

An Educator's Guide to Support Information Literacy

Prepared by Melissa Guerrette, M.Ed., NBCT

Oxford Elementary School, MSAD 17, Maine



With more information being created and shared than ever before, it is imperative that we incorporate information literacy into today's classrooms in order to equip students with critical skills for participation in the world as informed and independent thinkers. In all three books in the series, *Two Truths and a Lie: It's Alive!*, *Two Truths and a Lie: Histories and Mysteries*, and *Two Truths and a Lie: Forces of Nature*, Ammi-Joan Paquette and Laurie Ann Thompson have created works of children's literature that serve as an information literacy entry point, by presenting stories that weave together bewildering facts and fascinating photos while also demanding that readers employ their best critical thinking skills in order to weigh whether each story is true or false. These books can be used as catalysts for shared conversations about facts and fiction, and offer multiple opportunities for practicing the evaluation of nonfiction stories.

Evaluating Sources

The presence or absence of reliable sources can be a tip-off to spotting fake information. After an initial read-through of one of the stories included in these collections, prompt students to re-read closely, noting any mention of sources of information. For each source cited, ask students to consider the answers to the following questions:

- ? Who or what is the source of information?
- ? What is this person or organization about, or what do they stand for?
- ? Is this a trustworthy source? How do you know?
- ? Does the author include a bibliography listing sources that informed his or her writing? Are those credible sources, and how do you know?

Evaluating Images

Many fake stories capitalize on eye-catching photography to appeal to readers and to use as “evidence” to support their claims. Practice analyzing images with students to increase their critical consciousness. Pick a story from either of the *Two Truths and a Lie* books and ask students to consider the answers to these questions:

- ? Is the source of this image trustworthy? Why or why not?
- ? To what degree does this image (or set of images) support the information included in the text?
- ? What might not be shown in this image, and how does that influence my thinking?



Evaluating the Author's Purpose and Potential Biases

Ultimately, at the root of every written document is a writer with a purpose. Helping students to be conscious of an author's intentions and choices is key to identifying his or her purpose. (Remember to help readers understand that an author may have more than one purpose. In all three *Two Truths and a Lie* books, the authors' purpose was twofold: to inform and to entertain their readers.)

Pick a story from any one of the three *Two Truths and a Lie* books. Prompt students to read closely for language that suggests the author's purpose. You may find it helpful for readers to code language for informing, entertaining, and persuading with symbols or colored sticky note tabs. Or, ask readers to record the language they notice in a three-column chart.

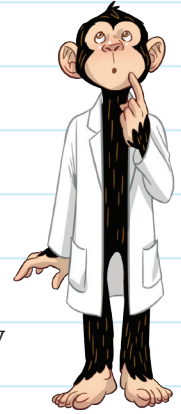
When reading other articles, use the stories from any of the *Two Truths and a Lie* books as a comparative text to identify the author's purpose. When reading other, similar texts with students, ask:

- ? Is the author trying to entertain you similarly to the way Ammi-Joan Paquette and Laurie Ann Thompson did? What is the same or different?
- ? Is the author trying to inform you similarly to the way Ammi-Joan Paquette and Laurie Ann Thompson did? What is the same or different?



- ? Is the author trying to persuade you? How can you tell?
- ? Does the author have more than one purpose in writing this article?
- What evidence can you provide to explain your thinking?

Ask students to try writing on the same topic for different purposes. Choose a small passage from any one of the *Two Truths and a Lie* books and invite them to rewrite the passage to reflect solely an informative purpose. Can the same passage be rewritten with an entertaining and/or persuasive angle? Students can try this with another passage, or start from scratch with their own unbelievable story. (You may want to encourage students to begin with a fictional story so they are not managing author's purpose and research skills simultaneously. You can advance the degree of challenge as you see fit for your students.)



When talking with readers about bias, we should consider bias on both sides of the text: author bias and confirmation bias. While author bias is a slant given to the text by what the author wants you to believe, confirmation bias is a lens through which a reader may be reading; in other words, what the reader hopes will be true or confirmed via the text. Teach readers to be aware that having a desired message or outcome in mind can influence their analysis of a text.



Fact Checking

No matter which story from the *Two Truths and a Lie* books you may choose, you'll find your eyebrows raised as you question, "Really?" Teach readers to trust that feeling of uncertainty in their gut and to put it to the test. Have students note unbelievable facts and do some fact checking to verify.

Two frequently referenced sites for fact checking are www.factcheck.org and www.snopes.com. However, depending on the kind of information being investigated, these sites may not have straightforward answers, and it may be necessary to dig a little deeper.

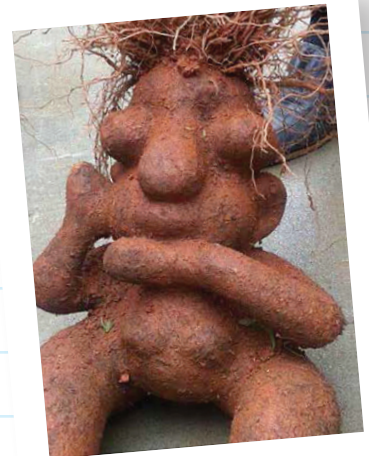
Have students choose a story from any one of the *Two Truths and a Lie* books and go sleuthing for the true facts. They can mark the facts from the story that seem too strange to be true. Then, have them pull up favorite age-appropriate resources or a kid-safe internet search engine and get started on a mission to find a second reliable source that confirms the fact(s) as true information, or not.

Suggest these tips to students for their searches:

- ! Practice selecting keywords and phrases that will help narrow the results.
- ! Evaluate the credibility of the websites returned in the search. Remind students of the prompts practiced in the Evaluating Sources activities previously listed.
- ! Look for sites with .edu, .org, or .gov extensions. In fact, include them in the search. Caution students that while these may be helpful, in some cases this information may be misleading as well.

Experimenting with Degrees of Truth

In many cases, texts we read may include both factual information and fictionalized information. Ask your students if any of them have personal experience with twisting a story, even just a little bit, to make it sound



better. These tweaks are often the fine line between fact and fiction, and in some cases, just what the authors thought about when writing this book.

Ask students to read one of the “lies” of their choice from any one of the *Two Truths and a Lie* books and then fact check to find what’s true and what has been changed or embellished or tweaked. Can they pick out what the authors might have done to turn fact to fiction?

Another way to experiment with degrees of truth is to take one of the true stories from any *Two Truths and a Lie* book and twist a detail or two in a way that makes the story fictional, but believable.

Have students try their own hands at fictionalizing some surprising stories. After they find a wild or surprising fact, ask them to write an almost-true story they could share with others. Have students take turns reading their stories or articles aloud to see who can spot the part of the text that is made up.

What's So Bad About Fake News Anyway?

Talk to students about fake information and the danger of too many fictionalized stories being spread. Chances are they can generate their own reasons why spreading lies or false stories is risky, but help them consider the complexities involved in such large or small deceptions. (Depending on the age and maturity of your students, you might offer them a real world example of a fake story that got too much traction and caused damage.)

The internet and social media are means through which information is easily and rapidly disseminated. Once a fictional story hits the internet or social media, it can be spread and shared and be impossible to rein back in. Sharing false information can result in many people having — and reacting to — information unnecessarily.

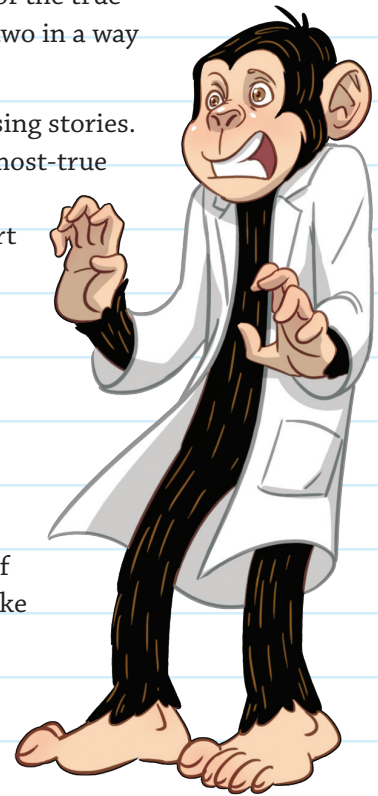
Our world can be so clouded and full of information that sometimes we may not know whom or what to trust. The production and spread of false information results in more distrust or uncertainty.

Help students to be critical consumers — as well as producers — of information. Before they share something on the internet or on social media, encourage students to:

- ! be vigilant about fact checking what they read/view and what they produce;
- ! identify more than one source with the same claim;
- ! cite their own sources when producing work;
- ! weigh the value or potential impact of what they choose to “share.”

Fact or Fiction Note-Taking Sheet

The Fact or Fiction note-taking sheet on the following page is designed to help readers analyze a text and record evidence of their thinking in order to evaluate a text as factual or fictional. The categories of information align closely to the headings (or exercises) included in this Educator’s Guide. This note-taking sheet could be used alongside the articles from any one of the three *Two Truths and a Lie* books, but it is intentionally generic so that it can be a support tool for other nonfiction texts that students are analyzing.



Fact or Fiction?

Read through your article. Then, go back and reread, using this sheet to help you take notes to evaluate whether the information in the article is based on fact or fiction.

Title of article (pages): _____

Claim(s): What claim(s) does the text make?

Author’s purpose: What does the author want to accomplish with this text? (Mark all that apply.)

- ☐ Inform
- ☐ Persuade
- ☐ Entertain
- ☐ Other _____

Author’s bias or opinion: Does the author insert his or her own opinion into the text?

My lens: What bias or opinion do I bring to this text as a reader? Do I have an idea that I want to prove right or wrong? Do I have something I hope the text will say?

Evaluate the sources: Who or what is cited? Are these trustworthy and reliable sources?

Evaluate the images: To what degree do the images add credibility to the claim?

Unbelievable facts: Are there unbelievable facts in the text? Fact-check and mark the box when you’ve researched the fact with an additional source (make sure it’s reliable!).

| FACT TO CHECK: | T or F | ADDITIONAL SOURCE: |
|--------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Overall, do you think this text is fact or fiction? Explain your reasoning.

Related Standards

Activities and discussions in this Educator's Guide correlate to and support instruction of the following Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 — Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6 — Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 — Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8 — Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Some Additional Resources

For more sources of wonder and disbelief:

Atlas Obscura — www.atlasobscura.com

Did You Know — www.didyouknowFACTS.com

Science Notes — www.sciencenotes.org

Strange Animals — https://twitter.com/Strange_Animals

You might also try phrases like “weird hoaxes” or “weird plants + fake” in your favorite search engine.

For more information, resources, and lesson ideas related to media and/or information literacy:

Common Sense Media (www.commonsense.org)

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/toolkit/news-and-media-literacy>

Common Sense Media has a wide variety of materials for educators, parents, and students. You might be interested in beginning with the News & Media Literacy Toolkit. Videos, handouts, and more.

CRAAP Test

https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf

From California State University, Chico, a series of categories and questions (with the acronym CRAAP) for evaluating information.

Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civil Online Reasoning

<https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%2011.21.16.pdf>

A publication of Stanford History Education Group, this is the Executive Summary of their media literacy survey, including findings and tasks that can be adapted for classroom use.

kidCourses (www.kidcourses.com)

<http://kidcourses.com/how-to-fact-check-for-kids/>

This site has a variety of resources you can explore with a few simple clicks, but this link will take you to a list of sites to support fact checking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10 — Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 — Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8 — Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9 — Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Newsela (www.Newsela.com)

<https://newsela.com/articles/#/rule/latest?needle=fake%20news>

Newsela, an online bank of current event articles and follow-up assessments, has developed text sets related to media literacy.

Newseum (www.newseumED.com)

<https://newseumED.org/stack/media-literacy-resources/>

NewseumED, connected to the Newseum Institute in Washington, D.C., has published free media literacy resources for educators in addition to offering on-site programming for both educators and students.

nprED (www.npr.org)

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/16/514364210/5-ways-teachers-are-fighting-fake-news>

NPR gathered this assortment of ideas for teaching media literacy from teachers in the field across the country.

School Library Journal:

The Smell Test: Educators can counter fake news with information literacy. Here's how.

http://www.slj.com/2017/01/industry-news/the-smell-test-educators-can-counter-fake-news-with-information-literacy-heres-how/#_

Truth, Truthiness, and Triangulation: A news literacy toolkit for a “post-truth” world

<http://blogs.slj.com/neverendingsearch/2016/11/26/truth-truthiness-triangulation-and-the-librarian-way-a-news-literacy-toolkit-for-a-post-truth-world/>

Both are strong articles with ample tools for working with students and families alike.