

Reflection of the Process and Pedagogical Applications

My comic strip shares an example of fake news while also highlighting how fake news spreads and why it can be harmful. In the comic, a dog overhears the news that whale numbers have increased because of the lack of cruise ships. However, instead of understanding that the whales are simply more willing to enter the harbour, the dog mistakes the message to mean the whale population has increased. When talking with the bird, the dog shares the idea that whaling laws will change because of the increase in whales. By sharing this false information, the dog begins the spread of fake news, just as sharing sensationalized ideas on Twitter can cause fake news to go viral. Regardless of the dog's intentions, whether it was a case of misinformation or disinformation as defined by Black and Fullerton (2020), the sharing of the fake news led to serious consequences for the whale, who believed the pod needed to find a new home.

In producing the comic, I began with the idea of using animals I had previously photographed as my characters, including a bird to represent Twitter, the space where the fake news is originally shared. I then developed a story using those animals. To create the product itself, I took my old photographs, imported them into Procreate, and used the digital tools to draw outlines of the animals. I then pieced the drawings together in new ways to create the shots, zooming in to create close-ups as needed. After adding in colour to the frames, I exported the drawings to .jpeg files to be used in Comic Life. In Comic Life, I arranged the frames, imported the photo files, and applied the retro style. Finally, I added the dialogue and text.

This comic strip can be used in a variety of ways in my future classroom. First, it can be used as a text for learning about and critically discussing fake news. Students could be presented with questions that explore why it is fake news, how it is harmful, and the morality of both the

dog and the bird's actions in the sharing of the false information. This can then be extended into a deeper analysis of fake news more broadly. Second, this comic lends itself to a discussion on the inescapable connection between the actions of humans and their effect on the natural world and environment. In a middle years classroom, this comic could introduce a research project on endangered animals or habitats. In a senior years classroom, it could lead to a conversation about laws and regulations for the protection of animals, and larger concerns regarding sustainability. Finally, particularly in the ELA classroom, the comic strip can be used to teach literacies associated with comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels. This includes exploring questions such as: how do we read these texts (what order do we read the images), how do we "read" the images and symbols (such as the exclamation points above Eclipse's head), how do authors of these texts use different styles to convey mood or meaning? Similarly, this comic strip can be used as a model for students when creating their own comic strip and learning how to use and apply the conventions of comic strips. For example, students can discover the significance of the gutter which can be used intentionally as an absence of information, requiring the reader to participate and fill in that gap.

A particular benefit of this comic is that it could be used with any grade level. With the text being accessible and the characters being friendly animals, this comic could be appropriately included in an early or middle years classroom. At the same time, the possibility for deeper discussions that the comic alludes to makes it useful for a senior years classroom. With the increase in graphic novels, as well as the abundance of satirical and political comics, many of which are widely spread in newspapers and on the internet, it is meaningful to introduce students of any age to comic strips and fake news.

References

Black, J., & Fullerton, C. (2020). Digital deceit: Fake news, artificial intelligence, and censorship in educational research. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 8, 71-88. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.87007>