# DETECTING BIAS

Often, a writer wants to **influence** readers' opinions. They will slant the facts and appeal to readers' emotions. Biased writers discuss only one side of an issue. The bias can be <u>positive</u> or <u>negative</u>.

An example of positive bias is an ad or a commercial. Advertisers have a goal – they want to persuade you to buy their product. Think of the many popular Super Bowl commercials. Ads usually appeal to your emotions, and sadly even your self-esteem.

Use Beautiful Woman make-up and you too will be beautiful!

As if we needed to use make-up to be beautiful! Plus, these ads do not tell you of any negative sides of their product. Maybe you will get a rash from using it.
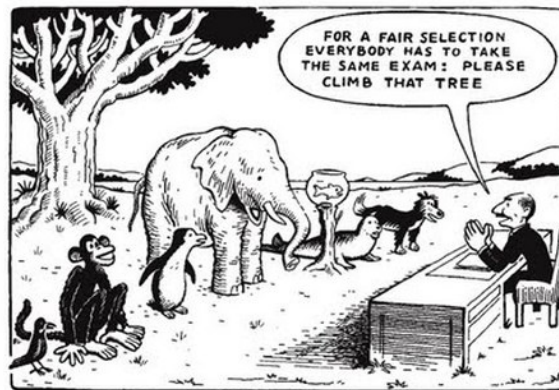
Political commentaries and editorials can also be biased. Writers of editorials choose the facts that will lead to readers sharing their opinions on issues. Once you recognize a writer's bias, you are then in a better position to decide if you agree with what you are reading.

<u>**Directions**</u>: Read the following campaign speech. Is the bias positive or negative? Underline words and phrases that show bias.

Senator Dimly's Campaign Speech:

My fellow Americans, I am here today to tell you why you must re-elect me to a fifth term as your senator. You already know that the worst problem we face today is a lack of jobs. Many companies have closed their doors. We must find a way to open them again. We need to put our people back to work. We must bring more industry into our community.

My opponent's ideas are so unwise. She plans to give huge tax breaks to foreigners who open new companies in our state. How blind and stupid can she be? Doesn't she know that our state should include only companies with American products, American employees, and American owners? Does she not want our state to go into more debt to reward outsiders who do not belong here? Isn't she smart enough to know that what's good for our state is newly created American businesses? If you're prepared to throw away our economy to foreigners, elect my opponent. But if you want America to grow stronger, march forward into the future with me, Senator Oliver B. Dimly.

How did you do? Did you underline the following words?

- Unwise
- Blind
- Stupid
- Outsiders who do not belong here
- Isn't she smart enough
- If you're prepared to throw away our economy to foreigners

Note that the campaign speech did not present plans or proposals for how to bring new business into the state. Dimly's purpose was to make his opponent look bad so that you as a voter would re-elect him. This is a technique used by many political candidates.

Strategy:

How to Recognize Bias

- ❖ Determine how many points of view are given. If the writer presents only one side, the writing is biased.
- ❖ Weigh the facts given. Are they true as far as you know? Or are they really disguised opinions?
- ❖ Look for loaded words that attempt to get you to respond with your emotions instead of your mind.
- ❖ Find out who the writer is. What are the writer's qualifications?