

# Topic 4.15: Media Framing of the Events of January 6, 2021

What really happened on January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol?

How will it be discussed in history and civics classes not only today, but 10, 20, 30 or more years from now?

Was it a protest, a riot, an insurrection, a siege, or something else?

Was it done by a mob, a few bad actors, lawful protestors, political opportunists, or a group of carefully planned conspirators?



"6 January 2021" by Tyler Merbler is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Defenders claimed that the people who marched to the Capitol were living up to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution by demonstrating against what they regarded as an unfair election.

Critics claimed nothing could be further from what actually happened. They contended that a crowd,

intentionally inflamed by speeches by political leaders, became a violent mob, and sought to overturn the results of a free and fair presidential election, and in so doing, turned against the ideals and values of American democracy.

The public's understanding of January 6 depends in large part on how the media chose to frame it. **Media framing** is how reporters and editors present what happened - the words used in stories, the images shown in videos, the pictures that accompany news bulletins, the choice of who to interview to gain information and insights, etc...

Different media outlets offered different framing, as evidenced by this report from PBS Newshour ([There's a Battle of Words to Describe January 6, 2021. Here's Why It Matters](#)). The following resources from AllSides.com offer more examples of different media framing: [Capitol Breach Coverage Demonstrates Media Bias](#) and [Capitol Chaos](#).

In the following activities, you will compare and contrast different media framing of the January 6, 2021 events at the Capitol.

## Activity 1: Compare and Contrast the Media Framing of January 6, 2021

- Choose at least three media outlets that have [different political perspectives](#) (e.g., left-leaning, right-leaning).
- Use the [Teacher and Student Guides to Analyzing Media](#) to critically examine their print and TV/livestream coverage **from the day of January 6, 2021 until now**.
- Then, based on your findings, **create a video** in which you discuss how different media outlets framed the people who were involved with the events of January 6, 2021 as either individuals who demonstrated political courage or individuals who failed to live up to the ideals of the Constitution.
  - Include screenshots of news articles/images and screenrecorded news clips in your video.
  - Screenrecording:
    - If you have a Mac computer, [use this shortcut](#).
    - If you have access to Quicktime, here's [how to screenrecord using Quicktime](#).
    - Otherwise, use a web-based screenrecording tool such as [Screencastify](#), [Screencast-o-Matic](#), or [Loom](#).

## Activity 2: Examine Media About and By the United States House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack

The events of January 6 continue to make news months later. In July, 2021, the [United States House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack](#) held its first hearings on what happened that day. The committee's investigations have continued throughout 2021.

- Use the [Teacher and Student Guides to Analyzing Media](#) to critically examine how the House Select Committee is using media, including social media, news articles, and [their website](#), to convey information to readers and viewers.
- Then, explore the AllSides page about the [January 6 Commission](#).

- What differences in coverage do you find between different media sources? Why do you think this is?
- Based on your critical analysis, **write a proposal or a series of tweets** to the January 6 Commission that offers advice about how to improve the media portrayal and reach of their work.

## **Additional Resources**

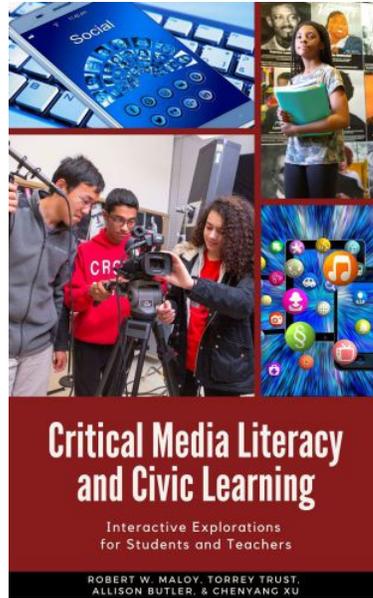
- [The January 6, 2021 Insurrection at the Capitol](#)
- [United States House Select Committee's Media Center](#)

## **Connecting to the eBook**

[Building Democracy for All: McCarthyism, the Red Scare, and the Lavender Scare](#)

## Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
  - *Examine the varied understandings of the role of elected representatives and discuss those who have demonstrated political courage or those whose actions have failed to live up to the ideals of the Constitution.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T4.11]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
  - Digital Citizen
    - 2c: Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
  - Knowledge Constructor
    - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
    - 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
  - Creative Communicator
    - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
    - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
    - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
  - Ethics and Laws (CAS.b)
  - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
  - Digital Tools (DTC.a)
  - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
  - Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. Equity Press. <https://equitypress.org/mediaandciviclearning>