

Lesson brief - Media Literacy

The lesson will aim to give students the tools they need to identify false information and the difference between mis-, dis- and mal-information which will enable them to critically engage with media, especially in the online world.

Lesson objectives

- Critically evaluate a range of media
- Identify the difference between misinformation, disinformation and mal-information.
- Explain why it is important to be able to identify these different types of information

Resources

- Slideshow - Media Literacy
- Access to the internet
- Pens
- Worksheet (optional)
- Articles (optional debating activity)

Suggested lesson plan: 1 hour

Optional activities lesson plan: 2 hours



Title slide - Media Literacy

Ask them what they think Media Literacy could mean based on their current perceptions of the words 'media' and 'literacy'.

Presenter mode:

Slides 2-4:

Read out the slide to the class so that they know what media literacy is and why it is important.

Read out the learning objectives to the class. Really emphasise the different words on the second bullet point: mis-, dis- and mal-information.

Read through the slide about spotting false news. This slide highlights why being able to spot different types of information will be important to them as they navigate the online world.

- **Optional:** Talk to them about how much information there is on the internet and how much content they ingest on a day-to-day basis. Ask them if they know how and why spreading false information on the internet could be harmful.

Discussion activity:

Read out the quote from "1984". George Orwell's dystopian novel depicts a world where information is strictly controlled and where

government officials can simply get rid of people (via vaporisation) who do not conform to their ideology.

- *Note:* If you want to make this exercise shorter, then the key slogan to think about is '**ignorance is strength**'. This idea links to misinformation because this is the mistaken spread of false ideas which ultimately leads to ignorance as people believe false ideas and the truth gets lost.
- *Optional:* You can make this exercise last as long as you would like. You could ask the students to discuss these three slogans and whether they would like this to be their reality today, what they think each one means and what impact they think it would have on a person to see these three slogans everyday.
- Discussion key words: propaganda, indoctrination, freedom.

Activity: Hands-up

Slide 6: Ask the students where they get the majority of their information.

- Ask the students if they have ever encountered any problems with this platform as a source for information. Have they ever shared something and then found out it was false? Have they ever clicked on something because it had an unusual or controversial headline?

- *Note:* If no one has mentioned **clickbait** then try to bring this up as a buzzword. Read out the definition if any students are unclear of what clickbait means.

Clickbait - (on the internet) content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page.

Slide 8: **Definitions (making it easier to remember)**

Suggest ways that students can easily remember the difference between the three terms.

Disinformation – think of **deliberate** - this is false information spread on purpose to harm.

Misinformation – think of **mistake** - this is false information shared without knowing it is false; mistakenly shared.

Mal – in Latin means ‘**bad**’ or ‘**evil**’ - this is truthful information shared to cause harm to an individual or group, or to hurt someone’s reputation.

- Highlight how disinformation and mal-information are linked by the **intent to do harm** and disinformation and misinformation are linked by the fact that they both spread **false information**.

Presenter mode

Slide 9:

Read through the information - it explains why fake news is not a helpful term. Play the video for the students, this should help them to further grasp the key terms.

REVIEW

Slide 10: Use the acronym to really get your students thinking about what skills they need when interacting with a source and information. They need to think about:

- **Reputation:** Where has this information come from? Is the person/ organisation reputable? Can you be confident this source is trustworthy?
- **Evidence:** Are there undeniable facts backing up the claims/ opinions? Are the statistics/ facts from a trustworthy source?
- **Verification:** Is this person regarded highly in the field in which they are discussing? Can you find any other sources that back up this person’s claims?
- **Intent:** Why was this written? Was it to be informative or do they have a personal or political agenda? What could that personal/ political motivation be? Money? Control?

- **Emotions:** Is whoever wrote this trying to provoke a response from the reader? What might that response be? Fear, anger, distrust?
- **Weigh it up:** After considering all of the above, do you think you can trust this source?

Note: You can take your time and apply the questions to the specific example and encourage your students to go through the whole REVIEW process if you want to extend this activity.

Activity: Worked examples

Slide 11: Instruction slide

The purpose of this activity is for the students to try to determine whether the example is mis-, dis- or mal-information independently and they should use the REVIEW tools from the previous slide to give one reason why they think it is the type of information that they have picked.

Slide 12-13: **Mal-information example**

Read through slide 12 and give the students 3-4 minutes to work independently or in pairs to decide what type of information it is.

Then read through the information on the slide to explain to your students why this information is considered **mal-information**.

- ★ *Optional question:* How could this information being leaked impact the 2017 Presidential Election in France? Can you think of any other examples of this type of leak in recent years?

For more information check: 'France's Macron has campaign emails leaked online one day before election', available at <https://www.dw.com/en/frances-macron-has-campaign-emails-leaked-online-one-day-before-election/a-38732299>

Slides 14-15: **Misinformation example**

Read through slide 14 and give the students 3-4 minutes to work independently or in pairs to decide what type of information it is.

Then through the information on the slide to explain to your students why this information is considered **misinformation**.

- The intention of the person sharing this false information is to show other people that the war in Ukraine is not real. This person believes the war is not real because images were being circulated that were said to represent the conflict in the Ukraine, when they were actually images of children from the Syrian conflict.
- They don't necessarily want to create harm, as they might believe the war in Ukraine is over-represented.

- Another example of this is when pandemic-deniers declared that Covid-19 was just a really bad cold and that the media had ‘hyped’ people up.

For more information see – ‘Ukraine invasion: False claims the war is a hoax go viral’, available at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/60589965>

Slide 16 – 17: Disinformation example

Read through slide 16 and give the students 3-4 minutes to work independently or in pairs to decide what type of information it is.

Then read through the information on slide 17 to explain to your students why this information is considered **disinformation**.

- The disinformation surrounding this drug was completely constructed online by a mixture of anti-vax campaigners and clout-chasing influencers. They used untrustworthy scientific studies to back their large claims.
- The purpose of this claim is to provoke fear and distrust of the government public health measures. It was also to undermine vaccines, as they present the scientifically proven effective remedy. In reliable scientific studies, Ivermectin is said to have little to no impact on stopping the progression of Covid from mild to severe.

For more information check – ‘Ivermectin: How false science created a Covid 'miracle' drug’, available at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-58170809>

Content warnings

Slide 18

Explain that they will now start to see more content warnings on social media. These warn about the possibility of it being false as well as sensitive information. You can use the question on slide 18 as either a thinking/ self-reflection point or you can ask for feedback from the class.

Slide 19 is a question that you can pose as a point for students to leave on and go think about or you can have a class discussion.

Final thought: Who should take responsibility?

Slide 20: Read through the passage taken from the DCMS report.

This slide highlights how the government has decided that the social media sites themselves must take the burden of responsibility and that they cannot merely be allowed to maintain the position of ‘publishing platforms’ that have little or no regulation.

Note:

- This poses questions about freedom of speech/ freedom of expression. Is freedom of speak absolute/ unlimited? What about hate speech e.g. the speech that denies the Holocaust or climate change, that supports white supremacy or other racist theories or violence against faith minorities?
- Will anonymity be allowed on social media platforms if the sites themselves are being held accountable for the content?

You can leave your students with these final thoughts or you can move onto the debating exercise if you have an extended session.

Optional Activity: class debate.

This activity is a suggestion for a 2-hour session. You can print out some or all of these resources, divide the class into two and allocate one side as being **for the motion** and the other as being **against the motion**. Give the class 20 minutes to do their research and then take as much time as you need for the debate. Minimum 10-15 minutes is recommended.

MOTION: “SOCIAL MEDIA SITES SHOULD FILTER OUT FAKE NEWS STORIES”

FOR

‘Fake news is changing the way we see the world. We have to face up to what that means’, Tom Watson MP, Independent 22 November 2016:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/fake-news-facebook-twitter-social-media-sharing-changing-way-see-world-face-up-to-it-labour-tom-watson-a7431466.html>

‘Obama is worried about fake news on social media – and we should be too’, Nicky Woolf, Guardian, 20 November 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/nov/20/barack-obama-facebook-fake-news-problem>

‘How fake news goes viral: a case study’, Sapna Maheshwari, New York Times, 20 November 2016:

https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html?_r=0

‘Click and elect: how fake news helped Donald Trump win a real election’, Hannah Jane Parkinson, Guardian, 14 November 2016:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/14/fake-news-donald-trump-election-alt-right-social-media-tech-companies>

AGAINST

'The crushing anxiety behind the media's fake news hysteria',
Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, The Week, 12 December 2016:

<https://theweek.com/articles/666395/crushing-anxiety-behind-medias-fake-news-hysteria>

'War on fake news part of a war on free speech', Ron Paul, New American, 12 December 2016:

<https://thenewamerican.com/war-on-fake-news-part-of-a-war-on-free-speech/>

'Fake news and post-truth: the handmaidens of Western relativism',
Brendan O'Neill, spiked, 25 November 2016:

<https://www.spiked-online.com/2016/11/25/fake-news-and-post-truth-the-handmaidens-of-western-relativism/#.WHNvjxuLSUI>

'The panic over fake news on Facebook is just the latest liberal ploy to shut down free speech', Angela Epstein, Telegraph, 18 November 2016:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/11/18/facebooks-fake-news-crisis-is-just-new-liberal-ploy-to-shut-down/>