

7.8: Fake News Investigation and Evaluation

People get news today from sources ranging from television, social media (e.g., Twitter, TikTok) and legacy news outlets (i.e., *New York Times*, *Washington Post*) as well as teachers, parents, family members, and peers. Yet, there is a real difference in quality and reliability between **real news** and **fake news**.

Fake news resembles real news in form (it usually has headlines, images, quotes, and a news-like look on screens), but not in how it is produced organizationally. Real news is derived following the standards and rules of journalism. It is fact-based and fact-checked from verified sources. It is presented objectively and truthfully in a journalistic style of writing. It is independent of political or corporate influences. Fake news, by contrast, is just what the term says -- information that is intentionally false and misleading (Molina, et al., 2021).

[Misinformation and Disinformation: Thinking Critically about Information Sources](#) from the College of Staten Island offers a further explanation of fake news and misleading, unreliable and deliberately false information.

Given the amount of fake and false news online and in print, every individual must become their own fact checker and news analyst - determining for themselves what is credible and reliable information and what is fake and false misinformation.



[Watch on YouTube https://edtechbooks.org/-BrR](https://edtechbooks.org/-BrR)

The following activities are designed to help you act as a critical news evaluator.

You can get more background information from Topic 7.4 [Social Media, Digital News, and the Spread of Misinformation](#) and Topic 7.5 [Evaluating Print and Online Media](#) in our *Building Democracy for All* eBook.

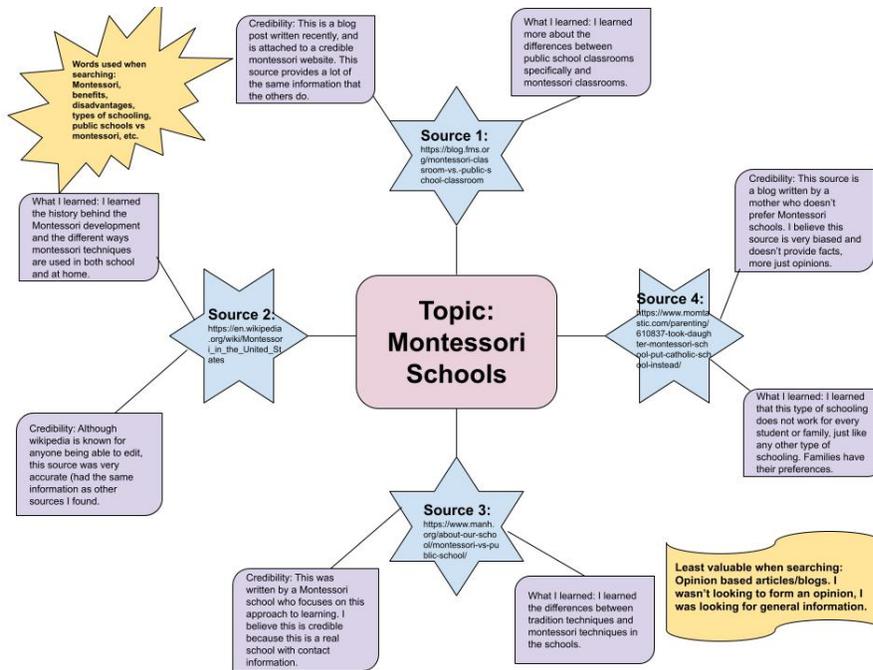
Activity 1: Analyze Your Online Search Habits

- Pick a topic that you don't know much about. Spend 20 minutes investigating and researching it. Find out anything and everything about this topic.
- Then, look through your search history.
 - What words did you use in your search?
 - What sorts of news sources did you tend to seek out?
 - What did you find the most or least valuable during your search process?
 - How did you determine whether a source was credible or not?
- **Create a mindmap that provides a visual overview** of your search process (see examples below).
 - Include boxes on your mindmap for each site you visited. Add details to each box, such as whether you consider the site credible and what you learned from the site.
 - Mindmap Tools: [Google Drawings](#), [MindMup](#), pencil and paper, & [more tools](#).
- Compare and contrast your mindmap with those of your classmates.

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

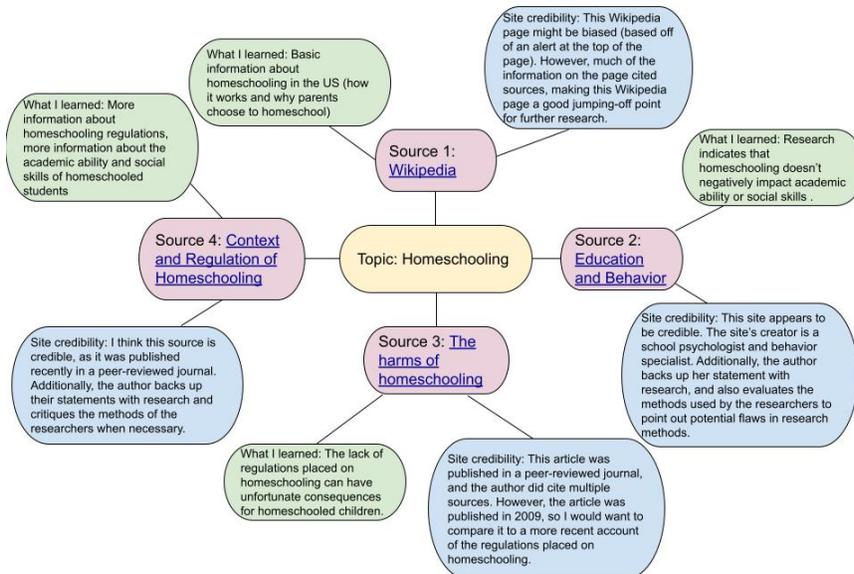
[Analyze Your Own Search Habits](#) by Maria Trifiro

Example Mindmap for the Search Topic "Montessori Schools" by Kayleigh Francis:



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Example Mindmap for the Search Topic "Homeschooling" by Sara Shea:



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Activity 2: Create a News Evaluation Tool

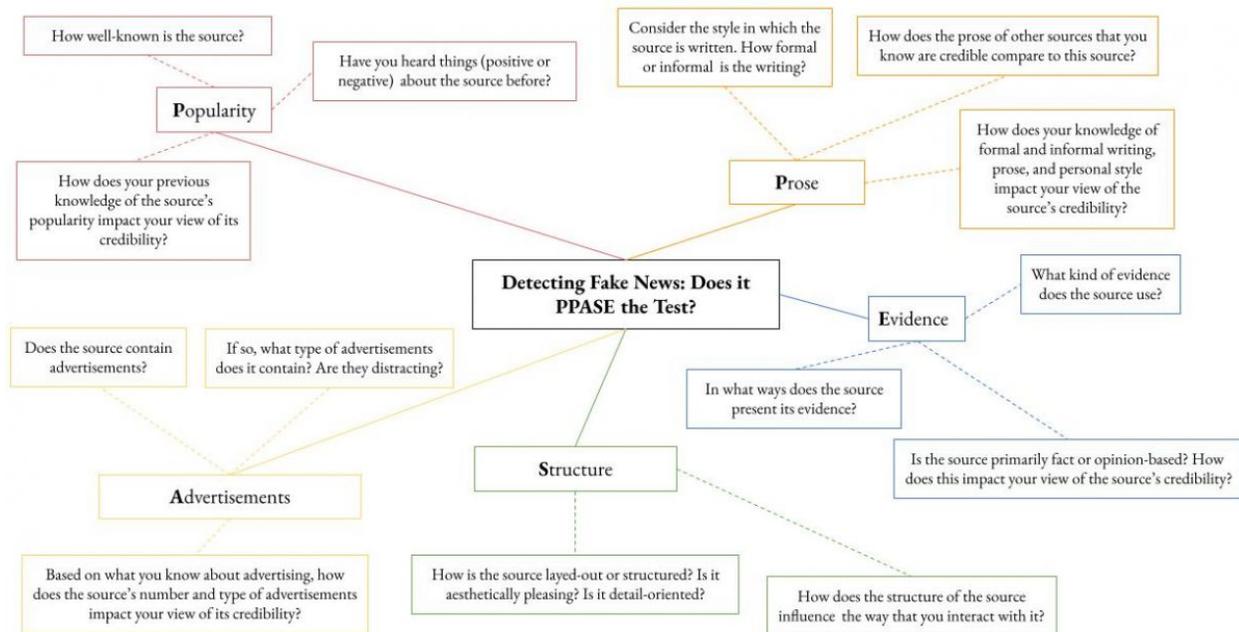
- Take the [National News Literacy Week misinformation quiz](#).
- Consider the following questions:

- How do you determine if a news story or social media news post contains misinformation?
- What would you tell someone who didn't know anything about how to tell if a source is credible to look for when evaluating news articles and social media posts?
- How would you explain credible news sources to your parents, grandparents, siblings, or friends?
- **Create a rubric, checklist, or other instructional tool** (e.g., [podcast](#), video) to help others evaluate news sources (see example mindmap below).

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Create a News Evaluation Tool](#) by Maria Trifiro

Example News Evaluation Tool by Sophia Hajjar:



When I'm detecting for fake news, I typically consider the five things listed above. They may be a bit broad, but I find them to be the best preliminary tools for deciding whether diving deeper into an online source is worth my time. Together they make up PPASE, an acronym tool that I've developed to help others evaluate news sources.

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Activity 3: Evaluate the Benefits and Challenges of Digital News and Social Media to a Democratic Society

Nearly half of adults ages 18 to 29 in this country get their political news mostly on social media. The figure is one in five across all ages groups. Those individuals also tend to be less well-informed about political issues and policies ([Pew Research Center](#), July 30, 2020).

- **Respond to the following prompts in a TikTok, Snapchat, or 60-second video:**
 - What do you see as the benefits of digital news and social media?
 - What are the potential drawbacks of getting news mostly from social media?

- What can be done to address the potential drawbacks of digital news and social media?

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Evaluate the Benefits and Challenges of Digital News and Social Media to a Democratic Society](#) by Maria Trifiro

Additional Resources

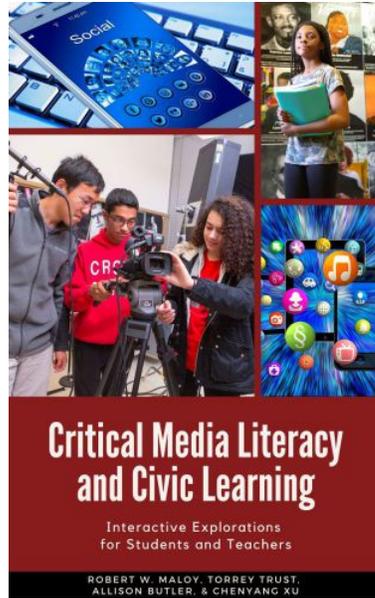
- ARTICLE: Molina, M.D., Sundar, S., Le, T., & Lee, D. (2021). ["Fake news" is not simply false information: A concept explication and taxonomy of online content](#). *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(2): 180-212.
- [Teens, social media and technology 2018](#)
- [What is News Literacy? & How to Teach It](#)
- ["Disinformation, Fake News, and Influence Campaigns on Twitter](#)
- [Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election](#)
- [What are deep fakes?](#)
- [What's Going On In This Photo?](#) (NYTimes Visual Literacy Series)
- [Fake News. It's Complicated](#)
- [The Great Hack \(2019\)](#)
- Fact-Checking Sites
 - [Fact Check.org](#)
 - [Michigan Truth Squad](#)
 - [Project Vote Smart](#)
 - [ProPublica](#)

Connecting to the eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Social Media, Digital News, and the Spread of Misinformation](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
 - *Evaluate the benefits and challenges of digital news and social media to a democratic society.* (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) **[8.T7.4]**
- [ISTE Standards](#)
 - Knowledge Constructor
 - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
 - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data, or other resources.
 - 3d: Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.
 - Creative Communicator
 - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
 - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
 - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
 - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
 - Digital Tools (DTC.a)
 - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
 - Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. EdTech Books. <https://edtechbooks.org/mediaandciviclearning>