

Beyond the Original

Created: September 2018

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| Estimated time: | 55 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• [15 minutes] Activity #1• [25 minutes] Assignment• [15 minutes] Discussion |
| Group or individual activity: | Group |
| Ages: | 14-18 years old |
| Grades: | Grades 9-12 |
| Online / offline elements: | This learning experience includes an offline activity and discussion and an assignment that requires computers or mobile devices with Internet access. |
| Areas: | Main area: Information Quality Additional areas: Civic and Political Engagement, Content Production, Context, Data, Media (Literacy) |
| License: | <p>This learning experience has been created by Youth and Media and is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. For more information, please visit http://dcrp.berkman.harvard.edu/about</p> <p>This "Beyond the Original" learning experience is inspired by the "Quick Start To Verifying Online Media" and "Verification Training For Journalists" courses by Dr. Claire Wardle at First Draft, available here.</p> |

Learning Goal

Participants will be able to define what a scrape (a copy from an original) is and explain why the proliferation of this type of media can make the verification process more difficult during breaking news events. They will find scrapes from a news event, in addition to the original image, and create a timeline of these images. Based upon the timeline, they will reflect on the importance of identifying a scrape's source and the possible motivations behind the creation of the different scrapes.

Materials

- [For educator] Computer with Internet access
- Projector and projection screen
- [For participants] Computers or mobile devices with Internet access
- [One per participant] Paper
- [One per participant] Pens or pencils
- Printout of Super Bowl 2018 Halftime / Selfie Kid image
- Printout of Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 selfie
- Printout of Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 Grumpy Cat meme
- Printout of Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 Kanye West meme
- Printout of Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 pizza meme
- Printout of 2019 Cricket World Cup image
- Printout of 2019 Cricket World Cup meme
- Printout of Kuala Lumpur sinkhole image
- Printout of Kuala Lumpur sinkhole King Kong meme
- Printout of Kuala Lumpur sinkhole Megatron meme

Resources

- Video: [The Challenge of Dealing with Scrapes](#) - by First Draft
- Article: [The 'Selfie Kid' Who Stole Justin Timberlake's Halftime Show Was the Super Bowl MVP](#) - by Ashley Hoffman (TIME)
- Article: [Several News Outlets Duped into Publishing Old Flight Turbulence Footage](#) - by Alastair Reid (First Draft)
- Article: [Why Eyewitness Media Is Central to the Future of the News Industry](#) - by Alastair Reid (First Draft)

- Article: [A Pocket Guide for Verifying Details of a Video](#) - by Malachy Browne (First Draft)
- Image: [Super Bowl 2018 Halftime / Selfie Kid image](#) - by Ryan McKenna (@selfiekid)
- Image: [Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 selfie](#) - by Ellen DeGeneres (@TheEllenShow)
- Image: [Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 Grumpy Cat meme](#) - by Grumpy Cat (@RealGrumpyCat)
- Image: [Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 Kanye West meme](#) - by Kirkkaboom (Knowyourmeme.com)
- Image: [Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 Pizza meme](#) - by Annehorel (Tumblr)
- Image: [2019 Cricket World Cup image](#) - Source unknown (originally uploaded as a screenshot by a Facebook user)
- Image: [2019 Cricket World Cup meme](#) - by R. (@rahimaso)
- Image: [Kuala Lumpur Sinkhole image](#) - by Gan Nicholas (@GanNicholas)
- Image: [Kuala Lumpur Sinkhole King Kong meme](#) - Source unknown (meme sent to blogger “MrBrown” via Twitter)
- Image: [Kuala Lumpur Sinkhole Megatron meme](#) - Source unknown (meme sent to blogger “MrBrown” via Twitter)

Activity #1: Tracing the Source

SAY:

- You previously learned about the five-step verification checklist journalists use when they want to verify an image or video.

[Quickly recap with participants the five items on The First Draft Verification Checklist.

1. **Timeline:** Are you looking at the **original** piece of content?
 2. **Source: Who** created the piece of content?
 3. **Date: When** was the piece of content captured?
 4. **Location: Where** was the piece of content captured?
 5. **Motivation: Why** was the piece of content captured?]
- Today, we will talk in more detail about the first two items on the checklist: timeline and source. In the current media landscape, people are constantly creating, sharing, and adapting media content (e.g., images, videos, text-based posts), especially on social media. Journalists and news consumers can use a

variety of tools to learn more about the content. Knowing if you are looking at the original piece of content and who the source is involves multiple steps.

- One challenge people face when it comes to analyzing these two items (timeline and source) on the checklist is that media content can circulate from platform to platform (for example, an image might be sent from one person to another through WhatsApp. The receiver may then post the image on Twitter). Images and videos can also be modified (for example, the caption / title of the image could be changed) and copied (for example, someone may post a video on YouTube, and then others may download the original video and upload a copy through their own accounts).

ASK:

- Have you ever received or seen an image or video on one platform and then shared it on another platform? For example, have you ever posted something a friend shared with you through SnapChat on a different platform, such as Instagram? Or, do you know others who have done so?
- Have you ever downloaded / saved an image or video that was not your own and uploaded it through your account? Or, do you know others who have done so?

SAY:

- **Scrapes** are pieces of content that are copied from an original and sometimes move from one platform to another. The term comes from the verb “to scrape,” and it refers to a piece of content that is copied by a user to create a new version of the content.

[Scrapes are also called “copies” or “versions” of media. If you / your participants want to find more resources about scrapes online, you can also use these other terms. Elsewhere in this learning experience, we have decided to refer to scrapes as “scrapes (versions)” to reflect the multiplicity of terms.]

SAY:

- Imagine you are sharing an image you captured on a closed messaging platform like Snapchat or WhatsApp.
 - A “closed” messaging platform refers to a platform that uses encrypted communication. Encrypted communication means that a process called encryption scrambles the messages and turns them into incomprehensible chunks of data as soon as you press “send” on a message. From there, the message isn’t understandable until it reaches the receiver. [To learn more about encryption, please see the learning experience “[Public Wi-Fi.](#)”]

- While the image was shared on a closed messaging app, people can still reshare the image with others (for example, they can [save the image on their phone, take screenshots of the image, and / or show the image to others](#)).
- Let's say one of your friends takes a screenshot of the image you send to them and posts it onto a more "public" platform like Twitter. Then, a journalist finds your friend's screenshot and wants to find out who took the image.

[You can read the two questions below out to the whole group of participants, or ask participants to turn to the person sitting next to them to discuss the questions.]

ASK:

- How could the journalist find out that you are the original creator of the image?
- What if your friend's post featuring your image became popular, and 50 other people re-shared it? How could the journalist find out that you are the original creator of the image?

[The journalist could contact your friend and ask if he / she took the image. If the journalist has found multiple re-shared scrapes (versions) of the image, he / she may look at the date each scrape (version) was posted, piece them together chronologically, and try to contact the person who made the earliest post.]

SAY:

- Scrapes (versions) can become a challenge during breaking news events because information can spread very quickly, and it can be difficult to figure out who originally created the content and when it was created. On websites like YouTube, some people will download an original video of a news event and quickly re-upload it using a different username, in hopes of making money (First Draft). "You can sometimes see hundreds of [versions] of the same video in the hours after a breaking news event" (First Draft).
- When you first come across a piece of content, you cannot assume that you are looking at the original. Look for clues such as the following that can tell you whether the image or video is the original version:
 - Scrapes (versions) generally have a lower image or video quality compared to the original version. They can also have smaller file sizes or nonstandard dimensions (which indicates that the content may have been manipulated or changed from the original).
 - Look at the account of the person who is sharing the image or video. Have they shared other scrapes (versions) of breaking news events? That could mean that they may not be the original creators of the content.

- Does the image or video come from the account / website of an organization? Organizations “can sometimes reshare content from an individual eyewitness” (First Draft).
- Think critically. How likely is it that this person was at the event and is sharing the original video?

Assignment

SAY:

- Go online and try to find at least two scrapes (versions) of an image from a political, cultural, or sports news event, as well as the original image. Next, draw a timeline of the scrapes (versions) and original image, noting who created each, when they were created, and what platforms you noticed them on. Feel free to be creative as you design your timeline! Then, write a short paragraph answering the following questions:
 - What original image did you choose and, and why?
 - What do you think were the motivations behind the person / group of people who created the scrapes (versions)?
 - As you move along the timeline, do you see any trends? Are there ways that one scrape (version) drew inspiration from a previous one?
 - Do you notice that one scrape (version) has been spread over more platforms / websites than others? Why do you think this might be the case?

Discussion

SAY:

- Turn to the person next to you. Share the timeline you made, and explain why you chose the original image as your basis.

[Reconvene as a large group.]

ASK:

- What are some of the reasons people might choose to re-share content online?
- Think of other famous scrapes (versions) you have seen people share online. Are there instances when identifying a source is more / less important than others? [Determining the source of a scrape (version) that depicts a violent

protest is likely more important than the source of a scrape (version) of a musical concert or sporting event.]

SAY:

- In today's news climate, any image or video can be captured, altered, or shared by anyone with access to the Internet and a computer or mobile device. In some cases, the content in question can be seen by countless people and altered again and again in such a way that the original image is almost unrecognizable. One particular instance of this phenomenon can be seen when scrapes (versions) become popular memes.
- Consider this image of the "Selfie Kid" Ryan McKenna:

[Project the Super Bowl 2018 Halftime / Selfie Kid image, below, on a projection screen.]



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BezI20HF17m/>

SAY:

- Images of the Selfie Kid became viral after he took this photo with Justin Timberlake during the 2018 Super Bowl Halftime Show. Replicas of the Selfie Kid's original photo with Justin Timberlake, photos of the Selfie Kid taken by others, and screenshots of this image have been reshared rapidly online, sometimes without identifying who the Selfie Kid is or when / where the image was taken.
- Some of these scrapes (versions) have been turned into [popular memes that have been featured in major publications](#). However, these memes often require some knowledge of the Selfie Kid's original context. As a result, people who see a Selfie Kid meme in isolation may not fully understand it if they do not know who the Selfie Kid is, where he was, and who was performing at the show.

ASK:

- Think of some famous scrapes (versions) that have become memes. Let's check out a few examples! [Project the Ellen DeGeneres Academy Awards 2014 selfie (i.e., a photo that she has taken of herself (including others)), below, on a projection screen.]



Source:

https://twitter.com/TheEllenShow/status/440322224407314432/photo/1?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E440322224407314432&ref_url=http%3A%2F%2Fknowyourmeme.com%2Fmemes%2Fellen-degeneres-oscar-selfie

- Let's now take a look at three meme examples, based on the same 2014 Academy Awards selfie. [Project the three images (the Grumpy Cat meme, Kanye West meme, and Pizza meme), below, on a projection screen.]



Source: <https://twitter.com/realgrumpycat/status/440335332265848835?lang=en>



Source: <https://i.kym-cdn.com/photos/images/newsfeed/000/710/581/cdc.jpg>



Source: <https://annehorel.tumblr.com/post/78404454451/oscar-photobomb-pizza-selfie>

- There are many other examples available online.
 - [This](#) is a photo of a man named Muhammad Sarim Akhtar watching the 2019 Cricket World Cup Pakistan vs. Australia match. The original image was a still image from the live event, captured and uploaded as a screenshot by a Facebook user. Several memes of this image have circulated online, including [this one](#).
 - [This](#) is a photo taken in 2014 of a [large sinkhole in Kuala Lumpur](#) (Malaysia). Several memes of this image have spread online, including [this](#) and [this](#) one.
- Can you think of other scrapes (versions) that have become memes you really like?

ASK:

- Are you familiar with the original source of this meme? What about the original context?

SAY:

- Visual information, even more so than text, is designed to grab people's attention on social media. As a responsible news consumer, you can decide how best you want to engage with, share, or adapt content that you see your friends, family, and other people posting online.

ASK:

- Based on what you have learned about scrapes (versions) today, how will you respond to scrapes and memes you see in the future?