Lesson Plan

Focus on Fake News

Book: *Before Social Media*
Series: What Did We Do?
Level: Beacon

Objective
To help students build skills in evaluating the trustworthiness of information posted online.

Supplies
- *Before Social Media* book
- "Spotting Fake News" web page on the National Geographic Kids website:
  https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/ngk-sneak-peek/april-2017/fake-news/
- "Real or Fake" web page on the National Geographic Kids website:
  https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/ngk-sneak-peek/april-2017/real-or-fake/
- Whiteboard

Before the Activity
Read *Before Social Media*, or assign it to students to read on their own.

Activity
Social media makes it easy for people to like and share posts. However, not everything posted online is accurate. Sometimes, people share facts or stories that are not real. These posts are written to seem true, but actually the information is just made up. This inaccurate information is sometimes called fake news. To learn more about how to identify it, read the "Spotting Fake News" web page as a class. Ask students to list questions they can ask to help determine if a story on the internet is reliable. Write their answers on the whiteboard, using the following sample answers as a guide:
- Have you heard of the website that created the story?
- Is the website a well-known source of news?
- Has the website released unreliable information in the past?
- Is the story featured in other newspapers, magazines, and websites?
- Is the story missing important details?
- Does the story mention experts or witnesses?
- Does the story include at least two sources?

Then, divide the students into five groups. Assign each group one story from the "Real or Fake" web page:
- Group 1: Countries Battle Over Bird Poop
- Group 2: Seafloor City
- Group 3: Robot Hitchhikes Across Canada
- Group 4: Plants Make Music
- Group 5: Astronaut Infestation

First, have students read their assigned story. (You might want to use screenshots so students can't scroll down to see the answers at the bottom.) Then, students should use the questions on the whiteboard to evaluate if the story is real or fake. Give students time to discuss their guesses. Then, come back together as a large group. Scroll down to the bottom of the "Real or Fake" web page to reveal the answers: "Seafloor City" and "Astronaut Infestation" are fake, but the other three are real stories. Finally, discuss the following questions as a large group:
- Was your group's guess correct?
- Was it easier or harder than you expected to tell if a story was fake? Why?

Evaluation
Could students participate in the discussions, both in their groups and as an entire class? Could they identify and use questions to evaluate whether a story was fake?

Standards
This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening standards, grade 3 (SL 3.1).