Can I Trust the Author?
Written by Beth Thornton

Who created this message?

There was a time when authoring media and information was mostly reserved for professional journalists, writers, entertainment producers and researchers. Today, anyone with a smartphone can create media. That democratization of information allows more underrepresented voices to be heard. But, it also means that media is available from countless sources – not all of whom are trustworthy. This activity is ideal to use when students are learning about using reliable sources for research. It gives students hands-on experience in analyzing whether or not an author is trustworthy.

AHA!

Key Question # 4

Core Concept # 4 Grade Level Materials

ACTIVITY:

Sometimes, authors are truly experts in their fields. Other times, on the topics that they are commenting/writing about. Other times, it is not certain who authored information.

Who created this message? Authorship 6-12 Articles from newspapers and magazines, and/or printed out from online sources. Access to the internet.

1. Pre-select some news stories to distribute to the class. Do your best to find stories that are from a mix of reliable and unreliable sources. Stories can be pulled from traditional or online media, or a mixture of both.
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2. In the classroom, review CML’s Key Question/Core Concept #1 with students. CML KQ/CC #1

Who created this message?

All media messages are constructed.

Keyword: Authorship

Someone has to do it!

Construction: Putting media together.

3. Ask students what techniques they use to determine whether or not information they see is trustworthy. Ask students how they determine whether the information they see is from trustworthy sources. Discuss finding info from recognized experts and institutions; doing Google searches of authors’ names and business interests; research other information the author has published; recognizing the risks of unsourced articles, etc.