

Fake News - Lesson Plan

1. (Slide 2) Ask students: What is news? Ask them to write a definition of news in pairs. Click on the slide to show them a possible definition.
2. (Slide 3) Ask students: Where do you get your news? Explain that we get our news from a variety of sources and show students that some of those sources are written on pieces of paper around the classroom. Ask them to match the signs to the pictures as follows: (1) Social Media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, YouTube), (2) Online News Website, (3) Television News, (4) Radio/Podcasts, (5) Newspaper/Magazines and (6) Friends and Family. Ask them to move to the part of the room with the sign designating their preferred news source. Give a few minutes for students to situate themselves.
3. When students are in their chosen parts of the room, have them talk with each other about (1) why they like using that news source and (2) what are some of the limitations/negatives of that news source. Get feedback as a class.
4. (Slide 4) Explain to students that there has been a lot of talk lately about “fake news,” especially around the 2016 US Presidential Election. Ask students to discuss the question on the slide in pairs or small groups. Get feedback as a class.
5. (Slide 5) Ask students to investigate the Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus homepage. Project it for them to see and ask them to share their first impressions. Then get them to investigate on phones, tablets or computers to see if it is real or fake.
7. (Slide 6, 7 & 8) Share examples of fake news and real news by projecting examples. After showing each example, have students jot down the title of the news story, whether they think it’s fake or real, and 2–3 reasons for why. (1= fake, 2= satire, 3=real)
8. (Slide 9) Discuss as a pair or small group.
9. Ask students to make a list of things they think you need to check if you want to decide if an article is fake or not based on what they have seen so far. Get feedback as a class.
10. (Slide 10) Students watch the video to compare their list with the video’s. Click to check.
11. Give students an article and ask them to search to find out if it is real or not. Show them slide 11 so they can use the fact checking sites as a resource.
12. (Slide 12) Discuss as a pair or small group.

Optional Writing Activity:

Have students write a short synopsis about what they learned about fake news, their best strategies for spotting fake news and/or what we can do as individuals or as a community/society about fake news. They should write their piece as either a Facebook post (that they are sharing with their followers, to inform them) or as a short blog post (which then you could publish later on a class blog). Have students complete their writing as a homework assignment.

Note: I haven’t included any explicit language activities as the plan is designed to be used with a variety of ages and levels. I think there are numerous opportunities to include language points in the lesson depending on the needs of your learners. My suggestions are introducing relevant news and internet related vocabulary at the beginning; functional language to discuss advantages and disadvantages (before slide 4); more specific lexis related to websites (links, hyperlinks, gifs, menus etc) (before slide 6); any interesting or difficult vocabulary that emerges from the video, or you think needs to be pre-taught for lower levels.