



UNIT 2: CALLING ON CRITICAL THINKING

Lesson 4

4. Analyzing Online Information, Part 1

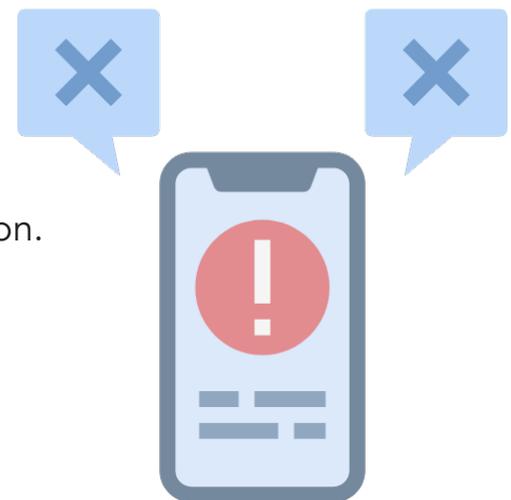
The ability to analyze online misinformation is one of the most important skills for a digital citizen to master. It is not hyperbole to state that our very democracy depends upon it. A [report](#) from the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) finds that youth “lack the skills to judge the reliability of information online.” In an effort to address this serious problem, SHEG researchers observed fact checkers from the nation’s most prestigious news organizations to see how *they* detect misinformation. In the [COR or Civic Online Reasoning program](#), they distill what these fact-checkers do into three essential questions. This lesson introduces students to these questions.

Key Standards—CCSS.ELA-LITERACY: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.4, RI.8.6, W.8.2, W.8.2.A, W.8.2.B, W.8.2.D, W.8.2.F, W.8.4, W.8.8, SL.8.1, SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.B, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D, SL.8.2, L.8.1, L.8.1.D, L.8.4, L.8.4.A, L.8.4.D, L.8.6. ISTE: 2b, 3a, 3b. CASEL: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5a, 5d, 5e.

Learning Objectives

Students will...

- ✓ Learn to think like “de-‘tech’-tives” when analyzing online information.
- ✓ Use three essential questions to detect misinformation.
- ✓ Understand how to read laterally to practice fact-checking skills.



Introducing The Lesson

As students have learned in previous lessons, it is easy for anyone to post anything online. That’s why they must think like “de-‘tech’-tives” (students may remember this term from Level 1) whenever they go online in order to keep from getting duped or misled by misinformation.

The Lesson

1. Tell students the first thing they should do when evaluating online information is to **leave the page where the information appears and open a new tab on their browser** (a fact-checking strategy called “lateral reading”). This second tab is where they will conduct their investigation.
2. Next, explain that you are going to teach them **the three essential questions that real fact checkers ask** when they are evaluating online information.

The Lesson

Question #1: Who is behind this information?

[Screen Video 1 in the Slides] Review: All information is influenced by its author. That's why students should **begin by investigating the person or organization behind the information** in question. Remind them to do this by leaving the page and using the tab they just opened. They should ask:

- *Who is the author? Are they reputable or qualified to write about the topic?*
- *Do they have a financial incentive for writing it? Are they trying to persuade you to believe/buy something?*
- *Who is the publisher? Do they have a financial incentive? Are they trying to persuade you?*
- *Is the information from a reputable news organization? Is it a sponsored post, a personal blog?*
- *Did you get the information from a friend you know and trust? From a stranger?*
- *Were you led to the information by an anonymous social media post?*
- *Why do you think this information was shared with you?*

Question #2: What is the evidence for the claims?

[Screen Video 2 in the Slides] Review: It can be tempting to accept online information at face value. After all, anyone can make an attractive website, write a convincing blog post, or sponsor an online ad that looks like information. That's why it's important to carefully consider **whether the evidence (if there is any!) supports the claims being made**. They should ask:

- *Is it a factual claim or an opinion statement?*
- *Is the claim backed up with evidence?*
- *Does that evidence come from a reliable source?*
- *Conduct a search on the source of the evidence. Is it from an expert in the field, a reputable organization, a random blogger?*
- *Does the source back up their claims with other sources and explain how evidence was gathered?*

Question #3: What do other sources say about the author/organization and the claims?

[Screen Video 3 in the Slides] Review: Explain that it is important to **check claims and evidence against other sources** on the Internet. Consider doing the following:

- *Search the topic to see what others have published about it.*
- *Check multiple credible sources to see what other information exists.*
- *Determine if those sources are reputable.*
- *Check in with an organization or website known to be an authority on the topic.*

Activity

This activity works best when students use digital devices to investigate the article. Alternatively, you could conduct the investigation on a device and screen what you find for students to see.

Have students work individually or in pairs to evaluate: "[Cancer Industry Not Looking for a Cure; They're Making Too Much Money](#)." This popular article has 3.3M views on the site where it appears. Students should analyze it using the three questions and the Student Packet. Remind them to open a second tab on their browser and leave the site to conduct their investigation. This activity may take a couple of class periods to complete or you can assign as homework.

Wrap-up by asking students to share what their investigations revealed. Facilitate a class discussion using the Teacher Guide that follows.

Goal

To provide students with three essential questions that will help them evaluate online information.

Reference:

[COR or Civic Online Reasoning Curriculum](#)

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Cancer industry not looking for a cure; they're too busy making money

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 by: [JD Heyes](#)
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3.3M VIEWS



(Natural News) It may sound ridiculously cynical to some, but there are many who believe that cancer is too big a business (meaning too lucrative) to ever actually cure. And they say the proof is in the numbers.

As noted by [Your News Wire](#), if any of the existing low-cost, natural and alternative cancer treatments were ever to be approved, then the healthcare industry's cornerstone revenue producer would vanish within months.

And Big Pharma isn't about to let that happen. The industry is what is keeping us from a real cancer cure.

Consider how big a business cancer has become. In the 1940s, before all of the technology and innovation we see today, just one out of every 16 people was stricken with cancer; by the 1970s, that ratio fell to one in 10. Today, *one in two* males are at risk of developing [some form of cancer](#), and for women that ratio is *one in three*.

Adds [Health Impact](#), "[We have lost the war on cancer.](#)" The site notes further:

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"The cancer industry is probably the most prosperous business in the United States. In 2014, an estimated 1,665,540 new cancer cases diagnosed and 585,720 cancer deaths in the US. \$6 billion of tax-payer funds are cycled through various federal agencies for cancer research, such as the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The NCI states that the medical costs of cancer care are \$125 billion, with a projected 39 percent increase to \$173 billion by 2020."

The belief among skeptics is that treating cancer has become an industry in and of itself, employing too many people while producing far too much income to permit a cure to be found (or approved). Indeed, the current research on cancer medications is based on the presumption that the disease will grow (as will the market), not get smaller.

A 2010 documentary entitled, *Cut Poison Burn*, by filmmaker Wayne Chesler, presented a number of powerful facts regarding corruption in the business of conventional treatments for cancer (surgery, chemotherapy and radiation) in the U.S. Here are a number of quotes taken from the documentary that reveal why we're no closer today than ever to a cancer cure, as reported by *Your News Wire*:

"From 1920 to the present time, we have made little progress in the treatment of adult cancers. So, a person who gets prostate cancer or breast cancer today will live as long as a person who got it in 1920." – *Charles B. Simone, M.M.S., M.D., Founder, Simone Protective Cancer Center.*

"Why are people terrified when they hear the word cancer? Because they know it [conventional cancer treatment] doesn't work." – *Dr. Julian Whitaker, M.D. Founder, Whitaker Wellness Institute*

"Everyone should know that most cancer research is largely a fraud." – *Dr. Linus Pauling 1986, Nobel Laureate*

There are more, including the U.S. government's own admission in patenting someone else's potential cancer cure, that current treatments "[are themselves carcinogenic](#)" and may actually promote recurrences of cancer.

But you get the point: There is no real incentive to cure something that generates so much employment and profit; just imagine all of the cancer treatment specialists and their staff members who would be out of a job if this disease was ever cured.

As *Natural News* founder Mike Adams, the Health Ranger, has said, there is nothing in "modern" cancer treatment that results in true healing. The law and [public policy have been established to prevent cures](#):

"Treating cancer with anything that actually works has been **entirely outlawed in the United States**, where 'healing has become a crime,' say independent observers. The conventional cancer industry isn't interested in curing the disease; it's interested in **profiting from its continuation.**"

J.D. Heyes is a senior writer for [Natural News](#) and [News Target](#), as well as editor of [The National Sentinel](#).

Sources include:

[YourNewsWire.com](#)

[Cancer.org](#)

[HealthImpactNews.com](#)

Read It Here:

<https://www.naturalnews.com/2019-04-10-cancer-industry-not-looking-for-cure.html>

THINK LIKE A DE-'TECH'-TIVE! 3 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. Who is behind this information?

- Who is the author? Are they reputable or qualified to write about the topic?
- Do they have a financial incentive for writing it? Are they trying to persuade you to believe/buy something?
- Who is the publisher? Do they have a financial incentive? Are they trying to persuade you?
- Is the information from a reputable news organization? Is it a sponsored post, a personal blog?
- Did you get the information from a friend you know and trust? From a stranger?
- Were you led to the information by an anonymous social media post?
- Why do you think this information was shared with you?

What Did You Discover? _____

2. What is the evidence for their claims?

- Is it a factual claim or an opinion statement?
- Is the claim backed up with evidence?
- Does that evidence come from a reliable source?
- Conduct a search on the source of the evidence. Is it from an expert in the field, a reputable organization, a random blogger?
- Does the source back up their claims with other sources and explain how evidence was gathered?

What Did You Discover? _____

3. What do other sources say about the author/organization and the claims?

- Search the topic to see what others have published about it.
- Check multiple credible sources to see what other information exists.
- Determine if those sources are reputable.
- Check in with an organization or website known to be an authority on the topic.

What Did You Discover? _____

Would you trust this article as a research source? Why or why not?

TEACHER GUIDE

1. Who is behind this information?

A quick search about the site where this article appears, "Natural News," reveals that it is "a science-based natural health advocacy organization led by activist-turned-scientist Mike Adams, the Health Ranger." However, the "About Natural News" page does not indicate what kind of scientist Adams is. A further investigation of the site reveals that it sells various health remedies and dietary supplements. Ask students what they discover about the author of the article.

2. What is the evidence for the claims?

The main claim of this article is that the "cancer industry" is making too much money. In the first paragraph it states, "there are many who believe that cancer is too big of a business..." but there is no evidence provided for this claim. Ask students: *Who is "many"?* At the end of the article, the author sites YourNewsWire.com as a source, but that URL leads to what appears to be a sports betting website.

3. What do other sources say about the author/organization and the claims?

Students will likely discover that many sources discredit "Natural News." For example, according to Vox, "'Natural News' is actually a network of sites filled with bylined articles and flanked by ads for survivalist gear and dodgy health cures." The internet trust tool NewsGuard reports it "severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency." Various fact-checking organizations have repeatedly flagged "Natural News" content as false and Facebook banned the site for using "misleading or inaccurate information." An [entire report](#) on disinformation focused on "Natural News." Ask your students what "credible sources" they find and what they discover.