

**BOOK REVIEW**

***Developing digital detectives:  
Essential lessons for discerning fact from fiction in the 'Fake News' Era***



OPEN ACCESS

Ashley Cooksey

*University of Central Arkansas, USA*

**Book review**

**Citation:** Cooksey, A. (2022). Book review: Developing digital detectives: Essential lessons for discerning fact from fiction in the 'Fake News' Era. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 14(3), 132-134. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2022-14-3-11>

---

LaGarde, J. and Darren Hudgins, D. (2021). *Developing Digital Detectives: Essential Lessons for Discerning Fact from Fiction in the 'Fake News' Era*. International Society for Technology in Education.

---

**Corresponding Author:**

Ashley Cooksey  
ashley.cooksey2@gmail.com

**Copyright:** © 2022 Author(s). This is an open access, peer-reviewed article published by Bepress and distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. JMLE is the official journal of [NAMLE](#).

**Received:** January 29, 2022

**Accepted:** January 31, 2022

**Published:** December 20, 2022

**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

**Competing Interests:** The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

**[Editorial Board](#)**



**Journal of Media Literacy Education**

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION (NAMLE)  
Online at [www.jmle.org](http://www.jmle.org)

Fake News. It is a well-known term that has taken the place of misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and more simply a disagreement. The book *Developing Digital Detectives* seeks to provide educators with tools, techniques, and support in implementing media and information literacy into their classrooms. The authors, Jennifer LaGarde and Darren Hudgins, build upon their previous work on helping students distinguish fact from fiction by providing critical lenses with which media and information consumers can use to discern misinformation. Although the authors refute the term “fake news,” each of the critical lenses provide educators and students with the key questions to locate quality information and discern mis/dis/malinformation across media.

The book’s overarching purpose is not just to teach “real” versus “fake” news, but to provide a means with which readers and media consumers can think critically, ask quality questions, seek confirmation, and identify triggers created to flame a response. As the authors explain:

“[W]e’ve also come to believe that the term fake news itself has become toxic: a slur sometimes used to discredit content that challenges one’s own beliefs. That’s why, apart from this in explanation (and the title), the term doesn’t appear anywhere else in this book” (p. xxi)

In the first half of the book, the authors identify four key lenses that media and information consumers can use. Chapter 1: *The First Lens: Triggers* focuses on managing your emotional response to information. This chapter challenges readers to consider their emotional response to content, and if there is no emotional response, readers are then challenged to consider whether or not other individuals or groups of people would have an emotional response. The second chapter, *The Second Lens: Access*, explores questions concerning platforms, formats and devices. Content may appear differently on desktop or laptop screens than it does on a mobile device. In addition, lateral reading and the use of hyperlinks becomes a challenge on a mobile device as tabs are opened one on top of the other rather than horizontally. In Chapter 3: *The Third Lens: Forensics*, the authors pose questions to readers to help them dig deeper into media and information content. The focus is shifted from finding the right answer to asking the right questions. The final chapter of this section, Chapter 4: *The Fourth Lens: Motives*, has the reader flip the script by putting themselves in the shoes of those who create suspicious content.

Chapters 5-7 highlight media and information literacy for young learners and begin to encourage the connection between information and emotions. Media and information literacy is a global skill, and these chapters bring to light the importance of working together and discussing information even at an early age. The final three chapters include a social-emotional learning component that is associated with media and information literacy education. Each of these chapters focuses on grade-level groupings (i.e. grades K-3, 4-8, 9-12) and includes lesson plan examples. Each lesson plan includes graphics to support the instruction, as well as learning objectives and the ISTE Standards (ISTE, 2022) for both students and educators.

In our ever-changing and sometimes volatile digital world, it is important for educators to engage in media and information literacy education. Using simple checklists such as the Current, Relevant, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose (CRAAP) test (Blakeslee, 2004) is outdated and no longer relevant because many times, it is easy for students to locate the right information concerning the currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, and purpose of media content. The real challenge comes from asking the right questions and digging deeper into the motives behind the content and, by extension, the producer or publisher. For educators to really encourage a media and information literate student population, they must begin using strategies that help students look more critically at media and information. For digital age learners, this means using critical lenses when examining media and information content, including social media posts.

Author Jennifer Lagarde is a former public education teacher with experience as a school librarian and digital teaching and learning specialist. She has been published in various professional journals including *Library Journal*. LaGarde’s work extends far beyond K-12 public education as she now teaches courses focused on emerging literacies and young adult literature at Rutgers University. Her work has been recognized in the *New York Times*, the American Association of School Librarians, and the Carnegie Corporation.

Darren Hudgins, author, is the director of Think - Do - Thrive, LLC. With over 20 years of experience in education, edtech, and educational coaching, he is an ardent advocate for cross-curricular learning experiences that involve real-world scenarios that engage and stretch educators and students to “think, do, and thrive.” Hudgins is a champion of active learning and creating opportunities for educational communities to improve.

LaGarde and Hudgins previously published *Fact vs Fiction: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills in the Age of Fake News* (2018) with the International Society for Technology in Education. *Developing Digital Detectives* (2021) is an extension of their work to spread media literacy education. Additionally, the authors' work in *Developing Digital Detectives* is supported throughout the final chapters of the book with the inclusion of lesson and unit plan examples. To further support the printed lesson and unit plans in the text, a supplemental website, The Evidence Locker, houses additional lesson plans, unit examples, graphics, posters, an interactive participation map, and an embedded Twitter feed. This text, and its supplemental materials, are a valuable contribution to media and information literacy education for K-12 and pre-service educators.

### REFERENCES

- Blakeslee, Sarah (2004) The CRAAP test. *LOEX Quarterly*, 31(3), 4.  
<https://commons.emich.edu/loexquarterly/vol31/iss3/4>
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). (2021). *Essential lessons for discerning fact from fiction in the fake news era*. Evidence Locker Online. <https://www.evidencelocker.online/>
- International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). (2022). *The ISTE standards*. <https://www.iste.org/iste-standards>
- LaGarde, J., & Hudgins, D. (2021). *Developing digital detectives: Essential lessons for discerning fact from fiction in the 'fake news' era*. International Society for Technology in Education.
- LaGarde, J., & Hudgins, D. (2018). *Fact vs. fiction: Teaching critical thinking skills in the age of fake news*. International Society for Technology in Education.