

Social studies disciplines play a key role in teaching students how to detect misinformation and disinformation in media sources. This issue of *Social Education* features a special section on media education that offers recommendations for teachers on how to develop the skills of students in evaluating these sources. The special section is complemented by articles in our regular departmental columns that address the topics of current book bans and freedom of speech and show how the thoughtful analysis of primary sources can enhance students' understanding of historical events.

In this issue's column on Teaching the C3 Framework, Bonnie Lewis and Laura H. Darolia express concern about the increased number of books that are being banned from school libraries, which will likely hit a record high this year. The authors point out that when books are taken off the shelves "students lose the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion around meaningful and perhaps confusing or complicated topics." (375) Their suggested C3 inquiry investigating the compelling question "Why Should I Care About Book Bans?" provides valuable resources for students to use to examine this issue.

In cases where public figures have sued newspapers and other media for defamation or libel, the Supreme Court has prioritized First Amendment rights by establishing the standard that plaintiffs need to prove "actual malice" to recover damages from defendants. In our Lessons on the Law column, Tiffany Middleton and Catherine Hawke review past Court decisions on this complex issue, note the different protections given to private individuals compared to public officials, and point out that the current Court may re-examine the "actual malice" standard.

Most articles in this issue are part of the special section on "Integrating Media Education into the Social Studies." In his introduction to the section, guest editor Jeremy Stoddard emphasizes the importance of going beyond "a version of media literacy focused on protecting students from

polarizing messages and fake news" (384) and teaching them to understand the ecosystem of contemporary communications media. This will provide them with a sound basis for investigating the quality and veracity of media sources.

The first article in the special section focuses on teaching students to evaluate online information. The authors (Sarah McGrew, Lauren Merroth, Sarah Zuspan, Scott Buhrman, and Elizabeth Reynolds) present a set of strategies based on the Civic Online Reasoning curriculum developed by the Stanford History Education Group. They emphasize the need for students reviewing an online source to engage in lateral reading by searching for more information about the same topic from other sources in order to evaluate the credibility of the source they are examining.

Understanding a state's political landscape can be an engaging and valuable task for students. Derek Behnke, Jais Brohinsky, and Jeremy Stoddard present the PurpleState political simulation activity that they have developed to give students insights into their local and state political information ecosystems. By identifying the political leanings of different regions of a state, and examining news stories about important issues in those regions, students will increase their awareness of the factors that drive the political campaigns aimed at the various media markets in their state.

Teachers can use a variety of media education approaches to develop their students' skills in evaluating the accuracy of online sources. Daniel G. Krutka, Marie K. Heath, and Cathryn van Kessel identify five approaches of this kind: thinking about sources; responding to posts; reflecting on feelings; observing the media; and identifying the power of the media to reproduce and shape culture. Their teaching tips will help teachers select the most appropriate approach for the particular topics being discussed in class.

During election campaigns, there is a surge of misinformation on social media designed to promote or denigrate candidates for political office. Kristin E. Duncan and Jania Hoover point

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out that this kind of misinformation can also aim at voter suppression, and they explore the ways in which misinformation campaigns targeted African Americans in the 2016 presidential election with the aim of persuading them not to vote. Duncan and Hoover offer suggestions for evaluating misinformation of this kind and emphasize the need for students to “realize that voter suppression is part of the nation’s past *and* its present.” (406)

The study of propaganda is a good way to introduce students to the dangers of stereotypes. Isabel Mann and Renee Hobbs use resources from the National World War II Museum to examine methods of teaching about the propaganda of World War II. They emphasize the importance of comparing historical and contemporary forms of propaganda so that students can “understand how people’s values can be hijacked through persuasive appeals that activate strong emotions, use oversimplified information, and attack opponents.” (412)

As an engaging class activity, David Olson recommends the use of two games that can develop the skills of students in thinking critically about the quality of information that they receive. In the *Bad News Game*, students simulate the activities of bad actors spreading misinformation, while in *BBC iReporter*, they play the very different role of being fact checkers. Among other resources, Olson presents *How to Fact-Check History*, produced by Retro Report, where he serves as director of education.

This issue of *Social Education* concludes with two articles on teaching with primary sources. In our Sources and Strategies column, Cheryl Lederle and Stephen Wesson introduce a leaflet published early in the twentieth century by the Immigration Restriction League. Titled “Immigration Figures for 1903,” the leaflet conveyed alarm about the increase in immigration and demonstrated prejudice against many national and ethnic groups as it advocated immigration restrictions and a literacy test. The authors offer guidelines for reviewing this historical document and connecting it to the present day.


Andrea Reidell’s Teaching with Documents column describes the struggle of Robert Purvis, a free Black man and anti-slavery activist born in 1810, to obtain a United States passport that would enable him to travel to Great Britain. The featured document is a letter from a friend of Purvis, Roberts Vaux, that persuaded the U.S. secretary of state, Louis McLane, to send Purvis a passport. Reidell’s teaching suggestions highlight the stark realities of racism and slavery in the United States in the pre-Civil War period.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org. 📌



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