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Secondary  
Social Studies

## Post-Testing Edition

# Why Teach About Fake News

Last year Oxford Dictionary declared 'post-truth' the 2016 word of the year. While life skills are not tested by the state, we as social studies teachers are often compelled to develop students into thinkers who are able to place the events happening around them into context. In the post-truth world, in which we currently live, anyone with an internet connection can produce and disseminate information under the guise of journalism; thus, our students need the ability to discern real from false and identify hyperbole.

I tasked my high school aged world history students with bringing a piece of reliable journalism and an article that showed gross bias. I was left in a cold sweat at the end of the discussion in which students shared their articles because all the articles shared were of highly questionable validity and my students seemed totally oblivious to the blatant bias present in the articles they were sharing as reliably sourced news. It was in at the end of this lesson that I realized the need to teach students how to approach all news with a level of skepticism and the need to arm them with tools and strategies for determining what news is valid and what is totally fallacious.

As testing comes to an end and you are considering on what to spend your class time now that the pressure of testing is allayed, consider taking this time to work with students on honing their skills of detecting validity in their information sources and training them to stay accurately well-informed in the post-truth world in which they live.

### Information on Need for News Literacy Education

- [Most Students Cannot Distinguish Fake and Real News](#) - Video from the Wall Street Journal
- [Students Have Dismaying Inability to Tell Fake News from Real, Study Finds](#) - NPR Article
- [5 Ways Teachers Are Fighting Fake News](#) - NPR ED Article

[From On the Media](#)

< CUT OUT AND TAPE NEAR YOUR COMPUTER OR TV

### 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

## Fake News/News Literacy Essential Questions

- Can different perspectives of the same event be true simultaneously?
- Is the truth defined by facts alone?
- Does perception shape the truth?
- Can the truth ever be fully known?
- How can I identify different types of bias and propaganda?
- How do we know what is true if we "weren't there"?
- In what ways does propaganda influence people's opinions and decisions?
- Does propaganda influence your opinions today?
- Whom do we believe and why?
- Is news inevitably biased?
- How does one define news, opinion, advertising, publicity, entertainment, propaganda and raw information?
- What is fairness?
- Why is it important that thus subjects of reports be given the chance to tell their side of the story?
- How does one know what visual images to trust?
- How does documentation establish credibility?
- Why does context matter?
- How will learning to navigate the wealth of information available on the internet help keep students from being deceived?



# 5 WAYS TO SPOT *and stop*

**FAKE NEWS**

**DON'T GET TAKEN IN**

Take a moment to think before you click - and share



**Consider the source:** Strange domain names or web sites that end in "lo" (like "Newslo") are signs you should be wary.

**Check the URL:** Fake news sites will often use a web address designed to make it look like real site, ending in ".com.co"



**Look for visual clues:** Fake news websites may use sloppy or unprofessional design and overuse ALL CAPS.

**Get a second opinion:** If a story makes you very angry, dig deeper; consult other news sources or use debunking sites



**Put your browser to work:** Consider installing one of the browser plugins listed on this page to flag fake news in real time.

**WHEN IN DOUBT...**

**ASK A LIBRARIAN**

asklib.hcl.harvard.edu

Source: An informal list compiled by Dr. Melissa Zimdars, Assistant Professor at Merrimack College

## HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



From First Draft News

From IFLA

From Harvard Library

## Resources

### Current Events/Articles

- [Long Before There was 'Fake News' There Were 'Fake Photos'](#) - NPR Article
- [How to Spot Visualization Lies: Keep Your Eyes Open](#)
- [Lies, Propaganda and Fake News: A Challenge for Our Age](#) - BBC Article
- [Four Tricky Ways That Fake News Can Fool You](#) - TED Article

### Research Articles

- [Fake News and The Spread of Misinformation](#) - 6 Research Articles from Peer Reviewed Journals

### Videos

- [How to Separate Fact and Fiction Online](#) - TED Talk
- [How Fake News Does Real Harm](#) - TED Talk

### Lessons

- [How False News Can Spread](#) - TED Ed Lesson
- [How to Choose Your News](#) - TED Ed Lesson
- [Not all Scientific Studies are Created Equal](#) - TED Ed Lesson
- [Evaluating Sources in a 'Post Truth' World](#) - Ideas for teaching and learning about fake news from the New York Times
- [Facing Ferguson: News Literacy in a Digital Age](#) - Unit on the role of journalism in a democratic society and being a responsible consumer of information. Part of a Unit Series on Democracy and Civic Engagement including Minimizing Bias and The Power of Images