



Reading and Evaluating a Text

Teaching Guide

The competent reader has the ability to evaluate what he or she reads, to understand the author's viewpoint, and draw conclusions about the veracity of the piece. The Margaret Garner news story carries an overarching tone of bias. Phrases like "made a stampede", "degree of horrible interest", "very much blown from the severe manner in which they had been driven." "Soaked in its blood" "he has always treated Simon more as a companion", etc.

As is often the case, this newspaper article reflects the attitudes of the majority of its subscribers. Pass out the sheet titled "Reading and Evaluating a Document". Read the following paragraph to the class. Write on the board a question like this: Does the article from the Cincinnati Inquirer support the idea that Cincinnati was NOT friendly to fugitive slaves? Then ask students to re-read the Cincinnati Enquirer article and answer the question on their handout.

"It was not that Cincinnati itself was friendly to fugitive slaves. In southern Ohio there was marked antipathy against abolition. Although antislavery sentiment triumphed at the polls in the Ohio election of 1855, and Salmon P. Chase was elected governor, in Hamilton County, of which Cincinnati was a part, Chase received only 4,518 out of 23,280 votes cast. . . . But in spite of its strongly anti-abolition electorate, Cincinnati's geographical location and efficient abolitionist organization made it a main starting point on the Underground Railroad. It was Cincinnati that the Garners hoped to reach when they set out, on that cold night in January, 1856." Julius Yanack

- What is the author's position (author's personal view)? Give examples.
- Is the article simply factual or is opinion included? If so, where?
- Is there an intention to persuade, e.g. has the reporter used propaganda techniques (bias, slant, misinformation, propaganda)?