Fake News

"Deception may drive the creation of fake news; gullibility helps create a market for it."

—Callum Borchers, journalist

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Which news sites do you rely on for information?

2. Do you ever share online content before reading or watching it in full?

3. Who is more likely to share fake news, young people or their parents?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

_____	1. stumble upon	a)	to go around
_____	2. catchy	b)	misleading, causing a person to believe a lie or exaggeration
_____	3. trend *(verb)*	c)	the center of attention
_____	4. deceptive	d)	attractive, eye-catching
_____	5. spotlight	e)	a person born in the '80s or '90s
_____	6. circulate	f)	a system of government that represents its people's values
_____	7. democracy	g)	to find by chance (without looking for)
_____	8. propaganda	h)	easily tricked or fooled
_____	9. millennial	i)	one-sided information (with a goal of hurting the other side)
_____	10. gullible	j)	to become a temporarily popular online subject

Reading

FAKE NEWS
Something smells fishy

1. Fake news is misinformation that people think is true. Social media users **stumble upon** this content in their newsfeeds. This drives web traffic to ads and makes money for fake news websites.

2. Fake news sites often advertise that their content isn't real. This doesn't stop people from believing or sharing it. In fact, a **catchy** title is all a fake news piece needs to start **trending**. Many people don't even preview online content before sharing it.

3. Some fake news is politically **deceptive**. The 2016 US presidential election put this type of fake news into the **spotlight**. Many Americans think Donald Trump won the election because of fake news about his opponent. Others wonder how he won with so much fake news **circulating** about himself.

4. Some journalists describe fake news as a modern form of **propaganda**. During the 2016 US election cycle, fake news was often more popular than real news. Does fake news threaten our **democracy**?

5. You might think that young people are more likely to share fake news. This is not true. In fact, **millennials** are less likely to spread fake news than their parents or grandparents. This has more to do with social media preferences than how **gullible** a generation is. Millennials don't use Facebook as much as their parents and grandparents, and Facebook users are more than twice as likely to see and share fake news.

6. Is fake news creating an era of misinformation, or is this a trend that will soon be forgotten? What can you do to prevent fake news from trending?

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is this reading mainly about?

2. Why do fake news sites exist?

3. How did fake news affect the 2016 US election?

4. According to the reading, are young people more gullible than their parents or grandparents?

5. How does the author end the reading?

Vocabulary Review

A. Recognizing Vocabulary

Which word from page 1 is described in the sentence? More than
one option may be possible. You may need to change the word form.

#	Sentence	Word
1	I **found** an interesting article about Ivanka Trump in my newsfeed.	
2	**False** news often tricks you into clicking on an ad.	
3	This is not real news. It's a **political advertisement** for the far right.	
4	The hashtag #notmypresident is **popular** on Twitter right now.	
5	**That younger generation** prefers Snapchat to Facebook.	
6	She shared the article because it had an **attractive** headline.	
7	I admit it. I'm **easily deceived**. Tell me anything and I will believe it.	
8	Have you heard the news that is **going around** about the election recount?	

B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. Don't trust the election polls. Vote! This era of misinformation threatens our _____ .

2. _____ spend a lot of time on their mobile devices.

3. I need to write a _____ title for my blog post.

4. The oil spill brought ocean pollution into the _____ . Now #oceangarbage is trending on Twitter.

5. The news from that site is _____ . Always check the source before you share a link.

6. Where did you _____ that news? Please don't say you saw it on Facebook.

7. I'm not _____ ! I fell for the headline, but after I read the article, I knew it was fake.

8. I wonder why #notdead is _____ . Maybe that article about the singer was a hoax.

Types of Questions

A. Introduction

Which types of questions do you already know how to ask? Read the examples.

Type of Question	Example Question Word(s)	Example Question/Sentence
Wh-	• who • when • why • what • where • how	**Why** is fake news a threat to democracy?
Choice	• which • do you prefer • who	**Which** is a bigger threat to democracy, fake news or militarized police?
Yes/No	• do • have • may • does • will • should • is • could • are • can	**Is** fake news a threat to democracy?
Indirect	• she asked whether... • he wants to know if... • they questioned why...	**She wants to know** how fake news threatens our democracy.
Embedded	• Could you tell me who... • I wonder why... • I don't know where... • I want to know when... • Let's find out what...	**Let's find out why** fake news is a threat to democracy.
Tag	• isn't it? • don't they? • won't she? • right? • do we? • will he?	Fake news is a threat to democracy, **isn't it?**

B. Practice

Now try asking variations of the following question. How many questions can you form?

Where did you stumble upon that fake news?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Discussion Questions

1. Some people enjoy reading fake news for entertainment.
   Do you find fake news entertaining? Explain.

2. Do you think that fake news threatens democracy?

3. Should the government play a role in reducing
   the circulation of fake news? Why or why not?

4. Do social media users have the power to prevent fake news
   from trending? What responsibility do social media CEOs have?

5. A lot of news stories have false information but are not entirely fake.
   Should users report these stories as fake news?

Critical Thinking

The word *curator* means "to care." If you care about the people in your
social media network, you can help prevent the spread of fake news.

A. Write Questions

Work in small groups to come up with five questions to ask
yourself when determining if content is worth sharing or not.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Sharing

Find a piece of fake news on the Internet (one per group) and
share it with your class. How can you tell that this news is fake?

Listening – Gap Fill

🎤 http://blog.esllibrary.com/2016/12/21/podcast-fake-news/

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

FAKE NEWS
Something smells fishy

1. Fake news is misinformation that people think is true. Social media
    users _____ this content in their newsfeeds.
    This drives web traffic to ads and makes money for fake news websites.

2. Fake news sites often advertise that their content isn't real.
    This doesn't stop people from believing or sharing it. In fact,
    a _____ title is all a fake news piece needs
    to start _____ . Many people don't even
    preview online content before sharing it.

3. Some fake news is politically _____ .
    The 2016 US presidential election put this type of fake news into
    the _____ . Many Americans think Donald
    Trump won the election because of fake news about his
    opponent. Others wonder how he won with so much fake
    news _____ about himself.

4. Some journalists describe fake news as a modern form
    of _____ . During the 2016 US election cycle,
    fake news was often more popular than real news. Does fake
    news threaten our _____ ?

5. You might think that young people are more likely to share fake
    news. This is not true. In fact, _____ are less
    likely to spread fake news than their parents or grandparents.
    This has more to do with social media preferences than how
    _____ a generation is. Millennials don't
    use Facebook as much as their parents and grandparents, and
    Facebook users are more than twice as likely to see and share
    fake news.

6. Is fake news creating an era of _____ ,
    or is this a trend that will soon be forgotten?
    What can you do to prevent fake news from trending?

ANSWERS:

1. stumble upon
2. catchy, trending
3. deceptive, spotlight, circulating
4. propaganda, democracy
5. millennials, gullible
6. misinformation

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Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about the fake news epidemic, which has been in the spotlight since the 2016 US election. This lesson includes vocabulary review tasks and a review of English question types.

TEACHING TIPS:

See Discussion Starters Teaching Guide (https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

LEVEL: Int – High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, media, news, fake news, false news, election, Trump, Clinton, America, US

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Discuss the quote. You may also want to explain the expression "something smells fishy" (when you are suspicious about something because it doesn't seem quite right).

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

1. g   3. j   5. c   7. f   9. e
2. d   4. b   6. a   8. i   10. h

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 6. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

1. This reading is mainly about the era of misinformation and the spreading of fake news by social media users.
2. According to the reading, fake news sites exist to make money. They can also be used as political propaganda.
3. Some people felt that fake news helped Donald Trump win the 2016 US election. Others felt it made it harder for him to win. At times, during the election cycle, fake news was more popular than real news.
4. According to the reading, social media studies don't suggest that young people are more gullible than their parents or grandparents. They may be exposed to less fake news, so they appear less gullible.
5. The author asks the readers to think about what they can do to prevent fake news from trending.

Vocabulary Review

A. RECOGNIZING VOCABULARY

1. stumbled upon
2. Deceptive
3. propaganda
4. trending
5. Millennials
6. catchy
7. gullible
8. circulating

B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

1. democracy
2. Millennials
3. catchy
4. spotlight
5. deceptive
6. stumble upon
7. gullible
8. trending

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Types of Questions

A. INTRODUCTION

Find out what types of questions your students know how to form. Which ones do they have difficulty with? Review question formation for the types of questions your learners need to work on. The following materials may be helpful:

- Questions (lesson):
  https://esllibrary.com/courses/88/lessons/1627

- Embedded Questions (blog post):
  http://blog.esllibrary.com/2016/11/21/embedded-questions/

- Embedded Questions (resource):
  https://esllibrary.com/resources/2345

- Tag Questions (blog post):
  http://blog.esllibrary.com/2012/11/29/tag-questions-are-fun-to-teach-arent-they/

B. PRACTICE

Here are some example question variations. Answers will vary.

- How did you stumble upon that fake news?
- Which site were you on when you stumbled upon that fake news, Facebook or Twitter?
- Did you stumble upon that fake news on Facebook?
- She's wondering where I stumbled upon that fake news.
- I don't know where you stumbled upon that fake news.
- You stumbled upon that fake news on Facebook, didn't you?

Discussion Questions

Answers will vary.
Can be done individually or in small groups or pairs.

Critical Thinking

Answers will vary.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Center*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Centre*. Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.