

BONUS LESSON: MEDIA LITERACY AND FACT-CHECKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify misleading headlines and biased news articles
2. Understand common tactics used in misinformation
3. Apply fact-checking techniques to verify information
4. Evaluate the credibility of news sources

Duration: 60-90 minutes

Materials:

- Examples of misleading headlines (provided below)
- Access to fact-checking websites (e.g., Snopes.com, FactCheck.org)
- Worksheet for headline analysis and fact-checking practice
- Let's Vote: A Guide to Informed Choices Ebook

Lesson Outline:

1. Introduction to Media Literacy (10 minutes)

- Discuss the importance of media literacy in the digital age
- Explain how misinformation can influence public opinion and voting behavior

2. Misleading Headlines Activity (20 minutes)

- Present examples of misleading headlines
- Have students discuss in small groups what makes these headlines misleading
- Class discussion on findings

3. Fact-Checking Techniques (15 minutes)

- Introduce various fact-checking methods and resources
- Demonstrate how to use fact-checking websites

4. Hands-on Fact-Checking Practice (20 minutes)

- Students work in pairs to fact-check given headlines or articles
- Groups present their findings to the class

5. Creating Accurate Headlines (15 minutes)

- Students rewrite misleading headlines to be more accurate
- Discuss the challenges of creating engaging yet truthful headlines

6. Conclusion and Reflection (10 minutes)

- Recap key strategies for identifying and fact-checking misleading information
- Students reflect on how this lesson will impact their media consumption

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Examples of Misleading Headlines:



1. "Scientists Say Coffee Drinkers Live Forever"
 - Actual study: Moderate coffee consumption associated with slightly lower mortality rates
 2. "New Law Makes It Illegal to Own Pets"
 - Reality: Proposed regulation on exotic animal ownership misconstrued
 3. "Local Mayor Bans All Books from Public Libraries"
 - Truth: Library removed some outdated books as part of regular collection management
 4. "Miracle Fruit Cures All Diseases, Doctors Hate It"
 - Fact: No single food can cure all diseases; clickbait targeting alternative medicine enthusiasts
 5. "Government Chip Implants Mandatory Starting Next Month"
 - Reality: Misinterpretation of a technology company's employee ID system
- Fact-Checking Techniques:

1. Check the source:
 - Is it a reputable news organization?
 - Check the website URL for slight misspellings or unusual domains
2. Look for other coverage:
 - Do other reputable news sources report the same story?
 - Be wary if only one obscure site is reporting a major story
3. Check the date:
 - Is this an old story being recirculated as current news?
4. Read beyond the headline:
 - Often, the article itself contradicts or significantly qualifies the headline
5. Check the author:
 - Is the author credible? Do they have expertise in the subject?
6. Check cited sources:
 - Do linked studies or documents actually support the claims made?
7. Be aware of your own biases:
 - Are you more likely to believe something because it confirms your existing beliefs?

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Examples of Misleading Headlines:



8. Use fact-checking websites:

- Sites like Snopes.com, FactCheck.org, or PolitiFact.com often investigate viral claims

9. Reverse image search:

- For stories with images, use Google Images to see if the photo is being used out of context

10. Consult experts:

- For complex topics, seek out expert opinions from relevant fields

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- **Let's Vote Merch Marketplace**
 - **Stickers, hats, tshirts and more featuring themes like "Voting Era", "Please Please Please" and "Hot-to-to"**



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Worksheet: Headline Analysis and Fact-Checking Practice

Part 1: Headline Analysis

For each headline below:

- Identify what makes it potentially misleading
 - Explain what questions you would ask to verify the information
- "Local Woman Discovers One Weird Trick to Lose 50 Pounds Overnight"
 - "Breaking: Celebrity Politician Caught in Scandalous Love Triangle"
 - "Study Shows Video Games Directly Cause Violent Behavior"

Part 2: Fact-Checking Practice

Choose one of the headlines from Part 1 and:

- Use at least two fact-checking techniques to investigate the claim
- Write a brief summary of your findings
- Create a more accurate headline based on the true information

Part 3: Reflection

- How has this exercise changed how you'll approach news headlines in the future?
- What challenges did you face when trying to fact-check the information?
- How might misleading headlines impact voters' decisions in an election?

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