

Digital Citizenship Lesson Plan: Spotting Fake News

Title:	Spotting Fake News: Verification and Lateral Reading
Grade Level:	9th - 12th Grade (High School)
Time Allotment:	45 minutes
Topic:	Media Literacy, Information Verification, Digital Citizenship

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. **Differentiate** between fact, opinion, and satire in online content.
2. **Identify** "red flags" in news headlines and source structures (e.g., clickbait, emotional language).
3. **Employ** "lateral reading" as a strategy to verify source credibility.

Materials

- Projector/Whiteboard
- Student devices (phones, tablets, or computers) for the Independent Practice.
- Pre-selected list of 4-5 headlines (2 real, 2 fake/clickbait, 1 satirical) for Active Engagement.

Lesson Structure (Workshop Model)

1. Introduction and Hook (3 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Hook	"The Viral Lie"	3 mins	Teacher: Ask students: "When was the last time you saw a shocking story online that turned out to be completely false? What made you believe it?" (Quick show of hands/one-word answers). Introduce

			the goal: to become 'Digital Detectives' who can protect themselves and others from misinformation.
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2. Mini-Lesson (7 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Instruction	Red Flags and Definitions	7 mins	Teacher: Quickly define the three categories: Fact (provable), Opinion (belief/judgment), and Satire (humor meant to make a point, but <i>not</i> real). Focus on Red Flags: Display 5 key signs of misinformation/clickbait: 1. Extreme Emotional Language (ALL CAPS, outrage), 2. Weird URLs (typos, unusual extensions), 3. Lack of Author/Date , 4. Visual Oddities (poor quality photos, obvious photo edits), and 5. "You won't believe what happens next..." (Clickbait).

3. Active Engagement (10 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Shared Practice	Headline Detective	10 mins	Teacher: Display 5 pre-selected headlines one at a time. Student Task: For each

			headline, students use a finger signal (1=Fact, 2=Opinion, 3=Satire) and identify <i>one</i> red flag they see. Debrief: Quickly discuss 1-2 headlines, reinforcing that even real news can use emotional language (Red Flag 1), but the other flags are usually more reliable indicators.
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4. Independent Practice (7 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Application	Lateral Reading Challenge	7 mins	Teacher: Introduce Lateral Reading (the act of <i>leaving</i> the article you are reading and opening new tabs to see what other sources/fact-checkers say about the topic or the site itself). Task: Provide students with a single, highly questionable, short <i>claim</i> (e.g., "Bananas are becoming extinct by 2030 due to a new fungal disease, experts warn.") and the name of a fake or highly biased news site it allegedly came from. Students use their devices to perform lateral reading to verify the claim and the source's reputation.

5. Share and Close (3 minutes)

Phase	Activity	Time	Teacher/Student Actions
Synthesis	Quick Write & Reflection	3 mins	Share: Ask 1-2 students to share what they found when researching the claim and how many tabs they had to open to verify. Close: Hand out or display the Exit Ticket question. Exit Ticket Prompt: <i>Write down one essential step you will take the next time a headline makes you feel extremely angry or shocked.</i> (Collect responses.)