Unit 12: News: Fact or Fake?

Fake vs. Fact: The Digital Truth Trail

Keywords				
commit	despite	document	finance	host
penalty	refer	rely	source	vote

In our world right now, finding out what's happening around us is easy and quick. We don't have to wait for someone to deliver the newspaper in the morning or for the TV to tell us the news later in the day. Instead, we have wonderful gadgets like tablets, computers, and smartphones that let us know about things the moment they happen, whether we're at home, at school, or out walking in the park. Because of the internet, we can read stories about what someone on the other side of the world is doing right when they're doing it! We can watch a soccer game live from another country, or learn about a space rocket that just took off, all with just a few taps on a screen.

But there's a tricky part too. The internet is like a huge, never-ending collection of all sorts of stories and facts, and some of them are made up. Not everything we read online is true. **Despite** looking real, stories might be false. It's like when someone tells a story about a dragon in their neighborhood—we know dragons aren't real, so we know that story isn't true. When we're clicking through different websites or looking at what people share on websites like Facebook, we have to be like detectives. We have to look for clues to figure out if a story is a real one or just make-believe. Just like in a murder mystery, where we have to decide which clues will lead us to the person who **committed** the crime, we have to decide which stories tell us real news. It's important to be really careful about believing what we read until we're sure it's not just a story someone made up for fun or to trick us. Just because we read something, it doesn't mean it's true. We can be easily tricked by false information and **documents**, especially when we use the internet to find out news.

When you use a computer or phone to look up stuff, the internet remembers and often shows you things that are like what you've seen before. It's trying to help, but sometimes that means you keep seeing the same kind of stories again and again, and they might not be the true ones. We can't be completely sure that fake news is growing, but we do know that on big websites like Facebook and X (Twitter), lots of stories that aren't true are being **hosted** and shared a lot.

When we use these websites a lot, we might start to believe things that aren't true because the websites show us stories they think we'll like, not the ones that are real. It's a bit like getting only chocolate ice cream all the time because you liked it once, even though there are lots of other kinds to try that might be just as good or even better. So, we have to be smart when we read things online. We need to think about what we're reading and decide if it seems like something that's really happening or just a make-believe story. We have to be detectives for news.

Sometimes, when people want us to believe something that's not true, they can try to trick us with stories that make us feel a lot of emotions. These stories are like the ones you hear about shocking or impossible events; they sound exciting or scary, but they're not always based on what's real. For example, you might read a story that says, "NASA found an alien base on the moon!" That would make us feel surprised and interested, and we might even believe it for a second because it's so exciting. But then we have to stop and think, "Wait, is this a real news story, or is it like one of those stories in comic books?" Remember, there is no **penalty** for showing false information like this. These kinds of stories are often called conspiracy theories. They're like puzzles that some people try to solve, even though the pieces don't quite fit

together. They say things that are so wild that they get us to have big feelings, and sometimes those feelings can stop us from asking, "Is this really true?"

Stories like these are shared a lot, especially on places like Facebook and X (Twitter), and they can make people argue because everyone has different feelings about them. It's important not to let our feelings stop us from thinking about whether what we're reading is real. We have to be like judges in a talent show, deciding if the act in front of us is the real deal or just a magic trick.

Here are some things you can do when thinking about online information. First, don't **rely** on a single **source**. Check many places. Just like when you're trying to solve a mystery, it's a good idea to look around for clues. When you find a story online, be a detective and **refer** to other websites to see if they're telling the same story. If they are, the story might just be true! Watch Out for Clickbait: Big shocking headlines might not tell you the real news, they just want you to click on the site. So, be careful and think about whether what they're saying sounds possible.

Ask who is telling the story. Just like how you'd want to know more about someone who's telling you a story in real life, you should also want to know more about the person who's writing the stories you read on the internet. Let's say you read an article by someone named Sam Smith. Perhaps Sam wants you to **vote** for someone. Before you decide if what Sam Smith is saying is true, you should look into who Sam Smith is. What else has Sam written? Are those stories true and helpful, or are they often just made-up stories? If Sam usually writes things that end up being true after you do some checking, then the new story might be true too.

It's also smart to find out who's giving Sam the money to write these stories. Who is **financing** him? Sometimes, people pay money to have certain stories told, maybe because they want you to think like they do or buy something they're selling. Knowing who's behind the story can help you understand why it was written and if you should believe it. So, remember, when you come across new information, take a moment to look into who's telling you the story and why. It's like when you find a piece of a puzzle; you need to see if it fits into the big picture you're putting together. If it doesn't fit, then you might need to look for a different piece to make everything come together just right.

Questions

1. What makes finding out what's happening around us easy and quick?
    A) Newspapers
    B) Televisions
    C) Tablets and phones
    D) Radios

2. Why do we need to be like detectives on the internet?
    A) To make news
    B) To read stories
    C) To find clues
    D) To write stories

3. Where do we see or hear the same kind of stories repeatedly?
    A) Books
    B) The internet
    C) Newspapers
    D) Radios

4. What is the issue with stories that make us feel a lot of emotions?
   A) They are always true.
   B) They can trick us.
   C) They are not interesting.
   D) They are about sports.

5. What should you not rely on when verifying a story?
   A) A single source
   B) Multiple sources
   C) No sources
   D) Pictures only

6. What is 'clickbait'?
   A) Reliable headlines
   B) Shocking headlines
   C) Similar headlines
   D) Very large headlines

7. What should you investigate about the person writing a story?
   A) Stories about voting they've written
   B) Other stories they've written
   C) True stories they've written
   D) False stories they've written

8. Why is it important to know who is financing a story?
   A) To know the cost of the story
   B) To understand potential biases or motives
   C) To find the story's publication date
   D) To learn about the writer's family

9. What does the word 'host' refer to in the text?
   A) A party organizer
   B) A website server
   C) A television show
   D) A book

10. According to the text, what might fake news do on social platforms?
   A) Decrease
   B) Remain static
   C) Grow
   D) Vanish

Vocabulary Review

commit: to carry out an act, usually referring to something serious or unlawful
Example: *Just like in a murder mystery, where we have to decide which clues will lead us to the person who **committed** the crime, we have to decide which stories tell us real news.* (Paragraph 2)

despite: without being influenced or prevented by something or someone
Example: ***Despite** looking real, stories might be false.* (Paragraph 2)

document: a piece of writing that provides information or serves as an official record

Example: *We can be easily tricked by false information and **documents**, especially when we use the internet to find out news.* (Paragraph 2)

finance: to provide funding for a person or enterprise
Example: *Who is **financing** him?* (Paragraph 9)

host: to act as the organizer or provider of a space for an event or as a server for guests or users; or the provider of internet space for information
Example: *We can't be completely sure that fake news is growing, but we do know that on big websites like Facebook and X (Twitter), lots of stories that aren't true are being **hosted** and shared a lot.* (Paragraph 3)

penalty: a punishment imposed for breaking a law, rule, or contract
Example: *Remember, there is no **penalty** for showing false information like this.* (Paragraph 5)

refer: to talk about something or someone; to relate to something or someone; to look at something for information or help
Example: *When you find a story online, be a detective and **refer** to other websites to see if they're telling the same story.* (Paragraph 7)

rely: to depend on someone or something for support or help
Example: *First, don't **rely** on a single source.* (Paragraph 7)

source: the place, person, or thing from which something originates or can be obtained
Example: *First, don't rely on a single **source**.* (Paragraph 7)

vote: to express one's preference for a candidate or resolution in an election or decision-making process
Example: *Perhaps Sam wants you to **vote** for someone.* (Paragraph 8)