

Activity Title: Lateral Reading, AKA “Cross Examination”

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Identify the platform and author of a news story
- Use lateral reading to assess the reliability and accuracy of a source

Estimated Time: 15-20 minutes

Resources:

- At least two inaccurate or seriously flawed news articles
 - You may find it helpful to use Snopes or FactCheck.org to find examples of misinformation or disinformation
 - Try testing out a search for alternate coverage yourself to make sure the stories you’ve chosen are usable!

Summary: This is a two-part exercise in which students work in small groups or teams to first identify the author and platform of a news story, then work to find alternate coverage that is more accurate and reliable. This technique of assessing the authority of a source by exploring how the story is covered elsewhere (rather than relying on claims of authority from within the source itself) is called “lateral reading.”

Instructions:

- Split your students into pairs or small groups.
- Assign each group one of the news articles.
- Each group of students works together to identify:
 1. The author of their piece
 2. The platform (e.g., the website or publication), along with a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of the platform’s goals and typical content
- Once students have summarized their source, each group must search for a news or popular article from another platform that covers the same story or claims. Each group must choose one source that they feel is a more reliable and accurate take on the same story, and then explain their rationale for selecting it in group discussion.