

Worksheet: Wikipedia under the magnifying glass

Łukasz Migniewicz

Wikipedia as the field of dispute – an analysis of content neutrality and the influence of editors on the interpretation of history

Objectives:

- Developing the ability to critically analyse web content
- Identifying facts, opinions and manipulation in Wikipedia articles
- Understanding the impact of the historical and political context on the interpretation of events
- Conscious use of online content and the development of skills needed to assess its reliability

Sample answers

No.	Statement	Fact	Opinion	Fact and opinion	Comment
1	Gdańsk has always been Polish and this is beyond dispute.		✓		It is a biased statement with no reference to sources - a pure propaganda statement.
2	In English-language sources, the city was referred to as Danzig until 1945.	✓			The statement is based on historical data.
3	Wikipedia editors manipulate content to push their views.			✓	It is possible, but the problem requires a thorough analysis of almost every entry and the provision of irrefutable evidence and examples of manipulation.
4	Wikipedia is an entirely neutral and objective source of information.		✓		Wikipedia strives for neutrality, but it is sometimes susceptible to manipulation.
5	The Wikipedia entry for Gdańsk had more than 1,400 edits between 2003 and 2005.	✓			The statistics can be verified.
6	Disputes over the name Gdańsk/Danzig stem from a difference in a historical perspective.	✓			The statement describes the actual status of the dispute.
7	Editing wars are proof that Wikipedia is an uncertain source of information.			✓	Wikipedia has control mechanisms, but editing wars show its weaknesses and shortcomings.
8	The nomenclature of cities in Wikipedia is only a linguistic issue, not a historical one.		✓		The statement ignores the political and historical context.
9	Wikipedia can be used to spread disinformation.	✓			This is indicated by the ISD and CASM report on the Russian-language edition.
10	Wikipedia editors should remove all controversial information.		✓		Wikipedia should present different points of view instead of censoring them.

Topic for a discussion:

What steps can Wikipedia users (not only moderators) take to enhance its reliability? Is the principle of a neutral point of view tenable for historical topics?