

9-12th Grade: Various Subjects

Course Title: Your subject here.	Lesson Title: New researcher for the NY Times!
Instructor: You.	Prerequisites for Assignment: None.
Equipment/Resources Required: Computer(s) with internet access	Evaluation Method: Completed written/electronic assignment
Students will work: Individually	Total In-Class Time Required: 1-2 class periods depending on level of students / scaffolding required
Max. # of Students: 36	Total At-Home Time Required: Approx. 1 hour, depending on comprehensiveness of assignment
Initial Preparation by: Ethan R. Siegel, Ph.D. Date: 07 / 27 / 2012	Final Revisions by: Date:
Approved by:	Date:

Performance Objectives

Students will accomplish the following:

- Access, create and train their own “traps” on a specific topic
- Discern different points-of-view / goals of different authors writing about the same topic
- Provide links / citations to referenced works and articles
- Identify gaps / errors in reasoning or presentation, including false statements and fallacious reasoning
- Use artificial intelligence combined with human curation to produce a *quality* “trap” on a particular topic
- Complete a written assignment based on the in-class activity

Curriculum Standards Met:

- Research / gather topic-specific information using applied modern technology
- Comprehend and evaluate the quality of information
- Identify an author’s perspective / point-of-view on a particular issue

CCSSI Objectives Addressed:

- Reading: objectives 1, 4, (5 and 6, a little bit) **7 (especially)**, and 8
- Writing: objectives 1 and 6

Lesson Plan Outline

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Engagement / Setup

You've just been hired as the new (insert appropriate section) researcher for the New York Times, a highly competitive job where the Editor-in-Chief is relying on you to accurately gather and represent the facts related to (insert your/the student's topic of choice).

The facts you gather will be used in your section's headlining story for the next print edition, and **must be accurate!** After all, the reason you got this job is because your predecessor was fired for inaccurately reporting (insert appropriate fact), which was obtained from a disreputable source on the internet.

Scaffolding:

Lead the class in a discussion – possibly including an original article or other handout – on the dangers of reporting an untrue story. Examples:

- Richard Jewell, security guard hired for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, saves lives, alerts the authorities, and evacuates the area after discovering a bomb. But he was falsely accused and given a “trial-by-media” despite his heroic actions in this situation.
- JonBenet Ramsey is kidnapped and murdered, but her parents are repeatedly accused in the media. Many still feel they are guilty despite their having since been exonerated and apologized to.
- The Oklahoma City Bombing contained initial reports identifying the bombers as middle-eastern men leaving the scene. In fact, the bombers were Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, and Michael Fortier, all white men.
- In 1948, the Chicago Tribune reported “Dewey defeats Truman” based on exit poll data from the 1948 presidential election. In fact, Truman had won handily.
- In June of 2012, CNN reported that the health-care mandate had been struck down, when in fact it was upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States. The story was later retracted and replaced.
- In 2011, an Italian physics experiment measured the apparent speed of neutrinos to be slightly greater than the speed-of-light, the supposed speed limit of the Universe. While a flaw was later uncovered in the experiment, many news outlets rushed to report that Einstein's relativity had been overturned.
- Fraudulent research was conducted by Andrew Wakefield that claimed a link between autism and vaccines in 1998. This was highly publicized and often reported without nuance or caveat. An anti-vaccine movement followed, and epidemics of whooping cough, measles, and other diseases now plague the USA.

Instructor's Notes:

It may be useful, as part of the scaffolding, to include a discussion on the consequences of having misinformation or, even worse, counterfactual information, reported as though it were accurate.

This will vary by field and example, and could be relatively a benign case (such as “Dewey defeats Truman”) or could go as far as to create a public health hazard or incite violence, depending on the example chosen.

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Instructional walkthrough:

- Demonstration to students on how to:
 - Create an account on trapit, using either the computer / web app or the iPad
 - Create a good trap from start-to-finish, including:
 - Sample discovery terms using a variety of subject-specific keywords (e.g., global warming, climate science, atmospheric CO2; war on drugs, drug enforcement association, drug cartel, etc.)
 - How to appropriately dislike articles that do not apply
 - When to flag an article as “not relevant,” i.e., when you dislike the relevancy of the content
 - When to flag an article as “dislike the source,” i.e., when the keywords are relevant to the topic, but the source is disreputable or otherwise not what you want, content-wise
 - How to choose five *good* articles to like
 - Will be the basis for your trap’s A.I.
 - Browse appropriate featured traps (if relevant)
 - Selection and review of sample news stories

Students will see: **what makes a good search, what makes a good article to “like”, when/why should a source be disliked?**

Sample Assignment:

- Clear explanation of what you want the students to do with the (either paper or electronic) assignment handout
 - Allow students to choose a topic to investigate (or assign a topic to students); choose one with at least one relevant, newsworthy story that took place within the last 30 days
 - Have students create their own traps, train them, and fill out the attached assignment: [Lesson 2 – Handout.docx](#)
 - Include a detailed analysis of various accounts of a subject told in different mediums and from different sources, determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Instructor’s Notes:

Make sure to modify and assign, either electronically or via paper format, the handout before allowing students to work on their own.

Sample topics for students (by subject):

- History: US Government, world leaders, elections, economics, public policy, SCOTUS, etc.
- Physical Science: Astronomy, neutrinos, Higgs boson, global warming, etc.
- Life Science: Genetics, Evolution, DNA sequencing, Stem Cell research, etc.
- Humanities: Human Rights, Authors, Books/Literature, Performing arts, Museums, LGBTQ rights, Digital art, etc.
- Health: Fitness, Yoga, Obesity, Body Image, Sex Education, etc.