

SHOULD IT BE ILLEGAL TO PUBLISH FAKE NEWS?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners 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 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. He 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 networks that reaffirms or is in agreement with a person’s beliefs is tribal and reflective of the information landscapes of that past, before broadcast news and newspapers.
- After the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, Cyrus bought a Facebook ad that asked if users stood 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. He says that stirring up anger is good for business.

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

NPR | December 5, 2016 | Article
593 words

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

- A man fired a gun inside the Comet Ping-Pong 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. Metropolitan police say the story is a “fictitious online conspiracy theory.”
- Most people who saw the conspiracy theory spread across the internet read it as a joke, but the police say there is no sign of it going away as more politically motivated fringe news sites 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 news story.

DANISH MAN IS FIRST PERSON SENTENCED UNDER MALAYSIA'S ANTI-FAKE-NEWS LAW

NPR | April 30, 2018 | Article

620 words

A story from NPR's The 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 the country's recently passed Anti-Fake-News Act. Sulaiman was fined \$2,500 but could not pay, so he will serve one month in jail.
- In the YouTube video, Sulaiman made false claims about being with a Palestinian lecturer when he was shot and about the police's response time to his calls.
- The Malaysian Anti-Fake-News Act went into effect in April 2018, and outlaws the creation and sharing of fake news. The act also applies to people outside of Malaysia who create and share false news about Malaysia.
- Some have criticized the act, citing it as a weapon to censor the press. Critics have noted that any story not verified by the Malaysian government about the Prime Minister's investment fund qualifies as "fake news."

KEY WORDS

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

- Censor
- Conspiracy
- Marketplace of Ideas

CONTEMPLATE

Learners 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 learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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