

Lateral Reading: Read Like a Fact Checker

1. Question & Research Task

We know not to believe everything we hear, but what about what we read? What about what we see? The online world is full of **misinformation**: false or inaccurate information, especially that which is intended to deceive.

One way to avoid being fooled by **misinformation** is by practicing **lateral reading**, a tool used by professional fact checkers. **Lateral reading** focuses on using many sources to **corroborate**, or confirm, information, instead of just relying on one authentic looking source. In today's lesson you are going to learn about and practice lateral reading.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How can lateral reading help you to avoid being fooled by fake information online?



FAKE NEWS: In March 2020, [news circulated](#) that due to the restrictions created by COVID-19, dolphins were seen in the canals of Venice, Italy. The footage of dolphins was [actually](#) from another part of Italy.

2. Information Sources

Now it's time to learn more about lateral reading and investigate some sources using this technique.

- What is **lateral** reading?
- How do we do it, and why is it important?

Use paper or a word processing document to answer these questions as you review the sources below and on the right.

- [The ART of Reading Laterally](#)
- [Stanford scholars observe 'experts' to see how they evaluate the credibility of information online](#)
- [Students Fall for Misinformation Online. Is Teaching Them to Read Like Fact Checkers the Solution?](#)



Select the image above and scroll down to the video **“Sort Fact from Fiction Online with Lateral Reading.”**

Source: [Stanford History Education Group](#)

3. Student Activity

Use your new knowledge about reading laterally to analyze the truth and accuracy of at least three of these sources.

- Record your findings on this [chart](#).

Source Options:

- [Frog Photobombs NASA Moon Probe Launch](#)
- [Cocaine Hippos May Benefit Colombia’s Environment](#)
- [Help Save the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus](#)
- [Hero Pig Saves Baby Goat From Drowning](#)
- [Pigeon that Can’t Fly Befriends Special Needs Chihuahua](#)

These fact-checking sites may help you with your lateral reading:

- [Snopes.com](#)
- [Factcheck.org](#)
- [PolitiFact](#)
- [OpenSecrets.org](#)
- [Internet Archive WayBack Machine](#)

Remember that it is also useful to use a search engine (such as Google) to search for the topic or source and verify the information being presented in another credible source. Lateral readers should have multiple browser tabs opened at once!

The ART of Reading Laterally
To check on the truth and accuracy of a source, before reading vertically, fact-checkers open tabs and practice the ART of reading laterally:

- A - AUTHOR**
Who is the site/article author - and is there a motive behind the message?
What can you learn about the author?
What biases might the author have?
- R - RELIABILITY**
How recent is the site/article - when was it published or last updated?
What do other fact-checking sites say about the author and his/her claim?
- T - TARGET**
Who is the intended audience and why is the author targeting them?
What does the author want his/her target to believe, take a stand against, support and/or purchase?

Image Source: [Commonsense.org](#)

4. Assessment Activity

How can lateral reading help you to avoid being fooled by fake information online?

1. Now that you're an expert on lateral reading, it's time to share what you've learned!

Imagine your principal has asked you to prepare a brief (two paragraph) article for the school's website about lateral reading. The purpose of the article is to **persuade** your classmates to use lateral reading in their own research. Your article should answer our inquiry question: "How can lateral reading help you avoid being fooled by fake information online?" Use your research and analysis from class today as evidence for your article.

Use the success criteria on this [rubric](#) to self-assess your work.

2. Don't forget to take the **Lateral Reading Schoology Quiz** as assigned by your teacher or librarian to show what you've learned about lateral reading.



Image Source: Pixabay.com

5. Enrichment Activities

SLIDE NAVIGATION

[1](#)

[2](#)

[3](#)

[4](#)

[5](#)

[6](#)

[Next](#)



Image Source: Pixabay.com

Let's put those new skills to the test!

In the game [FakeOut](#), you examine social media posts to decide if they are based on true or false news stories. Play Round 1 and see how you do without using your lateral reading skills. Then use those skills for Round 2 and see how your score improves!

After the game, create your own list of headlines: three true, but hard to believe, and three false. See if you can stump the class!

6. Teacher Resources

1	2	3	4	5	6
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Learning Standards Alignment

[Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy](#)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational text to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[AASL Standards Framework for Learners](#)

I. INQUIRE: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by:

I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:

I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes:

I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by:

I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

[ISTE Standards for Students](#)

2. Digital Citizen: Students recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal and ethical.

High School Digital Citizenship: Grade 9

Content integration: ELA, American Government, Advisory

Objective: Students will analyze information from multiple sources in order to determine the value of lateral reading.

Time Frame: One 90-minute class period

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Have students use learning supports provided in BCPS Digital Content found in the [Apps Portal](#). Refer to [Digital Content Snapshot/Support pages](#) as needed.

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to plan and implement this lesson.
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is available on the **BCPS Digital Content** page found via the [Apps Portal](#)
- ALL STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE THE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP QUIZ for this lesson on Schoology.
- Consider [using the Schoology Assignment Apps feature](#) to assign Microsoft and Google documents and files for students to access, edit, and submit through Schoology.
- To enhance this lesson for audiovisual learners, consider showing John Green's video on lateral reading [here](#).
- Materials have been adapted from the Common Sense Education [News & Media Literacy Lesson for Grade 9](#).
- Consider sharing these Common Sense Education resources on News & Media Literacy with students' families following this instruction: [Family Activity](#) | [Family Tips](#) | [Family Engagement Resources](#)