



Image source: <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

## Learning Design: Create Your Own Tree Octopus

**Grade:** 9

**Subject:** ELA

**Big Idea:** Media & Digital Literacy

**Time:** 2 Classes + 2 Work Periods

**Objectives:** Consider the impacts of disinformation and misinformation and understand the elements used in their creation well enough to build their own disinformation and misinformation.

**Activate:**

1. Teacher reminds learners that she lived in Vancouver for over a decade and it is such a different environment, with rainforest, mountains and oceans. “We are going to learn about an endangered species of octopus – the Pacific Northwest tree octopus.” Display only the image for learners to see.
2. Learners may realize this isn’t legitimate but keep the delivery of the misinformation serious. Teacher says, “The tree octopus lives in the temperate rainforests of the west coast. Although I lived in the Pacific Northwest for 10 years, I never did see one because they are so elusive. Today we are going to

read about the human actions that have endangered this amazing creature.”

*NOTE: It's ok if some learners have seen this before, or already know it's fake. The theatrics are fun, and useful, but not critical to the lesson.*

3. Teacher says, “Pull up this link on your phones or share with the person beside you.” Wait for someone to notice something that gives away the fake. If that doesn't happen, lead them to it or directly ask if the Pacific Northwest tree octopus really exists.
4. Ask learners how they know it **doesn't** exist? What are the clues? (Looking for elements on the website that give away its spoof nature, either style/layout or content) Prompt as needed from the list below ([from this lesson plan](#)):
  - title
  - layout, font and colours
  - images and diagrams
  - use of hyperlinks
  - style of the language and vocabulary
  - information labelled 'scientific'
  - information under label 'news'
  - links to other organizations and research
  - quotes from 'experts'
5. Teacher says, “Now what made you think it was **credible**?”
6. Brainstorm with the learners to create a list of elements they should evaluate when they are considering the veracity of a resource. Have them turn and talk to their elbow partner for a minute or two to come up with ideas that they add to the jamboard. Go over with class and add elements that were missed.

### **Acquire:**

7. After 10 minutes, the teacher says, “This site is intended to make people laugh by seeming credible. It's not trying to fool the reader, make them do anything, or get money from them. It's just for fun. As we know there is other content online that is intentionally created to misinform us. Does anyone know of any examples?” #activatebackgroundknowledge
8. Post the links below on Edsby and ask learners to prepare for a conversation next class by RWL'ing one of the following before next class and quote the most interesting statement they find on the class jamboard. Remind them to credit their source:

- [Climate misinformation on Facebook ‘increasing substantially’, study says - article in The Guardian](#)
- [Twitter bans climate change propaganda ads as deniers target platforms - article in The Washington Post](#)
- [Climate change: How to talk to a denier - BBC Blog](#)
- [Fake videos of real people -- and how to spot them - 7:15 min. TED video](#)
- [Hero Pig Saves A Drowning Goat - 4:46 min. Comedy Central video](#)
- [Check Yourself with Lateral Reading: Crash Course Navigating Digital Information #3 - 13:51 min. CrashCourse video](#)
- [Four Moves - Web Literacy for Learner Fact-Checkers](#)
- [The Fur-Bearing Trout - Myth or Marvel?](#)

1. NEXT CLASS - ahead of the learners arriving in class, project the statement “Search ‘climate fraud’ and ‘climate change hoax’ on your preferred social media platform” so they can start this as soon as they get settled.
2. Briefly look over the jam board noting anything you want to highlight. Leave it up for learners to see as they head into their conversations.
3. Split the class into 4 groups to have discussions using [Talk Moves](#) (make sure they have their sheets available to remind them of sentence starters, etc). Project the questions:
  - “What is the difference between disinformation and misinformation?”
  - “What are the possible consequences of disinformation and misinformation?”

Wander the room while learners talk. Look for learners to clarify that disinformation is spread with the intent to deceive, while misinformation misleads regardless of intent. Look for learners to note that consequences could be conflict, damage to relationships, etc. #formativeassessment

### **Apply:**

4. Teacher says to learners, “Now we are going to use what we have learned to create our own misinformation! We are going to create a fake climate story. Ask if anyone read the articles from The Guardian or The Post. If not, quickly rundown what they are about so learners have an idea of what climate change denial looks like in the media.

5. For their reference as they work, re-post the list learners created when talking about the Tree Octopus to note what made the site seem credible. Teacher says, “We will use the list we created, so let’s look at our list again and see if we need to add, remove or refine anything on there.” Read each idea aloud and ask learners to give thumbs up or down, and stand if they have an edit to suggest.
6. Supply learners with one of the Google templates (Instagram post, TikTok post, or Facebook profile), have a few to hand out paper copies, and invite them to create their own (landing page for a website, email newsletter, etc). Teacher says, “We will spend 10 minutes sketching our ideas. I will be available while you work.” Circulate and provide clarification or push thinking as needed.
7. Teacher says, “Now that you’ve had some time to sketch your idea, what questions do you have for me and what resources will you need?” Respond to learner’s questions, and acquire the resources they need.
8. Provide learners with at least two work periods to complete their work.

## References:

Common Sense Education. (2021). *Hoaxes and Fakes: How can you avoid being fooled by fake videos and other information online?* <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/hoaxes-and-fakes>

*Encouraging Academic Conversations With Talk Moves.* (n.d.). Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.edutopia.org/video/encouraging-academic-conversations-talk-moves>

Manitoba Education. (2020). *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework: A Living Document.* [PDF file]. Retrieved from [https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/full\\_doc.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/full_doc.pdf)

*Save The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus.* (n.d.). Retrieved March 3, 2022, from <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

*Save the Tree Octopus! Helping Learners Develop Critical Thinking Skills.* (n.d.). KQED. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.kqed.org/education/531201/save-the-tree-octopus-helping-learners-develop-critical-thinking-skills>

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