

That Is So Me: **check your reading.**

Six questions on one real news article. Each uses a different reading skill, from finding a fact to judging what to trust.

READ THIS FIRST

The only thing limiting Taylor Swift's popularity is partisan polarization

Laurel Elder, Jeff Gulati, Mary-Kate Lizotte and Steven Greene · The Conversation · January 21, 2026

<https://theconversation.com/the-only-thing-limiting-taylor-swifts-popularity-is-partisan-polarization-272884>



How to use it. Read the whole article first. Keep it open while you answer, the way you would at the kitchen table. The questions go roughly from easier to harder. The levels are a guide to how hard each kind of task is on the international adult literacy test, not a score. The answer key is on the last page.

DECODE LEVEL 1

1. Paragraph 20 says pop stars have become "partisan litmus tests." What is a litmus test here?

LOCATE LEVEL 1 TO 2

2. On the 100-point scale, how did young women and young men rate Swift, and was the gap the same for older Americans?

RESTATE LEVEL 2

3. In one or two sentences of your own, what is the article's main point?

INFER LEVEL 3

4. Young women averaged 55 and young men 43 on a 100-point scale. Does that mean most young men dislike Swift?

COMPARE LEVEL 3

5. Paragraphs 13 to 15 and 18 compare views of Swift with views of a politician. What do the authors say the two have in common?

EVALUATE LEVEL 4 AND UP

6. Paragraph 15 says the backlash “is not about her lyrics or her image. It’s about what she represents.” What kind of statement is that, and what would you need to check it?

Answer key

1. Decode. A single quick sign used to tell which side someone is on. Liking or disliking Swift gets treated as a shortcut to your politics.

Where to look: Paragraph 20

2. Locate. Young women averaged 55 and young men 43. The authors say the gap was not present among older Americans.

Where to look: Paragraph 8

3. Restate. How people feel about Taylor Swift now lines up with party and, among young people, with gender, so liking her has become one more way to signal which side you are on. That is part of a wider trend in which everyday tastes become political badges and shared spaces shrink.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2 to 6 and 20

4. Infer. No. 43 is a little below the middle of the scale and 55 a little above it. The numbers show a gap between averages, not a split between love and hate, and many young men may simply be neutral. The headline-style line in paragraph 4, “young men don’t,” is stronger than the numbers.

Where to look: Paragraphs 4 and 8

5. Compare. Hostile sexism, negative attitudes toward women and a sense that men should dominate, predicts negative views of Swift and also predicted negative views of Kamala Harris in 2024, as earlier research found for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Where to look: Paragraphs 13 to 15 and 18

6. Evaluate. It is the authors’ interpretation of why people dislike her, which goes beyond what a survey can show. The survey shows that hostile sexism goes along with negative views; it does not show why each person feels that way, and the article does not say whether people were asked about her lyrics or image. To check, you would need the paper itself (the article does not give the survey’s name, dates, or size) and data on the reasons people give.

Where to look: Paragraph 15, with paragraphs 3 and 14