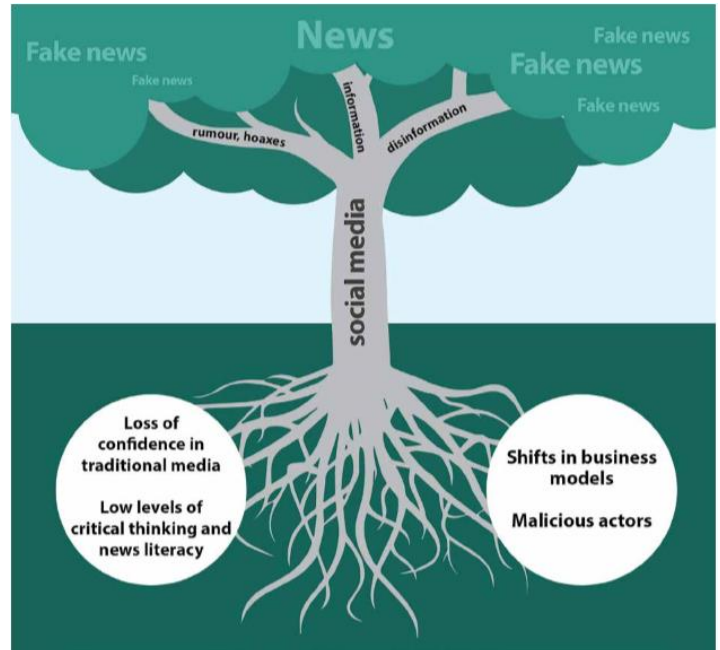## Fake News: The Problems With Internet Sources

What is fake news?

'Fake news' is any kind of journalism that aims to mislead readers with deliberately incorrect information. Sometimes this might be **hoax stories**, which are completely made up in order to trick people. Other times, the incorrect information might be **sensationalist**, which means that the truth has been exaggerated or made up in order to gain more readers or get more hits on a website.

Many people today associate the term 'fake news' with Donald Trump, who uses the term 'fake news' to deny lots of news stories that are written about him and his policies.

Fake news is different from **satire**. In satire, news stories are deliberately changed in order to make a humorous comment about society. Satire makes use of deliberate absurdity and does not claim to be literally true.

Is fake news a new thing?

The term 'fake news' has become popular recently, but the idea of fake news is a very old one. You could argue that fake news has been around since 1439, with the arrival of the printing press. Since then, people have been free to write and spread whatever ideas they like, as long as they've had access to the means of communicating it.

Propaganda is also very similar to fake news. However, propaganda is considered to be done for political reasons, not financial reasons. Propaganda also often has a much larger agenda than fake news, I would say in many ways this is worse, as it can affect far more people.

What are examples of fake news?

One very distressing hoax story was created after the Grenfell Tower fire, which claimed 79 lives in 2017. The fake story claimed that a baby had been found alive on the 16th floor of the tower, 12 days after the fire. The news story appeared on a website called Metro-UK, which was created to look similar to the popular UK newspaper The Metro. Many people shared the story on social media, believing it to be true.

In the 2016 elections for President of the USA, Russian trolls created many fake news stories designed to damage the reputation of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, including the false story that she was involved in unscrupulous activities and even more shocking things such as Satan worshipping.

Why do people write fake news?

People write fake news for lots of different reasons. One reason is that they want to influence people to think or vote a certain way. Another reason is that fake news can attract people to a website, so that the website gets lots of hits and makes lots of money. A third reason, the worst, I believe, is that the writers of fake news want to trick people, or to prove that people can easily be manipulated.

Why does fake news spread?

Since anyone can publish stories on the internet, fake stories can become popular if they appeal to enough people. Many fake news stories appeal to people because they are stories which people want to believe, or they are stories which could be possible. Because many people get their news from social media, they may believe any articles which are shared on sites like Facebook or Twitter. This is why it is important to always check the sources of any information you find online.

Is fake news illegal?

France is currently proposing to make laws against the sharing of fake news. However, while fake news isn't illegal in itself, people who write fake news could potentially be sued for defamation, infliction of emotional distress, fraud, and intellectual property violations, amongst other legal issues.

What can I do to protect myself against fake news?

You need to be very careful when looking at news stories and articles online. Here are some of the things that usually give away a fake news story:

1. The website may have a suspicious domain name, for example Metro-UK.com instead of metro.co.uk

2. There is no 'about us' information page, or no contact information

3. There are few or no previous posts, or the content isn't updated regularly

4. There are no links to other sources

5. The website doesn't look professionally designed

6. The posts don't have dates on them

Comprehension Questions

Mild

1. Define fake news in a sentence.

2. Name TWO reasons why people write fake news.

3. Describe two examples of fake news.

4. Highlight all the adjectives which have been used in the article.

Spicy

1. Write out TWO sentences from this article which show **the writer's** opinion.

2. Describe the legality of producing fake news.

3. Find all the adverbs being used within this article. How do they affect the way this article is read? Why?

4. Write out a sentence which contains adjectives. What effect do these adjectives create on the reader? Why?

Hot

1. Evaluating the entire article, what are the writer's opinions on fake news? How do you know?

2. Is this article completely unbiased? How can you tell?

3. What kind of tone does the writer establish in the article and why? Provide examples.

4.. Write a sentence which summarizes your own opinion on fake news. Your sentence should include a semi-colon.