**AoW 8 Directions:**

1. Annotate (write your thoughts, questions, etc.) the text (10 points)
2. Identify (circle, underline, highlight, etc.) key words in 1-4. (10 points each question)
3. Circle the BEST answers for 1-4. (10 points each question)
4. Write a well-written paragraph summary of this text. Your summary must be 4-6 sentences. (10 points)

# **Real news reports on fake news as people try to figure out the difference**

By The Mercury News, adapted by Newsela staff

01.12.17

STANFORD, Calif. — Advertisement or news article? Think tank or lobbying group? Verified Facebook page or fake account?

Students from middle school to high school are social media savvy nowadays. Yet they are easily fooled by biased sources, ads that resemble news articles and even fake social media pages, a study by the Stanford History Education Group showed.

The study, released in November, was conducted by the Stanford History Education Group. From January 2015 to June 2016, researchers asked students in 12 states to complete 56 tasks. These tasks measured the students' ability to judge the trustworthiness of online information.

**Surprising Results Across The Board**

Researchers analyzed 7,804 responses from students across the country. They were surprised by their results.

“We were shocked, to be honest, by how consistently poor these students did,” said Joel Breakstone. He is the director of the Stanford History Education Group. “Across the board, students really struggled. They read for content, and rarely do students consider, ‘Where does this content come from?'”

The new findings come as companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google are trying to figure out how to stop the spread of fake news and false information. The companies are in a bit of a bind. At the same time, they want to avoid suppressing free speech.

**Learning To Separate Fact From Fiction**

In the wake of Donald Trump’s stunning presidential victory, some are blaming Facebook for not doing enough to combat fake news. Many people believe that fake news stories helped Trump gain support.

Facebook CEO and co-founder Mark Zuckerberg said the company was looking at different ways to fight fake news. Facebook is considering showing warnings on stories flagged as fake or making it easier for people to report these posts.

That might not be enough, though. There is so much information to sort through online, some trustworthy and some clearly not. Experts say that educators and parents will have to play a role in helping students separate fact from fiction.

“The number 1 skill that kids are going to need in this 21st century is media literacy and the power of discernment,” Stephen Balkam said. He is the founder and CEO of the Family Online Safety Institute. More and more, he said, students will have to ask themselves, “What is real and what is not real?"

Helping students develop those skills will likely not be easy. Students are often taught in schools how to understand a written passage. However, they do not often learn about the source of the information presented to them, Breakstone said.

**A Tweet Doesn't Make It Real**

In one assessment, 225 high school students were shown two Facebook posts about Trump announcing his candidacy for president. They were then asked which one was the more trustworthy source. One post was from Fox News and had a verified check mark next to the name. Another post was from “Fox News The FB Page” and included a screenshot of a tweet from Trump.

Only a quarter of the students recognized that one of the Facebook accounts was verified with a blue check mark. More than 30 percent thought the unverified Facebook page was a more trustworthy source because it included a tweet from Trump.

**Better Labels Might Work**

Hidden advertisements are another challenge for students. Advertisers have started designing ads that look like news stories and paying websites to run them alongside their articles. Students are often fooled by these. More than 80 percent of the middle school students who were shown the homepage of Slate’s website thought “sponsored content” was a news story. In fact, it is a way of labeling ads that look like articles.

Better labeling might be a partial solution. The Federal Trade Commission has urged companies to be more clear about the language they use to identify ads. For example, the labels “Paid Advertisement” and “Sponsored Advertising Content” are more likely to be understood than “Sponsored by.”

Breakstone noted that the Internet has become a complicated space to navigate. Advertisers and other organizations often try to hide who they are, and some groups and individuals spread news stories that are simply lies. In this environment, Breakstone said, "it is crucial for students to understand what makes a particular piece of information reputable."

**Summary:**

1. **Which two of the following sentences from the section "Learning To Separate Fact From Fiction" include MAIN ideas of the article?**
   1. Many people believe that fake news stories helped Trump gain support.
   2. There is so much information to sort through online, some trustworthy and some clearly not.
   3. Experts say that educators and parents will have to play a role in helping students separate fact from fiction.
   4. “The number 1 skill that kids are going to need in this 21st century is media literacy and the power of discernment,” Stephen Balkam said.

**A** 1 and 2

**B** 1 and 3

**C** 2 and 4

**D** 3 and 4

1. **Read the paragraph from the section "Surprising Results Across The Board."**

The new findings come as companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google are trying to figure out how to stop the spread of fake news and false information. The companies are in a bit of a bind. At the same time, they want to avoid suppressing free speech.

**How does this paragraph reflect a CENTRAL idea of the article?**

**A** It describes the methods that companies are using to try to fight fake news.

**B** It connects the needs of different tech companies with the needs of the government.

**C** It highlights the challenges that companies are having in trying to limit fake news.

**D** It illustrates the benefits of working with companies to fight fake news.

1. **Read the first paragraph of the article.**

Advertisement or news article? Think tank or lobbying group? Verified Facebook page or fake account?

**What purpose is served by beginning the article with this paragraph?**

**A** to highlight the main problem addressed by the survey in the article

**B** to show the difference between fake and real news

**C** to list various sources that people use to get their news

**D** to describe different kinds of advertisements

1. **Why does the author include the section "Better Labels Might Work"?**
   * 1. to discuss different labels that advertisers use to mark sponsored content
     2. to highlight possible solutions that companies are taking to make sources more clear
     3. to show why the Federal Trade Commission thinks it is important to use the label "Sponsored by"
     4. to convince advertisers to adopt new kinds of labels to make content easier to understand