

Lateral Reading/Current Events Template

What is lateral reading?

Evaluating the authorship or sponsorship of a source is a critical part of deciding whether it is a trustworthy source about the question or topic at hand. Websites often present information about themselves and their authors, but this information may not provide the full story or be completely truthful. A better way to learn about who is behind a website is to *read laterally*—to go outside the site to see what trusted sites say about it. Below are suggestions to help students practice *lateral reading*, a strategy for investigating a website by going outside the site itself to search for information about the author or sponsoring organization in other trustworthy sources.

What kinds of online content should I ask students to evaluate?

Lateral reading is an approach to evaluating any kind of online source, so you can't go too wrong! We suggest that you select websites, online stories, or social media posts that you think will be interesting and engaging for students. For example, you could ask students to read laterally about:

- A viral post—either photographic, video, or text—on social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube)
- A current event that is heavily featured in the news that week. You could ask students to compare articles from two different sources, including:
 - One stronger and one weaker source
 - Two strong but different sources (e.g., a think tank and a news organization, or a local and national news organization)
- An example students pick from their own social media feeds

Link to Source #1 about current event:

1. What organization is behind this information?

Do you know anything about this organization already?

2. What can you learn about the organization by reading laterally?

3. What sources did you use to learn about who is behind this information?

How do you know that these are trustworthy sources?

4. Based on this information, how reliable is this source of information? Explain.

Link to Source #2 about current event:

5. What organization is behind this information?

Do you know anything about this organization already?

6. What can you learn about the organization by reading laterally?
7. What sources did you use to learn about who is behind this information?

How do you know that these are trustworthy sources?

8. Based on this information, how reliable is this source of information? Explain.

Comparing Sources:

Based on what you learned from lateral reading, which source do you think is stronger to learn about [current event]?