

# Misinformation, Disinformation, & "Fake News"



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A presentation by the Mucktracker Team



# Today's Lesson

**Objective:** identify different types of misleading information and examine their implications.

**Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.



## Connect

- What do you think when you hear the term “fake news”?
  - Do you think an unintentional lie can be as harmful or dangerous as a deliberate one? Why or why not?
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# Misinformation & Disinformation: Beyond “Fake News”

While the term “fake news” often comes up these days, there are competing uses of the term. These reflect different concerns with the content & delivery of news.

- Many use “fake news” to describe news that has inaccurate or unclear information that can confuse readers. Others use it to refer to news reported with a clear bias or perspective counter to one’s own. Still others use it to describe false information of any kind, even outside the professional news cycle.

In this lesson, we’ll use the lens of misinformation to disinformation to look at the spreading of any false or inaccurate information. No matter what you call it, we’ll give you some tips to stop its spread!





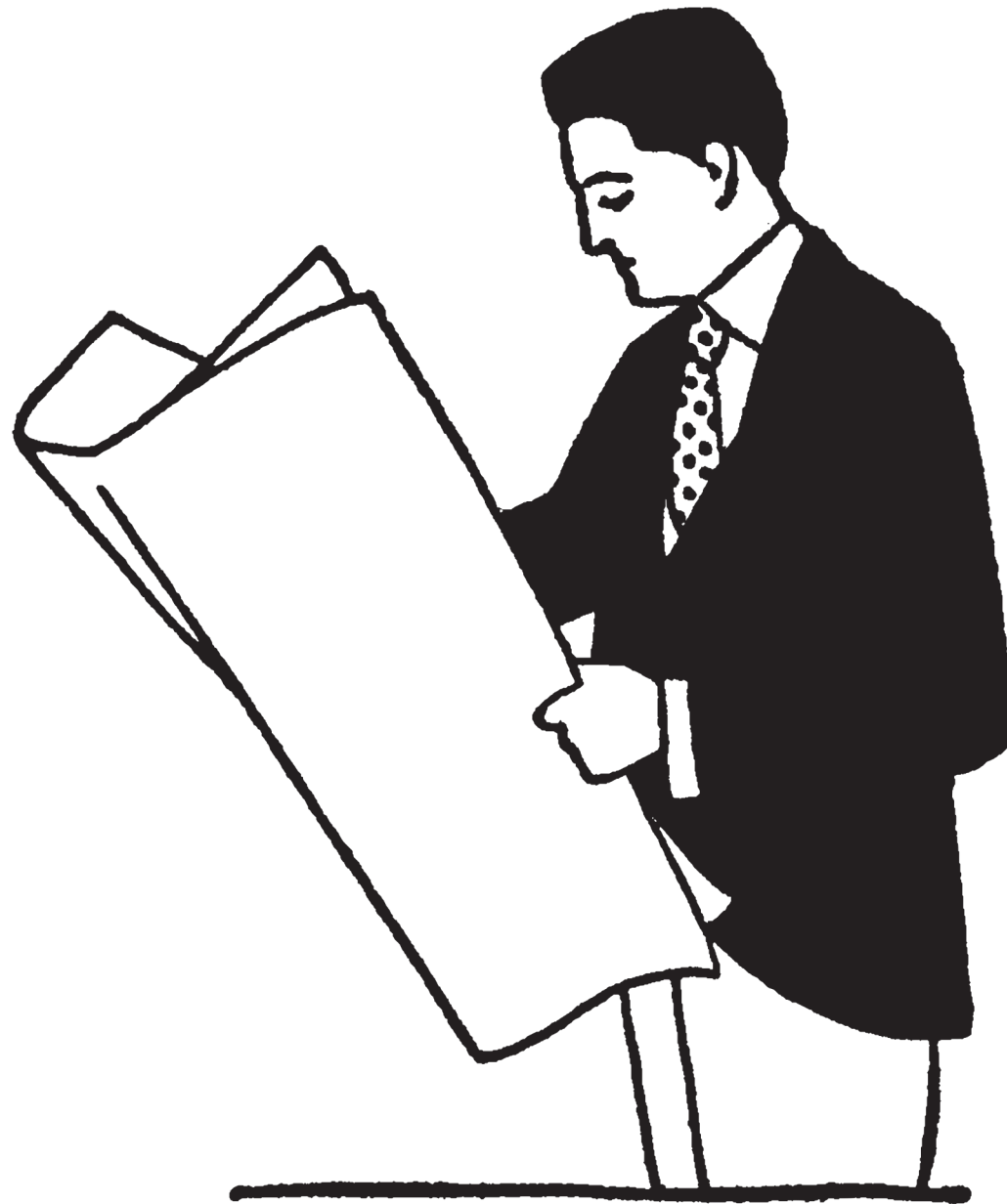
## Misleading Information in Newspaper History

Before we move on, we'll note that the journalistic issues we face today are not new.

Throughout history, journalism often valued things like influencing public opinion over accurate reporting.

Even when many news sources developed stronger professional standards, there were lower-quality, sometimes outright false news outlets. The practices of these outlets were called yellow journalism.

The popularity of yellow journalism stemmed from readers' willingness to pay for the news as a form of entertainment.



# Hoaxes



The press has sometimes participated in spreading hoaxes. Hoaxes are whole made-up stories designed to deceive.

Sometimes, news outlets are active participants in the hoax, but often they are as deceived as the readers. They may be following a story they believe is of public interest without realizing it is one that is made up.

A famous example was the supposed photograph of the Loch Ness Monster published by the Daily Mail in 1934. Although investigations in 1975 and 1993 directly exposed the photo as a hoax, many people still believe it to be genuine, and others casually and unwittingly spread the untrue story around.



## Reflect

What connection can you see between the journalism practices of the past and those of today?

Do you think the problems were greater back then or are they worse today? Why?



Today, inaccurate information that spreads is usually divided into misinformation and disinformation.

## Misinformation

describes any misleading, inaccurate, or false information that is shared. This can be completely unintentional.

## Disinformation

describes intentionally misleading information that has been created and spread deliberately to deceive people.



## Check for Understanding

Identify whether each of the following is an example of misinformation or disinformation:

- A doctored video of activist Emma Gonzalez ripping up the Constitution of the United States
- A story reporting on a candidate leading in a poll, but the story does not take into consideration a limited sample size or large margin of error.
- An editorial that attempts to persuade by presenting unproven allegations without evidence.





- Did you say that the first and third examples were disinformation and the second example was misinformation? If so, congrats!
- Now, we will go over some tips to help avoid misinformation in our daily lives.
- Remember that it is easy to fall for these types of information and it can happen to anyone, even a world leader as you will soon see!



## Tips for Good News Hygiene

- Be on the lookout for provocative language or imagery.
  - Shock value can be used to distract from key information.
- Consider the source. Is a particular agenda being pushed?
- Participate in “lateral reading” or fact checking by looking at other sources.
- Consider whether what you are reading is labeled news or opinion (opinion includes “analysis” or “commentary”).
  - If it's an opinion piece, remember that the writer is making an argument.
- **Pause** and step back before you read further or share.
  - Especially if you encounter something through an opinion piece or meme, seek out a more straightforward news source before forming your own opinion about it.



Look at the following examples and conduct a quick fact check through lateral reading.



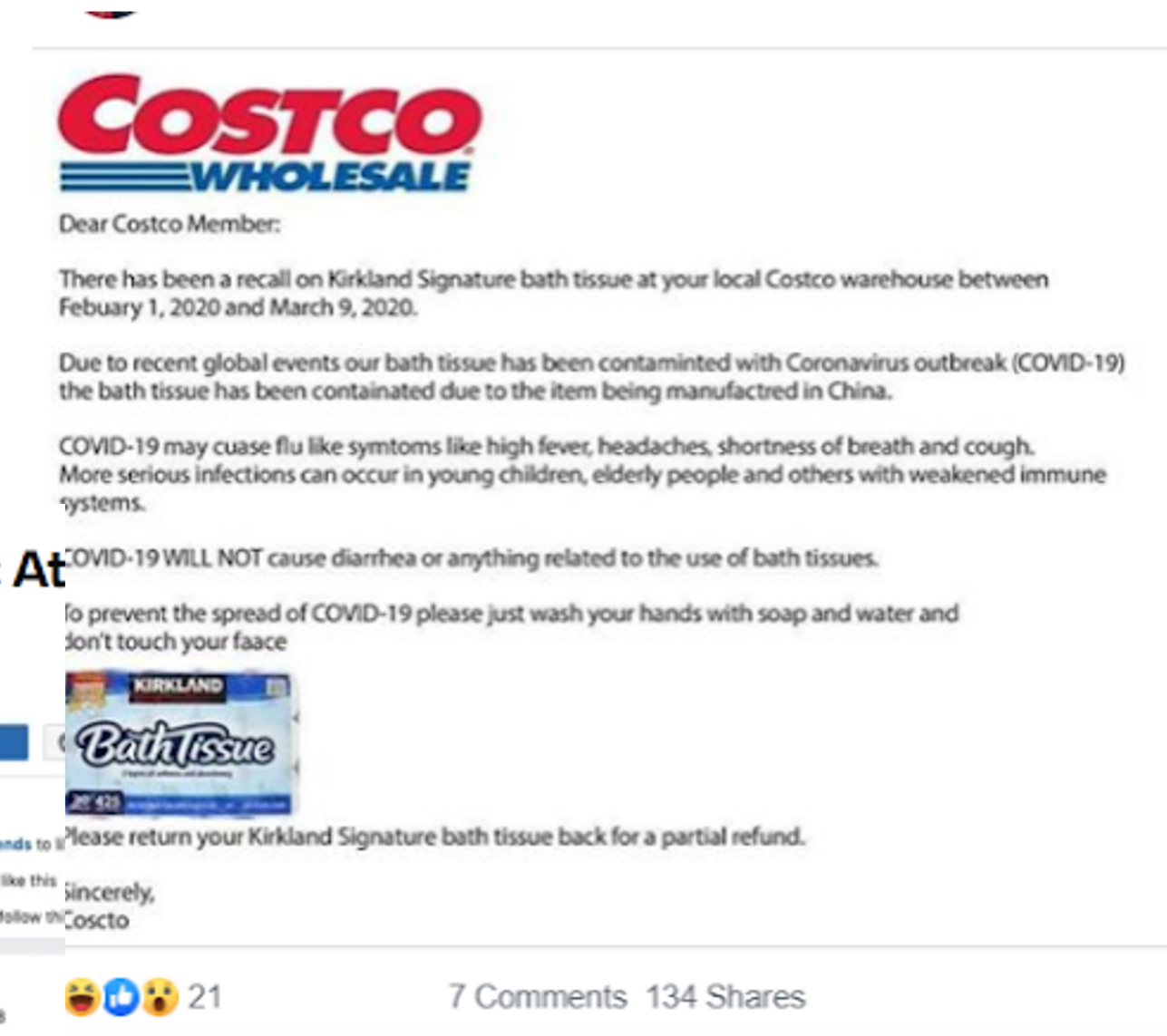
Macron Amazon Tweet

## 6. "BREAKING: Nancy Pelosi's Son Was Exec At Gas Company That Did Business In Ukraine"



Facebook

Pelosi's Son & Ukraine



Costco COVID-19  
Toilet Paper Shortage

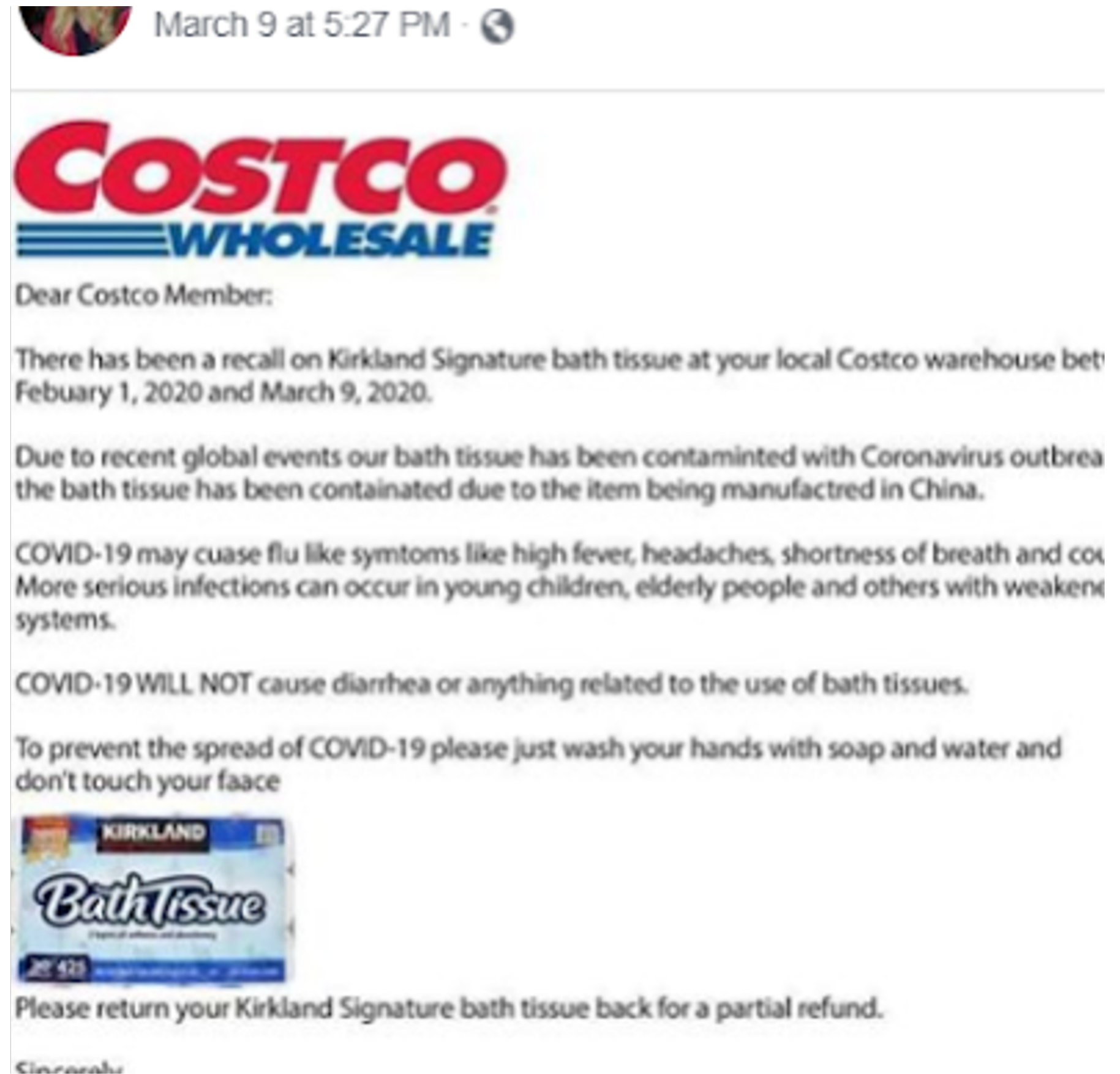


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- What do you think is the goal of the person who originally shared this?
- What is the impact?





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## 6. "BREAKING: Nancy Pelosi's Son Was Exec At Company That Did Business In Ukraine"



## Extension: Considering the Role of Algorithms in Spreading Misinformation



- Read the article "Radical ideas spread through social media. Are the algorithms to blame?" by Katherine J. Wu.
- Then, answer the following:
  - What role do algorithms play in spreading misinformation? Or disinformation?
  - Do you think more should be done to limit the impact of algorithms on people's information consumption? Why or why not?

# Wrap-Up



- Misinformation describes the spreading of any false or inaccurate information, including rumors, often unintentionally.
- Disinformation, on the other hand, describes the intentional and malicious creation and distribution of inaccurate or false information in order to mislead.
- Algorithms on the internet may also contribute to the spread of misinformation and disinformation.
- Fact checking is an important activity to limit the spread of misinformation and disinformation online.