

NEWS LITERACY

LESSON COLLECTION FOR GRADES 5 AND UP



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News Literacy

Lesson Collection for Grades 5 and Up

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ABOUT THIS COLLECTION:

In today's world, it's easy to mistake 'fake news', propaganda, advertising, and rumours as news. That means it's more important than ever to teach students how to separate fact from fiction, and to know what information to trust.

However, determining whether a source of information is trustworthy is not easy. According to the Center for News Literacy, "*there are four literacy challenges for civil society in the digital age:*

1. *The overwhelming amount of information that floods over us each day makes it difficult to sort out reliable from fabricated information.*
2. *New technologies to create and widely share information make it possible to spread misinformation that looks like it's from an authoritative source.*
3. *The conflict between speed and accuracy has escalated. We all want information as quickly as possible, but accelerating the distribution of information in the Digital Era has also increased the chances that the information will be wrong.*
4. *The Internet and Social Media make it much easier to select only the information that supports our preexisting beliefs, reinforcing rather than challenging them.*"*

How can these challenges be addressed? This collection of six detailed lesson plans provides a starting point. It identifies the skills that students need to evaluate the credibility of the information they encounter, and suggests ways these skills may be taught. Start with the first lesson plan, 'What's Up?', to encourage students to begin examining the role news plays in their lives. The remaining lesson plans can then be taught in any order.

More excellent information and teaching resources are available online. Check out these website for additional news literacy lessons and strategies:

*Center for News Literacy: www.centerfornewsliteracy.org

Media Smarts –Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy:
<http://mediasmarts.ca/>

The News Literacy Project: <https://newslit.org/>

Games for Change News Literacy Challenge:
<http://www.gamesforchange.org/studentchallenge/la/news-literacy/#1481656115412-3efob078-21514765-4eb4da79-5d670357-0a65>

Please note that the lesson plans in this collection were originally published in **What in the World?**. Some cited links may no longer be active.

WHAT'S UP?

CONTEXT

In today's digital world, the Internet and social media make the accessing, creating, and spreading of information easy, instantaneous and far-reaching. Peter Adams, from *The News Literacy Project*, describes how today's youth are 'digital natives' but also show 'digital naiveté', trusting many sources of information without considering their reliability or credibility. [Read his 2014 Edutopia post 'News Literacy: Critical Thinking Skills for the 21st Century': <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/news-literacy-critical-thinking-skills-peter-adams>].

This lesson is designed to help raise students' awareness of the prevalence and the significance news plays in their lives – to set the stage for the lessons that follow.

LESSON PLAN

A. SET THE STAGE

1. Begin by distributing **The One-Question Interview** template (p. 5) to each student. Read the directions aloud. Pose the following question and ask students to copy it onto their template: *What is news?*
2. Give students 3-5 minutes to conduct their interviews and additional time to analyze the information and draw conclusions.
3. Facilitate a **Think-Pair-Share** discussion asking partners to share the insights from their interviews. Then, elicit several responses to build a class definition of 'news'.
4. You may wish to share the following definitions of news and comments about news by famous people in history, outlined by MediaSmarts.ca (scroll to page 2 of the following lesson plan): http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/pdfs/lesson-plan/Lesson_Definitions_Comments_News.pdf Compare the published definitions with the class's definition and invite students to respond to the 'Comments about the News'.

B. DIG DEEPER

The following activity is intended to help students to determine their personal sources of news and to consider the importance news plays in their lives.

1. Invite students to spend 48 hours making note of the news they hear, watch, click on, read and/or share. To help them track their sources, including the type of news and topics, hand out a copy of **Where does my news come from?** to each student. Direct them to place a ✓ in the box that best represents the types and sources of news they receive or share and to record a **1-3 word summary** of the topics (e.g., lunch, tornado in Florida, Oilers won).
2. Once they have finished their research, ask them to draw some conclusions about the news in their lives, then to create a visual representation of where most of their news comes from, using **Wordle** (<http://www.wordle.net/>) or an app like **Pic Collage**.
3. Finally, arrange for students to share their findings and representations in a **Gallery Walk**. Encourage them to notice the themes that emerge across the class: *Where do students get most of their news? What purpose(s) does the news serve in their lives?*

[Note: You may wish to inform students that according to the Digital Resource Centre (DRC), the 'hunger for news' is universal. It suggests that all societies studied by anthropologists have valued a system for exchanging information. The DRC has observed that this 'need to know' can be categorized into three kinds of news: to alert, to divert (entertain), and to connect. Read more about the 'Power of Information', in the DRC's Spring 2017 News Literacy Lesson 2 Course Pack: <http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/course-pack>].

WHAT'S UP?

C. TEST IT OUT

1. Present the following **News Blackout Challenge** to the class: *For 48 hours, do not read, watch, listen to or share ANY news... no sports scores, no weather reports, no Facebook (or other social media)... even from family or friends. Be prepared to report on your experience—thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions.* You may wish to encourage students to keep a running diary or response log throughout the two-day period.
2. At the end of their blackout, conduct another **One Question Interview** asking students to copy the following prompt onto their organizer: *What did you notice most about your news blackout experience?*
3. Facilitate a **Think-Pair-Share** discussion, asking partners to share the insights from their interviews, then participate in a class discussion. Challenge students to draw conclusions about the impact news plays in their lives. ★

WHAT'S UP?

THE ONE-QUESTION INTERVIEW

Directions: Write the interview question below. Ask your question to as many people as you can in the time you are given. Record their names and briefly summarize their responses. When you're finished, analyze the information and draw conclusions from it by responding to the questions at the bottom of the organizer.

Question: _____

Number of people I interviewed: _____

What they said:

From this I can conclude that: _____

* Adapted from: The Learning Network: Teaching & Learning with the New York Times learning.blogs.nytimes.com

WHAT'S UP?

WHERE DOES MY NEWS COME FROM?

Types of News	Sources and Topics					
	Radio	TV	Newspaper/ Magazines	Internet	Conversation	Other
World News						
National News						
Local/ Community News						
School News						
News about Family/Friends						
Other:						
Other:						

My conclusions: _____

* Adapted from: www.MediaSmarts.ca

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

CONTEXT

Rapidly evolving technology and the rise of digital media have changed the way information reaches the public. The speed at which words, pictures, and videos can be shared and received has also changed the nature of news. CIVIX (2017) states that we are shifting from 'old media', including both broadcast (radio or television) and print formats (newspaper, magazines or flyers), to 'new media'. It characterizes old media as "typically one-way communication that strives to maintain journalistic integrity and standards." This unwritten code of ethics and the valuing of transparency and accountability meant that consumers could, for the most part, trust the news sources.

New media, on the other hand, refers to information that is accessible on devices via the Internet, including online sources, newspaper websites, and social media platforms. CIVIX suggests that new media is usually "interactive, user-driven, borderless and functions in real-time." [To read the full article on Media, go to The Student Vote website: <http://studentvote.ca/bc2017/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BC2017-Secondary-Lesson-4-1.pdf>]

This proliferation of information requires news consumers to become 'news literate' – to become critical consumers of information who deconstruct what they are reading, watching or listening to in order to determine the accuracy and reliability of the information. The shift from old to new media also means that anyone can become a journalist, which impacts the nature of news and the motives for sharing it.

The Centre for News Literacy explains this evolution in this way: *The most profound communications revolution since the invention of Gutenberg's printing press seems to make it harder, not easier, to determine the truth. The digital revolution is characterized by a flood of information and misinformation that news consumers can access from anywhere at any time.*

News aggregators, bloggers, pundits, provocateurs, commentators and "citizen journalists" are competing with traditional journalists for public attention. Uninformed opinion masquerades as news. Lines are blurring between legitimate journalism and the propaganda, entertainment, self-promotion and unmediated information on the Internet.

This superabundance of information has made it imperative that citizens learn to judge the reliability of news reports and other sources of information that are passed along via their social networks [Source: <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/02/skills-and-strategies-fake-news-vs-real-news-determining-the-reliability-of-sources/>].

This lesson introduces the acronym I'M VAIN, created by The Centre for News Literacy, to help students analyze the credibility of a source.

[If you wish to learn more about news literacy, check out how students in this New York City middle school are learning to consume news responsibly using the I'M VAIN acronym (and other curricula developed by The Centre for News Literacy at Stony Brook University): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Exo9MolpFg&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhSrnPm-9awXCCbzybGgoGHM&index=2>]

LESSON PLAN

A. SET THE STAGE

1. Begin by posing these questions for students to consider and discuss: *How do you know if something you read is true? Why should you care?*
2. Using appropriate technology, project the image found on p. 16 of the Stanford History Education Group's Executive Summary, Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning: <https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%2011.21.16.pdf> [The image was one of the tools used to assess youth's ability to judge the credibility of information that 'floods' their devices.] The image is a post from Imgur, a photo-sharing website, and shows daisies along with the claim that the flowers have 'nuclear birth defects' from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster.
3. Read the caption aloud, then direct students to answer the question underneath the photograph: *Does this post provide strong evidence about the conditions near the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant? Explain your reasoning.*

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

4. Facilitate a **Think-Pair-Share** discussion, inviting students to share their responses, first with a partner, then in a class discussion. Their responses will give you insights into whether they considered the source of the post and the validity of the information in making their judgments.

B. DIG DEEPER

1. Suggest that being news literate means to get to the truth of something; that when you are looking at or listening to news online you should be asking yourself some questions:

- *What are they telling me?*
- *Do I believe them?*
- *Should I believe them?*
- *What decision am I going to make, based on my understanding of what they've said?*

2. Suggest that responsible consumers of information use a series of filters to help determine its *source* (where the information came from) and its *credibility* (trustworthiness).

3. Distribute a copy of **How credible is this source?** to each student. Begin by introducing and discussing each of the letters of the acronym **I'M VAIN**, a mnemonic developed by the Centre for News Literacy, for questioning sources of information. Point out the 'red flags' – clues students might look for as they gather evidence to support or refute each aspect. [You may wish to point out the irony of the acronym. Someone who's vain is excessively concerned about his/her own appearance, value, qualities, or achievements. They're conceited and, therefore, don't always consider the needs or interests of others. These qualities are not shared by responsible, ethical journalists.]

4. Then, use the acronym to collectively deconstruct the credibility of the Fukushima Daiichi daisies post. Use a think-aloud to make your thinking explicit as you model the process for and with the students. Encourage students to record relevant evidence to support or refute each of the letters in the acronym, like the example below:

Independent source: *This post was more self-serving; the person who posted the image was not the person who photographed the daisies. The original photo was posted to Twitter by @San_kaido on May 27, 2015 and purportedly showed mutated Shasta daisies growing near the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan. Here is a copy of the original Tweet: <https://abm-website-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/pddnet.com/s3fs-public/Fukushima%20Daisies%20Tweet.png>. We have no way of determining why the creator of the post copied and shared the image.*

Multiple sources: *An Internet search of images showed that many people copied and/or shared the image. Photographs of other mutated daisies came from places far away from Fukushima (e.g., Idaho, Netherlands). No other sources show photographs of mutated daisies from the same area.*

Verified with evidence: *The photograph does not show strong evidence about conditions near the nuclear power plant. There is no proof that the picture was taken near the power plant or that nuclear radiation caused the daisies' unusual growth.*

The radiation level near the daisies, as claimed by @San_kaido, is only slightly above normal and is classified as safe, according to journalists who investigated the authenticity of the photograph on Snopes', National Geographic's and Science Alert's websites. They also suggest that the appearance of the daisies may be the result of fasciation, a naturally occurring phenomenon with a variety of causes. As a class, check out these websites to learn more about the credibility of the photo:

- *Snopes: Mutant Daisies. Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Fasciation: <http://www.snopes.com/nuclear-mutant-daisies/>*
- *National Geographic article: Are 'Mutated' Daisies Really Caused by Fukushima Radiation? <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/07/150723-fukushima-mutated-daisies-flowers-radiation-science/>*
- *Science Alert article: New Photos Show Mutated Daisies Growing Near Fukushima – But that doesn't mean they are the result of radiation: <https://www.sciencealert.com/new-photos-show-mutated-daisies-growing-near-fukushima>*

Authoritative/Informed sources: *We know nothing about the credentials of David Kelly, the person who copied and shared the image (or the author of the original Tweet) on Imgur. Imgur is a site where anyone can upload a photograph.*

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

Named sources: *David Kelly is the name attached to the post but there is also another name, Shaker Aamer. An Internet search shows that there are several men named David Kelly so we can't confirm the identity of the person who posted the image. One of the David Kellys was a Welsh scientist and authority on biological warfare who died in 2003; another is an actor; yet another is a football player. An additional search also revealed that Shaker Aamer is a citizen of Saudi Arabia who was held by the UN in Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp for more than 13 years without charge. He was released in 2015. The connection between David Kelly and Shaker Aamer is unclear, if there is a connection at all.*

5. After working through each step of the I'M VAIN acronym, revisit what it means to be news literate and review the four questions posed at the beginning of the lesson. Focus in on the fourth question: ***What decision am I going to make, based on my understanding of what they've said?***

6. Suggest that once they have determined the credibility of a source, responsible news consumers reflect on the kinds of actions they might take in response to what they've learned. For example, decide whether or not the information matters; probe more deeply to determine what else they want (or need) to know about the topic or issue; and/or forward, post or share the information.

7. Finally, invite students to individually respond to the mutant daisy post by completing the "My Conclusions" portion of the organizer.

C. TEST IT OUT

1. Hand out another copy of the organizer to each pair of students. Encourage them to work together to deconstruct another online news article, again providing relevant evidence to support their findings. It may be helpful to provide the source for the students to work with before they select their own; that way you can review the credibility of the article together. Students will need multiple opportunities to practice this process before it becomes second nature and fluid.

2. **MediaSmarts.ca** has a lesson plan that helps students deconstruct a web page. Although the acronym to guide students' deconstruction used in the lesson plan is different than the one introduced above, many of the same filters are used. The Teacher Backgrounder and related article are helpful resources. Download the lesson plan for your reference, at:

http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/lesson-plans/lesson_deconstructing_web_pages.pdf. Direct students to the article on the webpage Aspartame's Hidden Dangers by Dr. Mercola: **http://www.mercola.com/article/aspartame/hidden_dangers.htm**. ★

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

HOW CREDIBLE IS THIS SOURCE?

What are you analyzing?

a photograph a website an article a blog/editorial a visual a social media post other:

Title: _____

Author: _____

URL or source: _____

Date: _____

INDEPENDENT <i>Is this an independent source? Does the quoted source have personal or financial interests at stake?</i> Red flags: employer, investor, neighbour, business owner, advocate/lobbyist	
MULTIPLE SOURCES <i>Are there two or more people saying the same thing?</i> Red flags: family, housemates, teammates, colleagues	
VERIFIED <i>Does the source provide evidence that verifies (proves) what he/she is saying?</i> Red flags: strong language, tone, vague/no references or facts	
AUTHORITATIVE <i>Does the source have experience or education/training to back up his/her claims?</i> Red flags: e.g., lawyers talking science	
INFORMED <i>Is the source well-informed about the specific news topic?</i> Red flags: no access to the scene	
NAMED <i>Is this a named source?</i> Red flags: anonymous source	

HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

HOW CREDIBLE IS THIS SOURCE?

MY CONCLUSIONS:

My opinion: This post matters doesn't matter because...

It makes me think/feel...

My judgment: This post is highly credible somewhat credible not at all credible

because...

My decision: After analyzing the credibility of this source, I will:

dig deeper forward, post or share it responsibly other:

because...

* Adapted from: The Center for News Literacy

FACT VERSUS OPINION

CONTEXT

One of the foundational skills of media literacy is distinguishing *fact* from *opinion*. In most cases, news reporters strive to be impartial—to offer factual and neutral coverage of an event without letting their opinions or biases interfere. (However, the process of selecting which stories will be broadcast or published, and where and when they appear, is a form of bias.)

The news media also produces editorial and opinion pieces, where writers (editors or columnists) share their insights and perspectives to persuade readers to accept their views based on their personal or professional experiences. Although their opinions may be based on facts, they are often meant to deliberately sway readers' thinking. These writers often use first or second person (I, we, our, ours, you, yours) to show the piece is based on a personal point-of-view. As well, they use emotion-laden words (for example, *caution*, *trigger*, *shatter*) or make judgments (for example, *should*, *worst*, *remarkable*) to influence the reader.

Both factual and opinion-based pieces serve a purpose. However, when reading an article, it's important to be aware of the following:

- **who is writing the story**—is it a reporter, editor, columnist?
- **the author's intent**—is he/she trying to inform, persuade or entertain?
- **his/her choice of language**—is it factual or emotion-laden?

These filters can help the reader assess the credibility of the source—how much it can be trusted.

SET THE STAGE

1. Begin by defining (or reviewing) the terms **fact** and **opinion**:

A fact is a statement that can be proven to be true or false. It is observable and can be verified.

An opinion is a personal belief, feeling, or thought that cannot be proven.

2. You may find it helpful to watch a short video explaining the differences between a fact and an opinion, such as one of the following:

- Fact or Opinion for Kids: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLyt5pEcE_g [2:11]
- BrainPOP UK - Fact and Opinion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ngkj2Lx-Ks> [5:11]
- Fact or Opinion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcoXdBrbgw8> [5:26]
- Distinguishing Fact from Opinion: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsgZGW_1oMM [7:39]

[Note: these videos are arranged according to their complexity.]

3. Present students with a series of statements and have them identify whether or not they are fact or opinion, such as:

- The government's new tax plan is unfair to low-income families. (opinion)
- At a press conference, the provincial government promised to provide free day care for children under 5. (fact)
- The province of B.C. has spent \$484.7 million fighting fires so far this year, compared with \$122 million last year. (fact)
- This season is now B.C.'s worse fire season in history and it is far from over. (opinion)
- People who wanted to protect their property from the hurricanes and floods that plague the U.S. Gulf Coast should have had insurance. (opinion)
- Reconstruction efforts are underway in Texas to clean up after Hurricane Harvey flooded Houston and other areas in the state's southeast. (fact)
- Nearly 800 aftershocks have been recorded since Mexico's 8.1 magnitude quake struck late last Thursday. (fact)
- One of the things you can do to be prepared for an earthquake is to make sure you have an emergency kit near the door you're most likely to exit, and keep it free from clutter. You should also keep a kit in your car and at work as well. (opinion)

FACT VERSUS OPINION

DIG DEEPER

Select an article from the front page of a local or national paper. Using appropriate technology, project the article and read the piece aloud as a class. Invite students to identify which lines are *facts* (underline/highlight these) and which are *opinions* (circle these). Discuss how you can tell the difference between the two. Ask students to point out which statements were tricky; discuss why. Then, encourage them to look at the rate of fact to opinion statements in the article and infer what this tells them about the author and his/her intent.

You may wish to choose another article for students to analyze independently or allow students to select their own. Direct students to read and underline/highlight the facts in the article and circle the opinion statements. When they have finished, ask them to compare their analysis with another student, using the following questions to guide their discussion:

- *Did they underline/highlight the same facts?*
- *Did they circle the same opinions?*
- *If there were differences, why do they think there were?*
- *Which statements were tricky? Why?*
- *What does the rate of fact to opinion in this article tell you?*

TEST IT OUT

Select a news report and an opinion piece on the same topic. Have students read and identify the fact and opinion statements in each, as they did previously. When finished, invite students to notice the differences and identify the fact/opinion ratio in the both pieces. As a class, discuss the following:

- *Which was the most interesting to read and why?*
- *Which seems most credible and why?*
- *Which will have the most impact and why? ★*

IS THIS REAL?

CONTEXT

Common Sense Media conducted an online survey of 853 children ages 10-18 in January 2017. Its report, “News and America’s Kids: How Young People Perceive and Are Impacted by the News,” investigated ‘how children get their news, how much they trust different news sources, whether they can spot “fake news”, and more.’

Results showed that 63 percent of children get their news from family, teachers, and/or friends and 49 percent from online media. However, 39 percent *prefer* getting their news from social media, with Facebook and YouTube being the most popular sites for news.

The findings also revealed that children are fooled by fake news. Only 44 percent of youth surveyed felt that they could tell fake news stories from real ones. Thirty-one percent of kids who had shared a news story online within the last six months later found out that the story was wrong or inaccurate.

According to MediaSmarts, students are least likely to fact-check news and other information that comes to them through social media networks like Facebook or Twitter. Because they don’t always think critically about the information they access or receive, they are easily fooled by fake news and can unknowingly spread misinformation or rumours.

This lesson offers strategies to help students verify the authenticity of information they receive through social media networks or find online.

Sources:

¹News and America’s Kids: How Young People Perceive and Are Impacted by the News. Common Sense Media, 2017.

<https://www.common Sense Media.org/research/news-and-americas-kids>

²”Reality Check” MediaSmarts 2017. <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/authenticating-information/reality-check>

SET THE STAGE

1. Begin by facilitating a Think-Pair-Share* discussion, asking students:

- How often do you check to make sure that what you are sharing or commenting on online is real?
- How do you go about finding that out?

* Explain to students that they will (1) think individually about the question (1-3 minutes); (2) pair with a partner and discuss the answer (2-5 minutes); and (3) share their ideas with the rest of the class.

2. Then, as a class, watch each of the following videos to learn more about how to spot fake news and create a list of strategies suggested by each video. Post the strategies for reference. Alternatively, divide the class into 3 groups and assign each group a different video to watch and present their findings to the class.

- How to Spot Fake News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z-7zhS4OHU> [5:25]
- How to Spot Fake News – FactCheck.org: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkwWcHekMdo> [3:22]
- 5 Ways to Spot Fake News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2AdkNH-kWA> [1:09]

Note: students may find the following related videos interesting. The first shows ways in which media can be manipulated to appear real; the second explains how false news can spread:

- The rise of ‘fake news’, manipulation and ‘alternative facts’ - BBC Newsnight: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aTApGWVGol> [4:27]
- How false news can spread – Noah Tavlin: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSKGa_7XJkg [3:41]

IS THIS REAL?

DIG DEEPER

1. Distribute to each student a copy of **Fact or fiction?**. Compare the class list of strategies to those listed on the handout.
2. Model each of the strategies using one or more of the stories posted on Internet news sites such as:
 - Yahoo News: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/viral/>
 - True Viral News: <http://trueviralnews.com/>
 - Mirror: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/viral>

TEST IT OUT

Challenge students to use two or three of the strategies on the handout to determine the authenticity of a personal social media post—news story, photograph, video—they suspect is fictional. Have them document their findings by answering the questions below, then share their posts and conclusions with the class or a small group of students:

- Headline/title:
- Source:
- Is it real?
- How do you know? (Explain what you found out when you verified the authenticity of the post.) ★

IS THIS REAL?

FACT OR FICTION?

Use these strategies to verify the authenticity of social media posts or Internet news:

√ **Examine the layout.** Look for grammatical errors. Check the accuracy of dates. See if claims are supported with sources. Watch out for sensationalist photographs. All of these are warning signs that the news may be fake.

√ **Consult the experts.** Independent, reputable, fact-checking sites, such as these, will tell you the extent to which something is true:

- **FactCheck.Org**
- **Snopes.com**
- **TruthOrFiction.com**
- **Hoax-Slayer.net**

√ **Find out more about the author.** A reputable source will have information on the author's qualifications or will offer a short biography. If not, type the author's name into a search engine and see what you find.

√ **Expand a shortened URL.** Services such as Unshorten.It! and checkshorturl let you copy a shortened URL into their search engine so you can get some information on the link before you click it. Shortened URLs are often used on social media sites.

√ **Cross-check other sources.** Facebook, YouTube, and other social media platforms aim to keep you on their sites. To check the validity of stories, check to see what other sources are reporting.

√ **Check the headline.** If a headline looks suspicious, copy and paste it into a search engine. If it's fake, you'll see links to sites that have debunked the story already. Or, you can do a search for the subject with the words 'hoax' or 'scam', as in the 'shark subway station hoax'.

√ **Try a reverse image search.** Google Images lets you upload a photo or paste in a link to search for information about it. You can also do a photo search at TinEye (www.tineye.com). It will tell you where else the picture has appeared and also show you similar pictures so you can see if it has been photoshopped.

√ **See if the account is verified.** It's easy for scammers to create bogus profiles to impersonate famous people and send out phony information. Social media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest offer "verified accounts" of well-known names including those of celebrities, brands, public figures, and media personalities so you can see that the information is coming from the correct source.

* Adapted from: "What's the best way for teens to fact-check the news?" Common Sense Media, 2017.

<https://www.common sense media.org/news-and-media-literacy/whats-the-best-way-for-teens-to-fact-check-the-news>

SHOULD I SPREAD THIS NEWS OR NOT?

CONTEXT

According to the Digital Resource Centre (DRC) For News Literacy, there is a universal need to share and receive information; that our ‘appetite for news is in our DNA’—we want to be ‘in the know’. The DRC suggests that news serves several purposes: to alert, divert, and connect us¹.

New technology, the Internet, and social media platforms help achieve these purposes in powerful ways. Apps like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter allow users to access, share, and receive information almost instantaneously. In 2017, 4.1 million YouTube videos were watched, 1.8 million Snaps were created, 3.5 million searches were conducted on Google, and 16 million text messages were sent...every minute². The volume of information available is mind-boggling.

MediaSmarts cites research suggesting that news stories or photographs that engage our emotions, surprise us, pique our curiosity, or connect with us on a personal level are more likely to capture our attention and be shared (and go viral). We often don’t take the time to critically look at the content of these stories or photographs to verify the authenticity of the source,³ nor do we think about the consequences of sharing information that is inaccurate or misleading. In addition, MediaSmarts shares the results of a study that show students are least likely to fact check news and other information that comes to them through social media networks like Facebook or Twitter, their most common sources of news.

Because we are ‘wired for news’, it is easy to be fooled by fake news and drawn in by viral stories. And, it is easy for anyone to spread rumours or falsehoods without intending to. The challenge can be differentiating between accurate information and misinformation. Or, knowing if what we are looking at is advertising, entertainment, publicity, or propaganda.

MediaSmarts confirms that online news is one of the hardest things to verify. In a world where news can be reported by anyone with a cellphone, how do we decide what is true? What questions should we ask to find out?

As social media users, it is our responsibility to be mindful of the information we find, receive, and share online. There are several things we can do to authenticate online news and photographs and prevent the spreading of fake news, embellished stories, or misinformation. Some strategies include: checking out the original source, verifying the photograph or headline, using professional fact-finding websites, and thinking before sharing.

This lesson helps students to stop and think about the content and consequences of sharing, tagging, retweeting, or forwarding something they receive through social media networks or find online.

¹“News Literacy Lesson 2 Course Pack” Fall 2017. The Power of Information, Centre for News Literacy.
<http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/course-pack>

²“What Happens in an Internet Minute in 2017?” Jeff Desjardins, Visual Capitalist, Aug 2 2017.
<http://www.visualcapitalist.com/happens-internet-minute-2017/>

³“Reality Check” MediaSmarts 2017. <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/authenticating-information/reality-check>

SET THE STAGE

Facilitate a **Think-Pair-Share*** discussion and pose the following questions, one at a time, to the class:

- Who can recall a recent news story or photo that went viral?
- What makes a news story or photograph go viral?
- How can you know that something that’s spreading is true?

* Explain to students that they will: (1) think individually about the question (1-3 minutes); (2) pair with a partner and discuss the answer (2-5 minutes); and (3) share their ideas with the rest of the class.

SHOULD I SPREAD THIS NEWS OR NOT?

DIG DEEPER

1. Using appropriate technology, view the following video produced by MediaSmarts: Reality Check—News You Can Use: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie2MnnWMqMA> [1:25]

2. Suggest to students that they don't have to fact-check everything they receive through social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, but the two questions posed at the end of the video are helpful in deciding whether or not they should share, tag, retweet, or forward a post. Post the questions for reference:

- How could people act on this?
- What will happen if I'm wrong (or if the post is fake or inaccurate)?

3. As a class, explore several viral news stories, videos, and photographs currently circulating, from sites such as:

- Yahoo News: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/viral/>
- True Viral News: <http://trueviralnews.com/>
- Mirror: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/all-about/viral>

Use the guiding questions to model how to stop and think about the content of the 'news item' and the consequences of the decision to spread each of the stories, photographs, or videos.

TEST IT OUT

Distribute to each student or pair of students a copy of the data chart **Stop and think: Should I spread this news or not?**. Direct them to find and cite three viral news stories, photographs, or videos that catch their attention on their own social media platforms (or on the Internet) and work through the questions for each 'news item' to determine what about the post caught their attention, how other people might act on the information, what the consequences might be if the information was fake, inaccurate, or misleading, and whether or not they should spread it. ★

SHOULD I SPREAD THIS NEWS OR NOT?

STOP AND THINK: SHOULD I SPREAD THIS NEWS OR NOT?

Headline & Source	Why does it catch your attention? <i>(e.g., It stirs an emotion— makes me laugh, cry, or angry; I can relate to it; it seems 'too good to be true'; it is about a hot topic or controversial issue; it was surprising, interesting, or unusual.)</i>	How might other people act on this information? <i>(e.g., People might base an important decision about their health, career, finances, travel etc. on this information.)</i>	What might happen if the post is fake, misleading, or inaccurate? <i>(e.g., Could people do or say something that they might regret based on this? Could bad things happen because people thought this was true but it wasn't? Explain.)</i>	Should you spread it? <i>(Yes, because.../No, because...)</i>

FOLLOWING A STORY OVER TIME

CONTEXT

There are many factors that drive the reporting of a news story, including: human interest; change; magnitude; unusualness; proximity; importance; prominence; conflict; relevance; and timeliness¹. As consumers of news we trust journalists and news agencies to report objectively and accurately so we can be ‘up-to-date’ and understand the ‘complete story’ regardless of what is driving the reporting.

New technology, the Internet, and social media platforms make the accessing and sharing of information even more immediate. These phenomena have both benefits and drawbacks, especially when news stories are catastrophic or impact a large number of people in deep and widespread ways. We can get moment-to-moment updates, as anyone with a cell phone can post videos, photographs or Tweet, but with this immediacy, accuracy and truth are often jeopardized.

According to TEDEd educator Damon Brown (2014), ‘the more chaotic a story the less you should try and follow it in real time.’¹ He suggests that in events like natural disasters or terrorist attacks the media attempts to provide continuous coverage, even when no new reliable information is available. These efforts at timeliness can sometimes lead to inaccurate information or false accusations of innocent people. Information may be misleading or biased as the story is often still unfolding.

Brown acknowledges the anxiety we might experience in such events but suggests checking for the latest information at several points throughout the day rather than every few minutes. This allows journalists to get complete details, investigate multiple perspectives, or refute false reports so we get a more accurate account of what is going on.

This lesson demonstrates how facts in a news story change, are confirmed, and/or refuted over time.

¹ How to choose your news – Damon Brown. June 5, 2014. TED Ed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Y-z6HmRgI&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhSrnPm-9awXCCbzybGgoGHM&index=1> [4:48]

SET THE STAGE

1. If possible, obtain a large magnifying glass or project an image of one (<https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/hand-holding-magnifying-glass-23382127.jpg>) to help you explain the role of reporters.
2. Suggest the following to students:
 - journalists, like detectives, seek the truth about an event by gathering direct evidence (facts) and drawing conclusions about it;
 - facts—observable and verifiable pieces of evidence—are drawn from reliable sources (e.g., photos, video, and audio; documents and records; eyewitness accounts by journalists; eyewitness accounts by others at the scene);
 - just as detectives piece all their clues together to figure out ‘who dunnit’, journalists arrange the facts of an event to explain what happened and put them in context to help the reader or viewer understand what led up to or caused the event, what the impact is, and what happens next.
3. Explain that journalistic truth is provisional; it exists for the present but changes as evidence accumulates. Therefore, it’s important to follow a story over time to get an accurate, complete understanding of the 5Ws + H.

DIG DEEPER

1. Distribute a copy of **How does a story change?** to each student or pair of students.
2. Project, using appropriate technology, the following series of news reports of the suspected terrorist attack on attendees at a Christmas market in Berlin on December 19, 2016. Examine each online article or news report as a class.
 - Truck ploughs into crowded Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-20/truck-ploughs-into-crowded-berlin-christmas-market/7588296> [Scroll down to the bottom of the page to get the first tweet from the ABC Reporter Joel Zander. Then, scroll further to get updates from the Berlin police, and live coverage from James Maasdorp, Digital Journalist, ABC News Online on December 19, 2016 • 12:20 p.m. – 5:38 p.m.]

FOLLOWING A STORY OVER TIME

- Berlin Christmas market attack suspect may be at large, police say: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-20/truck-deliberately-driven-into-berlin-christmas-market-crowds/8136706> [Updated December 20, 2016 • 6:20 a.m.]
 - Suspect in Berlin Christmas market attack released: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/suspect-berlin-christmas-market-attack-released-161220181533036.html> [December 20, 2016 Aljazeera]
 - Berlin Christmas market attack: What we know so far: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/20/berlin-christmas-market-attack-everything-know-far/> [December 21, 2016 • 8:17 a.m. The Telegraph]
 - Berlin Christmas market attack: a graphical guide to what we know so far: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/21/berlin-christmas-market-attack-a-graphical-guide-to-what-we-know-so-far> [December 23, 2016 • 11:35 GMT theguardian.com]
 - Berlin Christmas market attack: Tunisian man aged 26 detained: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/04/berlin-christmas-market-attack-tunisian-man-aged-26-detained> [January 4, 2017 16.50 GMT theguardian.com Scroll to the bottom of the article and note the headlines for links listed in the section ‘More on This Story’]
3. Direct students to record the date, time, and 5W’s +H on the organizer, in point form, for each news report. Then, ask them to consider what’s important about the facts as they are presented at the time of the report and explain why. Encourage students to notice what facts remain the same, what new information is discovered, and if any facts are refuted.
4. As you review each news report, point out direct sources: photos, video, and audio; documents and records; eyewitness accounts by journalists; and eyewitness accounts by others at the scene. Distinguish these from indirect sources, such as: opinions expressed by politicians like Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, and other European correspondents such as James Glenday and Phillip Williams; reference to a related attack in Nice, France in July 2017; and hearsay. Examine how the reporters explain the context to help the reader/viewer make sense of what is going on. Discuss the importance of receiving accurate, reliable, unbiased information.
5. After all the links have been explored and the organizer is complete, ask students to draw conclusions about the importance of following a story over time by completing the following sentence stems:
- *In following this story over time, I learned...*
 - *At first, I thought...*
 - *But now I know...*
 - *I was surprised...*
 - *I wonder...*
 - *It’s important to follow a story over time...*

TEST IT OUT

1. Invite students to follow a current newsworthy event – a natural or man-made disaster, a conflict, or other ‘breaking news’ story – over several days, using the organizer to track changes to the events.
2. When students feel that they have a complete picture of what happened, direct them to complete a ‘Then and Now’ comparison, noting relevant facts that were reported when the story first broke and showing how the facts changed over time. A Venn diagram or comparison chart showing the changes to the 5Ws + H might help them organize their thinking. ★

FOLLOWING A STORY OVER TIME

HOW DOES A STORY CHANGE?

Date	Time	5 Ws + H	What's important?	Why?