Comm Skills Virtual Learning

Debate I &
Adv Competitive Debate

Debunking Conspiracy Theories

May 04, 2020

Lesson: ==May 4, 2020==

Objective/Learning Target:
Use logical thought to debunk conspiracy theories.

Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

Think of a time when you heard someone tell you something you just didn't believe was true.
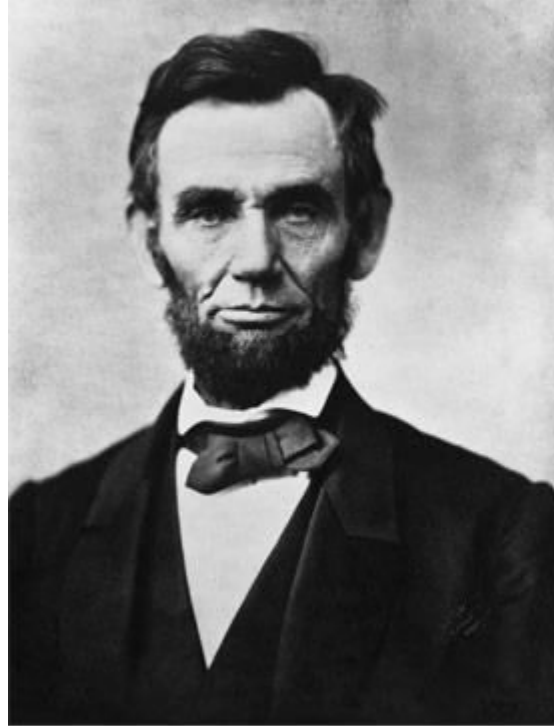
How did you know?

"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it."

Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

Think of a time when you heard someone tell you something you thought may or may not be true.

What did you do to test that person's accuracy? Anything?

"Don't believe everything you read on the Internet just because there's a picture with a quote next to it."

—Abraham Lincoln

WeKnowMemes

Lesson/Activity

In this video, Baloney Detection Kit, Dr. Shermer explains 10 questions to ask when confronting possible conspiracy theories or claims.

BALONEY DETECTION KIT

Practice

Choose a conspiracy theory you are either familiar with, or one that can be found [here](#).

Look for flaws in this theory, using Shermer's 10 questions, that are listed on the next slide. For each question, how does the answer point toward the theory's invalidity.

10 questions from Shermer:

1. *How reliable is the source of the claim?*
2. *Does this source often make similar claims?*
3. *Have the claims been verified by another source?*
4. *How does the claim fit with what we know about how the world works?*
5. *Has anyone gone out of the way to disprove the claim, or has only supportive evidence been sought?*
6. *Does the preponderance of evidence point to the claimant's conclusion or to a different one?*
7. *Is the claimant employing the accepted rules of reason and tools of research, or have these been abandoned in favor of others that lead to the desired conclusion?*
8. *Is the claimant providing an explanation for the observed phenomena or merely denying the existing explanation?*
9. *If the claimant proffers a new explanation, does it account for as many phenomena as the old explanation did?*
10. *Do the claimant's personal beliefs and biases drive the conclusions, or vice versa?*

Additional Resources