



Availability Heuristic: Worksheet

Quick Quiz

1. Define "heuristic." More specifically, what is the availability heuristic?
2. Briefly summarize what happened during the K study.
3. What happened in 1975 when people based their entire opinion of sharks upon the most accessible horror movie of the time, *Jaws*?



Propaganda on an Alien Planet

You're a space explorer who has just crash-landed on an unfamiliar planet. Here, you find two races of aliens: one is called the Jyorkai, while the other is known as Myunes. The Jyorkai and Myunes are currently at war.

1. You go to the country of the Jyorkai. As you walk down the streets, shopkeepers wave the daily Jyorkai newspaper in your face. You use your alien-translator technology to read the newspaper, which calls the Myunes "emotionless beasts," spreads rumors about how the Myunes soldiers practice cannibalism, and reports the casualties from when the Myunes attacked innocent civilian villages. There is also one article about Jyorkai scientific breakthroughs and another article that praises a Jyorkai citizen for bravely putting out a neighborhood fire. What are your current opinions on the Jyorkai and the Myunes? What specific evidence caused you to have those opinions?
2. You're still in the country of the Jyorkai. After a lot of effort, you dig up a few diary entries written by a Myunes fugitive about the war between the alien races. The author describes the "bloodthirsty nature" of the Jyorkai, and writes about watching Myunes children flee from their homes as Jyorkai soldiers invaded their villages. The author also writes about how the Myunes are a race of peaceful aliens who kept to themselves before the Jyorkai initiated the war, and as a farming society, the Myunes have barely any weapons to fight a war. After reading this new information, what are your opinions on the Jyorkai and the Myunes now? How have your opinions changed from before?
3. Based on this example, what do you think are the consequences of relying on the availability heuristic?