Media Literacy Challenge (Grades 5–8)

CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION

There's a lot of information online, and not all of it is accurate. But do you know how to determine the authenticity of the news you read and the content you watch? That's where media literacy comes in! Participate in the learning activities and log your reading to become a news and digital literacy champion.

CHALLENGE STRUCTURE

1 Registration Badge - Readers will earn this badge upon registering for the challenge

1 Bingo Badge - Readers will earn this badge upon earning four badges in a row, column, or diagonal.

10 Logging Badges (Minutes) - Readers will earn badges for logging their reading. Increments for logging minutes are 1 badge per 30 minutes, totaling 300 minutes (10 badges).

6 Activity Badges - Readers will earn badges for each set of activities they complete. Number of activities required to earn each badge can be determined by the library/school/company.

ACTIVITY BADGES

What Is News Literacy?

Badge Description

It's important to analyze and verify the content you consume in daily life before accepting it as the truth. **News literacy** is the ability to use critical thinking skills to determine the credibility of news and other information you consume in articles, books, and social media. This helps you maintain a fair and balanced outlook on the world and stop the spread of **misinformation**.

Answer the following questions in 1–3 complete sentences.

Activities

- What do you read and watch for news and general information? [Text box]
- What sources of information do you trust? Which ones do you mistrust? Why? [Text box]

Activity Badge Title:

Identify the Content

Badge Description

We encounter many different types of content every day, and not all of them are grounded in facts—even if they come from organizations and people we trust. Some may be **opinions**, **advertisements**, or **humor/satire**, and not necessarily **news**. It's important to recognize the signs of different types of content so that we know how to assess the information. Opinions, advertisements, and satire may present some facts in order to influence or amuse their audience, but they often don't give the full facts like news reports.

In the activity questions below, type the answer from the word bank to describe the scenarios.
- Advertisement
- Satire
- Opinion
- News

Activities

- You see a meme from a popular TV show shared in response to a news article. What kind of content is the meme? [secret code: Satire]

- You read an article from your local newspaper's editorial board. What kind of content is the article? [secret code: Opinion]
- You see an image of a famous celebrity in Snapchat Discover, and the words sponsored below the headline. What kind of content is that story likely to be? [secret code: Advertisement]
- You listen to the radio on the way to school, and the meteorologist comes on to give an update on the weather. What is that segment? [secret code: News]
- You talk to a friend who says that scooters are faster than bikes and better than skateboards. What is their statement? [secret code: Opinion]
- You see a video of an influencer drinking an energy drink and then partying all night. What is that video? [secret code: Advertisement]
- You watch a skit of comedians pretending to be politicians. What kind of content is it? [secret code: Satire]

Activity Badge Title:
What Is Misinformation?

Badge Description

Misinformation is false, inaccurate, or misleading information. There are many different types of misinformation; sometimes it's purposefully incorrect, but other times, misinformation can be a mistake.

- **Disinformation** is incorrect information that is intentionally spread to deceive and influence people, like mean rumors or government propaganda.
- **Fake news** is a type of misinformation where misleading or fabricated information deliberately copies the style of mainstream news in order to get accepted as the truth by a larger audience. It is often overly sensational, emotional, or politicized, and can fuel **conspiracy theories**.
- **Reporting errors** can create and spread misinformation accidentally. They occur when a news organization or reporter shares incorrect information, often in a breaking news situation or developing story, and are usually addressed with a **news correction** once the error is uncovered.
- Altered or photoshopped images and artificial videos (often called **deep fakes**) deliberately spread misinformation by using technology to change the appearance of a person or situation in imagery, oftentimes using artificial intelligence.

Answer the questions below in 1–3 sentences.

Activities

- What types of misinformation are spread on purpose? [Text box]
- Why would a source or person spread misinformation deliberately? [Text box]
- Have you ever spread misinformation accidentally or intentionally? Describe the situation. How did you or could you fix the situation? [Text box]

Activity Badge Title:

Identify Reliable Sources

Badge Description

One helpful tool when developing your critical news sense is the ability to determine the source(s) of the information you're reading. Did it come from a witness, overheard rumor, government official, company spokesperson, blogger, social media account, anonymous source, or news organization? This can help you pinpoint if the information is reliable or not.

Read the statements below and type in True or False as the answer.

Activities

- Advertisements are usually reliable sources of information. [secret code: False]
- Blogs and social media accounts don't have the same process for confirming sources and reporting a story as news outlets. [secret code: True]
- An expert like a doctor or a teacher is a reliable source of information. [secret code: True]
- Videos and posts from social media influencers who are paid to feature products in their content are reliable sources of information. [secret code: False]
- At news organizations, reporters use multiple sources of information to write truthful and unbiased stories. [secret code: True]
- Political ads and speeches are reliable sources of information. [secret code: False]
- A local government agency or department is usually a reliable source of information. [secret code: True]
- Sometimes unreliable sources of information will masquerade, or pretend, to be reliable or official sources. [secret code: True]
- A secondhand account of a story is usually a reliable source of information. [secret code: False]

Activity Badge Title:

Pick Out Loaded Words

Oftentimes, the words chosen to describe an event or situation can help you determine the reliability of a piece of news. Recognizing subjective, coded, or loaded words can help you determine the underlying **bias** in a new source. **Bias** is a preconceived notion, judgment, or stereotype, often toward one side of a political or social issue.

Consider these two headlines about the same event:
- **"Fringe Fanatics Loiter In Large Packs at Area Strongholds"**
- **"Knitting Groups Meet at Local Coffeeshops"**

Then, answer the following questions in 1–3 complete sentences.

Activities
- What words in the first headline imply bias? What bias toward the event or framing of the event do they reveal?
- How do those words affect your emotions and reactions to the event described?
- Are both headlines true? Why or why not?

Activity Badge Title:

Become a Critical Consumer

Badge Description

When you're confronted with a piece of news or a source you're not familiar with, follow the five C's to become a **critical consumer** of information.

1. Check the **context**, like its publish date, the site where it's published, and the state of the information now.
2. Confirm the **credibility** of the site, its URL, and the sources it uses. Does it have a good reputation and use multiple sources to show all sides of the issue?
3. Check the story's **construction** and watch out for loaded words, poorly written sentences, typos, and biased or stereotypical statements.
4. **Corroborate** the facts by checking other credible sources for the same information.
5. **Compare** and contrast with other credible sources to pinpoint any perspectives, facts, or nuances that may have been left out from the story.

Answer the following question in 1–3 sentences.

Activities

- Go to the library and either ask for a newspaper or visit a news service's website. Pick a story to read through with the five C's in mind. What does its headline, text, photos, and sources tell you about its reliability as a source?