

MEDIA LITERACY: An Introductory Lesson Plan



Students will Learn:

- ✓ Why unreliable information and information overload impacts us all
- ✓ How to reflect on their own media consumption
- ✓ New strategies to resist unreliable information



You will Need:

- ✓ PowerPoint slides
- ✓ My Media Landscape Handouts



Time

Approximately 45 minutes



Grade Level

9-12

Common Core Standards



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.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.



Instructions

1



Explain. Unreliable information is all around us and it affects what we buy, how we think about others, how people vote, the medical treatment we seek, and even the opinions we form. Towards the end of the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, the most popular unreliable information about the election got more engagement on Facebook than the top factual election stories by news organizations like the New York Times and Washington Post.¹ Online unreliable information is also a factor that increases the risk of epidemics from diseases preventable by vaccine.² For these reasons, it is really important that we all have the skills to discern true from false information. This is a big part of what's commonly referred to as media literacy.

2



Present. Load the PowerPoint Learn to Discern Media Literacy: An Introduction and show slides 1-11.

3



Group Discussion: How hard is it to correct wrong or false information? What does this suggest to you about your own responsibilities when it comes to sharing information? Have you ever experienced unreliable information?

4



Explain. It's very hard to correct misinformation. We saw that misinformation often gets more traction than the correct information that comes after. This means it's all the more important for us to carefully judge what we read and view, and avoid sharing something if it might be untrue. It's important to realize that all of us are working against our natural instincts when we try to disengage from sensational information. Unreliable information often works because human beings are drawn to it and we like looking at it! That is why false stories travel faster than true ones. False, sensational stories work because they touch upon something we value and at the same time, create fear or excitement. Fear turns off our ability to think critically. This is why it is important to coach yourself to recognize these emotions when they are triggered.

5



Handout. Give students the My Media Landscape handout, and pens or pencils. Have students complete the log, filling in what media they consume regularly (social media, radio, email, TV shows, etc.), and what content they consume. For example, they might check their social feed in the morning, watch a YouTube clip, and text with friends on the way to school. Remind students to include all the different notifications they receive during the day—they may not even be actively consuming this information, but it is there and it takes attention and energy. Tell everyone to list as much as possible and whatever comes to mind. Remember to include all media here—it doesn't just have to be the news or digital.

6



Handout. On a blank piece of paper, have students list the devices they use regularly (phones, computers, tablets, TV).

7



Ask. Now have students place the two sheets of paper side by side, tape them together, and draw lines from devices (such as phones, computers) to the types of media they consume (such as podcasts, news articles) to create a web. This can help students illustrate that they do homework research on a computer, message their friends on their phone, etc. Finally, have students highlight the devices that they use simultaneously—texting while watching TV, etc.

¹ Silverman, Craig. (2016). A BuzzFeed News analysis found that top fake election news stories generated more total engagement on Facebook than top election stories from 19 major news outlets combined. Retrieved from <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook>

² The clinician's guide to the anti-vaccinationists' galaxy. Human Immunology, 73(8), 859–66. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.humimm.2012.03.014>

8 

Share something about your own information use that you learned when you first did this exercise that surprised you. (Be brave! Share something slightly embarrassing—this will encourage students to share).

9 

Group Discussion: How do you feel about the media and tech you use? Does it seem like too much? How does that affect your ability to discern the quality of information?

10 


Explain. Media overload is a documented phenomenon and a lot of us feel overwhelmed by how much media we consume, how much media we are expected to keep up with, how many devices we have, etc. It can be hard to unplug. However, there are documented negative effects, especially related to social media. For example, a recent study found that the more time young adults use social media, the more likely they are to be depressed, according to new research from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.³ Being aware of certain habits and learning additional media literacy skills can help you navigate media more efficiently and find ways to help you avoid feeling totally overwhelmed.


11 


Present. Ask if students are familiar with self-driving cars. If not, explain that these are cars that drive themselves without any help from a human. Make sure students have a clean sheet of paper. Display example headlines, and mention that these are all real. Feel free to use your own examples that are relevant for your students. For example you might pick social media posts off a popular hashtag or create your own content that looks like something they might see with a basic image editor.

12 

Present slides 12-16, pausing each time so that students have a chance to read and absorb each headline. Explain the Name It To Tame It steps on Slide 13.⁴ Read these aloud:

 Pause: Turn your head away from the screen or paper.

 Ask: What am I feeling?

 Say: The name of the feeling to yourself.

13 

Group Discussion. Ask students to write down the feelings they experienced. Acknowledge that it may be hard to put a label on an emotion, and it may feel uncomfortable. Has anyone ever seen an example of content that someone you know shared that provoked a strong reaction in you? What was it? How did you react? What did you think? How might sharing something that provokes others be risky? Come prepared with your own example to share, and offer it first or early on in the conversation, to warm things up. *Note: there are additional examples after slide 16 if you choose to use them.*

14 

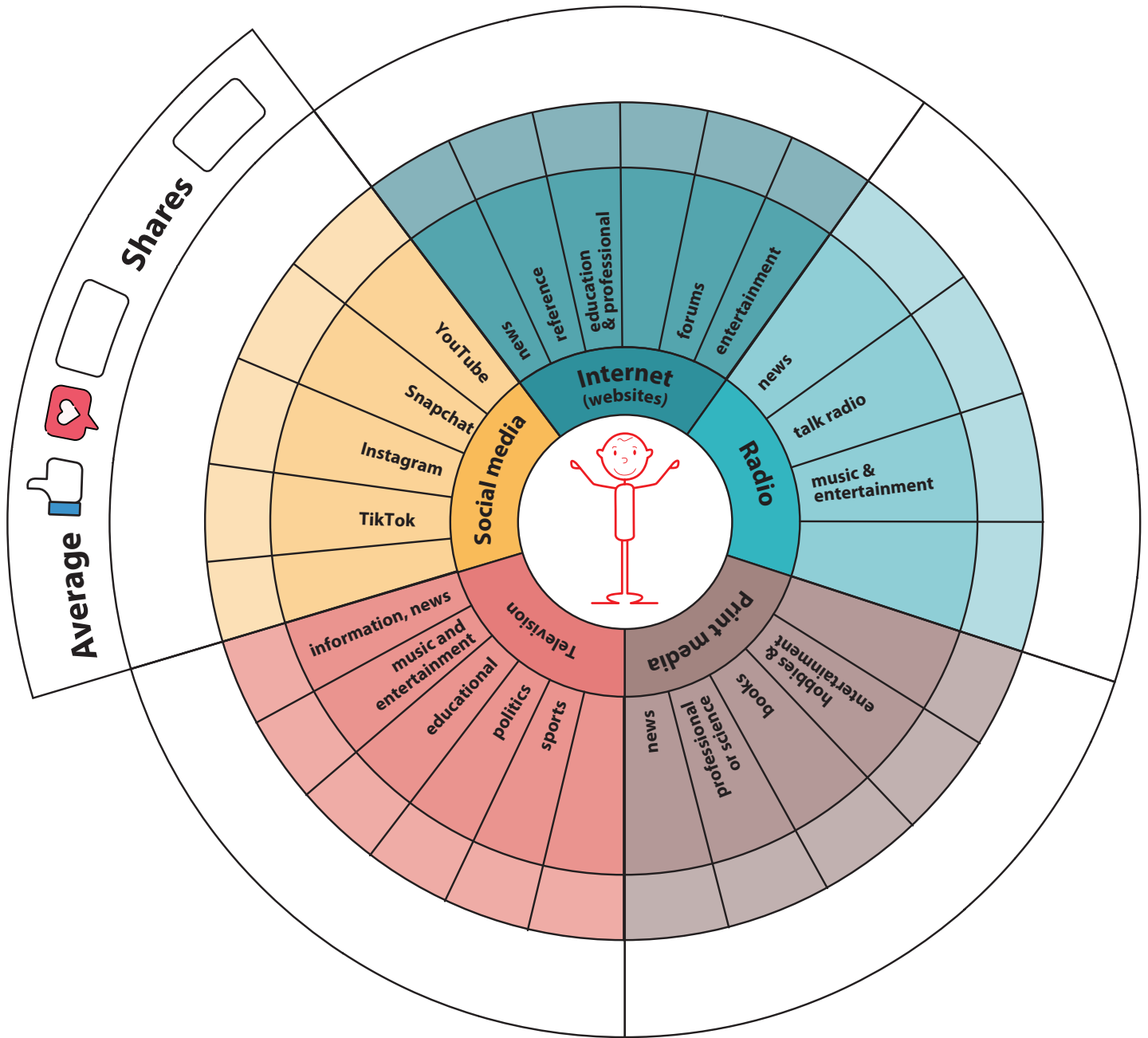
Conclusion. Today we looked at how we are all bombarded with information and it can be difficult to tell truth from fiction. To be more critical consumers of news and media, it can be helpful to recognize and understand your own emotional reactions to various topics covered in the news. Using Name It to Tame It—observing and setting aside your strong emotional reactions—can help you be a more critical and self-aware consumer of news and media. After that, it's critical to be careful about whether we share the information we come across. Keep in mind that you are the information gatekeepers, and false information travels faster and farther than corrections. Therefore, take steps to think critically before you share information.

³ Social media use associated with depression among U.S. young adults. (2016). University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). Retrieved from <https://www.upmc.com/media/news/lin-primack-sm-depression>

⁴ Dan Siegel: Name It to Tame It. Video posted by Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcDLzppD4Jc>. Used with permission

My Media Landscape

Step 1. Fill out the worksheet below. In the blank boxes next to each type of media, note how much time you spend consuming that form of media each day. For example you might spend 45 minutes on Instagram and an hour browsing online forums.
Step 2. In the white space, note the most common media sources you consume in that category. For example, you may spend most of your social media time on TikTok and listen to most of your music on Spotify.
Step 3. Add up the total amount of time you are consuming media and list the total at the bottom of the worksheet. You can estimate the total amount of time or use an app like Screen Time or Moment to calculate your usage. **Step 4 (optional).** Note how many average comments, likes, and shares you receive on social media each day.



TOTAL TIME: