

## LESSON PLAN FOR INFORMATIVE ESSAY ON FAKE NEWS

### Activity 1: What is a good writer?

FREE-WRITE: Students free-write for 5-10 minutes: What does a person need to do to become a good writer?

Share papers with a partner when done

Short class discussion based on student responses.

Underscore the following: There are many different kinds of writing. A good writer thinks about their audience and what they want to convey. Good writing isn't so much about correctness and good ideas and organization. A good writer revises until he/she is satisfied they have said what they want to say

### Activity 2: What is considered a "good" TASC essay?

Students brainstorm: What does an essay have to have to "pass?"

Look at "2" anchor paper for the informational essay and "3" anchor paper in small groups. Which one is better? Why?

After 5-10 minutes, bring class together. Which got the higher score? Why do you think so?

Give out guiding questions. Students look back at the essays with the guiding questions.

Now we know what a "good" TASC essay looks like.

### Activity 3: Our topic: Fake News

Fake news: Have you heard of it? What is it?

Take fake news quiz and review answers

"So if you wanted to find out if these were true or not, how would you go about it?" Discussion of how we can verify information.

Give topic:

*A problem today is fake news. These are news stories that appear on social media sites like Facebook and look like real news, but have no basis in fact. Read the 2 articles below. Then write an informational essay in which you explain why fake news is on the rise and what people can do to distinguish between real news and fake news. Be sure to use information from both articles.*

Tell students: it is very important to understand what you are being asked to do.

Discuss: What is the task in your own words?

Give the following quiz:

In this essay I have to:

- A. Write my opinion about fake news.
- B. Say whether I am “for” or “against” fake news.
- C. Say why fake news is a problem and suggest solutions
- D. Tell which websites publish fake news.

#### Activity 4: Reading to Gather Information

“OK so now we know what our “job” is. Let’s read the articles. As we read, we are going to look for information we can use in our essays.

Jane or Kate do brief think aloud while reading the first paragraph of the first article out loud. Demonstrate how to use subtitles to get an idea of what to expect in the article. Demonstrate how to underline/use post-its in different colors, depending on whether information relates to (a) problem or (b) solution.

Students read and underline/use post-its.

#### Activity 5: Planning/using a graphic organizer and sentence starters

“OK, now we have the information that we are going to use. Now we need an organizational frame. We know that we need to include both “problem” and “solution” or “tips.”

Give choice of 2 graphic organizers. Choose one to use. DRAW it in your notebook.

Something like this:

**Introduction**

**My topic.** An important issue today is \_\_\_\_\_

**Why it is important.** This is a problem because \_\_\_\_\_

**Preview.** In this essay, I will \_\_\_\_\_

**Problem**

There are a few causes of this problem. They are \_\_\_\_\_

As stated in the article \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Solution**

There are several ways people can \_\_\_\_\_. One way is to \_\_\_\_\_.

According to \_\_\_\_\_, for instance, \_\_\_\_\_.

Another way is to \_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion**

## Activity 7: Write

Students write in class while we circulate and provide assistance.

# Fake online news makes it hard for readers to make good decisions

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff

01.09.17

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — It's never been easier to make a lot of money from online ads. All you need is \$10 to pay for a website address. Fill out a short form and start getting ads on your website.

Then get some readers, and you'll have no trouble making money.

Post banner ads on your site, and you'll get at least a dollar or two for every 1,000 visitors. A banner ad is a small online advertisement. If you click on it, it will take you to the ad's website.

You will make three times the money from what are called recommended content ads. They combine crazy headlines and exciting pictures. Many of the stories are fake.

## People Are Interested In Crazy News Stories

The crazier the story, the more people are interested in them. Sites post exaggerated political news articles. Some have made-up information, and millions of people can't resist opening them.

Even the biggest sites make most of their money from these ads.

Advertising technology companies place these ads. They don't have many rules. This lets websites that spread fake news make as much money as they can.

Some are pretty crazy. There was even one story claiming that President Barack Obama banned the "Star Spangled Banner" at sports events.

Many tech companies are trying to stop fake news. Facebook has promised to fight sites that spread fake stories.

## **Businesses Spend Billions on Online Ads**

Businesses will spend more than \$30 billion on online ads in the U.S. this year. They pay websites just cents each time their message gets clicked. The tech companies split the money with websites. Companies say they can earn tens of thousands of dollars per month from fake news stories.

Many ad tech firms check sites for violence and hate speech. But they do not check whether information is true.

Before the presidential election, a fake news story was spread by more than 100,000 Facebook users. It claimed Hollywood star Tom Hanks was voting for Donald Trump. Hanks actually supported Hillary Clinton.

Conservative101.com and other websites produce mostly real stories. But they rely on the fake news posts to bring viewers to them, said research company SimilarWeb. As many as 9 out of 10 of their visitors find them by clicking on a Facebook link.

Many ad tech companies don't want to decide what's fact and what's fiction.

Justin Bunnell is the head of AdSupply.com, an ad company. He said he doesn't feel comfortable judging if Hanks supported Trump.

## **Ad Networks Need To Clean Up Their Acts**

Advertisers and big websites want ad networks to clean up their acts. Media critics and politicians want action too. They worry that bad information makes it hard for readers to make good decisions.

Some are making changes. Google and Facebook are the two top online ad companies. They say that fake news sites can't use their ad services. DoubleVerify is a company that helps sites control where ads run. It has a new tool to block fake news websites.

But these won't fully stop fake news.

People are more likely to click on more exciting stories. The fake stories give people what they want.

# **There is real news and there is fake news. How can you tell the difference?**

By Washington Post, adapted by Newsela staff

12.01.16

If you spend a lot of time on sites like Facebook and Twitter, you have probably made one common mistake: sharing an article without actually reading it.

You definitely are not alone. According to a study released in June by a team of French and American computer scientists, almost 3 out of every 5 links shared on social media have never actually been clicked. People share these articles after only reading the headline.

This is how "fake news" spreads. The best way to stop it is to actually read articles before sharing them. Pay attention to the following warning signs. There are both pro-Democrat and pro-Republican fake news websites. The same rules apply to both.

## **Determine Whether the Article Is From a Trustworthy Website**

ABC News, the television network, has a website at [abcnews.go.com](http://abcnews.go.com). ABC News, the fake news site, can be found at [abcnews.com.co](http://abcnews.com.co).

Both look very similar. But the use of ".co" at the end is a clue that you are looking at fake news. There are other signs as well.

## **Check the "Contact Us" Page**

Some fake news sites do not have any contact information. Real newspapers and news sites have email addresses, phone numbers and even street addresses. The fake "ABC News" does have a "contact us" page. All it shows is a picture of a house somewhere in the country. The real ABC television network is in a 13-story building in New York City.

## **Examine the Byline of the Reporter and Ask Questions**

An article on the fake ABC News site says a protester was paid \$3,500 to protest Donald Trump. It appears to have been written by someone named Dr. Jimmy Rustling. The site says he has won many awards for his work, "including fourteen Peabody awards and a handful of Pulitzer Prizes."

Peabody awards and Pulitzer Prizes are the highest honors in journalism. They are very difficult to win. Doesn't it seem strange that he would win so many? This is a sign that "Dr. Rustling" is not a real person.

### **Read the Article Closely**

Many fake articles have made-up quotes that are hard to read without laughing. In the article on the protest, there is a quote from the creator of Snopes. Snopes is a website that proves when stories on the Internet are not real. The article claims that he approves of it, even though the article describes Snopes as unfair and inaccurate. That should raise red flags. It is not true.

### **Study the Sources**

Sometimes fake articles are started with nothing but a tweet. For example, one fake news story said anti-Trump people were being driven by bus to protest at events. That would have been shocking because it could make the protests seem bigger or more popular than they actually were. It was not true, though. As The New York Times found, this story started with a single bad tweet. The man who tweeted it had just 40 followers.

Few real news stories begin with a single tweet. Most real stories have plenty of other sources of information, too. If the article has no links to sources, it might be fake.

### **Look At the Ads**

Too many pop-up ads on a news site mean you should be careful. Another bad sign is a bunch of ads or links designed to make you want to click on them. Fake news



sites often have links to stories about strange rumors or famous people doing wild things. You usually do not find stories like that on real news sites.

### **Use Search Engines to Double-Check**

A Google search often will tell you if a site is no good. Snopes has compiled a guide to fake news sites, which lets you check articles. A website called RealorSatire.com is another way to see if an article is truthful. If you type in an article's URL, it will quickly tell you if the story comes from a fake or unfair news website.

Stopping the spread of fake news begins with you. If it seems too crazy to be true, it probably is. Please think before you share.

Yoko Ono: "I had an affair with Hillary Clinton in the '70s."



(Johannes Simon/Getty Images)

\_\_\_\_\_ REAL

\_\_\_\_\_ FAKE

Donald Trump praises Saddam Hussein: “He killed terrorists. He did that so good.”



(Joshua Roberts/Reuters)

- REAL
- FAKE

Pope Francis says it's 'terrible' children taught they can choose gender.



\_\_\_\_\_ REAL

\_\_\_\_\_ FAKE