

LESSON PLAN

Media Literacy for the 2024 Provincial General Election in British Columbia

This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: MediaSmarts

LEVEL: Grade 9 to 12

This lesson was created by MediaSmarts for Elections BC.

This lesson package is designed to be modular, allowing teachers to choose activities that are most relevant to their students. The recommended sequence is as follows:

Minds On: Spotting Deepfakes (30 minutes): A “minds on” activity that introduces essential concepts of election-related misinformation, helps students retrieve prior knowledge, and shows the relevance of the topic.

One or more of the following, in any order:

- **Your Information Ecosystem** (45 minutes): In this activity, students analyze the quality of their information ecosystem and develop ways that they and the people who rely on them can improve it.
- **Recognizing Election Disinformation** (30 minutes): This activity introduces students to frequently encountered “tropes” of election-related disinformation and provides practice in recognizing them.
- **Digital Ad Targeting** (30-45 minutes): In this activity, students learn about how advertising on social networks is targeted based on users’ personal information, and investigate how that is used by political parties and interest groups.

Conclusion: Investigating Election Disinformation (60 minutes): Students are introduced to different strategies for verifying election-related information, including the idea of turning to a **best single source** (in this case, Elections BC). They then learn and practice engaging in active citizenship by **responding to election-related disinformation**.

MINDS ON: SPOTTING DEEPPFAKES

(30 MINUTES)

Big ideas/Key concepts: Students will demonstrate an understanding that:

1. photos can sometimes be inaccurate or misleading
2. images relating to politics or elections can influence our political views as well as how we vote
3. digital content can be verified by finding and verifying the original source and by checking against sources known to be reliable

Key questions:

- How can we tell if something is a deepfake?
- What's the best way to verify something we see online?
- How might deepfakes or other misleading claims affect elections?

Frequent misconceptions to correct: You can reliably tell if something is a deepfake or not just by examining it closely

Key vocabulary: Deepfake, reverse image search, cheapfake

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to project the slideshow [Spotting Deepfakes](#)

Note: This slideshow contains an embedded online video. Confirm before projecting it that you are able to play the video with audio on. If you are not, you can skip slide 9 and go through the handout *How to Tell What's True Online* instead: https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/tip-sheet/tipsheet_break_the_fake.pdf

Procedure

WHAT ARE DEEPPFAKES? (5 MINUTES)

Start by asking students if they have heard of “deepfakes” or know what they are. Briefly discuss their understanding of the topic, arriving at a shared definition that includes these key elements:

Deepfakes are...

- Images or videos
- Created with artificial intelligence tools (examples include Midjourney and Dall-E)
- Are presented as being real

Ask students if they have ever seen an image or video that they knew, or thought might be, a deepfake. What made them think that it was?

HOW WORRYING ARE DEEPPAKES? (5 MINUTES)

Now ask students to write a number from 1-4 down on a piece of paper. The number should indicate how worrying they think deepfakes are, with 1 being not at all worrying and 4 being extremely worrying.

- When they have written the number, have them write a sentence that starts with *I chose my number because ...* and give at least one reason why they chose the number.
- Ask every student who chose 1 to hold up their hand. If any did, ask some of them to share why they are not at all worried.
- Ask every student who chose 4 to hold up their hand. If any did, ask some of them to share why they are extremely worried.
- If no students chose either 1 or 4, repeat the process with those who chose 2 and 3.
- If some students chose 1 or 4, ask the remaining students whether what they've heard has changed their opinions: would they now choose 1 or 4 instead of 2 or 3? Why or why not?

SPOTTING DEEPPAKES (15 MINUTES)

Show **slides 1-9** of the *Spotting Deepfakes* slideshow. For each slide, ask students whether or not they think it is a deepfake and why. Provide only a few minutes of discussion time for each slide.

- Slides 2-3: This is a real image of Yoandri Hernandez Garrido, a Cuban man who was born with 12 fingers and 12 toes. Extra digits, or polydactyly, occurs in about one out of every 1,000 births.
- Slides 4-5: This photo is a deepfake made with the DALL-E 2 generative AI, based on the prompt "a National Geographic style profile photograph of a cheetah in Africa."

- Slides 6-7: This is a real photo of Mont St. Michel, a walled city in France. It sits on a “tidal island”: the land around it is marshy during low tide but flooded at high tide.
- Slides 8-9: The second photo is of Cruise posing with Keith Campbell, his stunt double on the first two “Mission Impossible” movies.

Point out to students that in some cases, such as the cheetah, there was no way to tell definitely that something was a deepfake. As well, some of the things we often look to as evidence that something is a deepfake, such as extra fingers, do sometimes occur in real life. As well, advances in AI mean that those will become less common.

1. Sometimes you can tell something is a deepfake just by looking at it, but often you can't.
2. Sometimes a real photo or video may look fake!

Now show **slide 10** and ask which of these photos students think is real. (Tell them not to give the answer if they have already seen these images.)

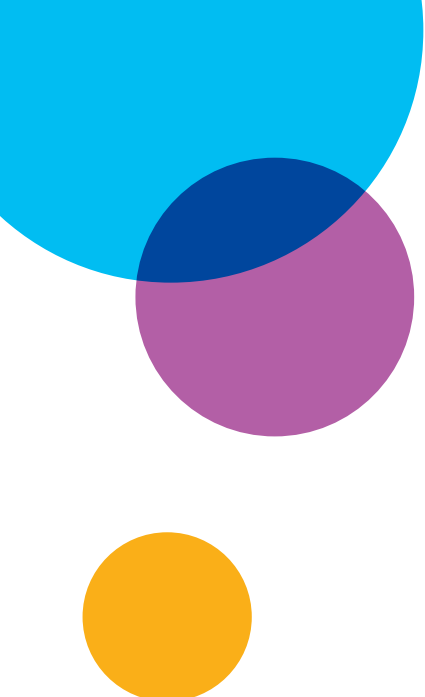
Why might they think the one on the left was real? Why might they think the one on the right was?

Now tell students that deepfakes are a good example of why we shouldn't try to verify what we see online by looking closely at it: unless you're a professional fact-checker, you will probably miss important clues – and think you see clues that aren't there, like Yoandri Garrido's extra fingers.

Show the video *Four Ways to Tell if Something is True Online* (embedded on **slide 11**) then ask students how they might apply those steps to verifying the photo in slide 10. (You may have to allow Powerpoint to access external media for the embedded video to play. If you have difficulty, use this alternate video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-O49KTrYBq>)

Show **slide 12** and explain that consulting a fact-checker, or using MediaSmarts' fact-checking search engine, shows that this image has been debunked.

Show **slides 13-14** and explain that using a reverse image search for the image on the left will show that it appeared in news outlets that are reliable sources of fashion information, such as Glamour magazine..



Show **slide 15** and explain that doing the same for the image on the right leads to articles telling you it was a deepfake. Before it had been exposed as a deepfake, a reverse image search only led to social network accounts sharing the photo - not to any reliable news sources.

Show **slides 16-17** and explain that searching the News tab on Google for “Rihanna Met Gala 2024” also leads to a story that debunks the image.

Point out to students that this is actually an example of a “cheapfake” - a fake image made *without* using AI - but it was still widely spread and believed.

REFLECTION: HOW MUCH SHOULD WE WORRY ABOUT DEEPFAKES? (5 MINUTES)

Have students go back to the number they chose earlier to indicate how worried they were about deepfakes. Now that they have learned more about them - and in particular, have learned a bit about how they might be used in politics - has that number changed for them? Why or why not?

This reflection can be done as homework, as a class discussion, or as an exit ticket, depending on your needs and the time available.

YOUR INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM (45 MINUTES)

Big ideas/Key concepts: Students will understand that:

1. We use many sources of information and news
2. Professional news sources gather their own news and have processes to make sure it's accurate
3. Many other news sources share and aggregate news
4. We have control over the health of our information ecosystems

Key questions

- What are the parts of our information ecosystems?
- What makes a healthy information ecosystem?
- How can we improve the quality of our information ecosystems?

Key vocabulary: Satire, news aggregator, ecosystem

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to distribute the following handouts:

1. *Information Audit*
2. *Family Information Audit*

Procedure

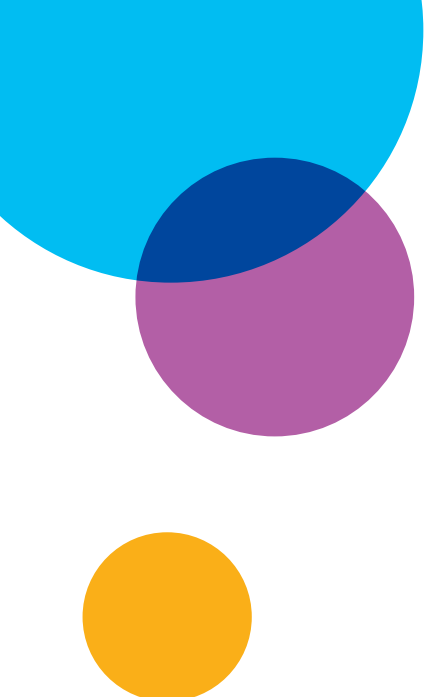
INFORMATION AUDIT (15 MINUTES)

Start by asking students:

What was the last thing you learned outside of school? Explain that it can be anything they didn't know before: What the weather was going to be, what your family is eating for dinner tonight, what new song all your friends were listening to.

Now ask them to consider: *Where* did you learn it?

Distribute the handout *Information Audit* and explain that we all get information from lots of different places. Go through the information sources across the top of the table:



Professional news: News outlets that do original reporting, have a commitment to accuracy and a process to make sure that what they publish is accurate before they publish it, and publish corrections if they make mistakes. This includes TV news broadcasts, radio news, print sources like newspapers or news magazines, and the websites of any of those. If you're not sure whether something is a professional news outlet, check to see if they have a Wikipedia page. If they do, see what it says about them: Do they have a good track record of publishing accurate news? Once you've used another source, like Wikipedia or a search engine, to find out that they are generally seen as reliable, you can see what they say about their process for providing accurate and objective news: look for something on the site like "News Principles" or "Code of Conduct."

Other news: Outlets that share news but don't do their own reporting, and may not have a process for making sure that what they share is accurate. This includes podcasts, YouTubers, news aggregators like MSN or Yahoo, and satirical news (note that there is a difference between sources like *The Daily Show*, which cover real news with a satirical take, and ones like *The Onion* and *The Beaverton*, which publish totally made-up news.)

Social media: Apps like Instagram, X, Snapchat, etc., as well as messaging apps like WhatsApp, where people might have shared news with you.

In person: Sometimes we get news from other people like friends or family members in person.

Next, go through the different types of news in the left-hand column:

Local news: Things about your community, like school news, street closures, weather, local events, etc.

Political news: News about municipal, provincial/territorial, national or international politics – elections, new laws being considered, things politicians said or did, etc.

Sports/entertainment news: Celebrities, athletes, sports scores, and news about music, movies, video games, etc.

Health/science news: New discoveries, health recommendations, astronomical events like eclipses, etc.

Once you're confident students understand both the news sources and news types, have them write as many examples of news sources they can

think of in each box – for instance, if they read a local news story in their local newspaper, have them write that newspaper’s name in the box where “Local News” and “Professional News” cross.

When students have finished the chart, have them fill in the three questions below:

1. If you can, list three things you learned from professional news
2. If you can, list three things you learned from other news sources
3. List three things you learned from social media

YOUR INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM (10 MINUTES)

Now ask:

1. How many were able to list three things they learned from professional news sources?
2. How many were able to list three things from other news sources?
3. How many could have listed more than three things they learned from social media?

Explain that most young Canadians are likely to say they heard about a news story because somebody shared it with them on social media or video sites such as TikTok or YouTube, and feel that news will “find them” if it’s important.

Because all of these news sources are connected, we can describe them as being part of an *information ecosystem*. In a physical ecosystem, if there is not enough good air, clean water, and sunlight, plants and animals won’t grow; as well, if there is pollution in the air or water, it will find its way into the plants and animals and eventually into us.

Now have students return to their *Information Audit* and ask:

1. Which sources are providing original news to other parts of the ecosystem?
2. Which sources can they be sure aren’t “polluted” with inaccurate or misleading information?
3. How much of their total information diet is made up of those types, compared to ones that rely on sharing news other sources collected or don’t take steps to avoid being “polluted”?



OTHER ECOSYSTEMS (10 MINUTES)

Next, distribute the handout *Family Information Audit* and have students complete it based on what they know about the information habits of someone in their close or extended family.

When they have finished, ask:

1. How similar or different was theirs to yours?
2. Do you think it is a healthier or less healthy ecosystem? Why?
3. What are some things you could learn from them, or vice versa, to improve your ecosystems?

REFLECTION: HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS? (10 MINUTES)

Have students complete an exit ticket or journal/blog entry reflecting on what they learned today. They should answer one of the following questions:

- What could I do to improve the health of my information ecosystem?
- What challenges might I (or my family members) face in improving my information ecosystem?
- How could I help my family members improve their information ecosystems?

RECOGNIZING ELECTION DISINFORMATION (30 MINUTES)

Learning Outcomes

Big ideas/Key concepts: Students will understand that:

- Our views about politics and elections can be influenced by disinformation
- Disinformation about politics and elections usually falls into recognizable tropes
- Disinformation about politics appeals to us more when it supports things we already believe

Key questions:

- What makes election disinformation believable?
- How might believing different forms of election disinformation affect our participation in democracy?

Key vocabulary: Trope, cliché, claim, absentee ballot, disinformation

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to distribute the following:

- *What Happens Next?*
- *Election Disinformation Tropes*

Review the following teacher backgrounders:

- *What Happens Next?: Teacher's Version*
- *Election Disinformation Tropes: Teacher's Version*

Procedure

INTRODUCING TROPES (10 MINUTES)

Distribute the activity sheet *What Happens Next?* and have students complete it. (If you prefer you can distribute it the previous class and

have students complete it for homework, or do the activity together as a whole-class exercise.)

Have students share their guesses about what happens next in each example.

Ask:

- How easy was it to guess what would happen next?
- Were some easier or harder to guess than others?
- How similar were different people's guesses?
- How many people have seen these things happen in media?

(Using the backgrounder *What Happens Next? Teacher's version* as a prompt if there are any that nobody was able to guess.)

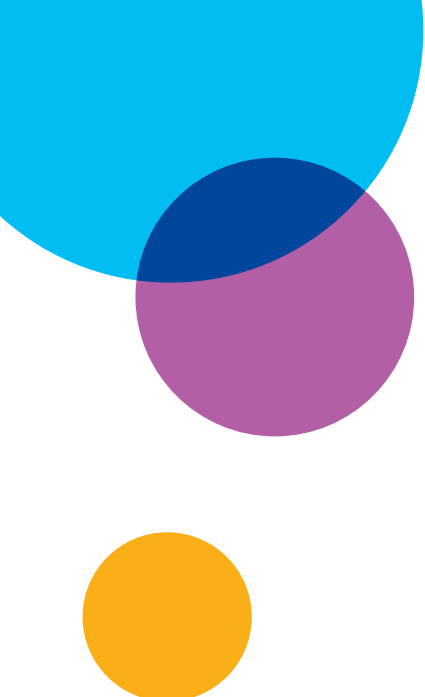
Now ask students if they know what these are examples of. If the term is not named by any students, explain that they are examples of *tropes*. Explain that tropes are sort of like “building blocks” of storytelling: events, characters, setting elements, and other things that are often used by media makers.

Ask students if they can give other examples of common *tropes*. Explain that while tropes can become annoying *clichés* if they are overused or used in uncreative ways, they can also be powerful tools for media makers. That's because they fit our sense of how stories and the world work (or *should* work) and also because they can mix the pleasure of the familiar (a trope we recognize) with the new (a new twist on it.)

TROPES IN ELECTION DISINFORMATION (20 MINUTES)

Now explain that researchers have found that while *mis- and disinformation* about elections and politics may appear as many different *claims*, these claims are usually examples of a small number of *tropes*.

If students are unfamiliar with the terms, explain that misinformation is false or misleading information that the person sharing it believes is true, while it's disinformation if the person sharing it knows it is untrue. However, people often believe that something is “basically” true even if they know the specific example they're sharing is untrue, so the distinction is not always that meaningful. In this lesson we use the term “disinformation” to mean both.



Distribute the activity sheet *Election Disinformation Tropes* and go through the definitions and examples with the class. You can either give students time to answer the questions on a separate page or document or use them as prompts for class discussion. Use the *Teacher's Version* to make sure students understand the definitions and examples.

Point out to students that the provinces and federal government *do* have specific rules about how to fill out ballots, how to submit absentee ballots, and so on, so not all “make your vote count” messages are wrong. It’s important, though, to verify them before you share or act on them.

Have students turn the activity sheet over and match the different claims to the tropes they are examples of. (Depending on time, you can have them do this individually or in pairs/groups.) Have students share their choices (Use the *Teacher's Version* as a reference.)

DIGITAL AD TARGETING (30-45 MINUTES)

Learning Outcomes

Big ideas/Key concepts: Students will understand that:

- Political advertisements are crafted and designed to communicate specific and targeted messages
- Organizations use personal information to target and influence our political opinions and ideologies
- Targeted advertisements rely on networks to discriminate between who sees specific messages

Key questions:

- How do political parties and interest groups target voters on social media?
- How might I be targeted by election or political ads?

Key vocabulary: Targeted advertising, micro-targeting

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to distribute the following handouts:

- *Issues Explained: Political Advertising Video Response*
- *Targeted Political Advertising Scavenger Hunt*

Ensure that you can access and show the video [*Issues Explained: Political Advertising*](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hwWXzCkxhI>

Ensure that students can access the [*Meta Ad Library Report for Canada*](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/report/?source=onboarding>

Procedure

INTRODUCING TARGETED ADVERTISING (10 MINUTES)

Start by asking students:

Have you ever seen an ad from a political party online, or an ad about any kind of political issue?

Do you think you see more or fewer ads like that than other people?

How do you think social networks and video sites decide whether or not to show you election ads, and which ones?

Distribute the activity sheet *Issues Explained: Political Advertising* and have students complete it while watching the <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hwWXzCkxhl> news clip by CPAC.

When students have finished, discuss the questions briefly using the *Teacher's Version* to ensure that students have the correct answers.

SITUATING TARGETED ADS IN CANADIAN POLITICS (15 MINUTES)

Now explain that in 2018, the federal government passed a new law that requires all online platforms that sell political advertising space to keep a public registry of all political advertisements displayed on their platform. (This was C-75, *An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act*.) This means that Canadians can see all political ads and who paid for them, even if they were not the ad's intended target.

Have students open the [Meta Ad Library Report webpage](#) and explain that since Meta owns both Facebook and Instagram, their detailed Ad Library is a great resource for answering important questions like "Who is spending how much money to connect with voters in Canada?" and "How might I be targeted by election or political ads?"

(If you wish, you can do this demonstration yourself on a digital projector or whiteboard.)

Direct students to select "Canada" from the dropdown menu on the top left.

Now direct students to select the "Last day" option (the first tab under the "spending tracker" header), and scroll down to "Spending by location."

Ask: Where does British Columbia fall on the list of ad spending compared to other provinces/territories?

Have students click on *British Columbia* to see a list of the top advertisers in the province. (It will appear on the right margin of the page.)

Ask: How many are political parties or candidates? How many are not political parties, but seem to be related to political issues?

Now have students click on the listing for political party or candidate, or one related to a political issue. This will bring them to a page where they can see all of the ads that they are currently running,

Have students scroll through the page to see the different ads, then select one by clicking “See Summary Details.”

Ask:

- Who paid for this ad?
- How many times was this ad on a screen?
- Who (gender, age, province) saw this ad? Who didn't?

TARGETED POLITICAL AD SCAVENGER HUNT (15 MINUTES)

Distribute the activity sheet *Targeted Political Advertising Scavenger Hunt*.

Explain that students are going to take part in a digital scavenger hunt, searching Meta's Ad Library for clues in order to answer the questions on the activity sheet.

Ask students to explore the tables displayed on the Meta Ad Library Report webpage and:

- compare spending over the last week, the last month, and the last three months
- note where British Columbia falls on the list of ad spending by location
- identify what happens when they click an advertiser or location/province.

(You may choose to assign this as homework.)

REFLECTION: HOW DOES AD TARGETING AFFECT US? (5 MINUTES)

Have students complete an exit ticket or journal/blog entry reflecting on what they learned today. Students can answer one of the following questions:

- Are you surprised by who is spending money to target voters in your province? Why or why not?
- How does digital ad targeting impact your understanding of political advertising?
- How might political ads on social media influence public opinion?

INVESTIGATING ELECTION DISINFORMATION (60 MINUTES)

Learning Outcomes

Big ideas/Key concepts: Students will understand that:

- There is sometimes a single best source for specific information
- The best source for information on the electoral process is the relevant electoral authority

Key questions:

- What methods work best for verifying information about provincial elections in B.C.?
- How can we correct disinformation if we see other people sharing it?

Key vocabulary: Site operator, ballot tabulator, advance voting, future voter.

Preparation and Materials

Prepare to show the following videos:

- *Correcting Disinformation* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4JAe7WDHgo>

Prepare to distribute the handout *Investigating Election Disinformation Claims*

Procedure

BEST SOURCES (10 MINUTES)

Start by asking students how they would get answers to the following questions:

- Will it rain tomorrow?
- When is the next bus coming? (skip this one if there are no buses in your community)

- How much does a Big Mac cost?
- What are you having for dinner tonight?

Point out that in each case there is a best source of information: Environment Canada for the weather, the local transit authority for the bus, McDonald's for the Big Mac, and whoever is making your dinner.

Explain that a “best” source is one that has expertise or authority on the topic and an interest in getting you accurate information. They are not always 100% right, because things sometimes change before they have a chance to update their information, but they give you the most accurate information they can and update when they get better information.

Ask students to brainstorm other examples of topics where there might be one or a small number of “best” and write examples on a blackboard, chart paper or digital whiteboard. In each case, ask students why this should be considered a “best” source, and only list it if there is consensus that this is correct.

Now explain that if you know there is a “best” source on a topic, going straight there can be more efficient than using the steps learned in the *Spotting Deepfakes* activity.

INVESTIGATING ELECTION DISINFORMATION CLAIMS (20 MINUTES)

Now ask: What would be the “best” source to find out if a claim that we’ve seen about a provincial election or the voting process is true?

Prompting questions:

- How could we find out if the voting place we had planned to go to was closed?
- How could we tell if the source that shared that information was reliable?
- What might be the best source of information about the provincial elections process in BC?

Distribute the activity sheet *Investigating Election Disinformation Claims* and divide the class into pairs or groups. Have them use computers or personal devices to research the claims using the two techniques: browsing or searching within the site, and using the “site:” operator on Google.

When students have finished, go through the claims with the whole class and check student answers using *Investigating Election Disinformation Claims: Teacher Version*.

If students completed the *Recognizing Election Disinformation* activity, ask them to identify which trope the three false claims are examples of:

- Ballot tabulators can be hacked through Wi-Fi: *The Other Side Cheats*
- You can vote by text: *Make Your Vote Count*
- Absentee voting is less secure than in-person voting: *The System is Rigged*

Have students correct any incorrect answers in their activity sheets.

RESULTS AND REFLECTION (15 MINUTES)

Have each group share their findings.

Have the class discuss:

- Which approach (searching within the website or using the “site” operator) seemed to get better results?
- Were some claims easier to research with one approach or the other?
- How would you identify a subject where there is likely to be one best source, such as provincial elections?
- What would be the best source on provincial elections?

RESPONDING TO MISINFORMATION (15 MINUTES)

Tell students that while they won't be able to vote until they're 18 (although they can, as they've learned, join the List of Future Voters if they're 16 or 17) there is an important thing they can do to make politics and elections better: respond to mis- or dis-information when they see it.

Show students the video *Correcting Disinformation* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4JAe7WDHgo> and then distribute the handout *Correcting Disinformation*. Go through the list of false claims they debunked earlier and ask students which correction strategy they think would be most effective for each. (This can be done as an exit ticket or a journal/blog entry, as there is no definitive right answer.)



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

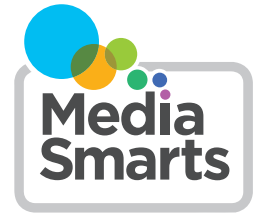
What happens next?

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Imagine that you see the following things happen in a movie, TV show, video game, et cetera. Write down what you think is going to happen next.

- Someone says “I absolutely, positively will never do” something. The scene then cuts to...
- A person has just finished paying for the car of their dreams when their friend asks for a ride. Then...
- Someone is told something by a teacher or parent, and replies “When will I ever need to know this?” Later on...
- A worker in a supermarket has just finished setting up an elaborate display. Just then...
- Two young people hate each other when they first meet. But later...
- After escaping from a dangerous situation, a person says “At least there weren’t any snakes.” Later on...
- At the end of a very difficult video game level, you find an apparently useless item. It later turns out...
- An orphan grows up in a small town, not believing their parents were anything special. They later discover that...
- Two people have a conversation that could easily be misunderstood if anyone overheard it. Later, it turns out...
- A person’s (dead or missing) parent left them something that seems unimportant, like an old book. They later learn that...

How easy was it to guess what would happen next?
Were some easier to guess than others?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Information Audit

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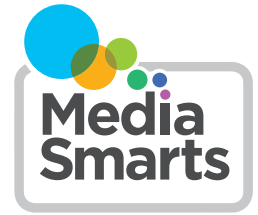
Pick one day in the past week that was a fairly typical one for you in terms of your news and information habits. Using the table below, record all the places you learned different types of news. (Don't limit yourself to English-language sources.)

	Professional News (TV, radio, print, online news with a good track record and a process for accurate and objective reporting)	Other News (podcasts, blogs, satirical news, YouTubers, news aggregators)	Social Media (social media apps, texting and messaging)	In Person
Local News	<i>e.g. My local newspaper</i>			
Political News		<i>e.g. A political podcast</i>		
Sports/ Entertainment News			<i>e.g. Memes about the new Star Wars movie</i>	
Health/Science News				<i>e.g. My friend said there was an earthquake</i>

If you can, list three things you learned from professional news:

List three things you learned from social media:

If you can, list three things you learned from other news sources:



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Family Information Audit

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Think of someone in your close or extended family. (Siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.) What do you know about where they get their news? (Don't limit yourself to English-language sources.)

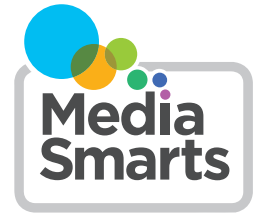
	Professional News (TV, radio, print, online news with a good track record and a process for accurate and objective reporting)	Other News (podcasts, blogs, satirical news, YouTubers, news aggregators)	Social Media (social media apps, texting and messaging)	In Person
Local News				
Political News				
Sports/ Entertainment News				
Health/Science News				

MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

How similar or different is their information ecosystem to yours?

What are some things you could learn from them, or vice versa, to improve your ecosystems?

Is it healthier or less healthy than yours? Why?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Election Disinformation Tropes

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Here are three of the most common *tropes* of election disinformation that researchers have found online.

THE OTHER SIDE CHEATS

People who spread disinformation about elections and politics often claim that their opponents are cheating in some way.

Here's a specific *claim* that's an example: "Check the voter registration records for the election that Party A won. How many of those people were eligible to vote?"

- Why might people respond to this *trope*?
- Why might people believe this *claim*?
- What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

THE SYSTEM IS RIGGED

These claims suggest that the whole electoral system is rigged in favour of one party (or against a particular party.)

Here's a specific *claim* that's an example: "I heard they found a bunch of ballots with Candidate X's name already filled in."

- Why might people respond to this *trope*?
- Why might people believe this *claim*?
- What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT

These claims present themselves as making it easier for you to vote, or helping you make sure that your vote is counted. These may sometimes really be meant to help, but if they're not accurate they can do real harm.

Here's a specific *claim* that's an example: "Did you know that you can vote by text? Just send the candidate's last name to 555-202-4895."

- Why might people respond to this *trope*?
- Why might people believe this *claim*?
- What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

Now match the specific claims below to the tropes they are examples of.

CLAIM:

TROPE:

“A bunch of ballots with Candidate X’s name marked were found in a ditch.”

“The power is out at our voting place. You’ll have to go to a different one.”

“This photo clearly shows that Candidate Y had an earpiece on during the debate, so that people could help with their answers.”

“Make sure to pay off all your parking tickets before the election. They won’t let you vote if you have any that are unpaid.”

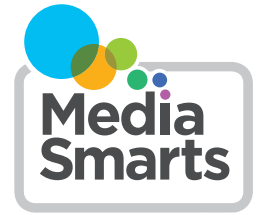
“Party A went to a retirement home and had all the people there fill out absentee votes for Candidate Y.”

“Election officials will give you a red marker if you’re voting for Party A, so they know not to count your ballot.”

The other side cheats

The system is rigged

Make your vote count



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

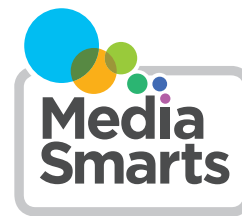
Issues Explained: Political Advertising: Video Response

.....

Instructions: Before you begin watching the CPAC segment on targeted advertising, take a moment to review the questions below. As you watch the video, keep these questions in mind and jot down your thoughts.

1. What are some of the categories in which political advertisers can target people?
3. Which social networks have chosen not to allow targeted political ads? Which ones have?

2. What do websites have to disclose about targeted political ads?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Targeted Political Advertising Scavenger Hunt

.....

Instructions: Please access Meta’s Ad Library Report by clicking [here](#). PLEASE NOTE: Political advertisers on social media platforms are required to disclose who paid for the ad. On the “Spending by advertiser” table, the “Page name” is the name of the Facebook page associated with the advertisement. The “Disclaimer” column lists the organization that paid for the advertisement.

Scroll down to the “Advertising data by date range” section and select the “Last 7 Days” option (the second tab under the heading). Then scroll down to “Spending by location” and select British Columbia.

Next, answer the following questions:

1. Which organization spent the most on political advertisements in the last seven days? How much have they spent on the ads they have published?

2. How much are advertisers spending to reach voters in your province? Who are the top three spenders in your province?

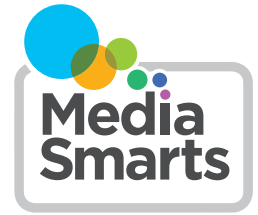
Please choose two of the organizations listed in Meta’s Ad Library Report and access their Ad Library page (this can be done by clicking the Page name).

- Who are political organizations in Canada targeting with specific messaging? Choose two ads, one by each of the organizations you selected. When you have chosen your ad, click “See summary/ad details” and compare the following data.

Who paid for the ad: Ad description:	Who paid for the ad: Ad description:
How much was spent on this ad?	How much was spent on this ad?
# of impressions (how many times was this ad shown?)	# of impressions (how many times was this ad shown?)
Most targeted locations in Canada: 1. 2.	Most targeted locations in Canada: 1. 2.
Which age group saw the ad most: Age: % of audience:	Most targeted age group(s): Age: % of audience:
Which gender saw the ad most: Gender: %:	Which gender saw the ad most: Gender: %:
Based on the information above, what inferences can you make about the ad’s target audience? Who is left out of this conversation?	Based on the information above, what inferences can you make about the ad’s target audience? Who is left out of this conversation?

<p>Compare your results.</p> <p>What similarities and differences do you observe in their messaging and targeting strategies?</p> <p>Consider the tone. Are they positive, negative, or neutral? How might the tone impact public perception?</p>	<p>Compare your results.</p> <p>What similarities and differences do you observe in their messaging and targeting strategies?</p> <p>Consider the tone. Are they positive, negative, or neutral? How might the tone impact public perception?</p>
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4. Consider the top spenders, in your province or nationwide, listed in the Meta Ad Library Report and identify an organization that is not a political party. What political ad is this organization running? Why might they be interested in publishing political ads?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Investigating Election Disinformation Claims

.....

INSTRUCTIONS

For this activity, you will research claims about provincial elections and voting procedures.

You will do your research either by browsing or searching within the Elections BC website, or searching it with Google. To search within a single website from Google, add "site:" and then the part of the web address *after* "http" or "https", like this:



Do not put a space between "site:" and the web address.

Mark here whether you are browsing or searching inside the site, or whether you are searching it from Google:

Now find out whether these claims are true or not:

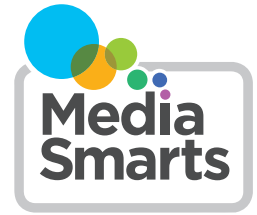
1. If a voter can't go to a voting place to vote in person, then they can't vote in the provincial election. T / F
How do you know?

2. Ballot tabulators can be hacked through Wi-Fi. T / F
How do you know?

3. You can register for the List of Future Voters at 16. T / F
How do you know?

4. You can vote by text. T / F
How do you know?

5. You can vote by telephone. T / F
How do you know?
6. You can vote at any voting place. T / F
How do you know?
7. Voting by mail is less secure than in-person voting. T / F
How do you know?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

What happens next? (Teacher's Version)

.....

Imagine that you see the following things happen in a movie, TV show, video game, et cetera. Write down what you think is going to happen next.

- Someone says "I absolutely, positively will never do" something. The scene then cuts to **them doing it.**
- A person has just finished paying for the car of their dreams when their friend asks for a ride. Then **their friend wrecks the car.**
- Someone is told something by a teacher or parent, and replies "When will I ever need to know this?" Later on, **they find themselves in a situation where they need to know it.**
- A worker in a supermarket has just finished setting up an elaborate display. Just then **someone knocks it over.**
- Two young people hate each other when they first met. But later, **they fall in love.**
- After escaping from a dangerous situation, a person says "At least there weren't any snakes." Later on, **they encounter snakes.**
- At the end of a very difficult video game level, you find an apparently useless item. It later turns out **to be the thing you need to do something important (like beating the final boss or unlocking the final level.)**
- An orphan grows up in a small town, not believing their parents were anything special. They later discover that **their parents were special in some way (royalty, aliens, et cetera.)**
- Two people have a conversation that could easily be misunderstood if anyone overheard it. Later, it turns out **someone overheard and misunderstood it.**
- A person's (dead or missing) parent left them something that seems unimportant, like an old book. They later learn that **it contains important information about what happened to them.**

How easy was it to guess what would happen next? Were some easier to guess than others?



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Election Disinformation Tropes (Teacher’s Version)

.....

THE OTHER SIDE CHEATS

Claim: “Check the voter registration records for the election that Party A won. How many of those people were eligible to vote?”

Why might people respond to this trope?

Nobody likes to lose! It makes us feel better if we think the other side beat us unfairly.

What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

If we think the other side is cheating, it gives us an excuse to cheat too.

THE SYSTEM IS RIGGED

Claim: “I heard they found a bunch of ballots with Candidate X’s name already filled in.”

Why might people respond to this trope?

People often feel like the system is rigged against them (even if their side won.) As well, if the system is rigged by the other side, it makes them seem more villainous and you more victimized.

What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

If we believe that the system is rigged, we’re less likely to participate in politics in ways like voting.

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT

These claims present themselves as making it easier for you to vote, or helping you make sure that your vote is counted. These may sometimes really be meant to help, but if they’re not accurate they can do real harm.

Here’s a specific *claim* that’s an example: “Did you know that you can vote by text? Just send the candidate’s last name to 555-202-4895.”

Why might people respond to this trope?

Voting is important, but you do need to make time for it. We want to make sure our vote counts but the idea that we could do it from home or work is appealing. While there are many ways to vote in a provincial election, it can be hard for some people to find the time.

What harm could this trope do if people believe it?

If the information is meant to mislead you – like this example – it could mean your vote doesn’t count. But even if it’s innocent, saying that you need to take extra steps to make sure your vote counts could make voting seem like too much work. (Research has even found that people are less likely to vote if news articles include photos of long line-ups at voting places!)

TROPE/CLAIM MATCHES:

The Other Side Cheats:

“This photo clearly shows that Candidate Y had an earpiece on during the debate, so that people could help with their answers.”

“Party A went to a retirement home and had all the people there fill out absentee votes for Candidate Y.”

The System is Rigged:

“A bunch of ballots with Candidate X’s name marked were found in a ditch.”

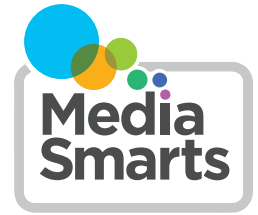
(This is an example of this trope because it could only have been done after votes were cast.)

“Election officials will give you a red marker if you’re voting for Party A, so they know not to count your ballot.”

Make Your Vote Count:

“The power is out at our voting place. You’ll have to go to a different one.”

“Make sure to pay off all your parking tickets before the election. They won’t let you vote if you have any that are unpaid.”



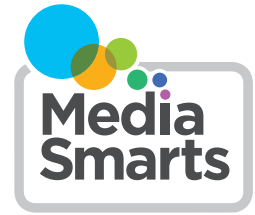
MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Issue explained: Political advertising: Video Response (Teacher's Version)

.....

Instructions: Before you begin watching the CPAC segment on targeted advertising, take a moment to review the questions below. As you watch the video, keep these questions in mind and jot down your thoughts.

1. What are some of the categories in which political advertisers can target people?
 - Age, gender, political views, interests
2. What do websites have to disclose about targeted political ads?
 - A list of politically motivated ads linked to candidates, samples of the ads, and what ads they are running
3. Which social networks have chosen not to allow targeted political ads? Which ones have?
 - Google is not running ads that feature a political party or its leader. Facebook and Twitter (now X) do allow targeted political ads.



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Targeted Political Advertising Scavenger Hunt (Teacher’s Version)

Instructions: Please access Meta’s Ad Library Report by clicking [here](#). PLEASE NOTE: Political advertisers on social media platforms are required to disclose who paid for the ad. On the “Spending by advertiser” table, the “Page name” is the name of the Facebook page associated with the advertisement. The “Disclaimer” column lists the organization that paid for the advertisement.

Scroll down to the “Advertising data by date range” section and select the “Last 7 Days” option (the second tab under the heading). Then scroll down to “Spending by location” and select British Columbia.

Next, answer the following questions:

1. Which organization spent the most on political advertisements in the last seven days? How much have they spent on the ads they have published?

Answers will vary according to when this lesson is taught. Answers can be found by using the “Spending by advertiser” table. Ensure data is sorted by “Amount spent” in order to best answer this question.

2. How much are advertisers spending to reach voters in your province? Who are the top three spenders in your province?

Answers will vary according to when this lesson is taught. How much advertisers are spending can be found under the “Spending by location” table. The top three spenders can be found by clicking on the province.

3. Who are political organizations in Canada targeting with specific messaging? Choose two ads, one by each of the organizations you selected. When you have chosen your ad, click “See summary/ad details” and compare the following data.

Answers will vary depending on which organizations and advertisements students choose. Answers can be found by choosing an advertisement, clicking “See summary details’ or “See ad details” (Depending on the advertisement), and scrolling down. This example uses [this](#) ad.

Who paid for the ad: <i>Quality Canadian Milk</i>	Who paid for the ad:
Ad description: <i>Makes a pop culture reference to the newly released Dune 2 movie, claiming if a character had had milk, staying hydrated would not have been difficult.</i>	Ad description:

Please choose two of the organizations listed in Meta’s Ad Library Report and access their Ad Library page (this can be done by clicking the Page name).

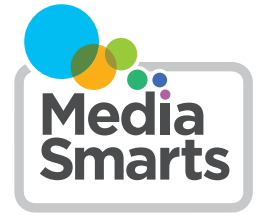
How much was spent on this ad? <i>\$500-\$599 CAD (at time of publication - it may be higher when students do the activity)</i>	How much was spent on this ad?
# of impressions (how many times was this ad shown?) <i>250-300K (at time of publication - it may be higher when students do the activity)</i>	# of impressions (how many times was this ad shown?)
Most targeted locations in Canada: <i>1. Ontario (34%) 2. Quebec (22%)</i>	Most targeted locations in Canada: <i>1. 2.</i>
Which age group saw the ad most: <i>Age: 25-34 % of audience: 54%</i>	Most targeted age group(s): <i>Age: % of audience:</i>
Which gender saw the ad most: <i>Gender: Men %: 70%</i>	Which gender saw the ad most: <i>Gender: %:</i>
Based on the information above, what inferences can you make about the ad's target audience? Who is left out of this conversation? <i>Men 18-34 were likely specifically targeted. Women 18-34 were targeted much less (29% compared to 70%) and all genders 35+ are left out. 77% of the targeted audience are in 4 provinces (Ontario, Quebec, BC, and Alberta)</i>	Based on the information above, what inferences can you make about the ad's target audience? Who is left out of this conversation?

Compare your results. What similarities and differences do you observe in their messaging and targeting strategies? <i>N/A for this example.</i> Consider the tone. Are they positive, negative, or neutral? How might the tone impact public perception? <i>Pop culture reference may be relatable to Canadian population. Quality Canadian Milk clearly believe this is more relevant to younger audiences.</i>	Compare your results. What similarities and differences do you observe in their messaging and targeting strategies? Consider the tone. Are they positive, negative, or neutral? How might the tone impact public perception?
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4. Consider the top spenders, in your province or nationwide, listed in the Meta Ad Library Report and identify an organization that is not a political party. What political ad is this organization running? Why might they be interested in publishing political ads?

Answers will vary according to when this lesson is taught. Answer can be found using the Meta Ad Library Report by examining the Page names under "Spending by advertiser" or by clicking a province under "Spending by location."

Clicking onto the "Quality Canadian Milk" Facebook page, and then to the website listed in the About section reveals that this is another name for the Dairy Farmers of Canada, a non-profit group funded and run by Canadian dairy farmers. Dairy is a supply managed sector in Canada, with government-controlled production, pricing, and import.



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Investigating Election Disinformation Claims (Teacher’s Version)

.....

1. If a voter can’t go to a voting place to vote in person, then they can’t vote in the provincial election.

False

How do you know? If a voter cannot vote in person on the day of the election, they can vote by mail or at an advance poll or they might qualify for assisted telephone voting.

https://elections.bc.ca/docs/8008790_Guide-to-Voting-and-Counting.pdf

2. Ballot tabulators can be hacked through Wi-Fi.

False

How do you know? Tabulators are never connected to the Internet: https://elections.bc.ca/docs/8008790_Guide-to-Voting-and-Counting.pdf

3. You can register for the List of Future voters to vote at 16.

True

How do you know? 16- and 17-year-olds can register as future voters so that they will be automatically registered for the Provincial Voters List when they turn 18: <https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/register-to-vote/>

4. You can vote by text.

False

How do you know? Voting by text is not one of the options listed at <https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/ways-to-vote/> and a search for “vote by text” does not return any results.

5. You can vote by telephone.

True

How do you know? Some registered voters, including those with a disability that prevents them from voting in person, are receiving care in a hospital, or are a deployed member of the military, can vote by telephone: https://elections.bc.ca/docs/8008790_Guide-to-Voting-and-Counting.pdf

6. You can vote at any voting place.

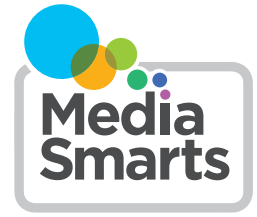
True

How do you know? B.C. has a “vote anywhere” model, meaning you may vote at any voting place: <https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/ways-to-vote/>

7. Voting by mail is less secure than in-person voting

False

How do you know? Voters must apply for their own voting package, which is then mailed directly to them. They must sign a declaration confirming their eligibility to vote and verify their identity by providing a shared secret (their birthdate). Upon receipt by Elections BC, there is further screening to ensure voter eligibility, and the voter is struck off the voters list. Vote-by-mail ballots are also put into a secrecy sleeve prior to going into the return envelopes.



MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Glossary

Absentee ballot: a ballot that is required to be placed in a certification envelope prior to depositing in the ballot box. For instance, ballots collected by mobile teams, some mail-in ballots and ballots from some absentee opportunities at voting places. Also known as special ballots at the federal level.

Advance voting: in-person voting that is done at an advance voting opportunity before Final Voting Day. Not all advance voting places are open every day of the advance voting period

Ballot tabulator: a machine used to count paper ballots. Tabulators also tell election officials if a ballot cannot be read, so voters have the chance to correct it immediately

Cheapfake: a fake image made *without* using AI, such as with photo-editing software or just by changing the context (e.g. claiming that a photo of the mess left behind a rock concert is actually from an environmental protest)

Claim: something that people assert is true. An example of a claim in the context of elections is “I heard they found a bunch of ballots with Candidate X’s name already filled in”

Cliché: a *trope* (see below) that has become annoying because it has been overused or used in unimaginative ways

Deepfake: an image or video created with artificial intelligence tools that is presented as being real

Disinformation/misinformation: misinformation is false or misleading information that the person sharing it believes is true, while it’s disinformation if the person sharing it knows it is untrue

Ecosystem: a complex system where the different parts affect and influence one another. Our *information ecosystem* includes all of the different sources of information we use, including online and offline media, friends, family, et cetera

Future voter: someone who is 16 or 17 years old, who will be eligible to vote (i.e. a resident of British Columbia and a Canadian citizen) when they turn 18, and who has put their name on the List of Future Voters. Future voters will automatically be registered to vote on their 18th birthday

Micro-targeting: aiming ads at very specific groups (for instance, women in British Columbia ages 18-24)

News aggregator: a platform such as MSN or Yahoo that does not report original news but reprints news stories from other sources

Reverse image search: a method of finding the other places an image has appeared, using tools like Google or Tineye

Satire: something that makes a social or political point through humour. There are two kinds of *satirical news*: outlets such as *The Daily Show*, which cover real news with a satirical take, and ones like *The Onion* and *The Beaverton*, which publish totally made-up news

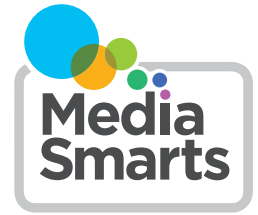
Site operator: a tool for using a search engine to search within a specific site. To do this, add the word “site:” and then the web address to the search, e.g. “advance voting site:elections.bc.ca” (note the colon and no space between “site” and the web address)

Targeted advertising: advertising that is displayed or delivered based on users’ personal information

Trope: the “building blocks” of storytelling: events, characters, setting elements, and other things that are often used by media makers. “Couple who hate each other and then fall in love” is an example of a trope, as is “the villain’s secluded lair”

TEACHER BACKGROUNDER

MEDIA LITERACY FOR THE 2024 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA



Related Resources

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MediaSmarts: <https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources>

Elections BC: Election Integrity: <https://elections.bc.ca/2024-provincial-election/election-integrity/>