

A LESSON PLAN for secondary
education students

IDENTIFYING MISLEADING IMAGES IN THE MEDIA



LESSON PLAN



Objectives: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze pictures online and decode the misleading content represented in them
- Understand the different forms of misleading, online content
- Communicate respectfully and critically and question the information represented in online sources



Duration: 1 hour and 40 minutes



Material: The material that you will need are:

- Multimedia (images & videos found in the lesson plan)
- The infographic "[How to read a photograph](#)" & "[Theory Sheet for Disinformation](#)"
- Access to PCs or tablets

INTRODUCTION

We are part of a mediated world. The development of technology has led us to a “new” digital world. We interact, communicate and even learn and work online, sometimes without restrictions and boundaries. Different people of different ages and social backgrounds communicate daily through their devices.


Someone can say that the whole world is in our hands since a mobile phone can give us access to a variety of information and opportunities by touching the screen. However, this online freedom has two sides; it can be a golden ticket, but it can also turn into a curse. Misleading content, as a form of disinformation, can be found everywhere and can have different forms, from titles to whole texts and images to videos. Visual content, especially misleading images, play a role in our online activities and can be generated for various reasons. We can even find them in social media with special effects and editing software or even in random articles. They are a part of our new online reality, and in most cases, they tend to alter our perceptions about reality, harm our well-being and our role in societies.

Young people are at the forefront of this situation as they spend much of their time online for various reasons. But what can we do to ensure they follow healthy media habits? We can say that this open access to information demands a new generation of media-literate citizens in order to filter this bulk of inputs. That is why students need to develop the necessary skills, such as critical thinking, and learn about the mechanisms which will help them detect and decode misleading content in the media.

Of course, this plan is not just theoretical. Instructors should constantly involve students in practical activities that depict everyday life and make them aware of this issue by providing certain information and suggestions to pave the way into a media literate world without being deceived by inaccurate sources.



STEP 1

 Duration: 40 minutes

- Create groups of 4-5 students each.
- Start a conversation with the students by asking questions about misleading, online content. For example:
Is online information always accurate?
Do you know any type of online disinformation?
If you do not know the term, could you give an example?
- Write on the board the keywords of the answers to create a brainstorming map.
- Distribute to the whole class the "Theory Sheet for Disinformation".
- Present the [video](#) to the classroom.
- Start a conversation with the students to help them reflect on what they saw and connect it to the theory.

You can check the "The Theory Sheet for Disinformation" [here](#) 

 Check the "[Beyond 'Fake News' - 10 types of misleading news](#)"



Infographic: "Beyond Fake News". [Image source](#)

STEP 2



Duration: 50 minutes

- Present students some examples of misleading images and let them reflect.
- Ask your students the **following questions**:
 - What do you notice here?*
 - Why is the image structured like that?*
 - What does it make you think and thus feel?*
 - Do you think the description of the image fits?*
 - What else could it be?*
 - Why do you think the creator of the image made this choice?*
 - What are the effects of misleading images on individuals and societies as a whole?*
- Write the term 'misleading images' on the board, and ask students to provide various keywords. Each group should provide at least 3 keywords.
- Create a 'brain map' and connect all the keywords with the term 'misleading images'.
- Present the theory/definition of misleading images with all the necessary details found below:

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Edited or misleading pictures are some of the most prevalent disinformation that may be discovered online, but most of the time is difficult to detect. They can be found literally everywhere online and even offline. Different messages and opinions aim to influence us and sometimes even distract us. Various types of content, including images, texts, articles from other sources, and graphs are everywhere through these social media platforms, from simple posts to forums, groups, pages, and even your private chat.

Over the last few years, more and more people have been using image editing software. Almost anybody can make significant changes to an image using photo editing software, from changing colors and lighting to adding and deleting information. The new version of any image depicts reality, sometimes a different one from what it truly is, to get attention or manipulate the audience. Moreover, users may edit their pictures to make themselves seem as they want in a matter of seconds by using editing tools and picture filters integrated into numerous applications. However, because they are portrayed as truth, these altered visuals might have an impact on our mental health. Since we are continually bombarded with images of artificially perfect individuals, some of us may begin to feel that these images are genuine and that we will never be able to live up to these unattainable expectations.



Types of misleading images

Out of context images: These images are everywhere and aim to influence our opinion and beliefs. They are used to manipulate our opinion and form a different view when accompanied by text.

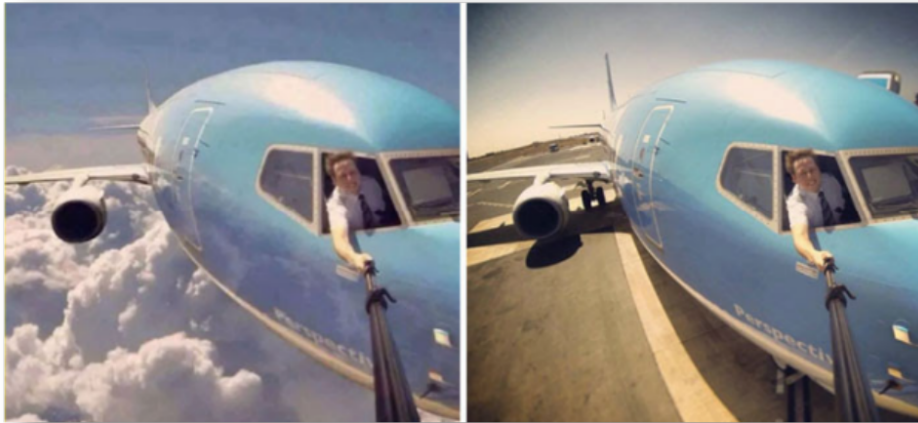


Let's have a look at the image above from the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic (or not?). What do you see? Do you think that it is true? Well, of course, it is misleading... The photographs presented are not photoshopped or edited; they are authentic, but not from Italy during the first months of COVID-19. A reverse image search shows that they had been taken in Zagreb, Croatia's capital, after an earthquake on March 22, 2020.



The caption tells a different story than the picture actually does. Pictures showing protestors leaving the area in the garbage, following a global warming protestation in London's Hyde Park in 2019, went viral online. In fact, some images originated from an entirely other event.

Edited images: there are various edited videos or images online that aim to manipulate our opinion and lead to false perceptions. The components of the image are edited in order to convey a different message.




Of course, it is photoshopped, right? This selfie of a pilot in the air was actually a photo of him when he was landed. It seems cool, right? But still, it is not a real event!




This (photoshopped) photo of a space shuttle went viral quickly with a lot of people sharing it online.

Once students have comprehended the meaning and the types of misleading images, ask them to combine the keywords they created and the information you provided them about misleading images to form a class definition.


STEP 3

 Duration: 60 minutes

- Each student group shares a computer.
- Give to each group 2 misleading pictures ([Misleading Images](#)).
- Ask them if they have any additional questions.
- Ask them to choose one picture and discuss it with their peers.
- The goal of the activity is to follow the theory, being able to decode the image and explain why it is considered a misleading image.
- Ask students to keep notes during the activity and prepare a short presentation of their work to the rest of the class.
- When their presentation is over, the other group should evaluate its presentation based on the infographic.
- When the whole process is over, distribute the infographic “How to read a photograph” and reveal to them the original picture.
- The students will try again to decode the picture with the help of the infographic and at the end of the conversation, you will provide the explanation for each photo.

You can check the infographic “How to read a photograph” [here](#). 

STEP 4

 Duration: 30 minutes

- Ask students to draft a list with tips and suggestions to avoid misleading content.

What are some ways to tell if an image is not misleading?

Check the location: Is the image where it claims to be? Look for signs (street numbers, buildings, language) that can help us reveal it

Perspective: Does the image depict its misleading parts? Does it tell only one side of the story? What are other images of the same event?

Image editing and photoshop: Is the image pixelated? Does something look not normal?

Fake quotes and statements: Is this quote or statement a valid one? Is there any evidence for that? Has the person truly said that?

Reverse image search: search through google image search to confirm the validity (or not) of an image.



In brief:

Think before you share: If you suspect the image, some more easy inquiries might assist you to further question it. Do the image details suit the description? For example, can you identify or acknowledge some landmarks? Many towns have famous skylines and important constructions. You may also see whether the weather in the photo matches other images or that day's prediction. You can also see what's happening in the picture – are people there praying rather than demonstrating, for example?

Familiarize yourself with the internet and its memes/jokes: You may assist to avoid falling into certain frequent disinformation traps by knowing how to communicate online, including the understanding of widely mentioned memoirs and jokes.

STEP 5



Duration: 60 minutes

- Ask students to create their own misleading content by taking photos. The topic is common for the whole class: "Our School".
- When the students conceive their specific topic, they will take the picture together and they will create a short presentation by providing descriptive labels for each photo they took. Potential ideas are: using elements that they will find in and out of the classroom, taking the role of an actor by producing a story behind the photos or by using an editing software to modify the photo.
- Their work will be presented to the whole class where the audience will explain why this is a misleading image (always based on the theory sheet about the misleading images).
- After the discussion, the members of each group will explain their idea and justify their choices (especially if their classmates won't find the answer) and their way of working.

This presentation will include:

- The names of each student group, the course and the date
- The title of the image
- The image
- The explanation in bullet points
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Alternative activity:

- Dedicate a specific school day to misleading images and ways to avoid them.
- Initiate a project that will last two months and students will work together.
- Give each student a role on that and allow them to work for two months on this special day.
- Students can invite parents and help them comprehend the significance of being able to recognize misleading images and the risks of content like that for individuals and the broader society.

Potential roles:

Designer
Manager
Author
Communication Assistant
Presenters
Researcher

Potential Deliverables:

Posters
Flyers
Presentation on misleading images/contents
Workshop for parents or other students on misleading images
A play where students will depict the effect of misleading images

