



Essay #4: Researching a Fake News Artifact

Topic Explanation and Requirements

The (fictional) Writing Situation

You are a member of the Ranger Institute as a staff researcher. The readers of your Institute's online magazine, *The Texas Ranger*, value the integrity and credibility of what your Institute publishes and shares online. Your editor has tasked you with the job of thoroughly researching a possible fake news story. Your magazine may share this news story or it may source information from this story in articles it is publishing, and they need your report to help them determine the trust-worthiness of the information and whether to use it or not.

The Writing Task and Requirements

Your job is to determine through research the answer to this question:

Is this story share-worthy?

OR: Is the information in this story true and trust-worthy?

From your research, you will write a report that is a critical essay arguing for your answer to this research question. You will present your opinion on why this article is trust-worthy and share-worthy or not and then back that opinion up from your research.

Your research report to the magazine editor must be 1250-1750 words and contain information from at least six sources. Your sources should be a mix of

- At least two articles about what fake news is and how to spot it (its features and characteristics). ONE of these three articles, at least, must be a peer-reviewed article from our college databases
- At least four research sources that help you to establish the facts and context of the story
--things like researching the author or investigating more on the larger "narrative" behind the story

The final report will document its research sources in MLA Documentation Style and will carefully handle quotes and information from its research sources.

Key Assignment Due Dates

4/2—Essay #4 Topic given	4/16—Essay #3-draft #1 (E3-1) due
4/11—Annotated Bibliography Due	4/23—Essay #3-draft #2 (E3-2) due
	4/30—Essay #3 Final Draft due

Topic Selection: A Fake News Artifact

You must have an approved “fake news” article. Many of these stories extend over multiple articles, tweets, and Facebook posts, but you must anchor your research in a single article that was published online or in a newspaper. It is this article or artifact you are evaluating.

I recommend that you [use one of the six approved topics](#) I have linked to our Class Announcements page. Each comes with an accompanying Snoops or FactChecker report to help you get started on your research. Note: You will be more thorough and go beyond these fact checker reports in that you have to double-check what they are reporting.



Doing Your Research

Task #1: Researching About Fake News

Research to find good articles about Fake News and what its characteristics are and how to spot it. You should be able to see features in your article that tie to these articles about Fake News

Task #2: Researching About Your Fake News Artifact

You will use the NewseumEd.org's ESCAPE approach to evaluating fake news to do your research. You will investigate EACH of the six categories listed above in terms of your overall research question—Is this story share-worthy? Is it true and trust-worthy?:

1. Evidence: Do the facts hold up?
2. Source: Who made this, and can I trust them?
3. Context: What's the big picture?
4. Audience: Who is the intended audience?
5. Purpose: Why was this made?
6. Execution: How was this information presented?

Use the [Evaluating Fake News Research Navigator](#) to help you research and keep track of your findings for each category. This researching guide will walk you through researching on each of the ESCAPE categories above.

Task #3: Evaluating Your Research Sources

As a good researcher, you must be sure to use good, reliable research to compile your report, so you will formally evaluate EACH of your sources using the 5Ws Method of Evaluating Sources.

Use the full 5Ws Method of Evaluation Sources as you fill in your evaluation of each source. You should write something in each row. View/Print the following guide as you evaluate each source: <http://www.lirvin.net/1301sitebb/5Ws.pdf> . Open and fill in the [5Ws Evaluation Worksheet](#) to evaluate each source. Post this worksheet into Canvas.

Source:

WHO: Who is the author? (What makes this author reliable or unreliable?)
WHAT: What type of document is it? (What makes this type of document reliable or not?)
WHEN: When was the information published and/or updated? (What makes this date reliable or not?)
WHERE: Where was the information published? (What makes this place of publication reliable or not?)
WHY: Why was the document created? (What makes this purpose behind the publication reliable or not?)
HOW: How was it written? How was it published? (What makes the way this publication was produced reliable or not?)
In 100-150 words, summarize why this is a credible source to use in my research paper? What key factors make it both a strong source and a source with some limitations?

You should seek to use as reliable and credible of sources as you can. If a source does not seem reliable and credible—don't use it! It may be that you use some information that may be somewhat mixed in its credibility, but as you weigh whether to use it, the source should come down on the side of being more reliable and credible than less.

Task #4: Creating an Annotated Bibliography

What is an Annotated Bibliography? And why do researchers create them? Read this explanation about what an Annotated Bibliography is and why researchers create them. <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/annotated-bibliographies/>

An Annotated Bibliography is a list of research sources on a topic. It resembles a Works Cited page in its format, except each reference has a note describing information about that source. Each notation is a short paragraph summarizing the source and its usefulness related to the topic. --[See this example Annotated Bibliography](#)
Each entry will consist of two elements:

1. The full MLA reference for the source (properly formatted)
2. The short 75-125 summary paragraph evaluating this source from your 5Ws Evaluation Worksheet.

Example of how each entry will look:

Annotated Bibliography (MLA format)

Fryer, Sarah Beebe. "Beneath the Mask: The Plight of Daisy Buchanan." *Critical Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*. Ed. Scott Donaldson. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984. 153-166.

This is a feminist essay that argues that Daisy is trapped in cultural constructions of Rich Wife and Pretty Girl - she chooses the "unsatisfactory stability" of her marriage because of those constructions. Fryer's only mention of Jordan is a foil to Daisy - "Like Jordan, Daisy is affected" (156). This is a scholarly publication located by conducting a boolean search in the online catalog.

Doing a good job on your 5Ws Evaluation Worksheet will make it easy to do this Annotated Bibliography. (Be sure that it is formatted in alphabetic order.)

Structure for the Final Essay

The essay will have an Introduction, Body and Conclusion. The Body will involve two sections:

An Analysis section in which you have a paragraph presenting why each category for evaluating Fake News supports your thesis that the article is or is not trust-worthy. You should have a single paragraph for each category.

A Synthesis paragraph coming after you have broken the news story up into its parts. You will have a paragraph where you pull together your overall view on the article. You should see connections between the parts that support your assessment of the article. You should see more clearly what aspects of the analysis prove to be most significant in proving this article is false and untrustworthy.

- I. Introduction
- Analysis Section
- II. Evidence: Do the facts hold up?
- III. Source: Who made this, and can I trust them?
- IV. Context: What's the big picture?
- V. Audience: Who is the intended audience?
- VI. Purpose: Why was this made?
- VII. Execution: How was this information presented?
- Synthesis—larger conclusion
- VIII. Synthesis Paragraph pulling together your assessment, finding connections and key points
- IX. Conclusion