

Resources for Teaching News Literacy

Jaclyn Siegel

In today’s world, “fake news” is everywhere. But what exactly is fake news? How do we define it for ourselves? How can we educate our students to identify it, and to develop their overall news literacy skills? This is where media literacy education can be extremely helpful for both educators and students. Being media literate means so much more than just identifying fake news. According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), the definition of media literacy is

the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communications. In its simplest terms, media literacy builds upon the foundation of traditional literacy and offers new forms of reading and writing. Media literacy empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens.

To aid our students to develop their media literacy skills in relation to fake news, or understanding the news in general, we need resources to help us with this instruction. Below are some suggested resources to help you get started.

Media Smarts

[\(http://mediasmarts.ca/\)](http://mediasmarts.ca/)

Canada-based Media Smarts has been leading the charge on developing students’ media literacy skills for years. While there are a plethora of lesson plans to choose from, Media Smarts also provides research, a breakdown of media and digital literacy information, e-tutorials and workshops, and games for kids to play. For example, the lesson “Authentication Beyond the Classroom” is designed for 9th and 10th graders. It incorporates “The New 5 Ws” for recognizing false content online. In addition to full lesson plans, Media Smarts offers supplemental materials such as “News You Can Use - tip sheet.” All materials are free to access, and you can sign up for updates and their newsletter.

PBS (www.pbs.org/)

The Public Broadcasting System has many resources—from documentaries with associated lesson plans, to articles and activities from PBS Kids. PBS

Newshour Extra has been aiding teachers in incorporating current events for years. Searching for “fake news” brings about videos from PBS Newshour, lesson plans, and related stories such as, “Student Reporting Labs explore how youth deal with misinformation” and “Media literacy and the problem with the term ‘fake news.’” This comes with key terms, extension activities, critical thinking questions, and further reading. PBS Learning Media is another place to find many resources related to fake news and news literacy. A service of New York’s Public Television Station, it allows teachers to search through materials based on grade level, subject, resource type, language, permitted usage, and accessibility features. Its layout is easy to navigate, and users can rate resources and share them to Google Classroom. Examples include: “Fake News and Biography—Edgar Allan Poe: Buried Alive” (Grades 6–12), “Current Events Awareness/Media Literacy” (Grades 9–12), and “The Lowdown: Fake News Lesson Plan” (Grades 6–13+)

Stony Brook/ Center For News Literacy

[\(www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/\)](http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/)

Among this site’s many resources are Stony Brook’s DIY News Literacy les-

son plans that support educators in creating their own lessons. They have multiple templates to choose from, as well as sample lesson plans from which to gain inspiration. The News Literacy General Discussion forum prompts educators to share questions, lesson plans, and jump into the discussion about teaching news literacy. The Digital Resource Center includes a course pack for a 14-week course. Materials are free with registration.

Common Sense Media

[\(www.commonsense.org/\)](http://www.commonsense.org/)

Common Sense Media is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing children’s media and digital literacy skills. There are resources for parents, educators, and advocates for integrating media literacy and technological skills into the classroom. The site includes tutorials, lesson plans, professional development including free webinars, and hands-on activities for students. Common Sense Media has a “News and Media Literacy” toolkit, which breaks down lesson plans and professional development by grade levels. In addition, there are “Classroom Essentials” that include videos, student handouts, quizzes, suggestions for best news websites and tools for students. All materials on Common Sense Media are free, but they do ask teachers to sign up for a free account.

Edutopia

[\(www.edutopia.org\)](http://www.edutopia.org/)

George Lucas calls Edutopia an archive of what works in k-12 education. Edutopia has a wide variety of articles on many educational topics, including news literacy, typically accompanied by classroom materials. For example, the article, “Turning Your Students into

Teaching the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework, Part Two

Edited by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S.G. Grant. NCSS Bulletin 116.

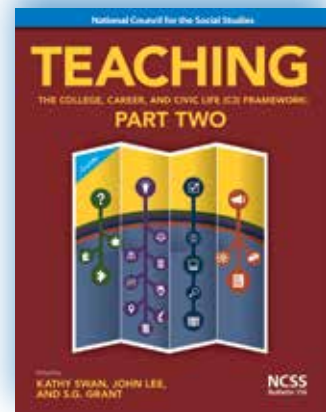
The powerful social studies inquiries in this book bring the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework to life. They are based on the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), a curricular approach that animates social studies standards and integrates the four dimensions of the C3 Inquiry Arc.

The editors of this book invited outstanding social studies curricular organizations to take the “IDM challenge” and contribute units based on IDM blueprints about topics that are central to K-12 social studies. The resulting inquiries cover an impressive range of subjects: teaching students about the concept of money and how to understand maps; engaging students in historical investigations of Indian Removal, slavery and the failure of Reconstruction, and the Holocaust; exploring social changes such as the historical impact of bicycles and the present-day effects of the use of robots in manufacturing; and dealing with current issues such as gun control, media literacy, the minimum wage, and the controversy over school bathrooms.

This book is a companion volume to the popular NCSS publication, *Teaching the C3 Framework*.

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Inquiry Design Model: Building Inquiries in Social Studies

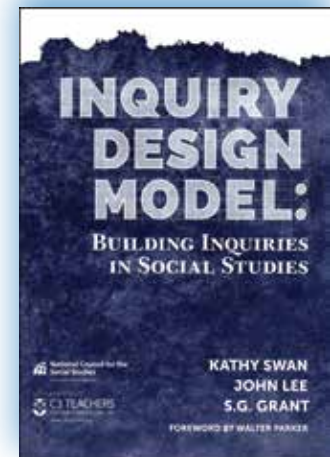
Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S.G. Grant. Foreword by Walter Parker.
C3 Inquiry Series, co-published by NCSS and C3 Teachers, 167 pp.

This book is a comprehensive, in-depth guide for teachers who want to build classroom inquiries based on the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. The authors demonstrate how to construct effective Inquiry Design Model (IDM) blueprints that incorporate engaging questions, tasks, and sources. The book offers invaluable advice on how to formulate compelling and supporting questions, build disciplinary knowledge, and develop the ability of students to evaluate evidence, construct arguments, and take informed action.

The authors of this book are the lead authors of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.

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Web Detectives” provides information about how students lack the necessary skills to effectively evaluate news sources, and then provides five fact-checking resources students can use in the classroom to develop this skill. The article “Teaching Adolescents How to Evaluate the Quality of Online Information”

explores how teachers can model and prompt students to think critically about the relevance, accuracy, bias, and reliability of sources. The article “The Future of Fake News” delves into different types of media that can be manipulated to disseminate fake news. Edutopia has a free weekly newsletter. 🌐

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Articles in this issue of *Social Education* highlight the following additional organizations:

- **Civic Engagement Research Group** (civicsurvey.org) – conducts research, develops resources, and engages in education reform efforts that promote equitable, informed, and effective youth civic and political participation. See article on page 208
- **Stanford History Education Group** (sheg.stanford.edu) – provides hundreds of free research-based lessons and assessments that have been downloaded over six million times and offers a range of professional development opportunities for teachers. See article on page 219
- **Media Education Lab** (mediaeducationlab.com) – offers public programs, educational services, community outreach, and multimedia curriculum resources, as well as develops an ongoing multidisciplinary research agenda to explore the educational impact of media and technology. See article on page 228
- **News Literacy Project** (newslit.org) – a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, works with educators, journalists and other partners to teach middle school and high school students how to sort fact from fiction. See article on page 232
- **The Newseum** (newseum.org) – free media literacy and First Amendment lesson plans, videos and primary sources, plus on-site and virtual student classes and teacher workshops; part of the Freedom Forum Institute. See article on page 235
- **Project Look Sharp** (projectlooksharp.org) – offers hundreds of free media analysis lessons and activities for social studies, searchable by content, grade level and standards, plus online PD for supporting question-based media decoding. See article on page 222
- **KQED** (earn.kqed.org) – free, trusted media literacy resources for educators and classrooms including teacher professional development (teach.kqed.org) and classroom inquiry, connection and collaboration. See article on page 238.

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CSPAN Classroom	Back Cover
The Choices Program-Brown University	196
Michele Luck’s Social Studies	218
National Constitution Center.....	213
The News Literacy Project.....	231
Population Connection.....	201
Shear Madness	201
Students of History, Inc.....	207
Teachers College Press.....	Inside Cover