# thinkalong™
### Current events for the curious classroom

# 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.

### ONLINE ANGER IS GOLD TO THIS JUNK-NEWS PIONEER
PBS NewsHour| May 2, 2018|Video
9:52 minutes

A video from PBS NewsHour that shows how a "junk-news" site spins news topics, targets an audience, and makes money.

- Cyrus Massoumi of TruthExaminer.com publishes articles targeted toward liberals with click-bait headlines. Cyrus says that people don't care about facts; people want to take out their phones and quickly read something that reaffirms their beliefs.
- Sites like TruthExaminer.com make money by selling their audiences to advertisers on their sites or on Facebook.
- Danah Boyd, President and Founder of Data & Society, says that news received through social networking that reaffirms or is in agreement with a person's beliefs  is tribal and reflective of the information landscape of the past, before broadcast news and newspapers.
- After the 2012 school shooting in Sandy Hook, CT, Cyrus bought a Facebook ad that asked if you stand against the assault weapons ban; those that did click were subscribed to his page and his articles appeared at the top of their news feeds. Cyrus says that stirring up anger is good for business.

### DANISH MAN IS FIRST PERSON SENTENCED UNDER MALAYSIA'S ANTI-FAKE-NEWS LAW
NPR| April 30, 2018|Article
500 words

A story from Two-Way about the first arrest for creating "fake news" under Malaysia's Anti-Fake-News Act.

- Danish citizen Salah Sulaiman was arrested while in Malaysia for posting a YouTube video that violated Malaysia's recently passed Anti-Fake-News Act. Sulaiman was fined $2,500 but could not pay so he will serve a month in jail.
- In the YouTube video, Sulaiman made false claims about being with a Palestinian lecturer when he was shot and the police's response time to his calls.
- The Malaysian Anti-Fake-News Act went into effect in April of 2018, outlawing the creation and sharing of fake news. The Act also applies to people outside of Malaysia who create and share news about Malaysia.
- Some have criticized the Anti-Fake-News Act, citing it as a weapon to censor the press. Additionally, critics have noted that any story not verified by the Malaysian government about the Malaysian Prime Minister's investment fund that has been denounced as corrupt qualifies as "fake news."
- The Southeast Asian Press Alliance says that the definition of "fake news" under the Anti-Fake-News Act remains very broad, meaning it could include punishment for a retweet.

*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.*

## MAN FIRES RIFLE INSIDE D.C. PIZZERIA, CITES FICTITIOUS CONSPIRACY THEORIES

NPR| December 5, 2016| Article

A story on the D.C. restaurant that faced an armed assault by a man who believed a conspiracy theory that was spread by fictitious fringe-news sites.

- A man fired a gun in a pizza restaurant after reading a conspiracy theory online that said the restaurant was a site for a child abuse ring led by Democratic politicians.
- The D.C. police say the story is a "fictitious online conspiracy theory."
- Most people who saw the theory spread across the internet read it as a joke, but the D.C police say there is no sign of it going away as politically motivated fringe sites continue to share conspiracy theories.
- After the incident, the son of Trump's former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn Jr., tweeted that until the theory is proven false, it will remain a story.

## 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.

- Censor
- Fake News
- Conspiracy
- Junk news
- 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.

*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.*

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website.

# 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**

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# 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 |
|---------|---------|---------|
|         |         |         |

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# 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 |
| --- | --- |