

Read the article. Then answer the question.

## The REAL PROBLEM with FAKE NEWS

Did you know that U.S. president Barack Obama was once featured on the cover of the teen magazine *Tiger Beat*? The magazine, normally filled with photos of cute boy band singers, quoted Obama as saying "I sing in the shower!" and promised "more personal facts" inside. The respected newspaper *The New York Times* even published a photo of the cover. If this story sounds a bit **unbelievable**, that's because the cover never actually existed—it was from the humor website *The Onion*. Although the cover looked real, it was actually just a joke.

The Obama cover was an example of "fake news"—a kind of hoax. With fake news, the information is formatted to look like a **reliable** news source, but the news isn't real—it's just intended to make people laugh. Fake news sources such as *The Onion* and *The Daily Show* have become extremely popular. Frequently shared via social media, it's not uncommon for these humorous news stories to go viral and reach hundreds of thousands of readers.

Unfortunately, since fake news is designed to look **believable**, it can be difficult to distinguish from real news. In addition, more and more people are getting all of their news from social media instead of traditional and more **dependable** sources like newspapers and television. One study found that 63% of Facebook users use the site as their main source of news. As a result, a significant number of people viewing fake news mistakenly believe that it's real.

Fake news like the Obama cover can be amusing, but sometimes it can cause serious problems. Some **disreputable** fake news sites are motivated more by profit than making people laugh. By publishing sensational yet real-sounding stories, they attract as many readers as possible—and more money from advertisers. In 2014, the fake news site *National Report* published a shocking article about an outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in a Texas neighborhood. After being shared over 340,000 times on Facebook alone, the article caused fear and panic. When readers discovered the news was fake, they were furious. Stories like this make it easy to understand why 4 out of 10 Americans don't trust the news media.

So how can you identify fake news? First, use common sense. If the story sounds far-fetched, be suspicious and do some research. Check the source. If the news comes from a website you've never heard of, it may be a hoax. Search for the same news on trustworthy news websites. If you also find the news there, it's **confirmable** and most likely true. If you're still in doubt, check websites such as *Snopes.com*, which investigate **questionable** news stories and evaluate their trustworthiness. You can even submit a news story for them to review!

It's true that fake news can be hard to identify. However, unless you want your friends to believe that Barack Obama is the newest teen heartthrob, be a skeptic.

Check the facts before you click that "Share" button!



**What is the main idea of the article?**

- A. It's not true that Barack Obama was featured on the cover of a teen magazine.
- B. Four out of ten Americans don't trust the news media.
- C. A lot of news we read is fake, so it's important to always check the information.

**Read the article again. Notice the adjectives in bold. Then choose the correct adjective to complete each statement.**

- 1. The theory that aliens have landed on Earth is so far-fetched. It's completely.....
- 2. I watch news on television because they do a good job reporting the news, and the information is always correct. It's a .....news source
- 3. If the National Weather Service says it is going to rain, it most likely will. Their forecasts are very. ....
- 4. That newspaper is a .....news source. The sad fact is that they just care about selling newspapers, not reporting facts.
- 5. There's lots of photo and video evidence that shows that UFOs are real. I think the theory that aliens have visited Earth is.....
- 6. The stones used to make Stonehenge came from a mountain 257 miles away. This fact is..... The stone from both locations is exactly the same.
- 7. The man's story about seeing a UFO is .....He admitted that he can't see very well and wasn't wearing his glasses the night he saw the strange object in the sky.

**Read the article again. Answer the questions, according to the information in the article.**

- 1. Fake news is \_\_\_\_.
  - A. a kind of hoax that looks like real news but isn't true
  - B. news from dependable news sources like newspapers and television
  - C. news from social media or an unknown website
- 2. The article mentions \_\_\_\_ as an example of a news media company that often publishes fake news.
  - A. *National Report*
  - B. *The New York Times*
  - C. *Tiger Beat*
- 3. According to the article, why did *The Onion* publish a fake magazine cover featuring Barack Obama?
  - A. to make people laugh
  - B. to show that you can't trust the news media
  - C. to cause fear and panic

4. Why is fake news difficult to distinguish from real news?
  - A. It is designed to look like real news.
  - B. It is usually published by dependable news sources.
  - C. It rarely sounds far-fetched.
5. What is one problem that fake news can cause?
  - A. Sensational stories can frighten people.
  - B. Viral stories can make advertisers furious.
  - C. Humorous news can embarrass famous people.
6. What example does the article use to show that fake news can be dangerous?
  - A. a fake news article about Ebola published by *National Report*
  - B. a fake news article about Obama published by *The Onion*
  - C. a hoax about the social media site Facebook
7. How has fake news changed many people's feelings about the news media?
  - A. People no longer think the news media is dependable.
  - B. People prefer to get news from traditional sources.
  - C. The news media has become extremely popular.
8. What tip does the article give to help people identify fake news?
  - A. research the news at *Snopes.com*
  - B. research the news at the library
  - C. don't share news stories via social media