**Scholarly Vs Popular**

The following activity is meant to help students discover the differences between scholarly and popular information sources. It introduces the idea that information can be presented in different formats depending on the context and information need. At the end of this activity, students should…

* Be able to compare and contrast four different types of information sources
* Recognize differences between scholarly and non-scholarly articles.
* Recognize the importance of authorship

**Assignment**

Please review the following four items closely. They are all on the subject of hydraulic fracturing and their effect on the environment. Be sure to pay close attention to the *source* of each of these items.

*Academic Article:*

Osborn, S. G., Vengosh, A., Warner, N. R., & Jackson, R. B. (2011). Methane contamination of drinking water accompanying gas-well drilling and hydraulic fracturing. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, (108) 20. Retrieved from https://nicholas.duke.edu/cgc/pnas2011.pdf

*Magazine Article:*

Bateman, Christopher. (2010, June 21). “A Colossal Fracking Mess: The Dirty Truth Behind the New Natural Gas,” *Vanity Fair*, http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2010/06/fracking-in-pennsylvania-201006

*Newspaper Article:*

Johnson, Kirk. (2011, December 8).“E.P.A. Links Tainted Water in Wyoming to Hydraulic Fracturing for Natural Gas” *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/us/epa-says-hydraulic-fracturing-likely-marred-wyoming-water.html

*Website:*

Anonymous (2015 July 1). “Dangers of Fracking”. http://www.dangersoffracking.com/

**Discussion Questions**

Please answer the following in complete sentences.

1. Each of these items about fracking can be found online, yet they wildly differ in how they present information. In 1-2 paragraphs, please describe what you see as the major differences between these information sources. (Need help? Start with the key message, language, and writing style of each one.)
2. Based on your answer above, who do you think is the intended audience for each item?
3. How does the author of the *New York Times* article differ from the (many) authors of the academic article? Can you find information on any of the authors on the Internet?
4. Is there a reason why you might recommend the “Dangers of Fracking” website to someone? What are the pros and cons of getting information from the website?
5. Scholarly journals are usually the preferred information resource for many disciplines in college. Based on what you’ve answered so far, what do you think are the major differences between a scholarly article and non scholarly (also called “popular”) article?
6. Do the items contain any citations or refer to other research articles? How would you track them down?