found yourself trying to piece together a story from a friends' night you missed? Journalists have to do the same thing. Sometimes a source is unreliable, or different sources contradict each other. Very rarely will a journalist know every important detail about a story with absolute accuracy.

The following source connecting extreme weather to climate change was written in a Montana newspaper more than 100 years ago!

The year 1911 will long be remembered for the violence of its weather. The spring opened mild and delightful, but in June a torrid wave of unparalleled severity swept over the country. The cities baked and gasped for breath while the burning sun and hot winds withered the corn and cost the farmers a million dollars a day.

...

With only one month out of twelve below normal, one may well ask if the climate is not changing and getting warmer. This important question is discussed by Francis Molena in the March Popular Mechanics Magazine. He says:

"Since burning coal produces carbon dioxide, it may be inquired whether the enormous use of that fuel in modern times may be an important factor in filling the atmosphere with this substance, and consequently indirectly raising the temperature of the earth."

"The Remarkable Weather of 1911" Fergus County Democrat, Lewistown, Montana. February 27, 1912. Library of Congress

What evidence does this excerpt provide about climate change?

_____

_____

_____

What evidence is not included in the excerpt that would help establish that the climate was actually changing at this time?

_____

_____

_____