

Lateral Reading

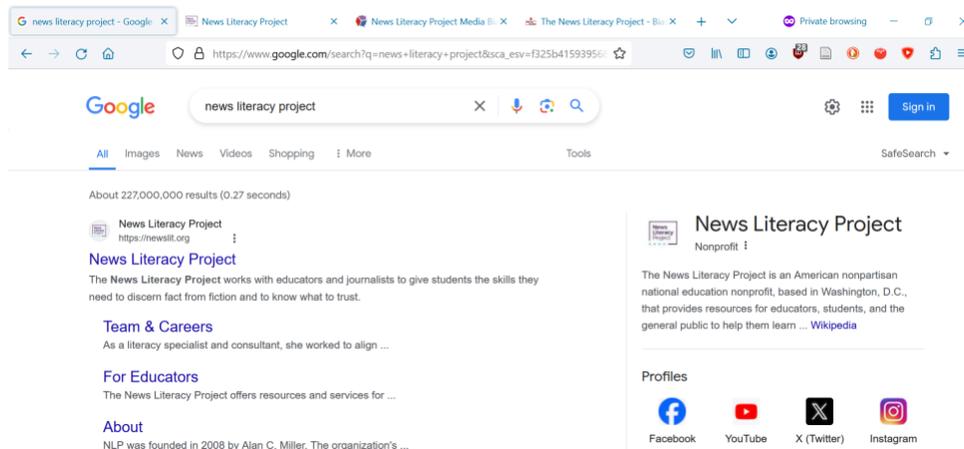
We live in a time where there is an overwhelming amount of information available online. In the past, news and opinion were presented separately in the news and on television, but today, most people receive their news from social media, where the opinions and facts are presented together as the “truth” in a subjective way. As a result, it can be difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. Anyone can post information online, and they can spin facts and truths in the way they want the truth to be perceived. When you search websites, listen to podcasts, or watch videos to learn more about particular topics, the results you see and consume will be a combination of unbiased and biased sources. This handout will introduce you to the concept of lateral reading, a technique that fact-checkers use for checking the validity of a source.

Vertical Reading vs. Lateral Reading

Vertical reading is when we read from top to bottom. While this is the way we’ve been taught to read books and websites at school, when we do so, we take the information presented to us at face value. It can be dangerous to take information at face value. Anyone can create a .org website to share their opinions with others, and an organization that spreads hate and misinformation can even hide their ulterior motives by wording their mission statement in a misleading way.

Lateral Reading

Lateral reading helps to solve this issue by having us not read from top to bottom. To do lateral reading, you open tabs in your web browser to figure out what the goals of the creator or organization are, and you laterally move left and right between these tabs to check if the source is biased. Here is an example of lateral reading for the website for the [News Literacy Project](https://www.news literacy project.org/) organization. Multiple tabs are opened, and fact-checking websites are cross-referenced to determine the validity of this organization.



One way to tell if a source is biased or not is to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the source spinning the truth to create information that they want the reader to believe?
- Is it reporting the truth in an unbiased way that allows the reader, listener, or viewer to decide how to feel or think about the information presented?
- If this is about a group of people, is this framing this group of people in a positive or negative way? How would this group of people be hurt if they were framed in this way? Are there other groups that are portrayed in a positive light that benefit from this framing of the truth?
- What does this framing of the truth tell us about what the authors want the reader to believe about the group they are portraying in a negative way? How do they want the reader to think about this group or to treat them? How do they justify their argument?

You can check websites that debunk misinformation or report on the amount of media bias a website has, such as [Politifact](#), [FactCheck.org](#), [Allsides](#), [Washington Post Fact Checker](#), [Snopes](#), [Reuters Fact Check](#), and [Media Bias Fact Check](#).

Fact-Checking Online Personalities

It is also important to remember that most people receive news from social media, which may include opinions from internet personalities who give their opinions on things they may not be qualified to give an expert opinion on. It can be difficult to spot when they are oversimplifying a complex hot-button topic while they are trying to convince you to choose a side. Researching why these individuals are taking a certain stance and double-checking their opinions against what other news sources and experts are saying can help you to understand multiple viewpoints. That way, you can make your mind up about whether or not this individual is representing the truth in a way that furthers a political agenda and plays on their insecurities, or if their stance reflects the complexity of the topic and is grounded in facts. It can be helpful to check if they have a recurring pattern of spreading misinformation. The word “grifter” has been increasingly used to describe internet personalities who sell products or ideas in a dishonest manner. You can use this keyword in your search to check the legitimacy of an internet personality.

Here are some search terms you can use:

- For online personalities: fraud, grifter
- For organizations: bias, Wikipedia, fact check

Beyond this, the [News Literacy Project](#) recommends that we ask these questions:

- Who funds or sponsors the site where the original piece was published? What do other authoritative sources have to say about that site?
- When you do a general search on the topic, are the initial results from fact-checking organizations?
- Have questions been raised about other articles the author has written?
- Does what you’re finding elsewhere contradict the original piece?
- Are credible news outlets reporting on (or perhaps more importantly, *not* reporting on) what you’re reading?

Activity 1: Check for Bias

Take a look at the following snippets from these websites as well as the website URL. Use lateral reading to figure out if the organization or speaker is credible. Samples one and two deal with a court ruling in Alabama where embryos are considered living beings, so the destruction of embryos that are frozen in labs can be considered the destruction of minors. Samples three and four deal with vaccines and immigration, respectively. Try to spot how the tones differ and how the authors express their opinions on their topics.

Sample 1: In a victory for life, the court held that unborn children created through in vitro fertilization are children and therefore protected under Alabama law.

Are embryos that have been created using in vitro fertilization (IVF) children worthy of protection under the law? Does this also include embryos that remain cryogenically frozen? What legal recourse do parents have when their stored embryos are negligently destroyed?

Such questions were raised in an Alabama case called *LePage v. Center for Reproductive Medicine*.

In the case, three couples, who had already become parents through IVF, sued an IVF clinic because the clinic was left unlocked and vulnerable to an intruder, tragically resulting in the deaths of their unborn children. The clinic claimed that the frozen embryos were not children because they were not yet placed in a womb.

In a victory for life and the rights of parents, the Alabama Supreme Court has held that all unborn children created through assisted reproductive technologies like IVF are children and therefore protected under Alabama's wrongful death statute.

But how did this case come about? And what implications does it have for the protection of life?

~Burke, Denise, "In IVF Case, Alabama Supreme Court Protects Life from Conception," Alliance Defending Freedom, March 4, 2024. <https://adflegal.org/>

Sample 2: The Alabama Supreme Court has grossly overstepped its role by classifying frozen embryos, single-celled fertilized eggs, as children.

*The Alabama Supreme Court earlier this week ruled that frozen embryos are children under state law. In *LePage v. Mobile Infirmary Clinic, Inc.*, the Court highlighted that "the Wrongful Death of A Minor Act applies on its face to all unborn children, without limitation." Below is a statement by the ACLU of Alabama in response to this decision:*

"One in six people worldwide are impacted by infertility and need in-vitro fertilization (IVF) as an option. The Alabama Supreme Court has grossly overstepped its role by classifying frozen embryos, single-celled fertilized eggs, as children. Justices have crossed a critical boundary to assign personhood to something created in a lab that exists outside of a human body. This ruling has terrifying implications for people in Alabama who are planning to have children and

for the fertility clinics that provide necessary services. This ruling endangers the fertility clinics in Alabama that provide IVF, those that have embryos stored, and the future of family planning in our state. Furthermore, this ruling, along with Alabama's strict ban on abortions, means for many, it is the state, not the person, who can decide whether they can become pregnant.

"Several justices voiced concerns about the opinion and invited the Legislature to fix the problem, including Justice Mendheim who wrote: 'Ultimately, it is the Legislature that possesses the constitutional authority and responsibility to be the final arbiter concerning whether a frozen embryo is protected by the laws of this state. Without such guidance, I fear that there could be unfortunate consequences stemming from today's decision that no one intends.'

"The ACLU of Alabama encourages the Legislature to follow the Alabama Supreme Court's directive and to pass legislation this session that protects fertility care in the state and ensures that families have options."

~ "Alabama Court's Extreme Ruling Puts IVF Treatments At-Risk," American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Alabama, February 20, 2024.

<https://www.aclualabama.org/en/news/alabama-courts-extreme-ruling-puts-ivf-treatments-risk>

Sample 3:

The safety profile of Wuhan coronavirus (Covid-19) "vaccines" seems to be widely dependent upon the batch from which a given injection comes. Some batches are exceptionally toxic, a new review has found, while others are slightly less toxic.

London-based researcher Craig Paardekooper figured this all out via data he collected from the government-run Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). He learned that "one in 200 of the [covid vaccine] batches are highly toxic," while the vast majority of them are not as toxic, at least in the shorter term.

"In fact, 70 percent of the batches for the vaccine-only produce one adverse reaction report in total," Paardekooper writes, adding that "80 percent of the vaccine batches only produce one or two adverse reaction reports."

Upon closer look, Paardekooper discovered that certain anomaly batches "produced thousands of times the number of adverse reactions." These batches stand out from the vast majority of other batches in that one caused 1,012 adverse reactions, another caused 1,394 adverse reactions, and another caused 4,911 adverse reactions.

The people unfortunate enough to have gotten jabbed from one of the really toxic batches are now either dead or seriously injured, with little, if any, chance at recovering.

To put this all into perspective, Paardekooper found that just four percent of Pfizer's covid jab lots accounted for all of the death reports associated with that mRNA injection, while five percent of Moderna's accounted for all death reports associated with that mRNA injection.

The other 96 percent and 95 percent of the two companies' batches, respectively, were orders of magnitude safer than the extremely lethal batches in question. And we know from the data that these highly toxic batches were disseminated across multiple states.

For Pfizer, just 2.9 percent of all covid jab lots were distributed to more than 12 different states, and were associated with 96.5 percent of all deaths, 95.5 percent of all hospitalizations, and 94.7 percent of all adverse event reports linked to that particular brand of jab.

Comparatively, 97.1 percent of the remaining Pfizer lots were distributed to fewer than 12 states and were associated with just 3.5 percent of all product death reports, 4.5 percent of all hospitalizations, and 5.3 percent of all adverse event reports.

To help people better understand the situation and to evaluate the data for themselves, Paardekooper set up a website of his own called HowBadIsMyBatch.com that contains a tutorial explaining how anyone can replicate his findings using relevant data from VAERS.

Retired pharmaceutical industry executive Alexandra Latypova did just that after connecting with Paardekooper directly, using a team of researchers with experience in clinical trials, data analysis, statistics, pharmaceutical industry regulations, manufacturing, and research and development to further analyze the figures.

Latypova uploaded a 20-minute video highlighting the disparities between covid jab lots and pointing to the importance of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) laws that are "designed to ensure safety and consistency of pharmaceutical products which must be produced in large quantities to very exacting standards of purity, stability, consistency, etc."

"Breaches of these practices have historically resulted in tragic cases of adulterated, tainted, or poisoned drug products which resulted in loss of life and severe injuries," she further wrote in an email correspondence.

"The failure to comply (with these practices) ... shall render such drug to be adulterated,' and that is a pretty significant crime to sell adulterated products."

"This is intentional, premeditated mass murder," added attorney Reiner Fuellmich about the matter. "There's absolutely no doubt about it because nothing else makes any sense."

~Huff, Ethan. "VACCINE ROULETTE: Some vaccine batches far more toxic than others, analysts find," Natural News, May 16, 2023. <https://www.naturalnews.com/2023-05-16-some-vaccine-batches-more-toxic-analysis.html>

Sample 4:

A major U.S. food corporation is retreating to one of the ugliest anti-borders tropes in the book to justify replacing American workers with foreign nationals.

Tyson Foods, Inc., a multinational corporation based in the U.S, recently shuttered a pork processing factory in Iowa, leading to the loss of 1,200 American jobs. Shortly after, Tyson announced plans to hire tens of thousands of illegal aliens. The food giant already employs roughly 42,000 foreign nationals, and a Tyson human resources rep stated earlier this month that “We would like to employ another 42,000 if we could find them,” and they are trying hard to find them. Tyson has been offering \$16.50 per hour wages and free access to immigration lawyers to foreign nationals who have resettled in New York. The company’s explanation for its desire to hire tens of thousands of illegal aliens is that they are “very, very loyal” workers, according to the same human resources rep.

Another term for “loyal” in this case might be “exploitable.” While American workers are likely to demand good pay and decent working conditions, migrant workers are likely to be much more desperate and much less demanding. This allows major corporations to take advantage of migrants at the expense of American jobs and treasure. Tyson is far from the only or the worst offender when it comes to this, but they are the latest example of how the U.S. asylum system is being abused as a labor-importation system.

The New York Times published an extensive report last year on the exploitation of migrant children, writing: “In town after town, children scrub dishes late at night. They run milking machines in Vermont and deliver meals in New York City. They harvest coffee and build lava rock walls around vacation homes in Hawaii. Girls as young as 13 wash hotel sheets in Virginia.”

To be clear, there is no evidence that Tyson is flouting child labor laws, but they are certainly profiting off the U.S. immigration system at the expense of American workers. They are also denigrating the country which has allowed them to attain so much success, by implying that foreign workers are more loyal and harder-working than American workers. The trope that foreign nationals have a stronger work ethic and are willing to do jobs Americans won’t do is a foundational myth of the anti-borders movement.

In 2019, a Koch Foods’ plant in Mississippi, employing hundreds of illegal aliens, was raided by federal immigration authorities. Days later, roughly 150 local residents attended a job fair seeking employment at the company, laying waste to the pernicious lazy American trope. In reality, there are no jobs corporations can’t find Americans to do if they’re willing to give them a living wage and decent working conditions.

The notion that there are demanding jobs that Americans aren’t willing to do is not based in reality, but a convenient excuse for corporations to continue to import cheap foreign labor at the expense of Americans. Speaking of loyalty, where is the loyalty from Tyson Foods’ executives towards the country that has allowed them to thrive?

The same suits at Tyson Foods who have lived the American dream are now publicly denigrating the work ethic of Americans trying to live out theirs. It should be no surprise that Tyson’s conduct has led to an intense backlash, including a campaign to boycott the company. Earlier this month, a multimillion-dollar fund manager announced that he was pulling all investments from Tyson Foods. Naturally, the company has retreated into damage control, releasing a statement saying they are “strongly opposed to illegal immigration” and have “led the way in participating

in the two major government programs to help employers combat unlawful employment, E-Verify and the Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers (IMAGE) program.”

As always, it’s important to watch what these companies do, not what they say. Tyson recently held a job fair for illegal aliens in New York City, and has partnered with a pro-refugee nonprofit to hire thousands of foreign-born workers. By firing Americans and hiring foreign nationals in rapid succession, Tyson is showing exactly where its loyalty lies, and it’s not with the citizens of the country they were founded and continue to operate in.

The Tyson Foods saga is the latest example of how American workers continue to be victimized by mass immigration. Both the government and corporations have a responsibility to put Americans first, but unfortunately, continue to put them last.

~Davis, William, "Tyson Foods Fires U.S. Workers, Exploits Illegal Aliens for Profits," Immigration Reform Law Institute, March 28, 2024. <https://irli.org/tyson-foods-fires-u-s-workers-exploits-illegal-aliens-for-profits/>

Sample Analysis for Activity

1. **Sample 1:** This source lacks credibility. Searching “Alliance Defending Freedom” leads to results that report that this organization wants to get rid of the right for women to have access to birth control and abortions, get rid of legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, and bring Christian practices into schools. Although IVF is not directly related to abortions, IVF is a process that can help expectant parents to conceive. By framing this ruling as a “victory for life,” the author indicates that limiting the control that parents have over when they conceive is related to their goal to limit women’s rights to have control over their own bodies.
 - a. Resources
 - i. Alliance Defending Freedom: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/alliance-defending-freedom>
 - ii. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF): <https://glaad.org/gap/alliance-defending-freedom-adf/>
 - iii. Alliance Defending Freedom: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_Defending_Freedom
 - iv. ICYMI: Alliance Defending Freedom Exposed for its Extremism, Organized Long Game to Dismantle Equality and Oppress Diversity in the U.S.: <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/icymi-alliance-defending-freedom-exposed-for-its-extremism-organized-long-game-to-dismantle-equality-and-oppress-diversity-in-the-u-s>
2. **Sample 2:** This source has credibility. Searching the “American Civil Liberties Union” reveals that this organization is a human rights organization that litigates and lobbies to protect the human rights of individuals in the United States, and it specifically supports reproductive rights. This is in line with the way the ACLU of Alabama describes the implications of this court ruling about how it will impact family planning in Alabama and provides suggestions for Alabama legislation to take to protect fertility care.
 - a. American Civil Liberties Union: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_Liberties_Union

- b. ACLU: <https://www.allsides.com/news-source/american-civil-liberties-union>
 - c. Explainer: Alabama's highest court ruled frozen embryos are people. What is next?: <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/alabamas-highest-court-ruled-frozen-embryos-are-people-what-is-next-2024-02-23/>
 - d. Alabama's Bizarre Ruling Isn't Really About the Embryos | Opinion: <https://www.newsweek.com/alabamas-bizarre-ruling-isnt-really-about-embryos-opinion-1872618>
 - e. Warnings of the impact of fertility treatments in Alabama rush in after frozen embryo ruling: <https://apnews.com/article/alabama-supreme-court-from-embryos-161390f0758b04a7638e2ddea20df7ca>
3. **Sample 3:** Searching “Natural News” reveals that this is a far-right website that spreads misinformation about conspiracy theories such as anti-vaccination claims. The sources he uses (Global Research, Alexandra Latypova, and Craig Paardekooper) have all been debunked.
- a. Facebook Removes Conspiracy Site Natural News: <https://www.allsides.com/news/2019-06-10-1624/facebook-removes-conspiracy-site-natural-news>
 - b. Natural News: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_News
 - c. COVID-19 Vaccines Tested in Clinical Trials, Despite Bogus Social Media Claims: <https://www.factcheck.org/2023/01/scicheck-covid-19-vaccines-tested-in-clinical-trials-despite-strong-bogus-social-media-claims-strong/>
 - d. Canadian professor's website helps Russia spread disinformation, says U.S. State Department: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/russian-disinformation-global-research-website-1.5767208>
 - e. The Shady Site That Shows Anti-Vaxxers Will Believe Anything: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/craig-paardekoopers-shady-site-shows-covid-anti-vaxxers-will-believe-anything>
4. **Sample 4:** Searching this Tyson Foods news event and the “Immigration Reform Law Institute” reveal that this is a false claim made by an anti-immigration group.
- a. Anti-Immigrant: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/anti-immigrant>
 - b. Immigration Reform Law Institute needs to check the facts: <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/media/307224-immigration-reform-law-institute-needs-to-check-the-facts/>
 - c. Politifact: <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2024/mar/21/sean-duffy/no-tyson-foods-didnt-announce-it-would-hire-52000/>
 - d. Associated Press News: <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-misinformation-tyson-migrants-employment-6eadd701916d4326469148e01bba9008>
 - e. Fact Check: Tyson Foods did not say it wants to hire 42,000 ‘illegal’ workers: <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/tyson-foods-did-not-say-it-wants-hire-42000-illegal-workers-2024-03-25/>

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find,” Natural News, May 16, 2023.

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