A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

FOR USE WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

TRUE OR FALSE

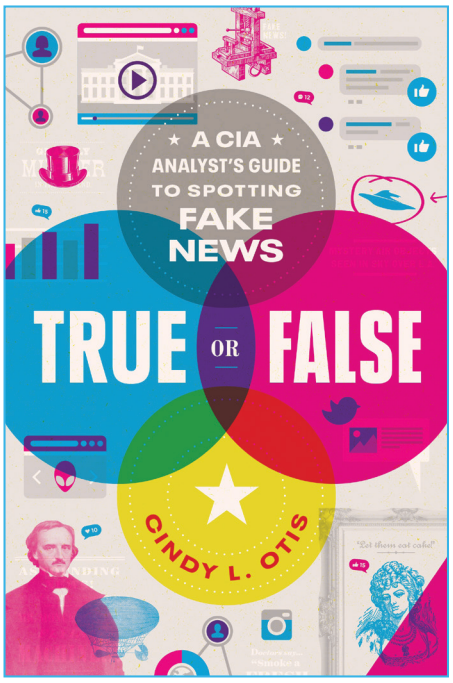
★ A CIA ★ ANALYST'S GUIDE TO SPOTTING FAKE NEWS

ABOUT THE BOOK

"Fake news" is a term you've probably heard a lot in the last few years, but it's not a new phenomenon. Fake news has been around as long as human civilization, from the ancient Egyptians to the French Revolution to Jack the Ripper and the Founding Fathers. But that doesn't mean that we should just give up on the idea of finding the truth.

In *True or False*, the former CIA analyst Cindy L. Otis takes readers through the history and impact of misinformation over the centuries, sharing stories from the past and insights that readers can gain from them today. Then she shares lessons learned in more than a decade of working for the CIA, including actionable tips on how to spot fake news, how to make sense of the information we receive each day, and, perhaps most important, how to understand and see past our own information biases, so that we can think critically about important issues and put events happening around us into context.

True or False includes a wealth of photographs, illustrations, informative inserts, and sidebars containing interesting facts and trivia that will be sure to engage readers in critical thinking and analysis.



HC 978-1-250-23949-5 | Ages 13–18



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CINDY L. OTIS knew that she wanted to join the CIA at the age of seven when her dad let her watch her first James Bond movie. And after receiving her bachelor's degree in international politics and her master's in international relations with an emphasis in national security from Boston University, her dream came true. Otis spent most of her career as a military analyst, but she also served as an intelligence briefer to the White House and, later, as a branch chief. She was the recipient of the Army Civilian Service Achievement Medal and the CIA's Donald B. Cryer Award. Otis now works in cybersecurity, regularly speaking and writing about political and national security issues for various media outlets. She also continues her lifelong work of advocating for disability rights.

This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. The standards listed throughout are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for grade eight, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels. Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students. You know your students better than anyone else!

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BEFORE READING

1. In the introduction of the book, Otis argues that "the difference between [journalism/news media] and fake news is their intent. Legitimate media is trying to inform you. Fake news is trying to deceive you" (page xiv). Reflect on her thoughts by defining the terms "journalism/news media" and "fake news." Then explain whether or not you agree with her argument. Are journalists trying to inform you? Is fake news trying to deceive you?

   CCSS.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

2. On page 145, Otis lists "The Top Ten Fake News Stories from the Election." Before you read the book, make a chart of the stories and evaluate whether you saw them in the news and whether you thought they were legitimate news stories or fake news. Add another column to reflect on why you thought that these stories were true or false.

   CCSS.RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

   CCSS.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

DURING READING

1. As Otis reflects in chapter 1 when discussing Jack the Ripper, "Even though the media had a responsibility to report on topics of interest to the public, it is clear from the ways newspapers manipulated the facts in their stories, spun up conspiracy theories, and built on existing anti-Semitism that their main concern was making money" (page 10). For Otis, this is the opposite of what the media should be doing when presenting news to the public. What was the impact of this choice made by newspapers on the ability to solve the Jack the Ripper murders?

   CCSS.RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

2. In chapter 2 we learn that when Procopius attacked Theodora in his book *The Secret History*, he took "The same approach trolls on the internet take today against their female targets" (page 19). Using evidence from the text and evidence from contemporary media attacks against women, defend Otis's claim.

   CCSS.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

3. What was the impact of the invention of the printing press on media and sharing the news?

   CCSS.RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

4. In chapter 3, Otis argues that "the pamphlet wars between Marie and Louis XIII show us that fake news is most effective when it is written with certain audiences in mind" (page 28). Why is the audience key for the success of fake news?

   CCSS.RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

5. According to Otis, fake news impacted the founding of the United States. Using evidence from the text, determine whether her reasoning on this claim is sound.

   CCSS.RI.8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

6. Define "satire" and "fake news" and compare and contrast their meanings with a Venn diagram.

   CCSS.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

7. Why was the Associated Press created and what is its role in news coverage today?

   CCSS.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

DURING READING (CONTINUED)

8. Define yellow journalism and its impact on global events, including the Spanish-American War.

   CCSS.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

9. What was the impact of Adolf Hitler referring to press that was critical of the Nazis as *Lügenpresse* ("lying press")? Does this type of manipulation of the news happen today or is it only part of the past?

   CCSS.RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

10. How has the United States used fake news to spread disinformation and negatively impact our enemies?

    CCSS.RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

11. What are bots, and how have they impacted the spread of fake news on social media?

    CCSS.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

12. How has fake news impacted American politics and US elections?

    CCSS.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

13. What is cognitive dissonance, and how does it impact a reader's ability to determine whether news is legitimate or fake?

    CCSS.RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

AFTER READING

1. Before reading this book, you were asked to reflect on the definitions of "journalism/news media" and "fake news." Then you explained whether or not you agreed with Otis's argument. Are journalists trying to inform you? Is fake news trying to deceive you? Now that you've finished, reflect on your original thoughts.
2. After reading Otis's book, do you still have the same understanding of these terms or has your thinking changed? Do you agree or disagree with her central idea that journalists are trying to inform whereas fake news is meant to deceive? Summarize Otis's claim and the evidence she used to defend this claim.

   CCSS.RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

3. In chapter 9, Otis explains, "Big Tobacco needed to get the media on board. Yes, thousands of scientists agreed that smoking caused cancer, but there were a few scientists who did not. These scientists needed to be heard, the company said; there were two sides to the debate, and journalists were not doing their job by providing information objectively if they did not report both, even if the evidence on one side was overwhelming" (page 96). This was happening in the 1950s, but does it still happen today? Research a current event and determine if both sides of the argument should be covered or if a one-sided approach is more honest when trying to inform the public.

   CCSS.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

4. Using a free online infographic maker (like **Canva**), design an infographic that informs the reader of how to spot fake news. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your thinking and provide visuals to engage the reader.

   CCSS.RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

AFTER READING (CONTINUED)

5. In chapter 14, Otis explains the difference between facts and opinions. To deepen your understanding of these terms, find articles and editorials from various news sources on the same topic. Annotate the text of each article and editorial, labeling facts and opinions. Where did you see more facts and where did you see more opinions? Which news sources included more facts?

   CCSS.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

   CCSS.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

6. On page 186, Otis creates a way for the reader to check their bias. How did the structure of this portion of the book help a reader understand their own biases and deepen their understanding of the concept of bias?

   CCSS.RI.8.5 Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

Nicole Woulfe has a bachelor of arts in history and a master of arts in secondary education from the University of New Hampshire. She is currently teaching at Sanborn Regional Middle School and was named the 2018 New Hampshire History Teacher of the Year.