



# NEWS IN EDUCATION

## NIE 4-Week Fake News Lesson Series

### Week 1: What Is “Fake News”?

News Literacy. Sounds boring, right? It actually becomes fun when you break it down. If you can get through these few definitions, you’ll see why. Let’s jump in:

**Literacy** simply means the ability to read and write, or knowledge relating to a specific subject.

**News literacy** is defined as follows: “...the acquisition of...critical-thinking skills for analyzing and judging the reliability of news and information, differentiating among facts, opinions and assertions in the media we consume, create and distribute...” *Prepared by the Radio Television Digital News Association with a grant from the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#).*

#### **Why is news literacy important?**

You come into contact with different kinds of news every day. It may be on your Facebook or Twitter feed, the radio on your drive, the television in a waiting room, or simply from overhearing adults discuss current issues, or political topics.

It is important to realize that not everything you see and hear is true. As you grow your mind, develop your worldview, and become your own person, you’ll need to always be aware of fake news.

**What is it?** News (material reported in a newscast or publication) that is false or counterfeit, is **fake news**.

The media can lie, exaggerate, and leave out important details such as the context of what someone said, so that you don’t get the whole story or the true story, but rather a twisted or false version.

**Twisted facts = fake news.**

*Snopes.com* reports:

“CNN posted a year-over-year ratings drop during the second week of May 2018...The reports were based on statistics published in Adweek showing CNN’s total-day

viewership for the week of 7 May 2018 as down 29 percent from the same period in 2017, but at least one partisan site with a well-documented bent for blending fact and fiction, *Your News Wire*, parlayed the numbers into the exaggerated claim that the network would soon be closing its doors because of “collapsing” ratings:

*‘CNN is on the verge of permanently closing its doors after its ratings collapsed even more than last week, falling a staggering 30 percent in the second week of May.*

*While Fox News increased its total viewers by a healthy 6 percent and MSNBC held steady, CNN’s viewership took a nosedive, signalling that the failing news network may be about to come to an abrupt end.’*

In any case, despite its year-over-year decline, CNN remained the seventh most-watched cable network in (terms of total-day viewership) for the week in question, and the eleventh most-watched in prime time. While that may be temporarily troublesome in terms of getting top dollar for advertising, it’s wishful thinking on the part of CNN’s detractors to interpret it as spelling doom for the network, which has weathered innumerable ups and downs in the television rating wars over the 38 years of its existence...

We note...that CNN executives have announced no plans to shutter or shrink the network because of a “ratings collapse,” or for any other reason.”

[Read the full Snopes.com report here.](#)

As a smart and equipped student, you need critical thinking skills to analyze what is true and what is not, and to judge the reliability of the news you see and hear.

You want to be an informed citizen who knows the truth, rather than someone who gives in to the hype and outrage of much of our society today. You should make it your goal to be the one in the group who is able to respectfully say “Actually, that’s false. Here’s the truth...” and calmly state real facts to prove why.

That’s why it’s so important that you know what fake news is, and how to discern it. We’ll talk about how you can do that in the next lesson, but for now, get familiar with the term “fake news” and what it means.

For more on news and media literacy, check out [The News Literacy Project](#) or [this article](#).

### **Week 1 Discussion Points:**

1. *Do you pay attention to the news? Why or why not?*

2. *How does it make you feel to know that stories you see on the news could be false?  
That the media can lie to you?*
  3. *Will you listen to the news in a different way after learning about fake news?*
  4. *Now that you know what fake news is, can you think of anything you may have seen or  
heard recently that may have been fake?*
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