

# SciJourn Read-Aloud



## WEBSITE CREDIBILITY

In this seed activity, the teacher models the examination of several websites for clues of credibility. It is important to repeat similar activities with different websites to help students become familiar with common credibility clues.

### ACTIVITY

1. Show the first website to the class.

[www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

Ask the students if they think the website is credible. Indicate that you are skeptical - sure it *looks* official, but you know websites can be misleading. If the students think the website is credible (many surely will) ask them to prove it.

What is there about this website that makes them think it can be trusted? If they do not mention it, wonder about:

- The .gov designation - what does it mean? Is it an indication of credibility? *It is a government site and, as such, is considered to be highly credible.*
- What is NOAA? Has anyone heard of it? *The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is a high-profile, respected government organization, part of the Department of Commerce.*
- There is an 'about NOAA' tab that tells about the organization, There are also 'contacts' and 'staff directory' tabs that are working links.
- There are no advertisements.

2. Show another website to the class.

[www.newyorkchronicle.org](http://www.newyorkchronicle.org)

Ask if this is a credible website. Tell them you think it looks pretty good, especially with it being a .org - it must be credible . . . right? Plus it's from the New York Chronicle - that sounds pretty good! Ask if anyone has heard of the New York Chronicle.

Try the following:

- Look for an 'about us' or an 'about this site' tab. *There aren't any.*
- Ask, "what do we know about the New York Chronicle?" Look for anything on the site that explains just what the New York Chronicle is. *If time, do a google search for the New York Chronicle. One reference is for a fictitious newspaper on a TV show. None of the other hits are for a newspaper in New York.*
- Try the links across the top of the page. Say, "well, at least we can find a lot of other information . . . let's try the news link." *It will bring you back to the same page, with the links hidden above the top of the screen.* Go back to the top and try the 'sports' tab or the 'weather' tab - *they all do the same thing.*
- Katie Olsen is the managing editor. Who is she? Certainly a managing editor of a New York newspaper can be found on google. *Actually not! The only thing close is Mary-Kate Olsen who is certainly not the editor of this fictitious newspaper.*
- Scroll down the page - Ask the class if they think it looks suspiciously like an advertisement.
- Point out that there is a 'conclusion' to the article. Mention that journalism articles *never* have conclusions.
- Say, "well, let's leave a comment that we are on to their scam." Scroll down to the bottom of the comments. There is a notice that says, "**Sorry, comments have been disabled due to a spam attack. Will be back online soon.**" *Hmmm - rather suspicious!*

Ask again if anyone thinks the website is credible. What is the website actually trying to do?

3. Remind the students to use common-sense when thinking about the credibility of a website - sometimes it is easy to be fooled.