



FAKE NEWS



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
1GUJ-J1L2-328



1

Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. How would you define 'fake news'?
2. Have you read fake news stories? If so, what topics were they about?
3. What do you think you can do to guard against fake news?





2 Finding vocabulary

Find vocabulary in the article on page three which has the same meaning as the following definitions.

1. _____ some information that is discussed between people informally but may not be based in fact (para. I)
2. _____ an article detailing the life and achievements of someone who has recently died (para. I)
3. _____ a statement or a description, or the act of making one, that makes something seem more important, better, worse, etc., than it really is (para. I)
4. _____ make a situation, disease or problem considerably worse (para. II)
5. _____ use something to cause harm or damage to someone or something (para. III)
6. _____ using humour to criticise a person or an institution (para. III)
7. _____ encourage someone to do something, often by offering something they want to do (para. IV)
8. _____ attracting attention because of how interesting or exciting it is (para. V)





3

Reading for gist

Skim-read the article on page three and choose the best word A - C to fill the gaps 1 - 12.

What to believe?*The problem of fake news*

I) In May of 1897, the famous American author Mark Twain visited London. While he was there, rumours _____¹ in the US that he had fallen ill and died with several newspapers reporting on it and one going as far as printing an obituary. Twain was in fact alive and well, though suspected the story began due to a cousin who shared his surname had indeed _____² ill. In a letter to a journalist, he humorously remarked 'The report of my death was an exaggeration.'

II) Fake news then, is hardly a new phenomenon. Though with the rise of the internet, _____³ social media, its spread and influence have been greatly exacerbated and it has become a real hot-button issue within the last decade, finding its way into discussions on politics, healthcare and international relations. News stories _____⁴ untruths come in two forms: completely false and not entirely true. The former are often created to drive traffic to a particular website or to push a false narrative about a person or event in the media. The latter can be somewhat more harmful as the true aspects are able to fool people more _____⁵ into believing that the false aspects are also worth their attention.

III) One of the issues of late is that the term 'fake news' has been weaponised to dismiss articles which are not worthy of the name. What fake news is not is articles talking about subjects you don't like or disagree with. Several politicians have used the label to attack reports on factual events that damage their reputation or present them in a bad light. There have also been incidents of articles _____⁶ for comedy value to critique events, which have been presented as fact which confuse readers who are not in on the joke who then confuse them with fake news. Websites such as The Onion and The Daily Mash have been producing these for some time. However, of late, reality has been so _____⁷ at times that it can be difficult to distinguish between that and satirical content.

IV) To add to the challenge, professional news organisations nearly all contain varying elements of bias in their reporting. News channels in the US such as MSNBC and CNN generally have a left-wing bias, tending to be more _____⁸ of conservatives. Similarly, Fox News is very right-wing, having been supportive of Republicans such as Donald Trump and George Bush. To a lesser extent, this is also true of several of the tabloid newspapers in the UK such as The Sun and The Daily Mail. Reporting from these institutions isn't fake news, but they are _____⁹ to push a view of the world which can entice or enrage their audience.

V) Real fake news can have _____¹⁰ real-world consequences. A serious issue is that the majority of everyday people don't have the time or brain space to tell which is which. Fake news is often compelling because it confirms what we already think or want to believe. It's _____¹¹ that 'a lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth puts on its shoes'; a quote which many people think was written by Mark Twain. There is, however, no evidence that this is so, making it, _____¹², another example of fake news.



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|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. a. circulation | b. circuit | c. circulated |
| 2. a. being | b. was | c. been |
| 3. a. partly | b. particularly | c. particular |
| 4. a. spreads | b. spread | c. spreading |
| 5. a. ready | b. readily | c. read |
| 6. a. written | b. writing | c. writes |
| 7. a. believable | b. disbelief | c. unbelievable |
| 8. a. criticise | b. critic | c. critical |
| 9. a. set off | b. set up | c. set down |
| 10. a. disaster | b. disastrous | c. disastrously |
| 11. a. saying | b. says | c. said |
| 12. a. fits | b. fitting | c. fittingly |

Sources: bbc.co.uk, skillsyouneed.com, weforum.org

4**Reading comprehension**

Decide if the following statements are True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG).

1. Mark Twain had a British relative who died in 1897. _____
2. According to the article, fake news has become a bigger problem in the last ten years. _____
3. According to the article, fake news containing elements of truth can do more damage than that which is entirely false. _____
4. According to the article, a news story criticising a politician you support is an example of fake news. _____
5. Humorous stories which make fun of public figures and events are not an example of fake news. _____
6. The writer of the article believes that differentiating between reality and satire can be challenging. _____
7. Conservative politicians don't appear on MSNBC to give their viewpoint. _____
8. The Sun and The Daily Mail tend to push a left-wing agenda. _____



5

Focus on vocabulary

Part A: Match the following vocabulary to the correct definitions.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. critical <u>thinking</u> (n) | a. being doubtful about the truth of some information |
| 2. <u>sceptical</u> (adj.) | b. unaffected by something, particularly when it can harm other people |
| 3. <u>immune</u> (adj.) | c. operating within the law |
| 4. <u>dupe</u> (v) | d. creating very strong negative feelings and emotions |
| 5. <u>gullible</u> (adj.) | e. make someone believe something which is false, usually to get something from them |
| 6. <u>inflammatory</u> (adj.) | f. the analysis of information to decide to what extent it is reliable and true |
| 7. <u>conspiracy</u> theory (n) | g. easily deceived into believing something |
| 8. <u>legitimate</u> (adj.) | h. the belief that a secret organisation is responsible for an event |

Part B: Complete the following sentences with the vocabulary from Part A. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the sentence.

1. The actor was previously strongly condemned for making _____ and racist comments which resulted in him being dropped by his management.
2. I have a strong belief in my writing, but I'm not _____ to criticism and I find it hurtful when people write negative comments about it on social media.
3. I was listening to a podcast the other day which was discussing the _____ that the September 11th attacks were faked by the government. It amazes me how anyone can believe that.
4. Everyone in my family uses a credit card, but I'm very _____ about them. I think they're designed to get you into debt.
5. When I first read the email, I thought it was a joke, but it turned out to be completely _____ and I had genuinely won £50,000.
6. You only need to use the smallest amount of _____ to know that everything Andrew Tate says is utter garbage. He says anything to chase fame.
7. My grandmother was _____ into giving away a large percentage of her savings in a scam, and now she's worried that she will have enough to live on.
8. I told him that the word _____ had been taken out of the dictionary and he actually went to look it up! I've never laughed so hard.



6

Listening for gist

Listen to the interview with Dr Neil Richardson and decide which of the following questions are asked.



1. What is it that makes people share fake news?
2. What is the reason people create fake news?
3. What can we do to check that the information on a blog is true?
4. What else should we do before sharing a story?
5. Has anyone been prosecuted for the creation of fake news?
6. What consequences has fake news had in the real world?
7. What do we do about fake news?
8. How can we fact-check information given on a podcast?





7

Listening comprehension

Listen again and decide which of the options A - C reflects what is said in the interview.



1. What does Dr Richardson think about blogs?
 - a. They're generally less reliable as a source of information than news outlets and should always be treated with scepticism.
 - b. They frequently provide exclusive stories that can't be found anywhere else as they can move faster than news channels.
 - c. The information they contain should be balanced against other sources reporting on the same event.
2. According to Dr Richardson, blogs written by professionals within the industry they're reporting on...
 - a. still need to be treated carefully as they can include bias and have a particular slant.
 - b. are ideal sources of information as they can deal with topics that official sources can't discuss.
 - c. are generally written for profit and therefore should be avoided as sources of information.
3. What action does Dr Richardson suggest ahead of posting a news story on social media?
 - a. Seeing if anyone else has posted the same story and what the reaction to it was.
 - b. Ensuring that the story isn't out of date and looking at the origins of the story, including checking the relevance of links.
 - c. Considering the relevance of the story to the audience you're posting it to, as it may not be necessary.
4. What is the issue with satire?
 - a. Many people have looked stupid after posting satirical news thinking it was real.
 - b. It's not a form of humour that a lot of people understand and it can confuse your followers.
 - c. In its attempt to make fun of the news, it can often contain language that is upsetting to a lot of people.
5. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a reason for people posting fake news stories on social media?
 - a. Being part of the Baby Boomer generation who frequently aren't as aware of how to effectively use social media.
 - b. Being driven by an emotional reaction to a headline prompts users to share before stopping to question its integrity.
 - c. Wanting to break the news of a fascinating story first to people within their social media circle.



6. How did fake news lead to a shooting in the United States?
 - a. Staff at the restaurant believed that a customer was a dangerous criminal.
 - b. A customer believed that he was saving children from dangerous criminals.
 - c. Child customers thought the pizza they were given contained poison.
7. How does Dr Richardson say fake news has affected politics?
 - a. Political leaders have actively been sharing fake news about their opponents.
 - b. There has been an increase in the amount of disinformation shared about politicians.
 - c. There has been a reduction in the amount of public trust in professional institutions.
8. Why does Dr Richardson mention Snopes.com?
 - a. It's a well-known source of fake news.
 - b. It's a useful source when checking facts.
 - c. It's biased against conservatives.

8**Talking point**

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. What effect has fake news had in your country?
2. What would you do if you saw a friend had shared fake news on social media?
3. What do you think can be done about fake news that hasn't already been done?
4. Before sharing a news story with family and friends, what action do you usually take?
5. Do you read news stories that friends post on social media? Why/Why not?
6. Where do you usually get your news from? Why?





9

Extended activity: Real or satire?

Read the following headlines. In pairs or a group, discuss if you think the headlines are from a real story or a satirical one.

1. Cows lose their jobs as milk price drops _____
2. Miracle cure kills fifth patient _____
3. Doctors successfully transplant entire living pig into patient _____
4. Elon Musk announces successful trial of Neuralink brain detonator _____
5. Amphibious pitcher makes debut _____
6. England has no idea what to do if it wins World Cup _____
7. Breathing oxygen linked to staying alive _____
8. Federal agents raid gun shop, find weapons _____
9. World death rate holding steady at 100% _____
10. Murderer says detective ruined his reputation _____