

Disinformation

Explained by Common Craft

Disinformation is growing. By learning what it is, how to recognize it, and how to prevent it from spreading, we can stop disinformation from doing harm.

Video Transcript:

Imagine a small village called Fernville that has residents, a government and a newspaper. For generations, the newspaper was a trusted source of information, with both good news and bad.

At the edge of town, a river separates Fernville from Treetown, the next town over. Fernville residents wanted a bridge over the river while Treetown residents were against it. The bridge became the subject of debate and a decision needed to be made about building it.

Normally, this kind of decision would be based on a shared understanding of the facts like construction costs and timelines that were published in the paper. The facts gave everyone a foundation for forming their own opinions about the bridge. In the past, issues between towns were settled between town leaders in public meetings.

This time, however, a few government leaders of Treetown, who were against the bridge, took a different approach. Instead of meetings and diplomacy, they decided to fool Fernville residents into rejecting the bridge. They created and distributed official-looking articles, documents, and advertisements that all had the same message - the bridge will cost three times what the estimates say. Leaders in Treetown repeated the same messages in interviews and meetings.

This information became widely shared in Fernville because it was surprising and provocative. But in reality, the messages were lies and exaggerations about the bridge's cost. This fooled Fernville residents, who trusted this new information like articles in their newspaper. It seemed so real to them.

Soon, the citizens of Fernville decided against the bridge and Treetown residents celebrated. They successfully manipulated Fernville into rejecting the bridge by spreading false information.

This is called a disinformation campaign. Disinformation is false information that is published and shared with the goal to deceive people and cause them to support a particular person, issue or organization that they may not otherwise support. The problem is that disinformation is based on lies and manipulation of facts. It causes people to lose trust in newspapers who report information needed to make sound decisions.

As in the bridge example, it can mean one town or country can unfairly control another and cause them to vote against their own interests.

Today, disinformation is growing and becoming more difficult to detect. To avoid spreading it, use information from trustworthy sources like respected newspapers, journals, and well-known

journalists. If the information seems misleading, research the writer and publisher and look for bias. Be skeptical of messages that seem exaggerated or provocative.

By learning to detect and avoid disinformation we can prevent others from unfairly manipulating our opinions and help facts and trusted information rise to the surface.

What it teaches:

This video illustrates the danger of disinformation, with a story of one community's use of a disinformation campaign to cause a rival community to vote against their own interests. It teaches:

- Why disinformation can work as a strategy
- Why disinformation is destructive and harmful to society
- How to recognize disinformation
- How to prevent disinformation from spreading

Video Info:

- Duration: **03m 11s**
- Captions Available: **YES**
- Lesson Plan: **YES**
- Category: [Net Safety](#)
- ISTE Standard: **Knowledge Constructor 3b**
- ACRL Info Literacy Frame: **Information Has Value**