Dissecting Fake News
Media Literacy in the Post-Truth Era

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THE BIG PICTURE

When thousands of students respond to dozens of tasks there are endless variations. That was certainly the case in our experience. However, at each level—middle school, high school, and college—these variations paled in comparison to a stunning and dismaying consistency. Overall, young people’s ability to reason about the information on the Internet can be summed up in one word: bleak.
Total Facebook Engagements for Top 20 Election Stories

ENGAGEMENT REFERS TO THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SHARES, REACTIONS, AND COMMENTS FOR A PIECE OF CONTENT ON FACEBOOK SOURCE: FACEBOOK DATA VIA BUZSUMO
# Top 5 Fake Election Stories by Facebook Engagement
(three months before election)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Pope Francis Shock World, Endorses Donald Trump for President, Releases Statement”</td>
<td>Ending the Fed</td>
<td>960,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“WikiLeaks CONFIRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS... Then Drops Another BOMBSHELL! Breaking News”</td>
<td>The Political Insider</td>
<td>789,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“IT’S OVER: Hillary’s ISIS Email Just Leaked &amp; It’s Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined”</td>
<td>Ending the Fed</td>
<td>754,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Just Read the Law: Hillary Is Disqualified From Holding Any Federal Office”</td>
<td>Ending the Fed</td>
<td>701,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead In Apparent Murder-Suicide”</td>
<td>Denver Guardian</td>
<td>567,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engagement refers to the total number of shares, reactions, and comments for a piece of content on Facebook Source: Facebook data via Buzzsumo
What is “Fake News”?  

1. False information posted on “news” websites (that mimic real ones).
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   Solutions: Read the “About Us” section.
   Pay attention to the domain name.
   Consult the experts.
   Reverse Google Image Search.
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2. Satirical websites taken seriously.
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Solutions: Look closer!

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Solutions: Ask critical questions. Determine the subtext. Look for the words: “Sponsored Content”
What is “Fake News”?

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4. Slanted or biased news.
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Solutions: Make sure you read all the articles beyond the headlines. Seek out a critique of the article or argument. Use the Critical Thinking and Stanford resource guides.
The Psychology of Fake News

Confirmation Bias/Myside Bias

Denying to the Grave
Why We Ignore the Facts that Will Save Us
SARA E. GORMAN, PHD, MPH
JACK M. GORMAN, MD

Availability Heuristic
On March 11, 2011, there was a large nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. This image was posted on Imgur, a photo sharing website, in July 2015.

Does this post provide strong evidence about the conditions near the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant? Explain your reasoning.