

EVALUATING ONLINE INFORMATION

EXERCISES OF MEDIA LITERACY

01

HOME PAGE ANALYSIS

This **is / is not** (circle one) an advertisement because _____



This **is / is not** (circle one) an advertisement because _____



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When Is Cheryl's Birthday?

A simple chart that explains the logic problem that spread around the world.

By Laura Bradley and Marie Lindemann

Slate



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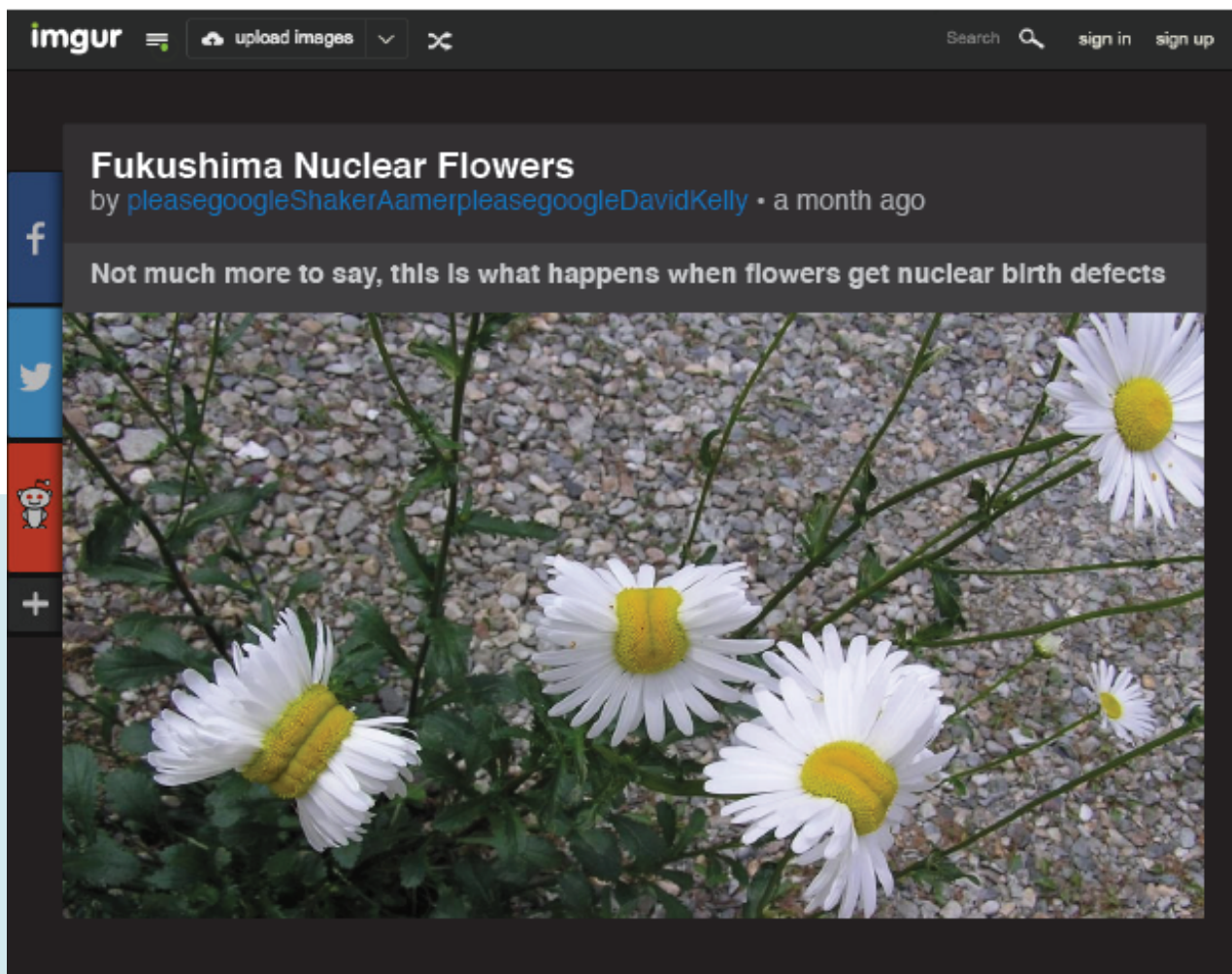


This **is / is not** (circle one) an advertisement because _____

02

EVALUATING EVIDENCE

On March 11, 2011, there was a large nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan. This image was posted on Imgur, a photo sharing website, in July 2015



Does this post provide strong evidence about the conditions near the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant? Explain your reasoning.

03

CLAIMS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The following tweet appears on your feed:



Why might this tweet be a useful source about NRA members' opinion on background checks? List any sources you used to make your decision.

Why might this tweet not be a useful source about NRA members opinions on background checks? List any sources you used to make your decision.

01

HOME PAGE ANALYSIS

Many news organisations have turned to native advertising as a source of revenue. By definition, native advertising tries to sell or promote a product in the guise of a news story.

Native advertising makes it difficult for unsuspecting readers to know if and when there is an ulterior motive behind the information they encounter.

In this exercise, participants are presented with the home page of Slate.com magazine's website, which includes both news items and advertisements. The task assesses participants' ability to distinguish between an article and an advertisement. Participants must evaluate three different sections of the web page - a traditional advertisement, a news story, and a native advertisement - and determine the nature of each. Successful participants understand the different forms that advertising can take and identify both traditional and native advertising. They are also able to explain the features that distinguish a news story from an ad.

Examples of correct answers:**Bubble 1 - It is a Traditional Ad:**

- It has the "Ad Choices" and "Stop seeing this Ad" buttons in the top right corner.
- It has a coupon code, a big company logo and has the words "limited time offer".
- In the left side it says "Save \$20" and usually money is involved when people are selling something.

Bubble 2 - It is a News Article:

- There is no little blue x, it has an author of the article, and it doesn't say it is a sponsored content.

Bubble 3 - It is a Native Ad:

- Despite that the advertisement takes the form of an article, it is an ad as it states "Sponsored Content", meaning the content is created by a company who paid money for the publication.

02

EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Given the vast amount of information available online, citizens need to be able to distinguish between legitimate and dubious sources. Participants need to ask a basic question: Where did this document I'm looking at come from? This task assesses whether participants will stop to ask this question when confronted with a vivid photograph. Participants are presented with a post from Imgur, a photo sharing website, which includes a picture of daisies along with the claim that the flowers have "nuclear birth defects" from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster.

Although the image is compelling and tempting to accept at face value, successful participants will argue that the photograph does not provide strong evidence about conditions near the nuclear power plant. Students may question the source of the post, arguing that we know nothing about the credentials of the person who posted this photo (especially since it appears on a site where anyone can upload a photo). Alternatively, participants may point out that the post provides no proof that the photo was taken near the power plant or that a nuclear radiation caused the daisies' unusual growth.

Examples of correct answers:

- No, it does not provide strong evidence about the conditions near the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. It does not provide strong evidence because it could just be a mutation in the plant. There also isn't evidence that this is near the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.
- No, it does not really provide strong evidence. A photo posted by a stranger online has little credibility! This photo could very easily be photoshopped or stolen from another completely different source. We have no idea given this information, which makes it an unreliable source.

03

CLAIMS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter is filled with individuals and groups seeking to further their agendas. In order to navigate this sea of information, citizens need to be able to weigh the relative strengths and weakness of tweets and social networks as sources of information. Specifically, they need to consider the sources of tweets and the information contained in them.

This task presents participants with a tweet from a liberal advocacy organisation MoveOn.org that reads: "New polling shows the @NRA is out of touch with gun owners and their own members". The tweet includes a graphic that asserts, "Two out of three gun owners say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported background checks". The tweet contains a link to a press release by the poll's sponsor, the Centre for American Progress, another liberal advocacy organisation. Both the news release and the tweet indicate that Public Policy Polling conducted the poll in November 2015. Participants are asked why this tweet might and might not be a useful source of information. Strong responses will note that the tweet may provide useful information given that it is based on a poll conducted by a professional polling firm. At the same time, participants must acknowledge how the political motivation of the Center for American Progress and MoveOn.org, both of which support stronger gun control measures, may have shaped the structure of the poll and how its results were publicised.

Examples of correct answers:**Question 1: Why might this tweet be a useful source?**

- The polling information which the tweet references was collected by Public Policy Polling, which appears to have a fairly strong accuracy record, though with a Democratic bent as resulting from a cross check online.
- The photo used in this tweet was compiled from a public policy polling survey.

Question 2: Why might this tweet not be a useful source?

- According to the MoveOn.org Wikipedia page, MoveOn.org is a "progressive public policy" group and thus will most likely be against most any media or information distributed by the NRA. The criticism section of the Wikipedia page cited more than one instance of MoveOn.org distorting the truth and even attempting to alter Google searches for their own benefit. I would seek a different source to know NRA members' opinions on background checks.
- Although MoveOn.org claims to be independent, they also were paid to work on Obama's campaign so are clearly Democrat-oriented, and the NRA members tend to be Republicans.
- Twitter is a social platform built for sharing opinions, and though there are plenty of news organizations sharing facts on Twitter, I'd be more likely to trust an article than a tweet.