

Whose Fake News

NAME _____

DATE _____

Directions: Part 1

Read the dilemma below.

WHOSE FAKE NEWS

John makes his living by hosting several fake news sites. The names of the sites look and sound legitimate, but they're completely made up and filled with untrue stories written just to get people to click on them. He buys ad space on other sites and places the stories as clickbait. Every time someone clicks on one of his stories, he earns money in advertising revenue. Some of his headlines have been shared millions of times on social media and have gotten even more in clicks and impressions.

Does John have the right to make money spreading false information, or should he have a responsibility to be accurate and not spread disinformation?

Directions: Part 2

Complete the steps below to take a stand on the issue. Some steps are done individually, and others as a class.

TAKE A STAND

(On your own.) What do you think? Explain your perspective.

On their own, have students reflect on their perspective. They could take one minute to think, and three to four minutes to write their responses on the handout.

Remind students to consider things they learned about, such as clickbait and how online advertising works.

You can provide anchors to help students start their responses, such as a line from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree where students mark their position along the continuum.

The aim is to support students' immediate reaction, thinking and reflection -- no need for them to write out a full paragraph or complete sentences. Getting down thoughts in the form of bullet points or keywords works.



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STAND BACK

(As a group.) Where do your classmates stand? Listen to their perspectives.

As a group, first get a sense of where students stand. You can either have students:

- Hold thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs sideways to signal if they agree, disagree, or are undecided, or
- Get up and position themselves physically to show where they stand. Assign each corner of the room to one of these positions, or form a line along one wall. It's helpful to have signs to remind students where to go -- e.g., for "Strongly Agree" vs. "Strongly Disagree."

Invite students to share their perspectives. Try to hear from students who have different perspectives. As students share their views, document themes from their responses on the board. For example, if a student says, "He is not responsible," you might write "Responsibility"; if a student says, "They might believe what they post," you could write "Belief" and/or "Truth." Some students might express different opinions depending on the type of fake news John is writing about on his website. Your aim as a facilitator is to help surface as many different considerations as possible.

Encourage students to show changes in their thinking. As students listen to their classmates' perspectives, their own stances on the dilemma may shift. If students have physically located themselves on a line or in different corners of the room to show where they stand, invite them to shift their location to represent any changes in their thinking.

LOOK AGAIN

(On your own.) Look again at your original response. What had you not considered that other people brought up? (Maybe you changed your mind, maybe you didn't -- that's OK! Either way, you heard other views. How has your thinking shifted after hearing your classmates' perspectives, even if you haven't changed your mind?)

on their own, have students look again at their original response and identify what they "had not considered." Looking again is not about asking students, "Did you change your mind?" Rather, the idea is to help them identify ways their thinking has changed based on what they learned and heard. It's powerful to recognize that our perspectives can evolve, deepen, or change when we listen to others. Students don't need to identify considerations that are opposite their perspectives. Perhaps someone had the same general viewpoint as them (agree/disagree) but raised a consideration that they hadn't thought of, which is fine to include here.



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Students can use the sentence starters for guidance:

- I had not considered ...
- My perspective did/did not change because ...

LOOK BEYOND

(As a group.) Look beyond this specific case. How does this dilemma remind you of other situations we've explored in class or that you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

Students make connections to situations or experiences beyond this specific dilemma. Ask:

- How does the dilemma connect to other things we've talked about in our class?
- How does the dilemma connect to other situations you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

Support students in recognizing connections and applying considerations beyond the current abstract situation.

Directions: Part 3 (optional)

In your group, pick and discuss one of the questions below.

- What if the revenue from the fake news site was being used to support a worthy social cause or charity?
- What if John's popular false articles help change public opinion on a topic?
- Should the websites or platforms that place John's stories as ads be held accountable for helping spread disinformation?

