

EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The 5 Ws method is an alternative to other acronyms, such as CRAAP (Blakeslee, 2004) and CRITIC (Bartz, 2002; Matthies & Hemke, 2004), used to help students learn evaluation skills.

The 5 Ws evaluation method builds on students’ existing knowledge. It is an instructional scaffold that introduces the basic process of evaluating a source, and includes advanced questions to challenge students to conduct more in-depth evaluations.

5 Ws IN-CLASS EVALUATION ACTIVITY – SELECTED QUESTIONS

WHAT?	What is the document? What is the writing tone?
WHO?	Where does the author work? Has s/he published before? Does the author have qualifications that contribute to his/her authority?
WHY?	Give examples (quotes) from the text that helped you determine the author’s purpose for writing.
WHEN?	When did the event or research being discussed occur? Is currency or timeliness important for your topic?
WHERE?	Where was the document published? What kind of publication is it (newspaper, blog, journal, etc.)?
HOW?	Did the author use outside sources? Did s/he cite them? How did the author reach his/her conclusions?

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

SCAFFOLDING

Instructional scaffolding is a concept in educational theory and cognitive development and is attributed to two psychologists who worked independently of each other, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner.

Vygotsky developed the theory of social constructivism and described how experts assist novices in the learning process. Bruner coined the term “scaffolding” to describe the tools and activities experts sometimes use to help novices learn skills or behaviors.

Using a scaffold helps novices develop complex skills and higher-level thinking by building on what they know, or skills they already have.

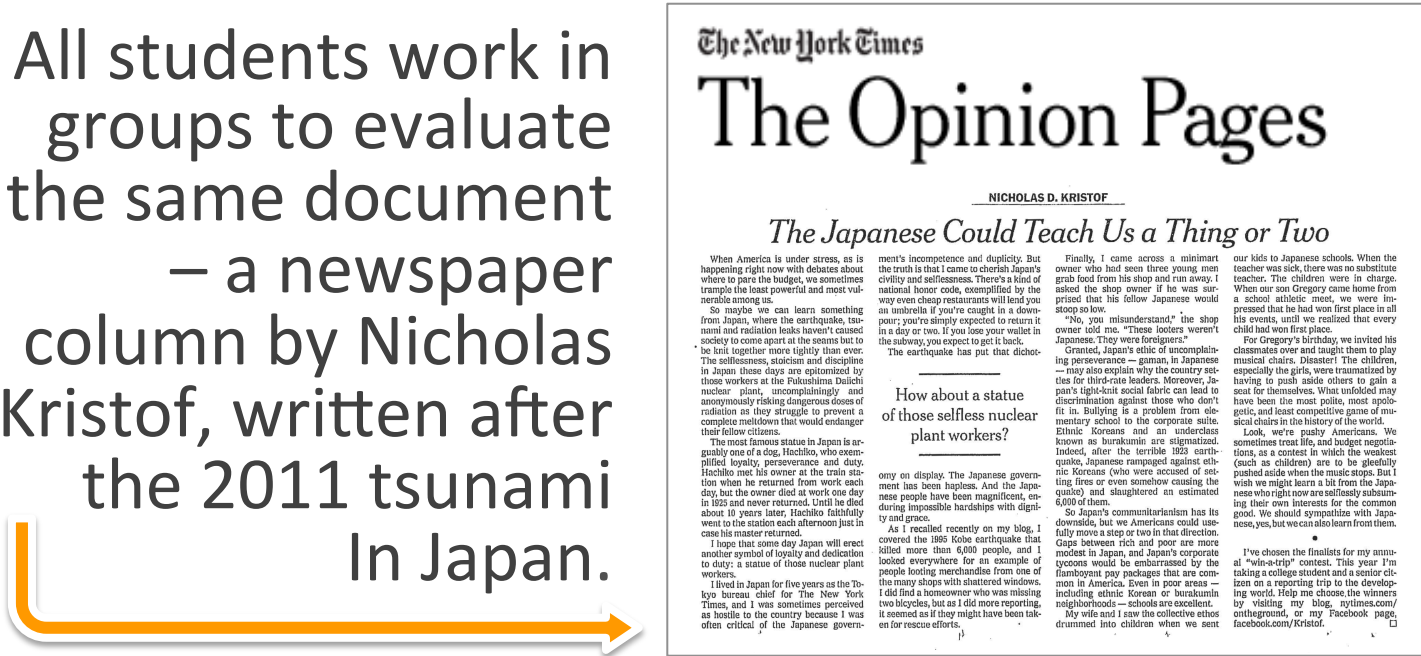


For one-shot library instruction, using a scaffold – an activity or tool that is grounded in something with which students are already familiar – saves class time and can help students more easily learn and apply advanced information literacy skills.

BACKGROUND

ABOUT the CLASSES

The 5 Ws activity is used in library instruction for English 101 classes, which focus on rhetorical analysis. Over the past two fall semesters, an average of 24% of English 101 sections attended a library session.



University of Tennessee librarians piloted the 5 Ws activity in fall 2011 and implemented it in fall 2012.

FALL 2012 IN-CLASS STUDENT ACTIVITY

STUDENT ANSWERS to the 5 Ws

- Responses indicate that students were able to effectively evaluate sources using the 5 Ws method.
- Incorrect answers show a lack of understanding with scholarly publication jargon – words such as “research study,” “methodology,” and “abstract” were unknown or confusing to many of the students.
- Defining publication terms was not part of the session, but results indicate a student learning gap that needs to be addressed.

RE-IMAGINING INFORMATION EVALUATION:

Using Social Constructivist Theory to Create an Information Evaluation Method that “Sticks”



Rachel Radom, University of Tennessee Libraries, & Rachel W. Gammons, Millersville University ACRL 2013

Responses	Student Answers	Correct	Incorrect
97% (N=76)	Source is popular, not scholarly	👍	
89% (N=76)	Document was written for the general public	👍	
72% (N=172)	Document is a popular article		👎
70% (N=128)	Author’s main purpose: to convince or persuade	👍	
54% (N=69)	Data came from a research study		👎
34% (N=69)	Document contained an abstract		👎

ONLY 16% IDENTIFIED IT AS A COLUMN

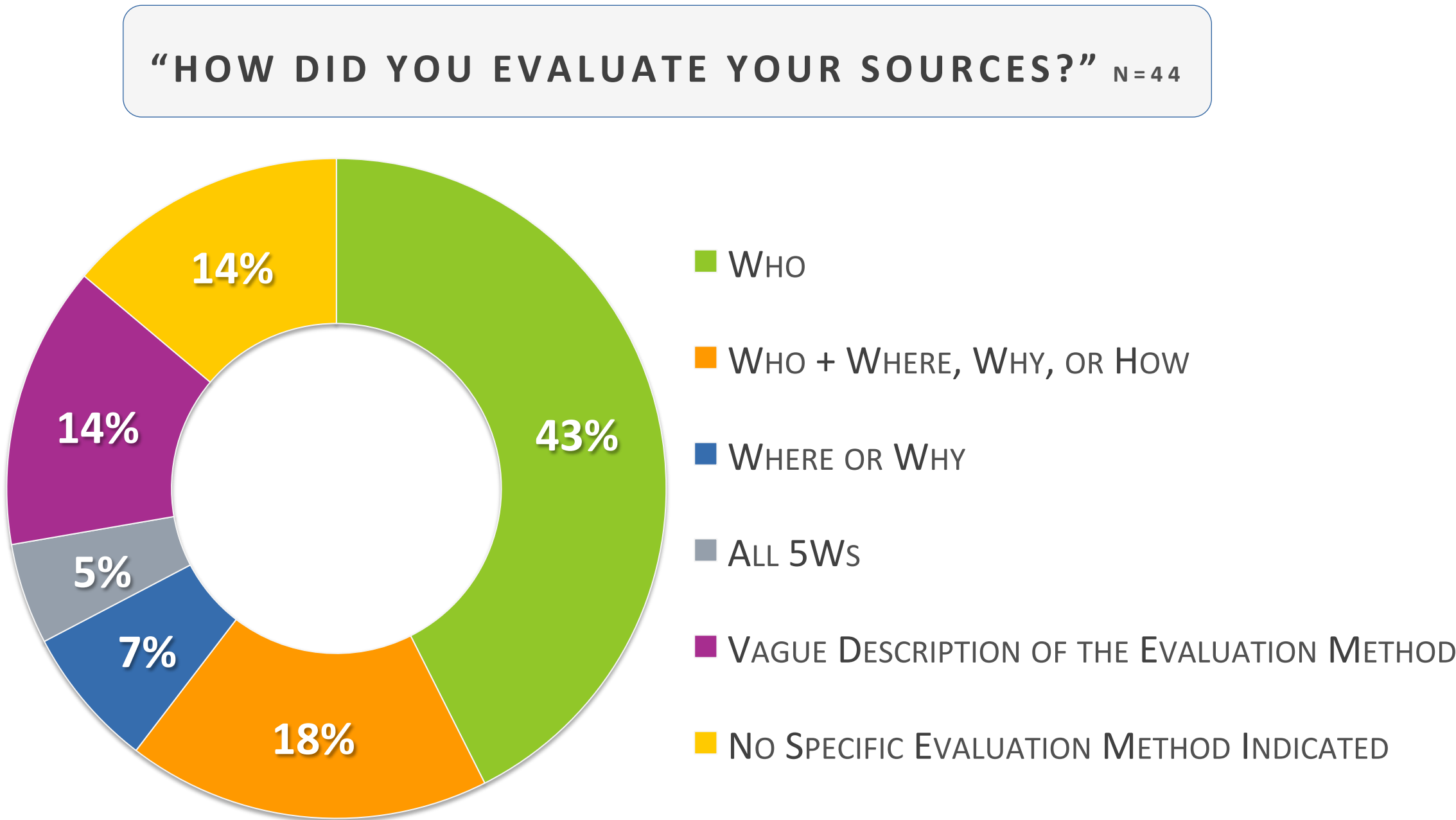
20% INDICATED THAT IT INCLUDED A METHODOLOGY

Document’s Strengths, According to Students	Document’s Weaknesses, According to Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “[A]n experienced and award-winning journalist.”• “Credible author, credible newspaper....”• “[Author] lived in Japan and knows [his] subject....”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “There are not a lot of sources.”• “Conclusions are entirely opinionated.”• “No scholarly research or data.”

POST-SESSION STUDENT SURVEY

STUDENT RECALL & USE

85% (N=53) of students reported that they evaluated their sources for at least one assignment during the semester.



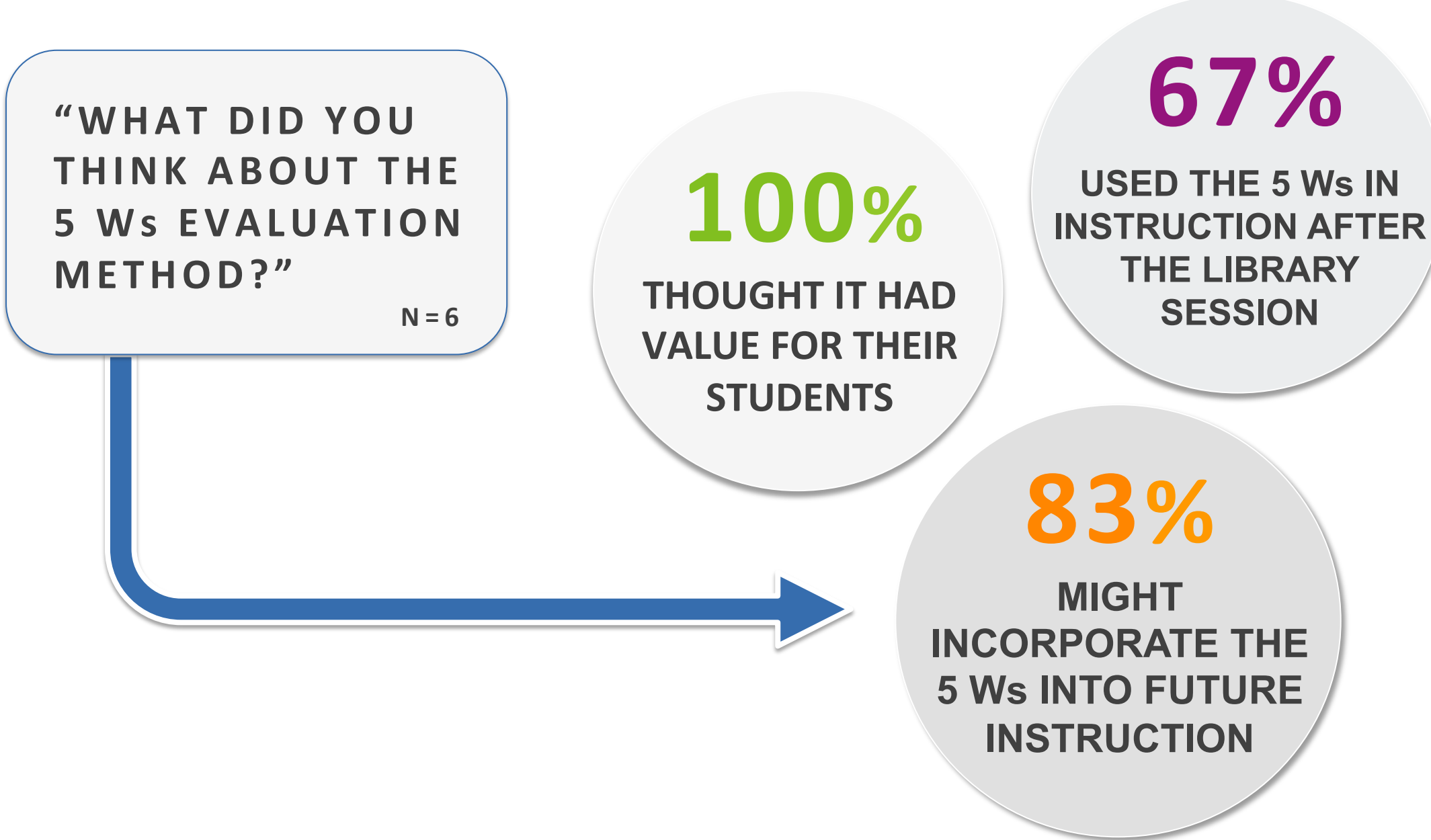
Students were shown how to evaluate the author (who) and publication (where) in the library instruction session. This could be a contributing factor in explaining why most students stated that they did evaluate authors and publications, but did not identify the “5 Ws” as their evaluation method.

ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

VALUE to & USE by INSTRUCTORS

About the 5 Ws, English 101 instructors wrote:

- “[E]asy and clear way to remember how to check a source’s credibility.”
- “Research can be overwhelming, but asking basic questions helps break down [students’] task into smaller parts.”
- Reminded students of something familiar “...while moving them forward into new territory....”



SUMMARY: WHY the 5 Ws?

- ✓ Can be introduced in a single instruction session
- ✓ May be utilized outside of the library by course instructors
- ✓ Builds on previous knowledge; students know the framework and can jump right into the evaluation
- ✓ Useful as a small group activity
- ✓ Appropriate for multiple research levels
- ✓ Applicable to a variety of resource types
- ✓ Acknowledges “gray areas” – scholars can write opinion pieces, not everything in a newspaper is written by journalists, etc.

PHOTO CREDITS:
① [Portrait of Lev Vygotsky] [Photograph]. (ca. 1930). Retrieved April 2013 from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lev_vygotsky.jpg
② Pixel8 (Photographer). (2008). Scaffolding in Soderholm (2) [Photograph]. Retrieved April 2013 from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pixel8/3625520766/>
③ [Untitled Photograph of Librarians and Students]. Courtesy of University of Tennessee Libraries.
④ [Portrait of Nicholas Kristof]. Retrieved April 2013 from: <http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timeline/2008/08/20/nytimescolumnists/nicholas-kristof/index.html>
⑤ [Untitled Photograph of Students in Library Classroom]. Courtesy of University of Tennessee Libraries.

