



Critical Thinking in the “Fake News” Era

By Jennifer Sader, PhD



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Fake News: Intentionally misleads, cherry-picks facts, purposely frames a story in a way designed to make its targeted readers angry and resentful. Spreads unsubstantiated rumor, does not attempt to be fair with evidence. Plays on people's existing beliefs and biases. May completely fabricate stories. Uses misleading images or takes quotes out of context. The issue of fake news is complicated by politicians calling stories they don't like "Fake News," "lies," "vast right-wing conspiracy," and suggesting that the media are untrustworthy.

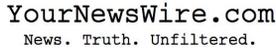
HISTORY

Marie Antoinette and "Let them eat cake" — her [famous line](#) about the poor that got her in all that trouble?

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/16/514364210/5-ways-teachers-are-fighting-fake-news>

Earliest recorded fake news story? "The fake news hit Trent, Italy, on Easter Sunday, 1475. A 2 ½-year-old child named Simonino had gone missing, and a Franciscan preacher, Bernardino da Feltre, gave a series of sermons claiming that the Jewish community had murdered the child, drained his blood and drunk it to celebrate Passover." The city's Jewish population was arrested and tortured over this "blood libel" story, even though the pope recognized it was completely false and tried to stop the persecution of the Jewish community. The originators of the false story "had Simonino canonized—Saint Simon—and attributed to him a hundred miracles."

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/fake-news-history-long-violent-214535>

		Types of Fake News: Examples	
<p>Satire</p>  <p>THE BOROWITZ REPORT <i>Not the news.</i></p> <p>PatriotNewsDaily.com</p>		<p>Fake</p> <p>THE WORLD'S ONLY RELIABLE NEWS</p>  	
<p>Bias</p>  		<p>Clickbait</p>    	
<p>Conspiracy</p>  		<p>Hate</p>  	

Adapted from “List of “False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and Satirical “News” Sources”
https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5-mCZLSS4MQY5QG5ewC3VAL6pLKT53V_81ZyitM/mobilebasic

Fake News (tag fake): Sources that entirely fabricate information, disseminate deceptive content, or grossly distort actual news reports.

Satire (tag satire): Sources that use humor, irony, exaggeration, ridicule, and false information to comment on current events.

‘Extreme’ Bias (tag bias): Sources that come from a particular point of view and may rely on propaganda, decontextualized information, and opinions distorted as facts.

Conspiracy (tag conspiracy): Sources that are well-known promoters of kooky conspiracy theories. Ex: 9/11 conspiracies, chem-trails, lizard people in the sewer systems, birther rumors, flat earth ‘theory,’ fluoride as mind control, vaccines as mind control etc.

Rumor Mill (tag rumor): Sources that traffic in rumors, gossip, innuendo, and unverified claims.

State News (tag state): Sources in repressive states operating under government sanction.

Junk Science (tag junksci): Sources that promote pseudoscience, metaphysics, naturalistic fallacies, and other scientifically dubious claims.

Hate News (tag hate): Sources that actively promote racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination.

Clickbait (tag clickbait): Sources that provide generally credible content, but use exaggerated, misleading, OR questionable headlines, social media descriptions, and/or images. These sources may also use sensational language to generate interest, clickthroughs, and shares, but their content is typically verifiable.

New US report says global warming man-made, contradicts Trump claim
Daily Sabah · 19m ago

Major federal climate report rebuts everything Trump administration has said about climate change
AOL · 36m ago

Massive federal report to give in-depth look on climate change in the US
WHAS 11.com · 18h ago

Despite Trump denials, humans causing climate change: Government report
Metro US · 20h ago

A Deceptive New Report on Climate
Wall Street Journal · 20h ago

Past 115 Years Warmest In Modern Civilization: Climate Report
Patch.com · 21h ago

Climate Change
TexasGOPVote · Nov 2, 2017

Climate change report says humans "extremely likely" to blame for warming
CBS News · 21m ago

Sort by relevance ▾

Comparing Headlines

Full coverage

Trump administration releases report finding 'no convincing alternative explanation' for climate change
In Depth · Washington Post · 1h ago

The Trump administration just debunked its own lies about climate change
ThinkProgress · 47m ago

Humans 'dominant cause' of climate change, government report says
Washington Examiner · 27m ago

More Articles

Future Global Climate Depends on Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Report
U.S. News & World Report · 27m ago

Humans to blame for global warming, massive federal report says
WTSP 10 News · 59m ago

Massive Government Report Says Climate Is Warming And Humans Are The Cause
KUOW News and Information · 23h ago

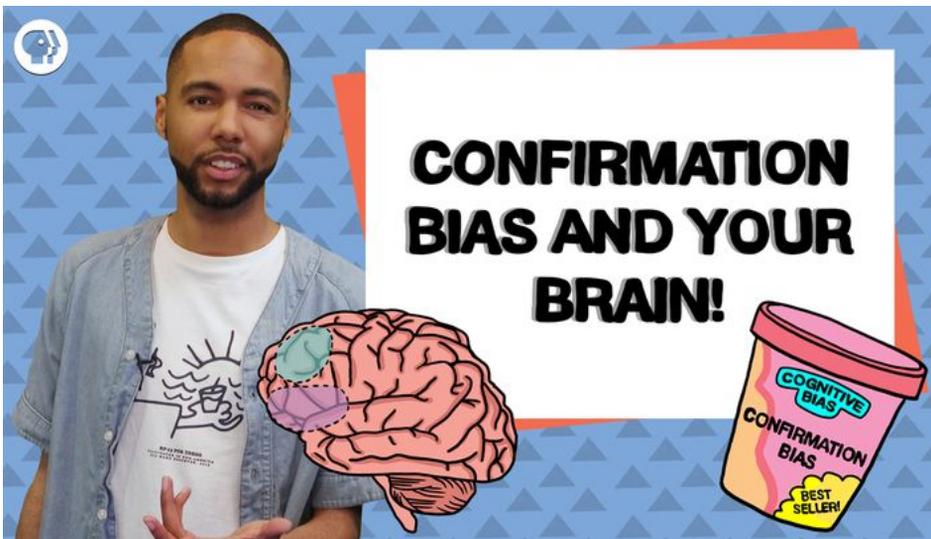
National Climate Assessment Moves Through Scientific Process to Diagnose US Climate Change Ills
Union of Concerned Scientists · 38m ago

Reading a story from multiple viewpoints to get the full picture

Even among reputable mainstream news sources, the headlines and emphasis for a controversial story can vary widely depending on the source. Many sources have a general "lean left" or "lean right" tendency. Compare the circled headlines. Left: Wall Street Journal, CBS News

Right: Washington Post, U.S. News & World Report, Union of Concerned Scientists. What attitude would you expect from each of these articles, given the headlines?

(Used Google News, View Full Coverage to get list of headlines)



Why do our brains love fake news? Everyone is susceptible to false stories that fit their existing beliefs and worldview.

Cognitive biases, especially confirmation bias:

Anchoring bias (n.) Relying too much on the first piece of information you learn or hear

Blind-spot bias (n.) Recognizing bias in others, but failing to recognize it in yourself

Confirmation bias (n.) Listening to and trusting only information that confirms your beliefs

Negativity bias (n.) Focusing on negative events at the expense of positive or neutral events

Outcome bias (n.) Judging or evaluating a decision based solely on the outcome

<https://wgte.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/confirmation-bias-kqed/the-lowdown-how-good-are-you-at-detecting-bias-lesson-plan/?#.WfzJW2hSy70>

“we’re open to new information – but only if it confirms our existing beliefs. We find ways to ignore facts that challenge our ideals. And as neuroscientist Bahador Bahrami and colleagues have found, we weigh all opinions as equally valid, regardless of expertise.”

<http://www.npr.org/2017/03/13/519661419/when-it-comes-to-politics-and-fake-news-facts-arent-enough>

Fighting Back Against Fake News

Story and Lesson Plan

From KQED



Some news is deliberately misleading, and it's important to be on your guard. Being a critical consumer of news is your best defense.

Lesson Plan:

<http://ww2.kqed.org/lowdown/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2016/12/Fake-news-lesson-plan.pdf>

<https://ww2.kqed.org/lowdown/2017/05/03/the-honest-truth-about-fake-news-with-lesson-plan/>

Activities for students to test their own reactions to news stories to see if they can spot misleading news. Asks them to look at sources, try to spot advertising, look at potentially-misleading articles and test their critical thinking skills.

BREAKING NEWS CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK

FAKE NEWS EDITION

1. Big red flags for fake news: ALL CAPS, or obviously photoshopped pics.
2. A glut of pop-ups and banner ads? Good sign the story is pure clickbait.
3. Check the domain! Fake sites often add ".co" to trusted brands to steal their luster. (Think: "abcnews.com.co")
4. If you land on an unknown site, check its "About" page. Then, Google it with the word "fake" and see what comes up.
5. If a story offers links, follow them. (Garbage leads to worse garbage.) No links, quotes, or references? Another telltale sign.
6. Verify an unlikely story by finding a reputable outlet reporting the same thing.
7. Check the date. Social media often resurrects outdated stories.
8. Read past headlines. Often they bear no resemblance to what lies beneath.
9. Photos may be misidentified and dated. Use a reverse image search engine like TinEye to see where an image *really* comes from.
10. Gut check. If a story makes you angry, it's probably designed that way.
11. Finally, if you're not sure it's true, don't share it! *Don't. Share. It.*

ON **THE MEDIA** ONTHEMEDIA.ORG

WNYC On the Media

Breaking News Consumer's Handbook:

Fake News Edition

How can you evaluate news when you see a story online? Some tips:

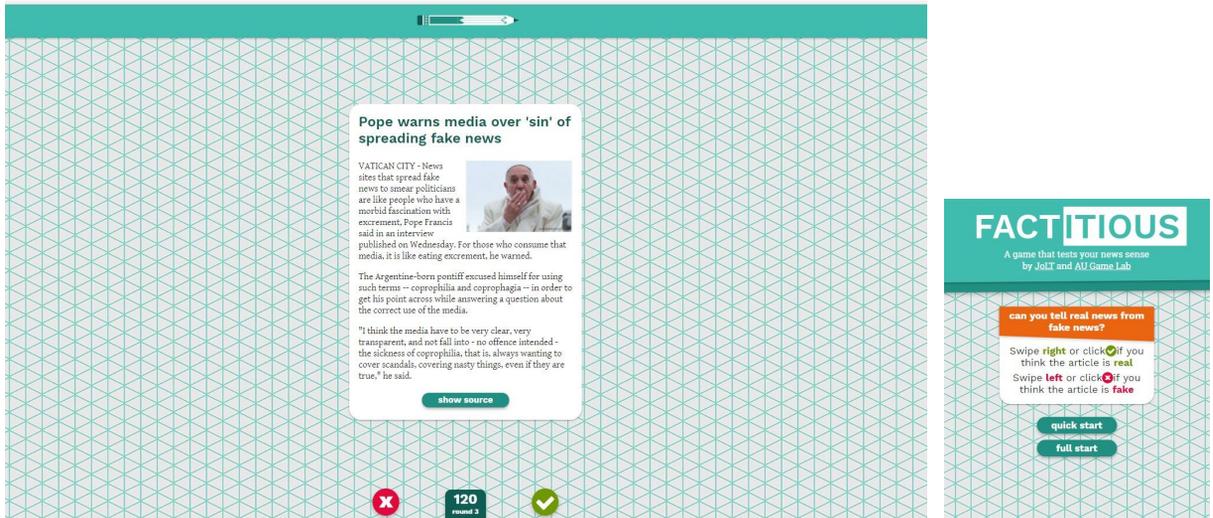
<http://www.wnyc.org/story/breaking-news-consumer-handbook-fake-news-edition/>

Also included:

List of "False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and Satirical "News" Sources"

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5-mCZLSS4MQY5QGb5ewC3VAL6pLkT53V_81ZyitM/mobilebasic

Fake News Game



Fake News Game:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/07/03/533676536/test-your-fake-news-judgement-play-this-game>

Play the game: <http://factitiousgame.com/>

Russian Influences: Resources for Discussion



Heart of Texas shared their event.

Fellow Texans! It's time to say a strong NO to the establishment robbers. It is unacceptable for us to see them ruin all we've been building for decades. For centuries. The establishment thinks they can treat us like stupid sheep but they are wrong. We won't put up with this anymore. The corrupt media does not talk about the crimes committed by Hillary Robben Clinton, neither does it mention the leaked emails but it would rather keep on kicking around some outdated tape feet. See More

GET READY TO SECEDE!

NOV 5
518 people interested · 98 people going

1.9K Reactions · 143 Comments

LGBT United shared their event.

Westboro baptist church is planning to stand against tolerance in education system near LG

GOD HATES BIGOTS

MAY 25
Westboro Baptist Church counter protest
Wed 5:30 PM CDT - 1901 Louisiana St. Lawrenc.
224 people interested · 51 people going

167 Reactions · 21 Comments

Army of Jesus shared their event.

Today Americans are able to elect a president with godly moral principles. Hillary is a Satan, and her crimes and lies had proved just how evil she is. And even though Donald Trump isn't a saint by any means, he's at least an honest man and he cares deeply for this country. My vote goes for him!

Born Liberal shared their event.

"If you ask me about the Clinton Foundation, do I have a problem when a sitting secretary of state and a foundation run by her husband collects many millions of dollars from foreign governments, many governments which are dictatorships... yeah, I do," Sanders said in an interview with Jake Tapper on CNN.

So, Bernie has the point. I appreciate the way he maintains his independent opinion in spite of all the pressure that is on him as the "second Democratic option". Because that... See More

Sample Russian-Sponsored Facebook Ads

Did Fake News influence the 2016 election? Video and lesson:

<https://wgte.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/41b739de-9649-41b4-b9b4-97b348e42bac/did-fake-news-influence-the-outcome-of-election-2016/#.WgG90mhSy70>

Anatomy of a Russian Facebook Ad:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/business/russian-ads-facebook-anatomy/?utm_term=.74d70758f7cc

Sample Russian Facebook ads: <https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/hpsci-11-1/>
Goal was to sow division by highlighting things that are divisive from both the left and right

How Russian Propaganda Spreads on Social Media:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2017/10/29/560461835/how-russian-propaganda-spreads-on-social-media>

Website tracks Russian Twitter bots:

<http://www.businessinsider.com/russian-propaganda-website-tracker-2017-8>

Hamilton 68 dashboard shows current stories being promoted by Russian-affiliated accounts: <http://dashboard.securingdemocracy.org/>



STUDENT SITE

ABOUT

LOG IN

CREATE A FREE ACCOUNT

BROWSE STANDARDS Search All Grades All Subjects All Types

Grades

PreK 4 9
 K 5 10
 1 6 11
 2 7 12
 3 8 13+

Subject

- Mathematics (112)
- English Language Arts and Literacy (742)
- The Arts (3,240)
- Health and Physical Education (257)
- Preschool (179)

8,091 results for "fake news"

Turn images off Include Teacher-Built Resources

Sort by: Relevance



The Lowdown | Fake News Lesson Plan

Fake news is no longer a matter of the occasional hoax. There is growing evidence that fake news has the power to shape public opinion and even sway...



Can Facebook and Google help tackle the fake news problem?

In the days just after the presidential election, the top result returned by the Google News service for the search "final election results" was an article... 0:05:52



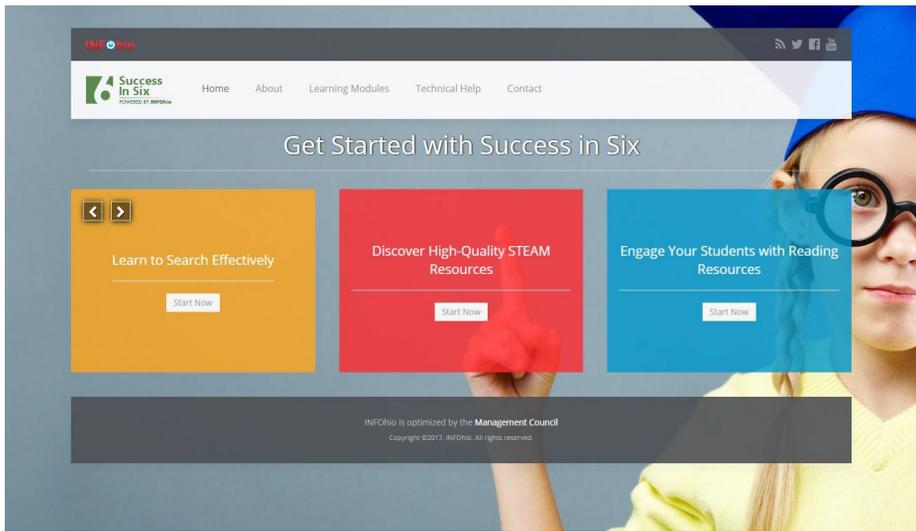
Identifying "Fake" News | Common Sense Education

What is "fake" news? How do we know it's false? Use these resources from Common Sense Education to help students investigate the way...

Need more resources on fake news?

Search PBS Learning Media: <https://wgte.pbslearningmedia.org/>

Can narrow by subject, grade level, etc.



InfOhio is a free digital library of resources available to educators and parents. You will need to look up your school's login, but then there are quite a few resources available. There is a tool here on search engines that will help you show your students how to find more reliable sources.

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