

Fake News

“Deception may drive the creation of fake news; gullibility helps create a market for it.”

—Callum Borchers, journalist



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Which news sites do you rely on for information?
2. Do you ever share online content before reading or watching it in full?
3. Who is more likely to share fake news, young people or their parents?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. stumble upon | a) to go around |
| _____ 2. catchy | b) misleading, causing a person to believe a lie or exaggeration |
| _____ 3. trend (<i>verb</i>) | c) the centre of attention |
| _____ 4. deceptive | d) attractive, eye-catching |
| _____ 5. spotlight | e) a person born in the '80s or '90s |
| _____ 6. circulate | f) a system of government that represents its people's values |
| _____ 7. democracy | g) to find by chance (without looking for) |
| _____ 8. propaganda | h) easily tricked or fooled |
| _____ 9. millennial | i) one-sided information (with a goal of hurting the other side) |
| _____ 10. gullible | j) to become a temporarily popular online subject |

Reading

FAKE NEWS

Something smells fishy

1. Fake news is misinformation that people think is true. Social media users **stumble upon** this content in their newsfeeds. This drives web traffic to ads and makes money for fake news websites.
2. Fake news sites often advertise that their content isn't real. This doesn't stop people from believing or sharing it. In fact, a **catchy** title is all a fake news piece needs to start **trending**. Many people don't even preview online content before sharing it.
3. Some fake news is politically **deceptive**. The 2016 US presidential election put this type of fake news into the **spotlight**. Many Americans think Donald Trump won the election because of fake news about his opponent. Others wonder how he won with so much fake news **circulating** about himself.
4. Some journalists describe fake news as a modern form of **propaganda**. During the 2016 US election cycle, fake news was often more popular than real news. Does fake news threaten our **democracy**?
5. You might think that young people are more likely to share fake news. This is not true. In fact, **millennials** are less likely to spread fake news than their parents or grandparents. This has more to do with social media preferences than how **gullible** a generation is. Millennials don't use Facebook as much as their parents and grandparents, and Facebook users are more than twice as likely to see and share fake news.
6. Is fake news creating an era of misinformation, or is this a trend that will soon be forgotten? What can you do to prevent fake news from trending?

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is this reading mainly about?
2. Why do fake news sites exist?
3. How did fake news affect the 2016 US election?
4. According to the reading, are young people more gullible than their parents or grandparents?
5. How does the author end the reading?

Vocabulary Review

A. Recognizing Vocabulary

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence? More than one option may be possible. You may need to change the word form.

#	Sentence	Word
1	I found an interesting article about Ivanka Trump in my newsfeed.	
2	False news often tricks you into clicking on an ad.	
3	This is not real news. It's a political advertisement for the far right.	
4	The hashtag #notmypresident is popular on Twitter right now.	
5	That younger generation prefers Snapchat to Facebook.	
6	She shared the article because it had an attractive headline.	
7	I admit it. I'm easily deceived . Tell me anything and I will believe it.	
8	Have you heard the news that is going around about the election recount?	

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1. You may need to change the word forms.

- Don't trust the election polls. Vote! This era of misinformation threatens our _____.
- _____ spend a lot of time on their mobile devices.
- I need to write a _____ title for my blog post.
- The oil spill brought ocean pollution into the _____. Now #oceangarbage is trending on Twitter.
- The news from that site is _____. Always check the source before you share a link.
- Where did you _____ that news? Please don't say you saw it on Facebook.
- I'm not _____! I fell for the headline, but after I read the article, I knew it was fake.
- I wonder why #notdead is _____. Maybe that article about the singer was a hoax.

Types of Questions

A. Introduction

Which types of questions do you already know how to ask? Read the examples.

Type of Question	Example Question Word(s)	Example Question/Sentence		
Wh-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who • what 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when • where • why • how 	Why is fake news a threat to democracy?	
Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • which • who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do you prefer 	Which is a bigger threat to democracy, fake news or militarized police?	
Yes/No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do • does • is • are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have • will • could • can 	Is fake news a threat to democracy?	
Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • she asked whether... • he wants to know if... • they questioned why... 		She wants to know how fake news threatens our democracy.	
Embedded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you tell me who... • I wonder why... • I don't know where... • I want to know when... • Let's find out what... 		Let's find out why fake news is a threat to democracy.	
Tag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • isn't it? • right? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • don't they? • do we? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • won't she? • will he? 	Fake news is a threat to democracy, isn't it?

B. Practice

Now try asking variations of the following question. How many questions can you form?

Where did you stumble upon that fake news?

Discussion Questions

1. Some people enjoy reading fake news for entertainment. Do you find fake news entertaining? Explain.
2. Do you think that fake news threatens democracy?
3. Should the government play a role in reducing the circulation of fake news? Why or why not?
4. Do social media users have the power to prevent fake news from trending? What responsibility do social media CEOs have?
5. A lot of news stories have false information but are not entirely fake. Should users report these stories as fake news?

Critical Thinking

The word *curator* means “to care.” If you care about the people in your social media network, you can help prevent the spread of fake news.

A. Write Questions

Work in small groups to come up with five questions to ask yourself when determining if content is worth sharing or not.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Sharing

Find a piece of fake news on the Internet (one per group) and share it with your class. How can you tell that this news is fake?