

LESSON PLAN

DECODING DISTORTION



English



South Africa



Memory Culture



12-18 years



50-60 min

LESSON PLAN

Decoding Distortion



Time

50 minutes to 1 hour

Target group

Middle to High school (Grades 7-12)

South African National Curriculum (CAPS)

OBJECTIVES

1. Recognition of signs of distortion and historical inaccuracy
2. Development of media literacy skills around sources, especially online and short-form videos
3. Increased awareness of Holocaust and World War II distortion online
4. Empowerment to use own historical knowledge to develop critical thinking skills
5. Development of close watching analytical skills

Short-form video platforms are excellent resources for both learners and teachers. However, they also host content that distorts and denies the Holocaust in a range of ways. Holocaust distortion and denial are not only dangerous in themselves – they are closely linked to the spread of contemporary antisemitism and other forms of hatred. Misinformation and disinformation of this kind are prevalent across these platforms and extend well beyond the Holocaust. It is therefore increasingly important to develop media literacy and critical thinking skills, and to empower learners to use their own knowledge to recognise and interrogate this content when they encounter it.

Lesson Plan

Opening

 10 min

- Start activity with little context: show learners the first video clip of 'Churchill' speaking
- Ask learners if they think the video really is of Churchill speaking. Allow for discussion and do not give away the answer.
- After the short discussion tell the learners that the video is fake.

Main Activity

 35-40 min

- Show the video again (If you are using the link or allowing them to watch it on their own devices, it is only the first 19.15 seconds of the linked video – the one on the SHOAH STORIES platform is already cut to the correct length). Allow them to watch it multiple times. In small groups, ask them to write down 3 to 5 signs that indicate to them that the video is fake and distorting history. Ask them to draw on their knowledge of the Holocaust and World War II as well as more general media literacy. At least one answer must reference the Holocaust or World War II. They must make note of how they know it is inaccurate or misleading. (15 minutes)
- Show the second video (JHGC TikTok). Ask them to discuss in their groups whether they identified the same signs or different ones, and why they think that is. (5 minutes)
- Ask each group to feedback to the larger group, presenting one of their signs that the video is fake and distorting history, as well as whether they had similar signs to the second video and why or why not. (15-20 minutes)

Closing

 5-10 min

- Teacher provides resources for research, for example the Shoah Stories platform, websites, books, articles, documentaries (the CTHGC can provide list of recommended sources if needed).
- Ask the learners to reflect on the activity individually. They can feed this back to their groups or the class.
- Guiding questions:
 - What specific features of the Churchill video made it convincing at first glance?
 - Has this activity changed how you think about content you've seen or even shared before?
 - If you saw a video like this on your own feed, what would you do?

Thoughtful answers might include:

- *Not sharing or engaging with the content*
- *Reporting or flagging the video on the platform*
- *Fact-checking before drawing conclusions*

- *Speaking to a trusted adult or educator*
- Answers that could spark a discussion:*
- *Learners who say they would simply scroll past: this is an opportunity to question whether ignoring distortion is a neutral act, or whether it has consequences*
 - *Learners who say they would engage in the comments to correct it: this is an opportunity to have a brief discussion on whether this amplifies or counters the content. This is because the more engagement a post gets, negative or positive, the more it is pushed by the algorithm.*

LINKS: SHORT FORM VIDEO

1. Video of 'Churchill' from Forgotten History (only use first 19.15 seconds):
https://www.tiktok.com/@_forgottenhistory/video/6960633399862185222
2. JHGC TikTok breaking down the signs of distortion:
https://www.tiktok.com/@jhgccentre/video/7330668757582449926?is_from_web_bapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7512391690675930630