

Deepfakes and synthetic media

40 minutes

Following My Interests Online

Outcome 3.9

Outcome 3.10

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Practise identifying synthetic media and deepfakes by examining remaining visual and audio tells. Judge examples as real, likely synthetic or cannot tell, then explore how this affects news reporting, evidence and personal trust in media.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
3.9	Identify examples of where image, audio and video manipulation has been used in digital media content.
3.10	Discuss how image, audio and video manipulation can impact on the audience or user.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Recognise AI-generated and deepfake media and discuss its impact on audience and trust (LOs 3.9, 3.10)
- Use remaining tells to commit to real / likely synthetic / cannot tell
- Discuss what it means for news, evidence and trust when any image, voice or video could be fabricated

BEFORE THE BELL

- No printing required. Case cards are already fully in the student step. For the discussion, project step 4 or write the Evidence and Trust headings on the board (News is optional if time allows).
- Teacher device and board; interactive activity ready in explore mode
- A device each, students signed in; the board shows the join code

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

4 min	introduction	Start
5 min	content	Examine and discuss
4 min	activity	Hands-on: deepfake detection challenge
13 min	activity	Class Play: everyone answers
8 min	activity	Your turn: news, evidence and trust
3 min	content	Make sense
2 min	content	Reflect
1 min	summary	What you covered

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Item 1, Likely synthetic Several classic deepfake-style signs stack together: lip-sync drift, a short visual glitch on jewellery, overly clean audio, and zero official source. Likely synthetic is the defensible call. Even one strong sign plus no verifiable publisher is enough reason not to share.
- Item 2, Real Messy, ordinary capture signs and independent people confirming they were there support a real recording. Perfect polish would have been more suspicious than this. Real does not mean every claim in the chat caption is true; it means the footage itself looks captured from the world.
- Item 3 (if time), Likely synthetic Repeated pebble patterns and broken background text are common machine-image signs, and there is no named creator. Likely synthetic fits. A clean landscape can still be real, but these specific artefacts plus no provenance push the call.
- Item 4, Cannot tell Audio alone is often not enough. A good voice clone can sound right, and a real recording can also sound right. With no matching video, no original post, and a high-stakes claim, the skilled call is cannot tell until you verify with Sam or another solid source. Refusing to decide from thin evidence is the point of this item.
- Item 5, Real Everyday phone flaws and an unplanned interruption are hard to fake convincingly at this level, and the people shown are interacting with the post as themselves. This is ordinary real footage, not synthetic media. Compression alone is not a deepfake sign.

TEACHING MOVES

- Keep Examine short: definitions, three verdicts, clean-quality-is-not-proof. Reveal the three starter prompts on the board only as the challenge opens.
- Run the detection challenge teacher-led with pair whispers before show of hands; if devices are available, pairs may tap a verdict before the class reveal.
- Hard pacing: Items 1 and 2 max two minutes each; about 5 minutes for Item 4; about 3 minutes for Item 5. If only three items fit, run 1, 4 and 5, never drop the cannot-tell audio.
- Circulate the room during pair work to prompt specific observations, not "it felt fake".
- Model the habit of pausing on emotional media and choosing a next check.
- Use open prompts to balance caution with the costs of total distrust.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students reject 'cannot tell' as failure: reinforce it as a skilled response when evidence is weak.
- Overlooking subtle signs in high-quality examples: spend time on the hardest items in the challenge.
- Generalising the discussion into blanket distrust: guide towards practical habits like source checking.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Provide a short printed list of starter prompts (lip/jaw timing, edge flicker, source) during the challenge activity.
- Extension: Invite students to suggest one additional check they would run; run Item 3 if the core path finishes early.
- Support: Pair students strategically for the discussion to encourage balanced contributions.