# https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/Tq1xUNZbmDbSkJ_AHdDzRhf7m-GJAWzjFRsIP23M7qS9fau3othqcbimL_ncBIEQpOeN9qkTQ2c9_eC8DeuJVnnVAxDQm7XsgJRR_5tnTunoMfB3vvIA-qJjlmUnVtV8mU5RKo9lpmoh-XPHEJ8M-A=nw https://lh4.googleusercontent.com/WRbmlTozBBu6NUmldJb_UHaftz_wzMZ12OYMBUWD1U179AekQQ3bDpN2aYqwdpwBgjC5t7iChbOyoer-41DvO28aXiribugYfDVsINpTUzbC6K69A5Pnvm5kOtqlOjJdoxC9Z9O3lWLUzIo=nwhttps://lh4.googleusercontent.com/V9WSd-xueNKFF3PKF-pFdL6zUO4mk_WbSZbn1MHi2lEu74kIErkjReWJ8w5PC-az_3m4nn2INb07UhpRQUM-on5_PX_9hn4q0OxsxoL_EnB50-e0hZiRnJSv5dvlZKWbjc_QWuaxrB1AcLI=nw

# Unit 6

# Lesson plan 2

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| **Fake news: can you spot it?** | | | | |
| **Aims** | |  | | |
| * To expand knowledge of vocabulary related to news and the media * To raise students’ awareness of fake news through discussion and reading * To develop students’ 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, collaboration and media literacy | | | | |
| **Age/level** | | |  | |
| Secondary school students  CEF level B1+ | | |  | |
| **Time** | | |  | |
| 45–60 minutes | | |  | |
| **Materials** | | |  | |
| 1. Worksheets 2. Webpages:   <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>  <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/octopus-tree-of-oregon> | | | | |
| **Introduction** | |  | | |
| The lesson begins with a brief discussion about news and fake news.    Students then skim read two webpages. One website is about the Tree Octopus (a spoof), while the other is about the Octopus Tree.  After a brief reading comprehension activity, students study the websites, using a set of questions to help them. The goal is to discover which one is the fake website and why it’s fake!  As a final activity, students find other fake news stories currently circulating the internet. They choose one from the list and design a post or meme advising their friends not to fall for it. | | | | |
| **Procedure** | |  | | |
| **1. Lead-in (5–10 minutes)** | | * Tell the class that today’s lesson is about real and fake news websites. * Hand out the worksheet. Ask students to answer Q1 in small groups. * Bring the class back together. Elicit the meaning of ‘fake news’. | | |
|  | | * Encourage students to come up to the board and write a simple definition. Use prompts to help them develop a more complete definition as a class, e.g. Is it deliberate? Is it always a complete lie or does it contain some true elements? Where do you find it? How is it spread? Why is it done? Read out a definition.   Answer key  Fake news: the deliberate spreading of misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online media. Fake news is written and published usually with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity or person, and/or gain financially or politically, often using sensationalist, dishonest or outright fabricated headlines and images to increase readership. (Wikipedia)  Fake news: false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke. (Cambridge Dictionary) | | |
| **2. Reading (10–15 minutes)** | | * Introduce Q2 of the worksheet. Tell the class that they are going to skim read two website pages. One site is about a Tree Octopus, the other is about an Octopus Tree. (Important: don’t explain yet that one is fake.) * Send students to the websites (high-tech).   <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>  <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/octopus-tree-of-oregon>   * Set a time limit. Monitor and help students as they read the two websites quickly, looking for specific information. Discourage them from spending a long time looking up unknown vocabulary. Then briefly check the answers.   Answer key: Tree Octopus  Habitat: In the temperate rainforests of the west coast of North America. Characteristics: The octopus has eight arms. On average (measured from arm-tip to mantle-tip) it is 30–33cm long. It is amphibious, intelligent and its eyesight is comparable to that of humans.  History: The octopus has become endangered because the fashion industry began to kill it in large numbers and sell it to the rich in the form of hat ornaments.  Answer key: Octopus Tree  Habitat: Pacific Northwest coast of the USA  Characteristics: The tree itself extends from a central base that is 15 metres around, and instead of shooting straight up with a central trunk, the body of the tree splits into a number of smaller trunks.  History: It is believed to be around 250 to 300 years old. No one knows how this tree came to have so many trunks. | | |
| **3. Discovery activity**  **(15–20 minutes)** | | * Lead students into Q3. Explain that one of the two websites was fake! Invite them to guess which one, but don’t give away the answer! * Turn to p.2 of the worksheet and explain that we can use five W-questions to help us validate websites. Pre-teach some useful vocabulary from the W-questions: credible/genuine/authentic/legitimate, suspicious, sensational, source, layout, URL, headline, reverse Google image search, Photoshop. | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * Ask students to work in groups. Tell them to apply the W-questions to the two websites in order to find out which one is fake. Students make notes of the evidence that shows the fake one. Note: students can divide up the W-questions between them to make the activity quicker and easier. * Finally, as a whole class, elicit the answers. Ask: Which one is fake? (The Tree Octopus). How do you know? Elicit the evidence that proves it’s fake (1. The URL is incomplete; 2. the content – see the section on history – is sensational and not credible; 3. the images of the octopus consist entirely of artwork and Photoshopped images – a reverse image search shows this; 4. there is no ‘About Us’ section or contact information on the page; 5. a simple check on more credible websites, such as Snopes and Wikipedia, reveals that the creature doesn’t exist.) * Optional: Have students look at the Wikipedia entry for the Tree Octopus and the Octopus Tree. Additionally, invite them to look at the Snopes page, which explains that it’s fake. (Note that this excellent Tree Octopus site has been used in schools around the world to test students’ media literacy skills.) <https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Northwest_tree_octopus> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octopus_tree>   <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/tree-octopus/>   * Ask students: Did you guess it was fake? How? What do you think of the quality of the fake website? |
| **4. Project (or homework)** | * Introduce students to Q4. Time allowing, encourage them to find one (or more) of the fake stories currently circulating the Internet. * [Have students create a](https://www.hoax-slayer.net/) meme, post or tweet, warning their friends not to fall for this fake news story. They should supply a fact, e.g. the image is fake. * Have them to use on line and interactive games in order to find out fake games:   <https://www.getbadnews.com/books/english/>  <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-8760dd58-84f9-4c98-ade2-590562670096>  <https://medium.com/@bobhone.designer/how-to-play-the-factitious-2018-news-game-9969aaa8f2a7> |

SPEAKING AND READING

1. **Group discussion**

Where do you get your news? Which sources do you use?

What do you think about this sentence? ‘It must be true because I read it on the internet.’ What do you understand by ‘fake news’? Brainstorm some keywords you associate with it.

1. **Skim read the two websites. Complete the table.**

Go to these links and read them quickly. Make brief notes about the tree and the octopus.

<https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/> <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/octopus-tree-of-oregon>

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Habitat | Characteristics | History |
| Tree Octopus |  |  |  |
| Octopus Tree |  |  |  |

1. **Check the validity of the two websites using the FIVE Ws.**

Which site is fake? How do you know it’s fake?

1. **Find one of these recent fake news stories. Create an informative meme or post to warn your friends about it.**

A weird cat with two legs was captured by Google Street View.

Japan has the best fireworks in the world – the fireworks are moons and stars. The world’s tallest teenager is 6ft 11in (210.82cm) and towers over her teacher.

A 79-year-old woman called Abigail wants to give you $5.7 million to distribute to charity

Kentucky Fried Chicken is giving three free chicken buckets to everyone as a way of celebrating the company's 67th anniversary

The actor Peter Dinklage (who plays the character Tyrion Lannister in *Game of Thrones*) is dead.

THE FIVE W-QUESTIONS FOR SPOTTING FAKE WEBSITES

**WHERE does the information come from?**

Look at the URL. Does it look familiar or credible?

TIPS

Websites with these URLs are usually legitimate: .com, .org, .net, .edu, .gov

Fake websites often have URLs that end with: lo, .com.co. Alternatively, fake URLs are incomplete. Fake websites have similar names to authentic sites, e.g. Sky Newz (instead of Sky News).

**WHEN was the post put online?**

What’s the date on the post? Is the date real? Is the post recent?

TIP

Fake news is often posted on dates which don’t exist (e.g. 30 February) or on 1 April (April Fool’s Day). Always check the date. Sometimes the news was posted years ago but is still being circulated as ‘news’.

**WHO created the information?**

Who wrote the article? Who took the photo?

TIPS

Real photos should always give the name of the person who took them (or explain where they come from).

Look at photos carefully. Could they have been Photoshopped? Check suspicious photos by doing a reverse Google image search. Other websites may have used the same photo for different news.

**WHAT does the post or website look like?**

Look at the layout. Is the website well presented and carefully organised? Look at the headline. Is it sensational?

Is there an ‘About Us’ section with contact information? Are sources given for the information? Is the spelling and grammar correct?

TIPS

Genuine websites usually look professional. They usually contain an ‘About Us’ section, contact information, sources and links to more information.

Check the spelling and grammar. Fake websites often contain mistakes in English.

**HOW do you know for certain that it’s true?**

Check the content again. Does any information seem unlikely? Too good (or too amazing) to be true?

TIPS

Real news stories should appear in several news outlets, not just the one you’re looking at. Cross-check the information with a credible website to see if you can find the same story!

If you’re still not sure, check a site that lists hoaxes and fake news. Is the story listed as fake news?

Try: <https://www.snopes.com/> <https://www.hoax-slayer.net/>