

## Lesson 2: Propaganda – Public and personal content designed to persuade

**Target audience:** KS3 (11-14 year olds)

**Lesson aim:** To highlight different propaganda techniques and to understand the power of the media in influencing decision making

**Learning objectives:**

- Students can understand the term propaganda and how it can impact on their opinions
- Students can identify and understand different propaganda techniques and analyse the reasons behind them
- Students can use selected criteria to critically assess different media and messages

<b>Timing:</b>	40-45 minute lesson	<b>Key words:</b>	propaganda, hidden agendas, motive, critical thinking
<b>Resources:</b>	PowerPoint, worksheets	<b>Preparation:</b>	Photocopy worksheets, familiarise yourself with the recommended reading

### Lesson outline

Lesson outline	Description	Resources	Class set up	Timing
<b>Starter</b>	How do you learn about the news? Ranking exercise	Slide 3-5	Pair work	5
<b>Activity 1</b>	Definition of propaganda and discussion	Slide 6-8	Whole class	7
<b>Activity 2</b>	Identifying propaganda techniques	Slide 9-14	Whole class	8
<b>Activity 3</b>	Reviewing propaganda in advertisements – what propaganda techniques can you see?	Slides 15-17	Pair work	5
<b>Activity 4</b>	Social media posts – are they telling you the full story?	Slide 18-19 <b>Appendix 1</b>	Group work	15
<b>Plenary</b>	Time to reflect	Slide 20-21	Whole class	5

**Before you begin**

It is important to establish a safe learning environment that students feel comfortable and able to participate in. You may wish to review your seating plan and set clear ground rules for the sessions. More information and guidance on this can be found in the Teachers Guidance document on page 3.

**Starter: How do you learn about the news?**

5 minutes

In pairs, ask students to make a list of the different ways to access the news (slide 3). You can start them off by completing a mind map on the whiteboard. Ask them to write down at least 5 examples.

**Suggested answers:** newspaper, the news on TV, free daily newspapers, tabloids, magazines, the radio, official websites, blogs, gossip websites, YouTube first-hand account videos, social media

Then ask students to rank their examples in order of their preferred source of information and consider why (slide 4).

On slide 5 ask students to consider the pros and cons for assessing news via their preferred method. Considering;

- Is it always the most accurate?
- Is it up to date?
- Is it biased?
- Can you trust the source?

You may wish to follow up with some discussion questions to assess if students understand the different forms of media.

- What is the difference between the information in a tabloid and in a broadsheet?
- What is the difference between the information in a blog and the evening news on TV?
- Is a YouTube first-hand account video more effective than a news report? Why?

**Activity 1: Definition of propaganda**

7 minutes

As a class, ask students to suggest words that come to mind when thinking about the word 'propaganda' (slide 6). By clicking through the slide you will reveal possible words to help stimulate discussion.

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may need to begin by reinforcing their understanding of words such as 'mislead, influence, one sided' by relating them back to examples from their everyday life, eg when Sarah pushed Ben over she only told the teacher what Ben had done wrong and left out that she had taken his pen (one sided).

In pairs, challenge students to devise their own definition of what propaganda means before revealing the Cambridge English Dictionary definition on slide 7. This slide also provides some visual examples. By clicking through to slide 8, ask the students to consider if propaganda can be used for good and who can make use of it.

**Can propaganda be used for good?**

**Suggested answer:** Propaganda is information, with a motive, shaped in such a way that will change behaviour or views. In campaigns like the NHS health campaign (Change for Life), this is information from the government given to the public with the clear motive of inspiring people to eat healthier. This is clearly an example where propaganda is used in a positive way. However, thinking about the bigger picture, although the campaign has positive intentions, there may be other reasons or motives behind

why the campaign is being run, so it may be rare that propaganda is used for only for altruistic purposes.

### Who can use propaganda?

**Suggested answer:** These examples of campaigns and advertisements show that governments and companies use propaganda to highlight to their customers/public the information that they want them to know so as to change their views or to persuade them to buy things. However, as propaganda is merely information intended to influence people's views, anyone can use propaganda. With the rise of social media, more people have access to a wide platform and audience, any individual might use propaganda to share their views with the world.

Feedback, and then as a class, look at the Cambridge English Dictionary definition of propaganda (slide 7) and see if it differs much from your class definition.

### Activity 2: Identifying propaganda techniques

8 minutes

Explain to the class that there are different techniques employed in propaganda in order to influence your thoughts, opinions and behaviours. Go through slides 9-13 and expand by explaining the examples below. On slide 14 ask the students to consider where they may have seen these techniques in their everyday lives. By clicking through the slide you will reveal possible answers to support the discussion.

### Activity 3: Reviewing propaganda in advertisements

5 minutes

Divide the group into pairs and ask them to consider which of the techniques have been used in the advertisements shown (slide 15). By clicking through the slide you will reveal the following answers;

- Sketchers – **Association** has been used here by suggesting a celebrity also used this product.
- Maybelline – **Omission** has been used here as the photo has been airbrushed to remove any lines or blemishes on the models face; making the suggestion that the products has done this instead.
- Boohoo – **Youth/slang language** has been used here by adopting the slang phrase OMG.
- Apple – **Bandwagon** has been used here as they are making the suggestion that many others love the iPhone 5...which is why you should too.

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to give them the 4 answers to choose from and make this more of a matching activity. The 4 possible techniques are association, omission, youth/slang language and bandwagon. It may also be useful for them to have the definitions on slides 10-13 printed as a reference.

After learning the techniques used in propaganda and identifying some of these in advertisements, ask the students to consider whether propaganda gives us the full picture (slide 16).

### Does propaganda give you the full picture of what is going on?

**Suggested answer:** No, propaganda is carefully selected information and only gives you the picture that they want you to understand. For example, the Navy recruitment campaign hints at the exciting and 'cool' life of a Navy Officer – it doesn't let on that it may be a dangerous job. In the same way, the advertisement for smoking doesn't outline the potential health risks.

On slide 17, discuss with students why someone might choose to not give you the whole picture. By clicking through the slide you will reveal possible answers to stimulate discussion. You may wish to

**Thinking critically** about what you see online

spend longer discussing with the students why someone would choose to adopt these techniques in order to achieve this.

**Activity 4: Social media posts**

10 minutes

As a class, look at [slide 18](#). These social media posts all refer to a potential winner of a music competition. Ask the class why they think each of these posts were written. What is the motive behind them? What do they want you to believe/do? By clicking through the slide they will reveal the answers below;

**Helping Others Children's Charity**

The motive behind this message could merely be a good news story. However, as the Pop Factor hopeful hasn't won yet, it would make sense to release this tweet ahead of the final, and the motive could be to encourage others to vote for the finalist as the charity may be set to receive some of the winnings.

**News Online**

This headline is written in such a way to entice people to find out more. The motive of this headline could be for people to click on their link and drive traffic to their website. This could be seen as 'click bait' whereby provocative headlines hint at information but don't reveal much more until you click on the link to learn the rest.

**Ben Danner**

This tweet could be someone's honest opinion about the contestant, or it could be someone looking for revenge and wanting to discourage others from voting for the contestant.

Then, divide the class into groups of 3 and handout [Appendix 1](#) which is shown on [slide 19](#). Ask each group to critically assess the different social media posts and circle any examples of propaganda they might see. Then, ask each group to think about the motive. Why did the person post it? What could the messages be suggesting? What are the messages not saying? What do they want you to do/believe, if anything?

Things to consider in your discussion ([appendix 2](#)):

- **Bold statements** – do hashtags change the meaning of a message? Are claims in adverts factual and true?
- **Omission** – do these posts give you the full picture? Are they intentionally vague? (for example, The Promised One's "16<sup>th</sup> account" Twitter post)
- **Celebrity endorsements** – are you more likely to buy/believe something if a celebrity has endorsed it? (for example, the dieting supplement)
- **Use of imagery** – does familiar imagery change how you feel about a message? (For example, 3 lions could mean 'pride' or the English football team, or even symbolic to another group who promote extreme behaviour)
- **Use of emotive language** – eg. "brothers" – what connotations do certain words have?
- **Amount of re-shares/likes** – does this affect how reliable the information seems?
- **Use of names** - does a full name with a post make you trust it more?
- **Linking to other sites** – what do they want you to look at and why?

Feedback as a group and discuss any potential posts which they would find worrying. If they share any concerns about content which they have seen themselves then follow your school's safeguarding procedures and direct the student/s to further support (see section 7 in the teacher's guidance).

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to focus on 1 or 2 posts first as a class/ group before allowing the students to work more independently on another example/s. You could also ask students to write a list of the emotions for how each post makes them feel and discuss why. You could also ask the students to write a list of questions they have about each post and discuss them with another student/supporting adult. E.g. why did you post a picture of a lion?

**Plenary: Time to reflect**

5 minutes

Explain to students that that thinking critically about propaganda doesn't mean that they can't believe anything they read or see online. It is merely taking a step back when confronted with information by a person or an organisation, online or offline, and asking oneself some questions before making a decision about something. On **slide 20** students have been asked for help from someone who is worried about the content they have clicked on and liked. Ask the students what advice they would offer this person. You may wish to offer the following questions as discussion starters:

- 'What is the bigger picture here?'
- 'What am I not seeing here?'
- 'Is there a hidden agenda, if so what?'
- 'Who wrote it?' 'Why did they write it?'
- 'What do they want me to believe/do?'

Following on from this discussion provide students with avenues for support if they are ever worried about something they see online (**slide 21**).

**Extension task: What is trending on Twitter?**

As a class, see what is trending on Twitter (**slide 22**) and see if you can spot any propaganda techniques in the memes/articles/statuses that you see.

N.B If you are uncomfortable with using Twitter on a live feed, you can search for a hashtag prior to the lesson and take a screenshot of what you found.

Top tips for staying safe online, as well as practical information and advice on a number of online safety topics can be found at [www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary](http://www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary).



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## Lesson 2 Appendix 1

### Thinking critically about what you see online

#### Task


Circle any examples of propaganda you can see and consider the motive.

Why did the person post it?


What could the messages be suggesting?

What are the messages not saying?






What do they want you to do/believe, if anything?










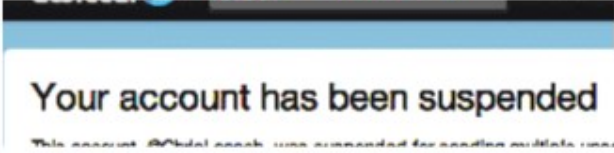




## What's new?














View 16 new posts

**DannyC996** 12m  
Gunna blow up London this weekend!  
#schoolsout #party  
  7  6 

**Our\_Call\_of\_Duty** 12m  
  
  178  219 

**ThePromisedOne** 34m  
16th account - They will never silence the one true voice!  
  
  8  7 

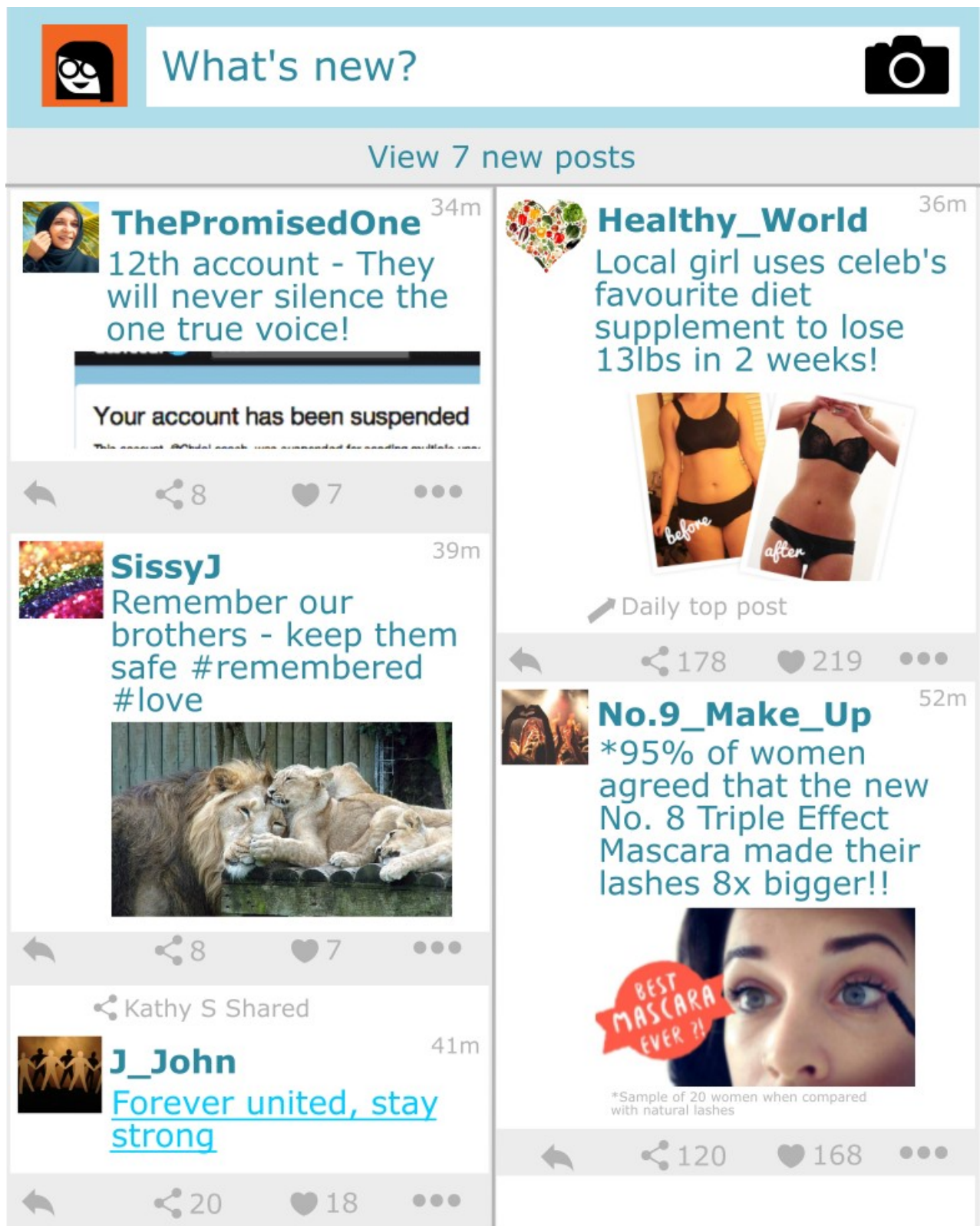
**J\_John** 52m  
Brothers stronger together #strength  
  
  178  219 

**D\_Benham** 41m  
Seal the border - Be a man and protect our nation!  
  19  19 

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## Lesson 2 Appendix 1

Thinking critically about what you see online



### Thinking critically about what you see online

#### Teaching points for reference

#### Male social media feed

- What could they mean? What might people interpret this message to mean and what consequences might that have?
- How have hashtags played a part in this post? Do they help you to understand it?
- This message has been retweeted and liked, why do you think this is?

- Why would someone get suspended?
- Why would they want to share the fact they had been suspended?
- What impact might this have on someone viewing the account? (Add intrigue and a sense of risk)

- What might this message be about?
- Why are they sharing a link and where may this take you? (Virus, extreme content, incorrect information, opinion shared as fact etc)

- What is this post asking you to do?
- What have they used to try and entice you? Why? (Call of Duty fonts)
- Look closely at the image and discuss what it shows and how it may have been cropped.

- Discuss the term 'brothers' - who may use this term and why? What does it symbolise?
- What do the lions typically symbolise? (bravery, used a lot in propaganda, used to depict a fighter, 3 lions for English football etc)
- What might this message be about? Is it clear?
- Does the account name bring up any previously held associations? Can you rely on an account name to reveal an account's intentions?





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## Teacher's guidance

### Thinking critically about what you see online

#### Teaching points for reference

#### Female social media feed

- Why would someone get suspended?
- Why would they want to share the fact they had been suspended?
- Why would someone refer to themselves as the one true voice?
- What impact might this have on someone viewing the account? (Add intrigue and a sense of risk)

- Discuss the term 'brothers' - who may use this term and why? What does it symbolise?
- What do the lions typically symbolise? (bravery, used a lot in propaganda, used to depict a fighter, showing a loving relationship etc)
- What might this message be about? Is it clear?
- What could these hashtags mean and what impact do they have on the message?

- Why would someone choose to share a link and what could it be? (Virus, extreme content, incorrect information, opinion shared as fact etc)
- Why has someone retweeted this message?

- What impact could this claim have?
- How do we know if it is truthful?
- Discuss the use of images—are they edited? Are they of the same person? Would the claim be as powerful without the images?

- Could you trust this claim/ study? Why?
- How have images and graphics been used to support the claim?
- Discuss use of font size for particular information - why has this been displayed in this way?