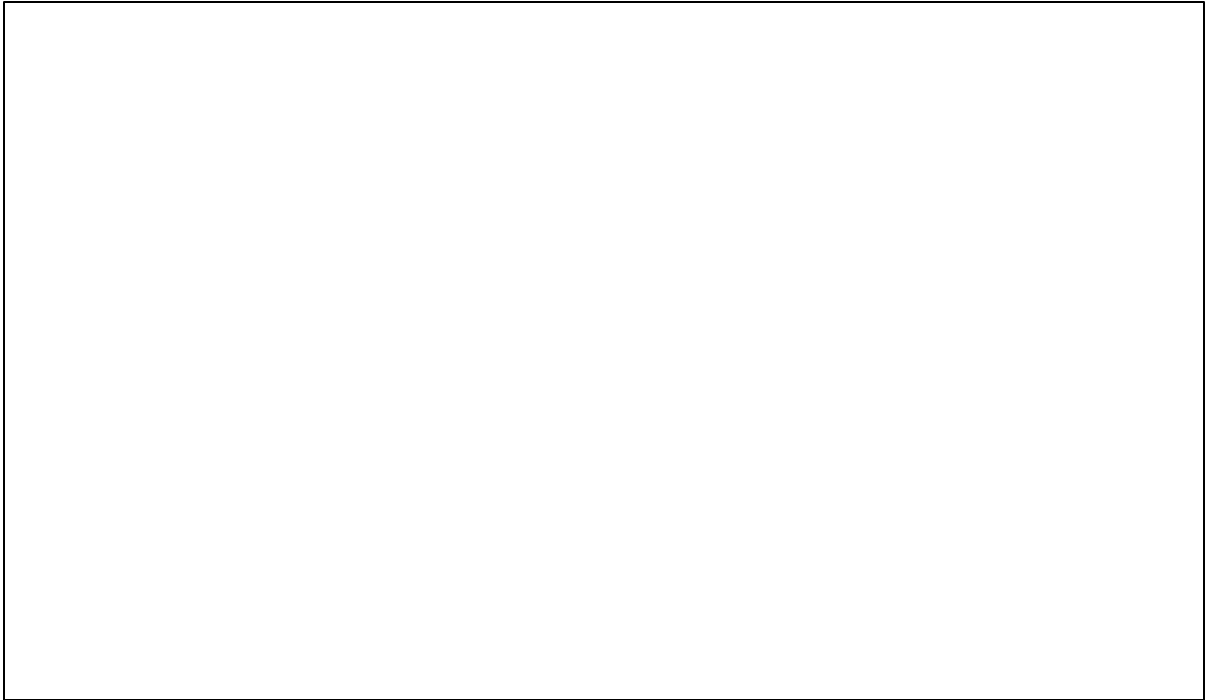


Internet Research Critical Reading Skills - Analyzing Writing for Reliability

DHMO ~ an assignment I use with my students (college age and older)

Scenario: A concerned parent has become disturbed by reports of a dangerous, non-regulated chemical called DHMO that students may be exposed to at your school. You go to the source, as suggested, <http://www.dhmo.org> and check it out. You may want to check out some of the links on the site as well.

What is your response to this site?



Questions for students:

1. Is this chemical available in your school, and should it be regulated by an oversight agency? What precautions should you and your students take if you come in contact with DHMO?
2. Comment on the writing, tone, layout and content of the website. Is this site argumentative (persuasive) or informative? What writing strategies does it use to present its point? Do you see any fallacies presented? List them.
3. What is DHMO? Analyze the words "dihydrogen monoxide." Use a dictionary, if necessary, to look up the prefixes and/or suffixes. Are the facts presented on this site true?

More Sites, More Fun

Snopes.com <http://snopes.com> The source for getting the real scoop on virus alerts, email chain letters, rumor, wishes and lies. Has documentation from newspapers and related stories. It has true, false and unproven stories on all types of subjects. Look up DHMO, the "Toxin du Jour"

UrbanLegends.com Searchable, mostly text stories about urban legends.

HoaxBusters <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org> This is a US government site dedicated to debunking or posting information on scams and hoaxes on the Internet. Has a good article on recognizing a hoax or scam.

Truth or Fiction <http://www.truthorfiction.com> Lists many rumors and news stories in mostly text form, and lists "true", "unproven" or "false" in headline.

Urban Legend Resource Center <http://www.ulrc.com.au> Australian site.

Fake News Sites

Hollywood Pulse <http://www.hollywoodpulse.com/> A site that spoofed Fox news.

The Onion <http://theonion.com> "news" magazine which does not look like a spoof. For older or more mature students. (Questionable taste in ads, some are offensive if not exactly NC-17, think Saturday Night Live with less comedy)

The Spoof <http://www.thespoof.com> Obviously a spoof of news.

Links for Evaluation of Websites

Evaluating Quality on the Net <http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html> Article by by Hope N. Tillman, Director of Libraries, Babson College, Babson Park, Massachusetts

Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/webcrit.html> from Cornell University

Getting It Right: Verifying Sources on the Net

<http://www.llrx.com/features/verifying.htm> by Sabrina I. Pacifici the Founder, Editor, Publisher, Web Manager of LLRX.com. For the past 23 years, Sabrina has worked as a library director and legal researcher in Washington, D.C.

Google Articles

http://directory.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/Instructional_Technology/Evaluation/Web_Site_Evaluation/

Ten C's For Evaluating Internet Sources

<http://www.uwec.edu/library/guides/tencs.html> From Univ. of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Library website

Found While Searching For Other Things....

April Fools' News <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/features/aprilfools.htm> Spoof stories

Catalaw <http://www.catalaw.com/> Site for researching laws nation and world wide.

How to spot a Phony POW <http://www.pownetwork.org/phonies/phonies.htm>

Improbable Research <http://www.improbable.com/>

Rumors of Dead People <http://www.dpsinfo.com/dps/rumors.html>

Slip Ups in Movies <http://www.slipups.com> Just what it says, continuity slipups.

Virus Myths <http://www.vmyths.com/> Also <http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp>;

<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html>

Suggestions for research for hoaxes, scams and urban legends:

1. Did people really believe the earth was flat in 1492?
2. Was there a Stone Age tribe called the Tasaday that survived into modern times?
3. Who was Piltdown man?
4. Where do crop circles come from?
5. Did NASA actually go to the moon?
6. Did the state of Alabama pass a law to change the value of pi to 3?
7. Were six million Jews killed by the Nazi regime in World War II?
8. Were nine million women executed for witchcraft by the church in the years from 1200 to 1700?
9. Did Sir Francis Drake leave a "plate of brasse" near San Quentin prison in California?
10. Was Stamford University created in California because Harvard's president was rude?
11. Can you really donate food to the world's hungry with a free click on a web site?
12. Was the first mechanical / computer chess master built in the 1700s?
13. What is the story about Roswell, MIB and Agent Mulder?
14. Was 1932 & 1936 Polish Olympic champion Stella Walsh male or female?
15. Can Sidd Finch, French horn playing monk, throw a baseball at 168 miles per hour?
16. Does spaghetti grow on Swiss trees?
17. Did Martians invade New Jersey in 1938?
18. Was Nazi Herr Goering's Vermeer painting stolen from the Dutch?
19. Who wrote Howard Hughes' autobiography?
20. What was the answer to the \$64,000 question?
21. What sorts of fossils were found in 1726 by Johann Beringer of Wurzburg, Germany?
22. What is the hereditary factor called Lysenkoism?
23. Can you tell if a mirror is really a one-way window by putting your finger against it to see how it reflects?
24. Can birds actually steal quarters from a car wash?

25. Is there an actual photograph of an iceberg that shows how much of it is under water?
26. Was a California car thief crushed minutes after the theft by a bridge that collapsed in an earthquake?
27. Can you block insurance rate hikes by overpaying a traffic ticket?
28. Could a personalized tag on your car cause you to get numerous parking tickets?
29. Are interstate highways designed to be emergency landing strips?
30. Was the Titanic the first ship to use the radio distress code SOS? What does SOS mean?
31. Did Alexander Fleming save the life of Winston Churchill, who then paid for Fleming to go to medical school?
32. Were Captain Kangaroo and Mister Rogers (children's TV celebrities) WWII heroes?
33. Did the actor who portrayed the Marlboro Man in commercials die of cancer?
34. Did the Dell Dude lose his commercial gig due to being busted?
35. Did Sesame Street add a muppet character that is HIV-positive?
36. Are there lyrics to the original Star Trek theme? If so, what are they?
37. Do we use only 10% of our brains?
38. Time magazine considered featuring Osama bin Laden as 2001's Man of the Year.
39. Can you escape criminal penalties by claiming influence of sugar or junk food?
40. Has the government "buy-back" of guns caused the homicide rate to increase in Australia?