Since millions of Americans get their news from Facebook, it makes sense to examine how that news is dispersed on the social network. The Wall Street Journal created a chart called Blue Feed/Red Feed showing side-by-side Facebook feeds for users classified as “very liberal” or “very conservative” by Facebook’s algorithm. In other words, a computer classified users as liberal or conservative based upon previous Facebook activity (likes, shares, etc.). The WSJ graphic illustrates the very real concern about “echo chambers” among Facebook users.

Ask students to examine their Facebook feeds to see what’s included and what’s not.

AHA! Someone else is deciding what I see!

Grade Level: 10-12

Key Question #3: What values, lifestyles and points of view are included or omitted?
Core Concept #3: Media have embedded values and points of view.
Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?
Core Concept #5: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Materials: Smart Phones or Computers

Activity: Show students the WSJ Blue/Red graphic. Choose a subject from the menu (i.e. President or Healthcare) that is best suited to your particular class/grade level.

Then ask students to make a list of the articles and trending topics that appear on their personal Facebook pages. Have students pair up and share their assessments of their feeds using the Key Questions and Core Concepts for media literacy.

Discussion questions: What’s included in your feed? What’s missing from your feed? Is it OK for companies like Facebook to determine what you see? Or to categorize users as liberal or conservative? Why would Facebook bother to categorize its users? Do you think the ads you see are...
associated with the category Facebook determined for you? What is the benefit of seeing stories from different angles and sources? What can you do to seek out other sources of information?

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2017, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com