

# Truth and lies in the social media

## - Honesty

### EXPLANATION:

Honesty and integrity are valuable and necessary skills to flourish and succeed in life. But how honest is social media? This activity promotes a critical review of social media and the investigation of the false information or lies that can be found on various platforms.

**YEAR LEVELS:** Years 11–12

**STUDENT GROUPING:** Group discussion and media searches conducted in pairs

**ACTIVITY LENGTH:** 30–40 mins

### LINK TO CURRICULUM:

**Senior Secondary Curriculum: English:**

#### ***Investigation of Persuasive texts:***

Texts whose primary purpose is to put forward a point of view and persuade a reader, viewer or listener, form a significant part of modern communication in both print and digital environments. They include advertising, debates, arguments, discussions, polemics and essays and articles.

**Link to General Capabilities:**

#### ***Information and communication technology (ICT) capability:***

There is a particular focus in *English* on ICT through the use of digital texts and on understanding and creating multimodal texts. For example, students explore the effects of sound and image as they consider how ideas are communicated in digital texts. They use digital technologies when they access, manage and use information and when creating their own texts. They develop skills in reading, viewing and responding to digital and multimodal texts and analysing the effects of the use of different mediums on meaning and interpretation.

#### ***Ethical understanding:***

In *English* ethical understanding is explored through the selection of texts for study, for example, when students engage with ethical dilemmas presented in texts, considering reasons for actions and implications of decisions. They explore and question values, attitudes, perspectives and assumptions in texts, examining how they are presented, their impact on audiences and how they are reflected in their own responses. Through the study of *English*, students come to appreciate and develop greater empathy for the rights and opinions of others. They develop increasingly advanced communication, research and presentation skills to express viewpoints.

## SCOPE OF TASK:

There are both pros and cons of social media use for teens. Positives include social interaction, and an outlet for creativity. It can also provide entertainment and educational benefits. Negatives associated with social media include cyber bullying, addictiveness and the fact that it can be a platform for predators. Traversing and identifying authentic posts from falsified posts that lie is also sometimes very difficult. Many people have been misled by manipulative posts and advertising on social media.

1. Begin a conversation with students about social media. Questions to gain understanding about their experiences and usage could include:
  - Who uses social media?
  - What platforms do you use? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc)
  - How often do you use social media?
  - What do you use it for?
2. Tell the students that the focus of today's investigation is about the accuracy of the information we are exposed to? More specifically - how honest are people on social media sites?
3. Ask students why they think people lie on social media? Some responses could include:
  - People directly lie about their lives to make themselves look better
  - People are trying to sell something
  - Photos are photo-shopped to create a different reality.
4. Ask the students, how dishonesty on social media affects us. Some responses may include:
  - Creates doubt because we trusted something someone said
  - Affects self-esteem due to comparison with others
  - Impacts on connections with others
  - Alters reality.
5. Ask the students how they can determine what is truth and what constitutes lies on social media. Discuss how they decide what to believe and what not to believe.
6. After the students have shared their knowledge and experiences, provide the details of their task:
  - In pairs students are to go onto a social media site and find an example of one dishonest post. Examples could include dishonest or unethical advertising.
7. Give the students 10 mins to find a misleading post on social media.
8. Bring students back to group to share what they have found. Reflect on how they knew it was a dishonest post:
  - What did you find?
  - How did you know it was dishonest – the text, the visuals?
  - Did you want to believe it?



9. In conclusion ask students how it makes them feel when they see these types of posts? How do they counteract what they see on social media and what coping mechanisms do they have?

**When engaging with social media, it is critical to remind yourself that what you see is not always an accurate picture of reality. Comparisons in particular, with others, are not healthy.**

## **RESOURCES:**

For more research-based information see: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/naked-truth/201807/how-honest-are-people-social-media>