Critical Media Literacy

SUBJECT AREAS:

Technology, Social science

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Students will analyze real and fake news articles for credibility and then produce their own media content (video, podcast, or blog) to apply their media literacy skills.

OBJECTIVES:

To evaluate the credibility of news sources and identify misinformation using fact-checking tools and strategies.
To create media content (video, podcast, or blog) that applies their understanding of accurate reporting, source verification, and ethical media creation.

MATERIALS:

Computers/Tablets with internet access
Fact-checking websites
Media examples (articles, videos, social media posts)
Video recording equipment (smartphones, cameras, or computers with webcams)
Blogging platforms (e.g., WordPress, Blogger, or Google Docs)
Projector and screen for group discussion and content display
Headphones for podcast editing and review.

GRADE/LEVEL:

Secondary school (15-18)

DURATION:

Preparation time: 30 min.
Activity time: 60 min.

PLACE:

Classroom, Laboratory, etc.

AUTOR:

Civil Society Organization Eco Logic - Republic of North Macedonia

INTRODUCTION:

In today's digital age, students are constantly exposed to various types of media, from news articles and social media posts to videos and blogs. With the rise of misinformation, it's crucial for young people to develop the skills to critically evaluate the content they encounter. This lesson focuses on teaching students how to recognize fake news, evaluate media credibility, and produce their own reliable media content, fostering responsible consumption and creation of information.

BACKGROUND:

Media literacy is essential in the 21st century, especially as the internet has transformed the way we consume information. With social media platforms, blogs, and websites constantly pushing out news, it's becoming increasingly difficult for individuals to discern what's true and what's false. Misinformation, or "fake news," can be easily shared across platforms, and it often spreads faster than information, leaving many people unaware of the falsehoods they are consuming.

The rise of algorithms that tailor news feeds to user preferences also plays a major role in reinforcing biases, creating "echo chambers," and contributing to the spread of disinformation. These algorithms prioritize sensational or emotional content over factual reporting, which can manipulate public opinion and influence major events, such as elections or social movements.

In response to these challenges, media literacy teaches individuals how to critically engage with media, evaluate the credibility of sources, and recognize the techniques used to create persuasive or misleading content. This includes understanding how to spot unreliable websites, how to use fact-checking tools, and how to ask critical questions about the media we consume, such as: "Who created this? What are they trying to achieve? Is this information backed up by evidence?"

By becoming media literate, students can not only protect themselves from misinformation but also contribute to a more informed and responsible digital community. In this lesson, students will learn these essential skills by analyzing both real and fake news stories, using fact-checking methods, and creating their own content to reflect their understanding of credible journalism.

Procedure:

Introduce the concept of media literacy: Define media literacy, fake news, and how to identify credible sources.

1. **Explain the importance of verifying information**: Show students how to use fact-checking tools (e.g., Snopes, FactCheck.org).
2. **Discuss the impact of bias and emotional language** in media, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking.

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Guided Practice:
Analyze a piece of media together: Choose a news article or social media post, and work with students to evaluate its credibility.
Use fact-checking tools: Model how to cross-check information with online resources and identify potential bias or misinformation.
Evaluate credibility: Have students apply what they've learned by evaluating another media piece individually or in pairs.
Collaborative Process:

1. **Divide students into two groups**: One group will analyze news articles, and the other group will analyze social media content.
2. **Group discussion and comparison**: Each group will present their findings, and as a class, they will compare the credibility and potential biases of news vs. social media.
3. **Create media content**: In groups, students will use what they've learned to create a piece of media (video, podcast, blog post) that adheres to ethical journalism standards and accurately presents information.

FUN FACTS:

➢ *Fake News Can Travel Faster Than Truth*
Studies have shown that fake news spreads significantly faster on social media than true news. This is partly due to how sensational stories tend to grab more attention and are more likely to be shared.

➢ *We are exposed to over 5,000 ads daily!*
On average, people encounter around 5,000 advertisements every single day, whether they're on billboards, social media, TV, or even in the form of pop-up ads on websites!

➢ *Misinformation is as Old as the Printing Press*
The spread of misinformation isn't a new phenomenon. Even back in the 16th century, the printing press allowed rumors, fake news, and propaganda to spread far and wide, just like social media does today.

➢ *Humans Are Wired to Respond to Stories*
Research shows that our brains are naturally inclined to respond to storytelling. That's why storytelling is such a powerful tool in advertising, politics, and media in general.

➢ *TV Ads Were Originally Only 10 Seconds Long*
When TV ads first began airing in the 1940s, they were only 10 seconds long. Today, the average length of a TV ad is around 30 seconds, but some ads can run as long as 2 minutes.

ASSESSMENT:

The assessment is designed to test student's understanding and application of media literacy concepts, which are crucial for navigating the modern media landscape. In this section, they will be asked to answer questions that focus on the key principles they've learned during the lesson.

1. What is the first step in creating responsible media content?

What should you do when using someone else's content in your media creation?

a) Take it and present it as your own without attribution

b) Cite the original source and ensure the information is accurate

c) Only credit the source if it's a well-known person
d) Skip the citation and hope it's understood as common knowledge

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EVALUATION:

1. Formative Assessment (During Lesson)
- Observe students while they analyze media content and work on their projects.
- Ask questions like, "How did you check if this information is true?" to guide their thinking.
- Provide immediate feedback to help them improve.

2. Peer Feedback
- Let students give each other feedback using a simple checklist (e.g., "Did they cite sources?" "Was the content balanced?").
- Encourage constructive suggestions for improvement.

3. Teacher Feedback
After grading, provide clear feedback on strengths and areas to improve. Focus on media literacy skills: critical thinking, ethical practices, and creativity.

4. Self-Reflection (Optional)
Have students reflect on what they learned and what they would change in future media projects.