

SHOULD IT BE ILLEGAL TO PUBLISH FAKE NEWS?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the [Thinkalong module](#). Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

THE ‘THRILL OF THE CHASE’ IN PERPETUATING FAKE NEWS

PBS NewsHour | December 9, 2016 | Video

9:29 minutes

A video about the widespread sharing of “fake news,” and the real-life consequences that result from unverified information being passed along as fact.

- “Pizzagate” was when an armed man threatened a local pizza shop because he wanted to investigate a secret child abuse ring that was being run from the restaurant. Only that was fake news – there was no child abuse ring in the pizza shop.
- Tech giants like Google and Facebook are working to stop the proliferation of fake news by decreasing incentives for advertising that appear on fake news sites.
- Decrease in trust of media has led some people to seek alternative news sources, which led to trusting fake news sites.
- Many fake news sites are created by programmers from other countries, who profit off of each click an article receives.
- Those who typically share fake news are driven either by profit-incentive or by the genuine desire to bring attention to a problem they think is actually legitimate.
- People who spread fake news, despite public perception, tend to be well-educated and well-connected online.
- In Europe, pressure from government has led to sites being required to remove posts with derogatory or inflammatory content – leading many observers to ask if the U.S. can do something similar.

WHAT LEGAL RECOURSE DO VICTIMS OF FAKE NEWS STORIES HAVE?

WNPR | December 7, 2016 | Audio

3:57 minutes

A radio story about how victims of fake news stories have been seeking justice for the damage that the false news made.

- For many victims of fake news, a legal remedy is filing a “tort,” a civil lawsuit between two parties in which one alleges that they were hurt in some form by the other.
- The most common form of tort is defamation – a tort that alleges that a communication damaged one’s reputation.
- Victims can hold anyone accountable who takes part in spreading the defamatory statements – whether it’s by making the statement up in the first place or repeating it.
- Victims can, but seldom do, attempt to seek out and sue every person who helped repeat or spread a defamatory statement.
- The “marketplace of ideas” refers to the idea that if truth and lies are battling in the marketplace, truth will win because individuals have enough rational sense to distinguish between what is real and what is not. There are some people who dismiss this idea as more sentimental than effective.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

WE TRACKED DOWN A FAKE-NEWS CREATOR IN THE SUBURBS. HERE'S WHAT WE LEARNED

NPR | November 23, 2016 | Audio

7:33 minutes

- An NPR investigation on the origin of a fake news site called denverguardian.com, which published a widely-shared fake news story during the 2016 election.
- NPR reporters tracked down the poster of a popular fake news website, a man named Jestin Coler who ran an organization called Disinfomedia, Inc.
- Coler says he started creating fake news stories back in 2013 to highlight the extremism of the white nationalist alt-right by publishing blatantly false articles in order to bait users into sharing them as legitimate news.
- Coler and his company attempted to create faux news sites for liberals, but they rarely “took the bait” in the same way that conservatives did.
- Coler claims these fake stories work well with the targeted audience because the content aligns with right wing conspiracy theories, thus he is “giving the people what they want.”
- Coler’s company generates between \$10,000 - \$30,000 from fake news stories every month. Despite claiming that the sites are meant to expose extremism rather than make money, he has not retracted articles or stopped publishing new ones.
- Google has flagged one of Coler’s sites, National Report, as fake news but Coler insists there are other ad networks willing to work with him. Coler predicts fake news will only grow and become harder to distinguish from real news in the future.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Fake News
- Tort
- Marketplace of Ideas

CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

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In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website. [Sign up here](#) to be connected.

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LET'S INVESTIGATE

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Use this worksheet to help you investigate the media sources in the Thinkalong module.



SUMMARIZE THE TOPIC

KEY VOCABULARY

MEDIA RESOURCE 1

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

MEDIA RESOURCE 2

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

MEDIA RESOURCE 3

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOURCES

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

After watching the media in the module, answer the questions below.

1. AUTHORSHIP: Who created this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

2. FORMAT: What creative techniques are being used to grab my attention?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

3. AUDIENCE: How might different people understand this message differently than me?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

4. CONTENT: What values and points of view are represented? What's left out of this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

5. PURPOSE: Why is this message being sent?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3



CREATE YOUR ARGUMENT

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Create strong arguments for both sides from the resources in the Thinkalong module.



DEBATE QUESTION	
PRO ARGUMENT	CON ARGUMENT
REASONING	REASONING
EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE