

ELA LESSON PLAN		News—The Good, the Fake, and the Funny (lesson #1 of 3)	
OVERVIEW			
Unit	<i>Where Did You Hear That? Becoming Critical Consumers of News Media</i>		
Lesson Length	Three hours minimum (can be split up over a couple classes)		
Class	ELA, Pre-ASE, GLE 4–8, CCRSAE C & D		
Teachers	Kristi Kaepfel, Ric Nudell, and Aliza Ansell		
STAGE 1—PLANNING for DESIRED RESULTS			
ESSENTIAL & GUIDING QUESTIONS	What qualifies a piece of media as reliable news? How can we discern between real news, satire, and fake news?		
LESSON OBJECTIVES			CCRSAE Instructional Shifts addressed in this lesson
<i>By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify and apply strategies for detecting false news ✓ Discern between authentic news and satire ✓ Compose a factually-based article and a satirical article using language and tone to differentiate between the two 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice with complex text and its academic language
CCR LEVEL-SPECIFIC STANDARDS THAT SUPPORT AND ALIGN WITH THE LESSON OBJECTIVES			
<p>R.4.D. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</p> <p>R.6.C. Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.</p> <p>W.4.C. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</p> <p>L.3.D. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening: (a) Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. (b) Maintain consistency in style and tone. (c) Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.</p>			
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with “tone”—what tone is, and how to identify examples of it in text. • Understanding how to do basic research online; for this lesson, students will need to look up factual information online on a topic in order to write a short authentic news article. • To save time and ensure preparedness to write a short news article, this lesson would ideally follow a unit in which students have researched current news topics. 			

STAGE 2—EVIDENCE of MEETING the LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students' understanding will be assessed through classroom discussion, performance on handout exercises, and application of concepts to their writing.

STAGE 3—ACTION *Materials provided with this lesson are posted at

<https://www.sabes.org/content/curriculum-critical-media-consumers-unit-lesson-1>

PRE-TEACH VOCABULARY (15 min.)

using appropriate EBRI strategies:

**Conspiracy, Satire, Credible (Credibility),
Reliable (Reliability), Valid (Validity)**

(see the [MA STAR Handbook](#), pg. 17, for a chart of vocabulary strategies)

INTRODUCTION (15 min.)

Materials—each student receives ONE of these two:

- Handout: Create a Story, Real*
- Handout: Create a Story, Fiction*

Guiding Questions: What real-life consequences follow from false or misleading news?

How can we be more careful in consuming news so as not to be misled?

1. Hook activity: Give students the **handout*** with photos and a caption. Give some students the handout with instructions to write a story using only what they can tell from the photo (“Real Story”). Give others the handout with instructions to make up a story (“Fictional Story”).
2. Have students from each group read their stories. Ask what the difference is and lead into a discussion of factual news versus fake news or exaggerated news (actual news will only report verifiable, true facts without judgment, etc.)

PART 1: HOW TO AVOID FALSE INFORMATION (45–60 min.)

Materials:

- Video—Pizzagate <https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/armed-man-nabbed-pizza-shop-named-clinton-conspiracy-article-1.2898666>
- Video—TED Talk: How False News Can Spread https://youtu.be/cSKGa_7XJkg or <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-false-news-can-spread-noah-tavlin>
- **Comprehension & Discussion Questions*** on “How False News Spreads”
- *On the Media’s* handout: **Breaking News Consumer’s Handbook-Fake News Edition** <https://www.wnyc.org/story/breaking-news-consumer-handbook-fake-news-edition/> Note: there is also a 9-min. podcast, with transcript.

1. Ask: what can happen when fake news is spread? Show **video on “Pizzagate”** (the conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton and the chef of a D.C. restaurant were running a child sex ring, that led to a man to shoot people at the people at the restaurant). Discuss again the consequences of false/misleading news.
2. Show Noah Tavlin’s **TED talk** on “How False News Can Spread”—introduces problem of satire, circular reporting, etc.
3. Pass out **comprehension and discussion questions*** on how false news can spread. Students can do these independently, in pairs, or as a class. Then, discuss orally.

4. The last question asks for the video's suggestions of ways that we can avoid falling for false information. Ask students to brainstorm additional ways. As a class, compile a list (on the board or class document on the projector) of ways to avoid falling into the false information pitfall.
5. Pass out ***On the Media's*** **handout** of tips on spotting fake news. As a class, compare these tips to the class-created list.

PART 2: SATIRE VS. REAL NEWS (45–60 min.)

Materials:

- Handout*: “**Truth or Satire? Headline Practice**” (students will need help understanding context of some of the articles)
 - One satirical article and one straight news article; for example, <https://www.theonion.com/wealthy-teen-nearly-experiences-consequence-1819570166> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/02/us/ethan-couch-affluenza-jail.html> (teachers are encouraged to choose their own current examples)
 - Handout*: Venn Diagram (or students can draw their own)
1. Start by showing students a **variety of headlines (handout*)**. Ask them to guess whether each one is a real or false news story. At the end, explain that another form of fake news is SATIRE, a humorous category of media that is meant to poke fun and criticize issues. You may also want to show **video clips** (not listed here; for example, SNL) to illustrate another media form of satire/parody).
 2. Provide students with **one satirical and one straight news article on a similar topic**. In pairs or small groups have students closely read each and answer the following questions:
 - Who or what is being discussed in each?
 - What is the tone in each?
 - What grabs your attention about each?
 - How does the language and/or photos in each help express the meaning of the article? How do they differ in each?
 3. Using elements from the questions above, have students complete a **Venn diagram*** comparing satire and authentic news.
 4. As a class, discuss the differences and similarities between satire and real news.

WRITING/WORK ON NEWSLETTER (CULMINATING ASSESSMENT) (1 hr.)

Materials:

- Handout*: “**Authentic News or Satire? A Checklist**”
- Writing materials *OR* internet access for google docs
- Reference the handouts from previous section of this lesson

Explanation

1. Explain to students that at the end of this unit, they will be developing their own newsletters on a current news topic that features a variety of article types they'll study: authentic news, satire, editorials, and biased news. Note to students that the purpose of

students creating a newsletter is not to showcase their arguments on current topics but to produce writing that reflects authentic, biased, and satirical pieces

Forming Groups, Brainstorming

2. To begin the process, divide students into groups of 3-4. You may want to allow for differentiation by assigning the lower-level groups less writing per article.
3. Start by writing a list of controversial current news topics on the board such as “immigration, gun laws, marijuana legalization, global warming, etc.” Ask students to add to the list.
4. Each group should choose a topic for their newsletter from the class-generated list.

Writing

5. Tell students they will write a 1-2 paragraph (more or less depending on level of group) factual, authentic news article AND a 1-2 paragraph satirical article on the topic. Handout and review the **checklist** for authentic news vs. satire.
6. Model the process by drafting a paragraph of each yourself. Explain that this is just a first draft, that students will return to their articles later to revise and edit them. *To save time, students should already be familiar with how to locate factual, reliable information online.*
7. Have students work in their groups (perhaps with 2 group members working on the authentic while 2 others work on the satire). Using Google Docs with help ease the collaborative writing process. Monitor and help students as needed.

Presenting and Analyzing

8. Have students take turns reading their articles with the others guessing which was authentic and which was satire.

CLOSURE (5–10 min.)

Materials: Paper for exit questions, or internet access for google forms

1. Exit questions (on paper or Google Forms):
 - A. Why is it important to figure out if news is trustworthy?
 - B. What are some of the consequences of false news and information being spread?
 - C. How can you be a more careful consumer of news?
2. If time allows, discuss answers as a group.

NOTES: If you have more class time, use it for further writing and editing of these pieces. After teaching this lesson, add a *Reflection / Notes for Teaching it Again*.

Useful documents on the SABES website:

[“Standards-Aligned Classroom”](#), [“Instructional Planning Guide for ELA”](#), [“Three Key Shifts”](#)