

FIGHTING **FAKE** NEWS

Issue 1

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Welcome to the first **Fighting Fake News** newsletter for staff and parents. The aim is to help us all support our students in understanding what is meant by the term 'fake news', and to provide some hints and tips for navigating our way around the reams of information out there.

KEY TERMS

Fake News

The Ethical Journalism Network defines this as "information deliberately fabricated and published with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts."⁴

There are three types of information disorder.

Disinformation

Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group or country.

Misinformation

Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.

Malinformation

Information that is true or based on reality, but used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country.

Critical Literacy

According to the National Literacy Trust, critical literacy "encourages readers to challenge what they read by asking critical questions which allow them to explore, for example, how texts position them as erasers, represent different groups of people or present differing perspectives."⁴

Deepfake

The use of AI technology to produce or alter video content so that it presents something that didn't, in fact, occur.

WHY WORRY?

We are now bombarded with news and information 24 hours a day. As adults we can be confused, so how much more difficult must this be for learners who have access to all this at their fingertips, without necessarily having the skills to navigate it successfully?

A recent Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools¹, which surveyed 388 primary pupils, 1,832 secondary students and 414 teachers in the UK, found that:

- *Only 1.9% of those surveyed could correctly identify six news stories as being true or fake*
- *Secondary students were much LESS able to correctly identify the fake stories*
- *A gap of almost 10 percentage points was noted in relation to gender, with more girls than boys correctly identifying both fake news stories.*

NOTHING NEW

The first thing to recognise is that this is not a new phenomenon.

In 1782, during the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin, created an entirely fake "supplement" issue of an actual Boston newspaper, the Independent Chronicle, in which he wrote a salacious tale of the supposed discovery of more than 700 "scalps of our unhappy country folk" by colonial soldiers. The hoax newspaper was a near perfect replica or the original paper, including advertisements and a fake letter from a real person! He then circulated this by 'sharing' it with his friends...²

The cartoon below appeared in Puck Magazine in 1894! People were already recognising that some 'news' was presented in certain way in order to sell newspapers.



The main difference now is the speed and ease with which any information, true or false, can be spread through social media.

A more recent example was during the 2017 earthquake in Mexico, where the world was following the story of a 12-year-old girl trapped in the rubble, who in reality did not exist.³

PTO for some hints and tips...

THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST'S TOP FIVE TIPS FOR SPOTTING FAKE NEWS

1. Think about who has shared the news—check that the story is written by someone that you trust and if not, find out more about the author first.
2. Look at the audience—think about who the story is meant for and the reasons why it has been written.
3. Check the information—try to find the same story from another source and check that the facts are the same.
4. Look carefully at the text and pictures—check that the story makes sense and look closely at the photos or videos.
5. Think about how you feel—if you think the story is funny or if it worries you in any way, think about whether the facts are all true. It is possible that the author is biased or is trying to make you believe something that is false.

DEEPAKE

One of the most recent and most unsettling phenomena is the rise of deepfake videos (see key terms overleaf). It is getting increasingly difficult to spot.

Here is a helpful explanation from CNN:

<https://edition.cnn.com/videos/business/2019/02/01/deepfakes-interactive-what-is-a-deepfake-intro-orig.cnn>

Share this recent example of a deepfake video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EknjAeHFAk>

Once upon a time the phrase was, “the camera never lies”. Nowadays we know that it certainly does, and much of the time!



MORE TIPS FROM ME

- ⇒ ***Always check the DATE before you share—even innocent Facebook posts, such as those detailing perfectly well-meaning fundraising events, can become fake news if they are 5 years old..***
- ⇒ ***If you're unsure of the veracity of a story doing the rounds, use a trusted fact-checking site such as Snopes (<https://www.snopes.com/>) or Fullfact (<https://fullfact.org/>)***
- ⇒ ***Remember that our past online searches influence our future results, so that we are shown information which reinforces our already existing beliefs or biases, but also so that information contrary to these is HIDDEN from us!***
- ⇒ ***Encourage our students to use their critical literacy skills in ANY online activities.***

REFERENCES

¹National Literacy Trust (2018), *Fake News and Critical Literacy: The Final Report of the Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy in Schools*

² Legarde, J and Hudgins, D (2018), *Fact vs Fiction: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in the Age of Fake News*

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/21/mexico-city-earthquake-frida-sofia-enrique-rebsamen-school>

⁴ <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/tag/fake-news/page/3>