

## ***Civic Minds***

**Date:** Friday, November 18, 2016

**Print Replica Date:** Wednesday, November 16, 2016

**Article Title:** Facebook, Google try to rein in fake news sites

**Section:** Main, A1

### **Learning Objectives**

- ✓ Students will examine the problem of fake news sites popping up on google and Facebook.

### **CCSS Standards**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.b**

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1.d**

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

**Social Studies EALR 1: CIVICS** The student understands and applies knowledge of government, law, politics, and the nation's fundamental documents to make decisions about local, national, and international issues and to demonstrate thoughtful, participatory citizenship.

### **Vocabulary**

Look up the definition of **besiege**. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

“Since last week’s election of Donald Trump to the White House — which left many looking for someone to blame — Google, Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter have been **besieged** by critics accusing the companies of promoting fake news that some media experts believe may have affected Americans’ decisions at the polls.”

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. Headlines splashed across the internet on Monday announcing that Google and Facebook would no longer tolerate what?
2. The search-engine juggernaut announced that it would no longer allow websites that peddle what?
3. Fake news sites, which run the gamut of political leanings, usually fall into one of two categories. What are they?
4. Online-advertising giants like Google and Facebook are a large reason why such sites exist. What do they do?
5. Google’s new directive targets its AdSense tool. What does this tool allow?
6. Banning fake news sites means what to these sites?
7. The new policy does not affect what?
8. Part of the challenge is that it’s not easy to distinguish between real and false information. How do email servers detect spam?
9. Fake news websites at the crux of this month’s controversy are similar to the content farms of the past, experts said. What is their goal?

### Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts

- *Where do you get your news from?*
- *Do you make sure it's a credible source? How would you do that?*
- *Did you know so many fake news sites existed prior to reading this article?*
- *What surprised you the most?*
- *After reading this article, will you be more aware of the news stories you read online? Why or why not?*

***Facebook and Google “are essentially polluting an information ecosystem with trash, with garbage, and it’s clear that that garbage has an impact,” said Gabriel Kahn, a professor at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. “When you create a marketplace that puts two unequal things on the same level, you’re democratizing unequal information. You wouldn’t put a carton of milk next to a carton of paste and tell people they’re the same thing because they both look white.”***

- Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Why or why not?

***“Moving forward, we will restrict ad serving on pages that misrepresent, misstate or conceal information about the publisher, the publisher’s content or the primary purpose of the web property,” Google said in the statement.***

***Facebook, which has been barring false news sites from using its Audience Network for months, said the only change made this week was that the company updated its written policy Monday to specifically include “fake news” alongside gambling and adult content as websites it bans from using its ad tools.***

***“We do not integrate or display ads in apps or sites containing content that is illegal, misleading or deceptive, which includes fake news,” Facebook said in a statement. “Our team will continue to closely vet all prospective publishers and monitor existing ones to ensure compliance.”***

***Neither Google nor Facebook would specify how it would determine which websites count as fake.***

- Do you think Google and Facebook will be able to eliminate these sites completely? Why or why not?

***When you create a marketplace that puts two unequal things on the same level, you’re democratizing unequal information.***

- Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Why or why not?

### Essay

***The companies have largely declined to acknowledge the role they play in the creation and dissemination of information, critics said, though calls for them to do so have grown louder. Barring fake news sites from using their advertising tools to turn a profit may hamper the seemingly unending barrage of hoaxes and hooey online, but, experts said, it’s not likely to change the fact that the internet is a minefield of misinformation.***

***A few days after the election, a search on “final election count” displayed a result from a fake news site that reported Trump won the popular vote. (He did not. Though votes are still being counted, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton has maintained a lead.)***

- Do you think the internet is a minefield of misinformation? Why or why not?
- Have you ever visited or clicked a new story from a fake news site? How did you know?
- How can the general public protect themselves from reading deceptive news reports?

**Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy**

***How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.***

- Using The Seattle Times print replica, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that “view” similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

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