



Five ways to use OWLconnected in the classroom

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Talking with Kids about Disturbing News

Breaking [Down] News

From political campaigns to planet discoveries, scientific breakthroughs to sports competitions, important events are happening every day all around the world. Keeping up with current events can be tough. Knowing how to size up a story quickly is an important tool for staying informed. And, it helps you create you own media messages, too!

Choose an OWLconnected article or a piece from another print or digital news source to read.

Seeing the Big Picture

- Where is the current event happening? Find it on a map. What's going on around it?
- Think back. What happened that led up to that event?
- Why do you think the news site decided to cover the story?

Breaking Down the Story

What's actually being said in the news piece? Read the article with these questions in mind:

- What's the main idea?
- What details support it?
- What info is most important?
- Who's the article intended for? What evidence tells you that?

Share your responses with a partner. Then together answer these questions:

- Do the headline and lead support the main points of the article?
- Does the supporting evidence support the main idea?
- Who are the sources for the supporting facts?
 - Are they witnesses? Experts?
 - Are they named? Are they credible? Are they independent or do they have something to gain from the story?
 - Are there multiple sources or just a single source?
- Does the story answer:
 - Who?
 - What?
 - When?
 - Where?
 - Why?
 - How?
- Is the story fair and balanced?

Learning More

- What questions do you still have? Where could you find the answers?





Spotting Fake News

Everyone is talking about fake news. But what does that really mean?

Fake news is:

- False stories—information, photos or videos created and shared to misinform or confuse.
- Stories that have some truth to them, but the facts aren't clear or haven't been properly checked. Information, photos or videos may have been altered to fool people, or old photographs may have been shared and labelled as new.
- Satire or parody news shows like *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* are a type of fake news, too. But they make up false stories to entertain people—not to fool them.

How to Spot Fake News

Online news can be the hardest thing to verify.

Ask yourself these questions:



- Check the web domain. Does the URL look real? YES NO
- Check out the article and the layout carefully. Does it look professional?
Are there spelling mistakes? Are there grammatical errors?
Are words in ALL CAPS? Are there lots of !!!? It might be unreliable. YES NO
- Identify the central message. Does the story sound believable? YES NO
- Check the sources and quotes. Is it clear what's fact and what's opinion? YES NO
- Identify the news outlet. Have you heard of the organization?
Does the news outlet have a good reputation? Do you trust it? YES NO
- Check to see if the news story appears elsewhere. Is it on the radio,
TV or in the newspapers? Go to www.Newseum.org to see each day's front
page stories across North America and around the world. YES NO

Use fact-checking sites to verify the information:

Do the fact checkers say the story is true?

- Search for the subject with the words hoax or scam. YES NO
- Search on Snopes, the oldest and largest fact-checking site. YES NO
- Check photos and videos by doing a reverse image search on TinEye. YES NO

How to Stop Spreading Fake News

Before you pass anything along on one of your social networks, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the story seem “too good to be true”?
- Is the story about a controversial issue?
- Could someone make an important decision (about their money, travel, etc.) based on the story?
- Could people do things that they might regret based on this?
- Could bad things happen because people thought this was true and it wasn't?



Test Your Fake News

Check out the following fifteen headlines. Seven are true stories. The rest are fakes. Put a “T” beside those you think are real news stories. Then, fact check the others using the resources listed on page three.

- 1 Woman trains cats to steal from her neighbours
- 2 Burger King replacing all cashiers with robots to avoid minimum wage increase
- 3 Disney World closed by hurricane damage
- 4 Can weed-killing robots change how we farm?
- 5 3D glasses on a praying mantis is the best thing
- 6 Governor of California signs law saying all students have to learn Spanish
- 7 Man gets fast-food tattoo and receives free food for life
- 8 Ozone hole over the Antarctic is getting smaller
- 9 Single-season home-run record broken
- 10 Biggest pterosaur ever discovered unveiled in Germany
- 11 Human chain rescues family from rip current
- 12 Fresh Swedish air: sold by the bottle
- 13 McDonald’s tests the McVegan in (Mc)Finland
- 14 Honeybees added to endangered species list
- 15 Miley Cyrus says President Trump ruined her career



How to Do an Interview

Good interviews make good stories. And good interviews come from good questions.

When you write a story you have to make sure to give your readers the important facts:

- WHAT happened?
- WHO was involved?
- WHERE did it take place?
- WHEN did it happen?
- WHY did it happen?
- HOW did it happen?

To make the story really interesting and unique, you'll want to interview people to help you answer those questions. They could be experts on the subject, or people who have been affected by the event or who are witnesses.

Before the Interview: Research and Plan

- You'll only have a short time with your subject, so you want to make every question count. Learn as much as you can about them and the event before the interview.
- Think about your goals for the interview. What kind of information do you want to learn? What questions would you like the interview subject to answer?
- Decide on some questions to get you started beforehand. Make sure they're:
 - simple, clear
 - open-ended (see activity below)

During the Interview: Listen and Watch Carefully

- Ask if you can record the interview.
- Take notes.
- Make the person you're interviewing feel comfortable.
- Take a few minutes to chat before you start asking your questions.
- Wait until you have a good rapport to ask the really tough questions.
- It's okay to ask something you think you already know the answer to. You might be surprised by what you learn.
- To get them to expand on their answer, ask questions like "What do you mean?" "Why's that?"
- Don't worry if there is silence for a few seconds while they think about their answer.

Writing the Story

- After the interview, what sticks in your mind?
- Review your notes and recording.
- Write the story you learned—not the story you thought it would be.

It's All in the Questions

Work with a partner to find answers to your questions about questions.

First, one person asks the other the questions in section A. Then the other person asks the questions in section B.

Make notes on answers you get. Are the answers different for Section A and Section B?

Why do you think that is? Which section has closed questions and which one has open questions? Which questions work best? Why?

Section A:

- 1 Do you like school?
- 2 Do you like to read?
- 3 Do you have a pet?
- 4 Do you like school?

Section B:

- 5 What do you like about school?
- 6 What's the last book you read and why did you read it?
- 7 What would your pet say about you?
- 8 If you were the principal of the school, name one thing you would make compulsory and one thing you would ban.

Interviewing for a Story

Now that you know the secret of open questions, pick someone you'd like to interview. It could be someone at your school or in your community or family. Research and write down five questions you would like to ask them. Then use the tips above to do your interview and write your story.



Writing a Review

Can't wait to see the latest movies, read the latest books, or play the newest video games? Why not share your experience with others. Write a review. Then send it to OWLconnected for a chance to see your work on the website.

Preparing to Write

- Take lots of notes while you're watching, reading or playing. Record what you liked and didn't like.
- Decide on the angle for your review. Is there a theme you want to focus on?
- Think about your audience. What's the most important information you want to share with them?

Writing Your Review

Write a brief a summary of the story, describing the main characters, where the action takes place and the central conflict of the story. Hook your readers by introducing the main conflict with a question. For example, you could write: *When someone needed him, no matter how unsafe the situation, Han showed up. Where did that guy come from? That question is what Solo: A Star Wars Story is here to answer.*

Summarize how you felt about the movie, book or game. Was it great? Bad? So-so? Be clear and colourful in your descriptions.

Use details from your notes to support your argument. Don't just talk about the plot and characters. Comment on the acting, illustrations, graphics or music—whatever is appropriate for your review. Share a memorable quote, short excerpt dialogue, or an action sequence.

Close your review with your feeling about the movie, book or video game, why you felt this way and your recommendation.

Remember to reread and check for SPOILERS. You don't want to ruin the fun for your readers by revealing a crucial plot twist your readers would rather learn on their own.

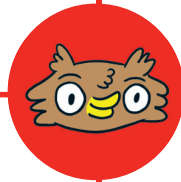




Science News Bingo

Choose three science articles from the OWLconnected site. Find something that fits the description in each box below. Make a note and list the article where you found it. When you have completed a row across, down, or diagonally, call out BINGO.

A scientific term	A scientific career	Something that affected the environment	A reference to computer technology
An animal or insect	An animal's habitat	A quote from a scientist	A disease or condition
A unit of measurement	A photo of space	A conservation success story	A video
A leader in science or technology	An article about a form of energy	A robot's job	A statistic



Talking with Kids about Disturbing News

OWLconnected reflects the mission of Owlkids—to respect kids’ intelligence, and encourage the next generation of curious minds. *OWLconnected* recognizes our readers’ insatiable appetites for the more unusual stories that happen everyday, their natural curiosity about developments in science, technology and the environment, and general interest in sports and entertainment.

Yet living in a 24/7 news cycle means students will be exposed to tragic stories of natural disasters, conflicts, and upsetting political events. Often all kids know are shocking headlines and images, making the event feel even more threatening. You can provide information that puts the story in context.

Tips for talking to your students about disturbing current events:

- **Start by gathering information.** Find out what students know. Their questions and concerns may be very different from what you think. Learn what misinformation needs to be addressed and the questions they have. Determine if they have a personal connection to the story.
- **Prepare yourself.** Do your own research so you can provide background information and accurate facts. Reflect on your perspective and feelings about the story. Be ready to articulate your perspective in an appropriate way if students ask.
- **Create a safe and respectful environment for discussion.** Let students know it’s okay to have strong emotions about a tragic event. Foster a classroom community that understands and respects that individuals will differ in their opinions and feelings on events. Encourage dialogue and discussion, not debate.
- **Stick to the facts when discussing the event.** Be brief and clear. Limit students’ exposure to graphic images.
- **Look for a hopeful angle to discuss the events.** For example, talk about the helpers who came to people’s rescue or the long-term good that may result. Explain that headlines are often created to attract readers or viewers and may exaggerate the threat or sensationalize events.
- **Monitor students’ reactions to the discussion.** If a child seems uneasy or is not coping well, excuse them from the discussion. Plan ahead so there’s another activity they can do. Then follow up with them later. If you’re concerned about a child, consult the school social worker, guidance counsellor or the child’s parent.
- **Help students take positive action.** As a class you could start a petition, write letters or articles for the class or school newspaper, raise money or donate time or items to help.