

## Foreword

This material, entitled "Attack of the Trolls", has been specially developed for Estonian schools to promote media literacy and critical thinking among students. The Teacher's Guide you are reading has been translated into English, but some materials and screenshots linked here are in Estonian, as the material may not be understandable without knowledge of the Estonian context. However, you can use the Google Translate app if you want to understand these materials better. If you want to use these materials in your national language, you will need to find appropriate links, media texts, etc. in your own language.

In brief, this educational resource is centered around a simulation game. It encourages students to engage with contemporary issues related to information manipulation, fake news, and media literacy. By participating in various activities such as creating fake profiles, analyzing articles, and developing critical thinking skills, students gain a hands-on understanding of the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age.

If you are interested in adapting this material for use in your country and require further assistance, please feel free to contact me. I am open to collaboration and would be happy to discuss how these resources can be tailored to suit different educational contexts.

Best regards,

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# Simulation game "Attack of the Trolls": a guide for teachers

# The aim of the game

To give students a quick overview of how different influencing techniques are used on the internet to sway people's opinions. Students who have played the game will better recognize the most common manipulation techniques (troll accounts, fake news, etc.) and understand the damage such attacks can cause in society.

## Learning outcomes:

- The participant knows which manipulation techniques are most frequently used in information attacks;
- The participant can pay attention to the arguments of the various parties and the narratives they want to convey when consuming media;
- The participant can recognize different manipulation tactics and knows how to act.

In addition, this material helps to develop students' **cooperation and presentation skills** and to promote **creative and critical thinking**.

The material is primarily intended for use in **high school media literacy education**, but it can be adapted and used with different target groups.

The simulation game "Attack of the Trolls" helps to **actively engage students in thinking and discussion, and a practical task helps to better consolidate the learned knowledge**.

Since the duration of a lesson varies in different high schools, the schedule for the simulation in this document is written for a 45-minute lesson (in which case the material is intended for three lessons) or a 70-minute lesson (in which case the material covers the content of two lessons).

Action	Lesson: 45 min	Lesson: 70 min
Introductory video (15 min) 	<b>1st lesson</b>	<b>1st lesson Computers needed </b>
Team formation (2 min)		
Article analysis (15 min)		
Choosing sides (3 min)		
Task introduction video (5 min) 		

Material creation (30 min) 🏠 🏠	2nd lesson Computers needed 🖥️	
Preparation of presentations (15 min) 🏠 🏠		
Team presentations (20-25 min)	3rd lesson	2nd lesson Computers needed 🖥️
Choosing the best work (5 min)		
Reflection (15 min)		
Summary video (5 min) 📺		

📺 - a video has been created for this activity, which can be used in class if desired.

If there is an opportunity to dedicate one more hour to these topics, the material includes ideas 💡 that can be additionally performed to better understand the topic and reinforce knowledge. However, if you still plan to stick to the 3 x 45 min / 2 x 70 min time frame, then do not plan these activities.

**Students will need computers for creating the material.** If you are doing it in the 3 x 45 min format, it is sufficient if students have computers during the second lesson. If you are doing it in the 2 x 70 min format, then students will need computers at the end of the first lesson and at the beginning of the second lesson.

## Activities

### Introduction 📺 (15 minutes)

Watch the introductory video with the students <https://youtu.be/HnRJWPzqcto>.

The video is in Estonian, but you can find the slides in English [here](#). Feel free to translate or adapt them for your presentation.

If you want better overview about topics in slides then here are some resources that you can look:

- [Sun Tzu "The art of War" audiobook](#)
- [Operation "Bodyguard"](#)
- [Troll farms](#)

- [Astroturfing](#)

💡 You can pause the video in the meantime and discuss with the students what examples they have noticed of different tactics and what fake news they have found themselves on the internet.

## Team formation (2 min)

### Preparation:

- Decide how you want to divide the students into groups (self-selection / lottery / other)

Form groups of 7-8 people.

## Article analysis (15 minutes)

### Preparation:

- Find two articles that cover a currently relevant social issue from different perspectives. Since there is limited time for this task, it is advisable to choose a topic that is currently polarizing society.

You can also use prepared articles on the following topics:

- [Sugar tax \(EST\)](#)
- [Green shift \(EST\)](#)
- [Legalization of cannabis \(EST\)](#)

**NB!** If you decide on a topic yourself, I recommend that you create an A4-long summary of the two articles, because unfortunately time is limited and using an article that is too long will lead to a problem with keeping to time.

- Decide how you want to **distribute the articles** to the students (print out / share as PDF files / link to a website). It is important that they can familiarize themselves quickly and easily with the two articles.

As the students read the content, draw a table like this on the board and ask the groups to have a short discussion about these topics.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

	Party 1:	Party 2:
Who do they represent?		
What is the personal connection to the topic?		
What is the desired goal?		
What are the main arguments?		
Who might this narrative appeal to?		

Now discuss the following topics together:

1. Who are the different parties in this conflict?
2. What is their aim/interest in this issue?
3. What are their main arguments?

💡 If there is time, participants can be asked to search social media for examples of how the discussion has gone there based on these articles. They can also discuss which type of audience might be more receptive to one or the other narrative.

## Choosing sides (3 min)

### Preparation:

- Prepare raffle cards with the parties to the conflict (the aim is for half the groups to produce material that supports one party's account and the other half that supports the other party's account). For example: "for the sugar tax" versus "against the sugar tax" or "for the green shift" versus "against the green shift"

Assign each group a side to support as trolls through a draw. If students complain about having to represent a viewpoint they disagree with, explain that arguing from the opposite side actually teaches them the best way to present their own viewpoint in the future ;)

## Task introduction (5 min)

Now watch this video with the students <https://youtu.be/beAbWWY661o>.

The video is in Estonian, but you can find the slides in English [here](#). Feel free to translate or adapt them for your presentation.

If you have a 45 minute lesson format, then if you have time then teams can start preparing materials. If the task will be continued next time then upload a [student guide \(EST\)](#) to e-school and give them the task to think a little and research the topic so that the next class can immediately start actively creating materials.

## Material creation (30 min)

### Preparation:

- For this task, computers are needed. Tablets can be used, but laptops or desktop computers are preferable. It's sufficient to have one computer for every two students (at least 3 computers per team).
- Review the [student guide \(EST\)](#) and try copying and modifying the design templates yourself from Canva.com (links in the student guide). If you have any questions about this, please communicate with the school's educational technologist.
- Upload the [student guide \(EST\)](#) to the e-school or learning management system.
- Experiment with creating fake news on the [ChatGPT](#) page yourself, so you can guide the students if necessary.

Students must create one **profile** (i.e. a person spreading false news), one **fake news article** (with the help of ChatGPT) and one **thread to illustrate the tactics of astroturfing**. All the necessary links and instructions are in the student guide.

The goal is to think through

- What kind of fake account would be suitable as the spokesperson for this theme and viewpoint,
- What kind of texts could help spread the desired narrative, and
- What a so-called artificially created thread might look like.

As an example, I have created a case for the students where the Grinch tries to discredit Santa Claus. It's important to note that the Grinch's profile is designed to speak to people. He has titled himself an expert and emphasizes traditions a

lot. He also tries to engage different target groups with his posts (e.g., animal rights activists).

Links to Canva.com design templates:

- Profiles: [Santa Claus Grinch](#)
- [Fake news](#)
- [Comment thread](#)



## Santa Claus

@RealSanta

35,2 M followers [Follow](#)

📍 North Pole

🏢 CEO of Santa's Workshop Ltd, Philanthropist, Gift Distributor

🎅 Spreading joy and delivering gifts 📦 all around the world 🌍 every Christmas Eve 🌲. Expert in reindeer 🦌 management and toy 🧸 production. Love milk 🥛 and cookies! 🍪



Just reviewed the good kids list for 2023. Some interesting changes coming this year!

👍👍👍 3,7 M



Going to update Rudolph's GPS system. Can't afford any mistakes!

👍👍👍 11,2 M



Enjoying homemade cookies from Mrs. Claus. As always, delicious!

👍👍👍 5,1 M



## Grinch

@RealChristmas

150K followers [Follow](#)

📍 Mount Crumpit, Whowille

🏢 The True Expert on Christmas

I want to bring back traditional Christmas, which would bring us love, unity, and peace. Let's end this commercial holiday and send Santa Claus into retirement!



🚨 IMPORTANT 🚨 Did you really think Santa Claus was a good man? In fact, he collects data about YOU and your CHILDREN! #SantaExposed

👍👍👍 128,7 K



Christmas isn't about gifts. 🙄 The true joy of Christmas lies in the heart and the warmth of the soul. ✨ #takecareofeachother #takecareoftheplanet

👍👍👍 72,4 K



It's depressing to see how Santa Claus engages in animal cruelty. Reindeer are not meant to fly, but to run freely in the tundra!

#protectanimals #freethereindeer

👍👍👍 93 K

## Hidden Truth

*Information they don't want to tell*

**Major data breach in Lapland!  
Elves secretly collected children's data worldwide**



**Helsinki, Finland** - A scandalous news story has shocked the global community: Lapland's legendary Santa Claus and his elves have been arrested following a revealing report showing they have been collecting children's personal data worldwide for years. The data breach has caused thousands of families to worry about their children's privacy.

### Santa Claus Interrogation

"Finnish security forces conducted a special operation at Santa's workshop this morning," said a security forces spokesperson. "We have brought Santa Claus in for questioning, and his employees have temporarily suspended all activities."

### Expert Opinion

The impact of the elves' activities on the safety of children and families cannot be underestimated in this situation. "This is not just an ethical issue but also a security threat," commented digital privacy expert Maria Häppinen. "The data can be used for manipulation, extortion, or even identity theft."

### Santa Claus's Defender Says "It's All a Misunderstanding"

Santa Claus's lawyer claims that the whole story is misunderstood. "Santa Claus has worked for decades to bring joy to children. His aim has never been to harm anyone," assured the lawyer. "Data was collected only to know what gifts children want. Everything was done transparently and in good faith."

### What's Next?

Santa Claus and his elves are currently under interrogation and awaiting official charges. Meanwhile, families worldwide are wondering how to explain to their children why Santa might not come this year. The investigation is ongoing, and this story is developing. All eyes are on Lapland as the public awaits answers to the shocking questions raised by this disturbing data breach.



## Grinch

@RealChristmas

🚨 IMPORTANT 🚨 Did you really think Santa Claus was a good man? In fact, he collects data about YOU and your CHILDREN! #SantaExposed #PeekingBehindTheWindow



**Major data breach in Lapland! Elves secretly collected children's data worldwide**



## Ebenezer Scrooge

@RealScrooge

👏 Great job, @RealChristmas! I've always had a feeling that this "goodness and love" was just a cover.



## Hans Gruber

@HansGruberDieHard

Look what happens when people finally start asking important questions. #BigBrotherIsWatching



## Devil

@Hot666

Down here in the "south," we've always known that those "good" uncles are not to be trusted. It's good that someone is finally bringing out the truth!

Here is [one example of a deepfake video \(EST\)](#) (Santa Claus denies the data leak), if students want, they can try it themselves. I used it to make a video <https://www.d-id.com/> (the first short video is free), but there are many similar applications on the Internet.

Jõuluvana

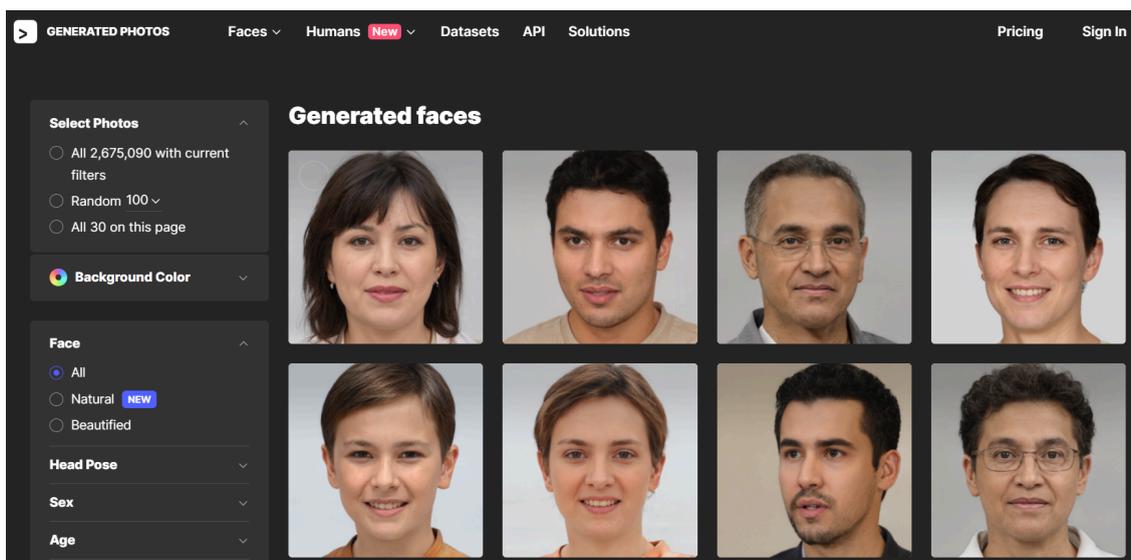
×



DOWNLOAD SHARE

DELETE

Students can also create profile pictures on <https://generated.photos/> web page where there are a lot of faces created by artificial intelligence. Also if students have a [Midjourney](#) account, it is possible to generate some images with a free account there.



When creating fake news, students can use the help of ChatGPT to better understand how this technology works (and how easy it is for foreign bad guys to create text in the local language).

If you don't feel very confident about ChatGPT, you can watch the video ChatGPT Tutorial: [How to Use Chat GPT for beginners 2023](#)

💡 Especially diligent teams could try creating a **deepfake video** on their own, but since there is very little time, this part is not mandatory (rather, it's a bonus).

## Preparation of presentations (15 min) 🏠 🏠

### Preparation:

- Create a place in eSchool/Moodle or elsewhere where students can upload their presentations.

Each team must prepare a presentation in which they present the materials they have created and answer the following questions:

- Why exactly can such a profile appear like a so-called opinion leader on this topic?
- How does this fake news help to reinforce the desired narrative?
- What were you thinking when you created the thread?

Make agreement whether everyone will use the same application (e.g. Google Sheets) or whether each team will decide for themselves how and where to put the presentation together. Instructions should also be given as to where the presentations should be uploaded so that the teacher can access them easily.

Students can use this [slide template \(EST\)](#) to save time (they will need to make a copy for themselves). This link is also available in the Student Guide.

## Team presentations (20-25 min)

### Preparation:

- Print for students [evaluation matrix \(ENG\)](#), so that they can evaluate the work of others during presentations.

Each team has 3 minutes for a presentation. Others rate the presentations based on a given evaluation matrix.

	3p	2p	1p	0p
<b>Fake profile</b>	The fake profile is believable, and the created persona fits as a spokesperson for the topic.	The fake profile raises some questions but is generally believable.	The fake profile is not believable <b>OR</b> the persona does not fit as a spokesperson for the topic.	The fake profile is not believable <b>AND</b> the persona does not fit as a spokesperson for the topic.
<b>Fake news</b>	Uses real people/places. The news is engaging, believable, and informative.	The news uses real people but could be more thorough.	The news is not believable, and it's very easy to check and disprove this news.	The news is short and insubstantial, telling no real story.
<b>Conversation thread</b>	The conversation thread is provocative and generates a lot of emotions. Invites comments.	The conversation thread is interesting but could have a clearer structure.	The conversation thread is mediocre, does not fully capture attention. Does not generate emotions.	The conversation thread is boring, does not generate emotions. Lacks intrigue and provocation.
<b>Deepfake video (an extra option for the particularly diligent).</b>	The video looks real. Without detailed scrutiny, one might not realize it is a deepfake.	The video generally looks real, but careful viewing reveals flaws.	Upon viewing, it quickly becomes apparent that it is a deepfake, e.g., suspicious speech, overlapping edges, etc.	The video is immediately identifiable as not genuinely made. The speech and video do not align, the voice is wrong, etc.
<b>Presentation</b>	The presentation is convincing. The materials form a cohesive whole.	The presentation is smooth. The parts are not very well connected.	The presentation is satisfactory. The parts are not connected but still contribute to the desired narrative.	The presentation is inadequate. The created material does not contribute to spreading the desired narrative.

## Choosing the best work (5 min)

### Preparation:

- Think about how you want the students to choose the best work. Some ideas you can use:
  - [Mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com)
  - Google Forms
  - Voting on paper (in this case, it is reasonable to issue the diploma at the end of the lesson and there is time to count the votes during the last video)
  - Showing your preference with raised hands
  - Some other exciting way that doesn't take too much time
- Print out [diplomas](#) to recognize the best team (you can write down the names in class after voting)

Find out which group's work had the best work and recognize the best team with diplomas.

## Reflection (15 minutes)

Discuss with the class and try to answer the following questions:

- What surprised/made you think the most during the simulation?

- How difficult is it really to use these tactics?
- Why is it dangerous for society/individuals to use these tactics?
- What should you do if you see a fake news/account, etc.?
- How can individuals stop the spread of troll accounts?

## Summary (5 min)

Now watch the summary video with the students <https://youtu.be/Wsceldw7KxM>.

The video is in Estonian, but you can find the slides in English [here](#). Feel free to translate or adapt them for your presentation.

**NB!** Reflection and the summary are **mandatory parts** of this educational material, to discuss and clarify the ethical and moral dimensions, and to explain that although the lesson might have been fun, using such tactics in real life is not acceptable.

The purpose of the task is to teach the recognition of different manipulation techniques, in order to better protect oneself and loved ones in the information space.