

Learning Guide



Communication Nation

Episode 1: Speaking the Truth

We hope you enjoyed learning all about media literacy, miscommunication, and how to think critically about where we get our information from. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts and Extension Projects

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

My Information Diet: Activity

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1, RI.7, RI.8, RI.9; SL.2, SL.3; C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2.Civ.1, D2.Civ.5, ISTE: 1.2 Digital Citizen, 1.3 Knowledge Constructor, 1.5 Computational Thinker

Analyze a Source: Activity

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1, RI.6, RI.8, RI.9; SL.1, SL.2, SL.3; C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2.Civ.5, D2.Civ.7, D4.1, D4.3; ISTE: 1.2 Digital Citizen, 1.3 Knowledge Constructor, 1.5 Computational Thinker

Comparing Perspectives: Activity

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.1, RO.6, RI.8, RI.9; SL.1, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4; C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2.Civ.5, D2.Civ.6, D4.1, D4.2; ISTE: 1.2 Digital Citizen, 1.3 Knowledge Constructor, 1.5 Computational Thinker

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2026 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/speaking-the-truth/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. If you ask Google a question, you will get the right answer.	
	2. YouTubers who have a lot of followers are reliable sources of information.	
	3. Information you read on a common, well-known news site is probably pretty accurate.	
	4. You can trust what is written on Wikipedia because lots of different people contribute to the articles.	
	5. Checking multiple sources is a good way to fact-check information you read online.	
	6. If someone cites their sources, they are more likely to be giving accurate information.	
	7. An article that uses emotionally charged words shows that the author is very passionate about their topic and can be trusted to give accurate information.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. FALSE! Google is not a direct source of facts, but a search engine that points to external websites, often prioritizing relevance, speed, or revenue over accuracy. Additionally, the integration of AI Overviews further confuses truth because AI confidently presents incorrect or fabricated information, known as “hallucinations”.
2. FALSE! Just because a YouTuber has a lot of followers does NOT mean they are giving true and accurate information! Check their background, tone, and their sources of information. Think about their motivation, intentions, and reasons for creating this media.
3. TRUE
4. FALSE. Although Wikipedia is generally considered reliable for general information and background research, because it is community-edited, it can contain errors, vandalism, or bias. It is best used as a starting point for finding credible, cited sources. [See Harvard’s advice about using it.](#)
5. TRUE
6. TRUE
7. FALSE. Emotionally charged words and phrases are a warning sign that the media contains misinformation.



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

bias

Feeling or showing favoritism for or against a thing, idea, person, or group. Bias can lead to ***misinformation***, ***disinformation***, and unfair treatment.

critical thinking

Asking questions and reflecting carefully about whether something is true or sensible before believing it.



Vocabulary

fact-checking

The process of verifying information for truth and accuracy in news reports, social media posts, etc.

media

The different ways people share information, ideas, news, and entertainment with others. *It can include:*

- *Books & newspapers*
- *TV & movies*
- *Radio & podcasts*
- *Websites & social media*
- *Video games & online videos*

media consumption

How much and what types of media we use, see, hear, read, and think about.

media literacy

The ability to understand, analyze, and make smart choices about the information you see, hear, read, and create.



Vocabulary

misinformation

False or incorrect information that is spread by people. When spread intentionally, it is known as ***disinformation***.

disinformation

False information that is created and spread intentionally to mislead or deceive people. *For example:*

- *A fake story posted online to trick people*
- *Edited photos or videos meant to make someone look bad*
- *False claims shared to influence opinions*

motivation

The reasons behind a person's actions. Motivation drives decision-making.

perspective

A specific attitude of how somebody sees or thinks about something. Different perspectives create different points of view.



Vocabulary

source

The origin or place where information comes from, such as a website, news outlet, or individual.

reliable source

A trustworthy place to get information, such as a well-known news website or an expert.

tone

The author or speaker's attitude or feelings about a topic, such as excited, angry, or serious. Tone is shown through the words they use.

hallucination

When AI confidently presents incorrect or fabricated information as true facts, especially with AI Overviews.



Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of **media** that you use every day?
(Examples: books, video games, social media, videos)
2. Why is it important to ask questions about the media we see or hear?
3. What is the difference between **misinformation** and **disinformation**?
4. How can false information affect people or communities?
5. What are some ways you can check if information online is trustworthy?
6. Why do you think some people spread false information on the internet?
7. **Bias** is impossible to eliminate in the media, even for those who are trying to be neutral. Why and how should we identify bias in media?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Write a news story that is likely to go viral. What characteristics make stories go viral?
2. Write a story about the impact of a fake news story on a community.

Informative/Explanatory Prompts

1. Explain the statement “The news isn’t what it used to be.”
2. Explain the statement, “The media constructs the message, the reader constructs the meaning”.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Do you think most viral news stories are true or false? Why?
2. Why is it important to know the difference between facts and opinions in the news?
3. How can you take action with news stories that are exaggerated, misleading, false, and/or biased?
4. Explain the statement, “The news isn’t what it used to be”. Do you agree or disagree?



My Information Diet

Listen

to [Part 1: Media Literacy](#)

The media that you consume is what makes up your information diet. Review the list of types of media that you consume (see, watch, hear, use) and track your media consumption based on a typical day.

Digital Media: social media apps, streaming services, videos, websites and blogs, email, messaging apps, gaming apps, podcasts

Print Media: newspapers, magazines, books, textbooks, brochures, flyers, posters

Broadcast Media: television and radio

Outdoor Media: billboards, business displays, ads on buses

Recorded Media: DVDs, CDs, vinyl records, tapes

Interactive Media: video games, virtual reality

	Type of Media Consumed	Amount of Time	Tone of subjects, thoughts, and feelings
Morning			
Afternoon			
Night			

Extension

Digitally or by hand, design your own way of tracking your media consumption for the next week. At the end of each day, write down notes on how the media you saw that day impacted your thoughts and feelings. Share your tool and your thoughts with others.



My Information Diet

A healthy, balanced diet includes a variety of good nutrients consumed in the right proportions. Think about the types of media that you use, see, hear, surround yourself with, and create. This media makes up your information diet. Your information diet should include a variety of perspectives, come from reliable sources, and be balanced with other activities. Fill your plate below to create a healthy, balanced, informative diet. Feel free to include visuals.



Which types of media do you engage with the most, and which do you enjoy the most? Why do you think you spend more time on these specific activities?

In the media you mostly use and consume, is there a diversity of people, perspectives, cultures, beliefs, and languages? Who/what do you see/hear most?

Why do you spend the most time on the activities listed above? What could you do instead? Ex: *For boredom, I could...*

What other types of people, perspectives, cultures, beliefs, and languages would you like to see, hear, and learn more about?



Analyze a Source

Listen

to [Part 2: Misinformation](#)

You can help avoid the spread of false information by determining if a source is reliable! Choose a source of media that you have seen recently (eg. TikTok, YouTube, etc.). Use the graphic organizer and checklist to help you analyze the reliability of the source of information.

Identify and describe the media source.	Include a visual that relates to the source.
Who is the author, creator, organization? Are there other sponsors, beneficiaries, or collaborators?	Complete the checklist, then explain if you believe the media source is reliable.

Critical Thinking Checklist

Answer these questions about the author/creator of the media source:

- What is their background and experience?
- What tone or feeling is it portraying?
- Where are they getting information from?
- Do they cite their sources?
- What motivations, intentions, or reasons are behind why they made this media?

Do you notice any of these warning signs about the media source?

- It suggests you do or buy something.
- It shares information that could be false.
- No other sources repeat the same information.
- It is presented in a way that targets you.
- It includes [emotionally charged words or phrases](#).
- It supports the spread of fear, hate, or discrimination.

Extension

Create a visual (ex. poster, collage, illustration, digital art) that highlights the importance of media literacy, provides tips for spotting warning signs of misinformation, and encourages critical thinking about media sources.



Comparing Perspectives

Listen

to [Part 3: Bias](#)

Analyze and compare different news articles covering the same event. Highlight, underline, and/or mark up words and phrases that show evidence of tone, attitude, perspective, and feelings. Pay attention to word choice, selection of quotes, and any other details that help you understand the author's perspective.

Sunny Times

New Playground Brings Smiles to Sunnyville!



Excitement filled the air as Sunnyville welcomed its newest addition: a vibrant playground! Children played with joy on the swings, slides, and

bridges. Parents watched proudly, their hearts warmed by the sounds of laughter and fun. It was a great time. Thanks to the hard work of our dedicated town council, this playground has become a shining beacon of

community spirit. Mayor Johnson expressed his delight, stating, "It's wonderful to see our children playing and having fun in a safe environment. This playground is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together." Local families praised the playground's accessibility, with special features for children of all abilities to enjoy. "Many activities are not accessible to my son, who uses a wheelchair," said a Sunnyville resident. "This park had special accommodations that allowed him to swing alongside his friends and feel included." The playground's opening marks a bright new chapter for Sunnyville, where laughter and play will continue to bring our community together for years to come!

SUNNYVILLE VOICE

DEBATE SPARKS OVER NEW PLAYGROUND EXPENDITURE



Though many celebrated the opening of the new playground, some residents are raising concerns about its \$50,000 cost. The project, funded by

city taxes, sparked a debate about whether the money could have been better spent on other community

needs. Critics argue that the money spent on the playground could have been used to improve local schools or repair crumbling roads. "As a taxpayer, I question the priorities of our town council," a concerned citizen voiced. "While a playground is nice, shouldn't we be focusing on essential infrastructure?" Others point out that investing in education and infrastructure would benefit the entire community in the long-term. "Sure, kids love playgrounds, but shouldn't we be thinking about their future too? Investing in education will help them succeed," stated a disappointed parent. As the discussion unfolds, it's clear that while the playground may bring joy to some, it comes with a cost and there are valid concerns about how hard-earned taxpayer dollars are being allocated in Sunnyville.



Comparing Perspectives

	Source 1	Source 2
Headline/ title of article		
Main idea, facts, details		
Attitude & tone of descriptive words		
Other signs or evidence of bias		

Reflect

1. How does the tone or language differ between the two articles?
2. What perspective or opinion does each article seem to support?
3. Which article did you find more useful and why?

Extension

Choose a recent news event that interests you. Search for the event on well-known and reliable news sites. Find two articles from different sites that relate to the same event. Use the same chart to take notes and compare, create your own discussion questions and discuss your findings with others.



Additional Resources

[Common Sense Media](#)

Find a wealth of resources, including free lessons and activities that help students build digital literacy skills.

[Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Experiences](#)

Use these questions to help you think critically about the messages you encounter.

[American Government: Discussion Questions about the Media](#)

These discussion questions encourage high school American Government students to think critically about the role of media in America.

[5 Questions to Ask About Media: Lesson Plan](#)

This worksheet and teacher's guide from Common Sense Media will help students analyze and think critically about media consumption.

[250+ Trigger Words](#)

This list of words by category of emotion they are designed to invoke will help you identify emotionally charged words that may indicate a less reliable media source.

[How can my kid find reliable sources for school reports?](#)

A Common Sense Media article from 2020.

[Reference and Research Apps and Websites](#)

A list of recommended sources from Common Sense Media.

Videos

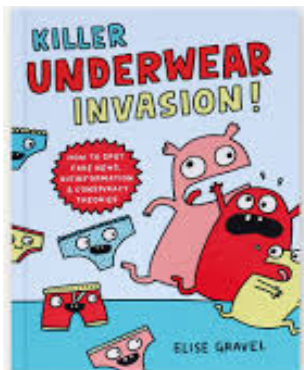
[Media Literacy \(Explained in 3 Minutes\)](#)

A great introduction.

[Do I Have a Role in Media Literacy?](#)

This 3-minute video from the Center for Civic Education explains what it is, why it's important, and the impact your content has on others.

Book List



Killer Underwear Invasion!

by Elise Gravel

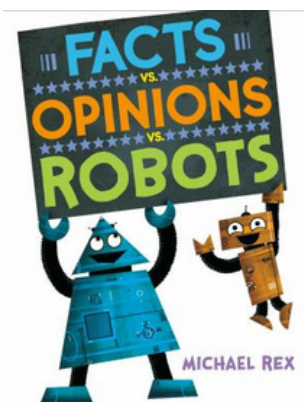
A hilarious book to help kids learn how to tell what news is true and what isn't. Were unicorns discovered on the moon? Can peanuts really give you super strength? This book will help readers learn to tell the difference! ages 7-12



Can You Believe It?

by Joyce Grant, illustrated by Kathleen Marcotte

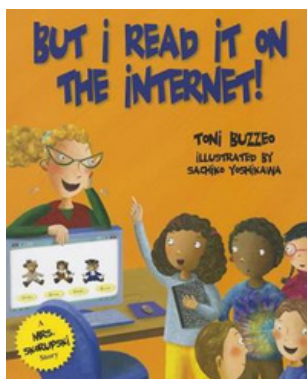
This book gives kids the critical thinking skills they will need to learn to decipher real journalism from "fake news". It's full of practical advice and thought-provoking examples. ages 9-13



Facts vs. Opinions vs. Robots

by Michael Rex

This funny book introduces young readers to the important distinction between facts and opinions and reminds them to listen to each other's opinions and stand up for the facts. ages 5-8



But I Read It on the Internet!

by Tony Buzzeo, illustrated by Sachiko Yoshikawa

This book teaches kids how to evaluate and verify information found online rather than taking it at face value. ages 8-12