



***“No single solution or actor can deal with the complex and interrelated challenges to electoral integrity arising from manipulated data, hate speech, and fake news. These phenomena are not new; they have been part of electoral cycles since the advent of democracy.”***

Kofi Annan (1938 – 2018), former Secretary General of the United Nations

## 1. Fake News Discussion

1. What is fake news?
2. How do you know if the news you read is true?
3. Have you seen any fake news? What have you seen? What fake news has been spread in your country?
4. Why do people believe fake news?
5. Who is responsible for creating fake news? What is the purpose of fake news?
6. Can we believe anything in the news?
7. Why does fake news spread faster than real news?
8. What effect does fake news have on society?

## 2. Fake News Vocabulary

- **confirmation bias** (noun) – *the tendency to favour any information that confirms a person's existing beliefs, regardless of the veracity of the information.*
- **misinformation** vs **disinformation** (nouns) – *misinformation is information that is incorrect or misleading; disinformation is information that is deliberately misleading in order to manipulate people.*
- **post-truth politics** (noun) – *when facts and evidence are less influential than appealing to people's emotions.*
- **propaganda** (noun) – *the use of information in support of a political cause; often accused of being misleading, biased, or false.*
- **satire** (noun), **satirical** (adjective) – *imitating something in order to ridicule it, usually for comedy purposes or to make a political statement.*
- **to factcheck** (verb), **fact-checker** (noun) – *to verify information, especially on the internet; someone, or a system, that checks facts online.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. Facebook and Twitter introduced **fact-checker** to flag up any posts deemed to contain incorrect or misleading information.
2. In the era of **post-truth politics**, supporters of Brexit continued to refer to a potential £350 million extra per week for the health service even after this figure was widely proven to be false.
3. Ofcom threw out hundreds of complaints against Channel 4's alternative Christmas speech, which depicted a 'deepfake' Queen Elizabeth II joking about her family and dancing, saying it was clearly **satirical** and no one would have believed it was real.
4. Due to **confirmation bias**, even when it is proved that information is false, people will continue to believe that it is true.
5. Ricky Vaughn, a social media troll, was charged with conspiring to disseminate **disinformation** with the intention of depriving people of their legal right to vote. His posts encouraged people to vote in the 2016 election by text or by social media posts, neither of which are legally valid ways of voting.
6. Government **propaganda** was seen as a vital part of the war effort during World War 2 to increase public support for the allies of the United States and to foster hatred of the enemy.

### Fake News vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Do you think you might be guilty of confirmation bias?
2. Have you seen any examples of misinformation or disinformation?
3. How can you explain the rise in post-truth politics?
4. What kind of political propaganda is used in your country?
5. What are some of your favourite satires?
6. How can you factcheck the information you see online? Do you always factcheck information before sharing it on social media?

### 3. Video: How to Choose Your News

You are going to watch a video by TED Ed called "How to choose your news."

**Watch the video here:** <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-fake-news/>

**While you watch the video, answer the following questions:**

#### Multiple choice

1. How was the news a few decades ago?  
**a) broad-based**      b) tabloid-based      c) board-based
2. The expansion of what made the problems with the media apparent?  
a) social media      **b) mass media**      c) broadcast media
3. What showed that democratic governments were misleading the public?  
a) the news      **b) scandals**      c) leaks
4. Who were alternative newspapers, radio shows and cable news competing with?  
a) the government      b) each other      **c) large media companies**

#### Sentence completion

1. Thanks to the expansion of social media and other online content like blogs and videos, everyone is now a potential **reporter**.
2. A good way to verify a news story is to find the **original news** that has not been altered by middlemen.
3. You should try not to follow chaotic stories, like terrorist attacks or natural disasters, in **real time**.
4. When the media attempts continuous coverage, this can lead to **incorrect information** or false accusations against innocent people.

#### Short answer

1. Despite good journalism, what is often unavoidable? **Media bias**
2. If you can't find the original story, what should you check to get a more complete picture of a story? **Multiple outlets/various sources**
3. Who might have an interest in influencing coverage of stories? **Anonymous sources**
4. What should you perform to find additional information before sharing a story? **A web search**

## 4. Fake News Conversation Questions

1. What is the difference between fake news and an opinion?
2. Do you think people will believe anything just because it is written on the internet? If so, why is this?
3. Did fake news exist before social media? Can you think of any examples?
4. Why might someone say that real news is fake news?
5. Has fake news led to a distrust of the mainstream media? What is the effect of this on society?
6. Can the media be biased and still tell the truth?
7. What can be done to prevent the spread of fake news?
8. Should fake news be illegal? If so, how would this be enforced?

## 5. Fake News Writing Task

Write about your opinion of fake news. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- Why fake news is created.
- The effect fake news has on society.
- How the spread of fake news can be prevented.

### **Alternative exam practice question:**

Some people say that fake news represents a threat to society and should be made illegal. Others, however, say that despite its negative consequences, people have the right to free speech even if this includes fake news. Which side do you agree with?