

A NEXT GENERATION LESSON PLAN

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO SOCIAL MEDIA



# An Investigation Into Social Media



## Overview

Ideal Context / Audience: **Gr. 9 - 12**  
Lesson Duration: **180 min**

## Learning Goals

This resource package will provide students with the following learning opportunities:

- Students will become aware of the following terms and be able to apply them to everyday examples: *algorithms, echo chambers, filter bubbles, fake news, confirmation bias, tracking.*
- Students will unpack the impacts of social media on self image and mental health and learn tools for healthier tech use and digital well-being.

## Learning Skills

- ✓ Self-Awareness
- ✓ Digital Citizenship
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Empathy
- ✓ Openness



## Important Notes

**Being informed and aware is a key part of fostering safe and responsible social media use.**

Research demonstrates that "simply understanding the basics of algorithms.... can be a sufficient differentiator when it comes to the material consequences of algorithms" (Brisson-Boivin & McAleese, 2021).

*As students are required to incorporate the use of technology with their learning, be mindful of potential burnout from screen time. Check out our [Digital Detox Resource Sheet](#) for more tips about meaningful media and prevention of screen fatigue.*

## Materials / Equipment

- [Peace Journals](#) - Access by [PDF](#) or via [Digital Learning Hub](#)
- [Resource Sheet + Worksheets A, B](#) (included)
- [Brave Spaces Toolkit](#) (Click [here](#) to access)
- [Digital Detox Resource Sheet](#) (Click [here](#) to access)



## Minds On | (60 mins) Understanding Key Concepts

Begin the lesson with the following video (4mins)



Video:  
[Allegory of the Cave - Legion](#)

Note: This video is a TV adaptation of Plato's cave allegory. To learn more about about Plato's allegory of the cave visit:

<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-allegory-of-the-cave-120330>

### Class Questions (20mins):

- What did the narrator imply when they explained “people are the other shadows, they are not real”? What happens when we do not see each other as real?
- What would happen to our thoughts if we were trapped in a hypothetical cave?
- How would you react if you were to leave the cave?
- Do you think these caves exist in our society? If so, where?



## Social Media Investigation Activity | (65 mins)

### Key Terms

*algorithm, echo chamber, filter bubble, fake news, confirmation bias & tracking*

After the class discussion, ask students to begin **Part 1** of **Worksheet A (30 mins)**. Students will watch a series of videos to help better understand the key terms. *For more information and definitions of the key terms, check out our **Resource Sheet** below.*

Having completed **Part 1**, students can move on to **Part 2** of **Worksheet A**. Here, students will use their new understanding of the key terms to match examples provided (**10 mins**).



## Social Media Investigation Activity Cont'd (65 mins)

Regroup the class and allow students to justify their answers from **Worksheet A**. Ask students to share one of their responses from the worksheet prompts. End the lesson discussing the following critical questions (**25 mins**).



### Critical Questions:

- What happens when the sources we rely on all have the same opinions about a topic?
- How can being directed to individuals who share your interests benefit you?
- What are some ways we can diversify our sources of information?



## Hands On | Media and the Self (120 mins)

As a class, take some time to reflect on the following magazine covers (**10mins**). Discuss the following questions below (**20mins**).



Google Slides is available [here](#)



Note: This activity can be completed with any celebrity or public figure.



## Hands On | Media and the Self Cont'd (120 mins)

### Discussion Questions:

- How does each magazine cover differ from one another?
- What audience do you think is intended for each cover?
- How would you describe the person in each cover? What is their body language saying?
- What message is being presented? Do the images symbolize an idea, a service, a product?

Next, move into a conversation circle, and have each student answer one of the following prompts **(20mins)**:

How do you feel society and social media has **imposed its ideals** on you?

How do ideals differ between **age, gender,** and **socioeconomics**?

Are you afraid that you might not be accepted if you look a certain way? **What ideals do you think are accepted in society?**

How does social media make you feel? **How do you want it to make you feel?**

### Conversation Circles

Set up your class in a circle so that all participants can see each other in an unobstructed way. This discussion strategy invites every student in the class to participate as an active listener and speaker. The circle approach is grounded in Indigenous philosophy and practice that values individuals as they build and maintain supportive relationships and communities ([morningsidecenter.org](http://morningsidecenter.org)).

#### Two key components for this exercise are

- Sitting in a Circle
- Having a Meaningful Talking Piece



## When we sit in a circle:

- All participants can *fully engage* with one another.



There is equal participation in the process for all; no one sits at the head of a circle. Everyone is invited into the circle to participate on an equal footing, and all perspectives are welcomed ([morningsidecenter.org](http://morningsidecenter.org)).

- The dialogue in circles is facilitated by a **Talking piece**.

*“The piece is passed around the circle in order, from one person to the next. The person who is holding it is invited to speak or pass. Everyone else in the circle practices active listening, knowing that their turn will come when the talking piece comes around. Everyone in the circle has an opportunity to share without interruption what is on their mind, and those not speaking can listen more fully without the distraction of preparing a response or rebuttal. In this way, the talking piece encourages more thoughtful reflection and unhurried expression” ([morningsidecenter.org](http://morningsidecenter.org)).*

**Example of talking piece:** a stone, a rattle, a small toy

Open the talking circle with a community agreement based on the elements of a Brave Space, listed in our [Brave Space Toolkit](#).



Remind your students to use a talking piece to engage in conversation and listening. Explain to your students that only the holder of the talking piece can talk, while others listen respectfully and reflect upon, consider and honour the meaning of what others say. Students may also pass at any time.



## Mood Board Activity | (65 mins)

Using [Worksheet B](#), students can create their ideal social media feed. What social media posts do students want to see? Students can draw or upload images that communicate their needs/interest. *Students can use platforms such as Pinterest, Twitter and Instagram to find inspiration (45mins).*

### Examples:



Source:  
<https://www.marykatemcdevitt.com>,  
@A Safe Place Inside Your Head,



### Mood Board Activity Cont'd | (65 mins)

When the students are finished with their mood boards, ask them to go on a gallery walk and share their thoughts (**15mins**).

#### **Instructions for an in-person Gallery Walk:**

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/gallery-walk>

#### **Instructions for a virtual Gallery Walk:**

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/gallery-walk-remote-learning>

#### **Gallery Walk Discussion Questions:**

- Are there common themes among your peers' mood boards?
- What images are missing on social media platforms?
- When you look at each other's boards, how do you feel?
- Is your ideal board making you want to change your current social media feeds?
- Was it difficult to find new content? Why do you think?



### **Reflection / Debrief (10mins)**

Ask participants to individually complete a **Peace Journal** entry and evaluate their feelings and mood: *What does social media do to your mood? Do you feel in control of the content that is being suggested to you? Does it feel like you belong to any echo chambers or filter bubbles?*

**NEXT**



### **Taking it Further**

- → Invite students to complete a personal inventory of their media platforms for identifying echo chambers or filter bubbles
- → Invite students to follow new social media accounts and diversify their feeds
- → **Invite students to create content that supports their ideal values**

## Additional Resources & References

Be Internet Citizens

<https://internetcitizens.withyoutube.com/>

Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy

<https://mediasmarts.ca/>

Common Sense

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship>

# SOCIAL MEDIA INVESTIGATION

**Instructions:** Watch these videos to learn more about the key terms. This worksheet will be helpful for Part 2.

## Algorithm

1



## Fake News

2



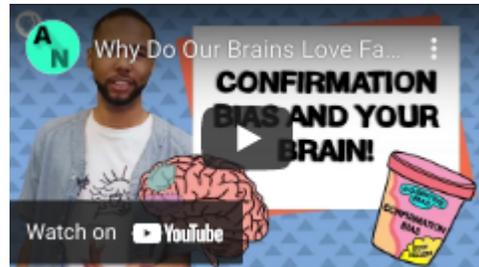
## Echo Chamber

3



## Confirmation Bias

4



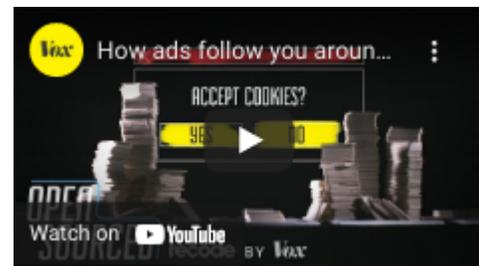
## Filter Bubble

5



## Targeting (using cookies)

6



# SOCIAL MEDIA INVESTIGATION

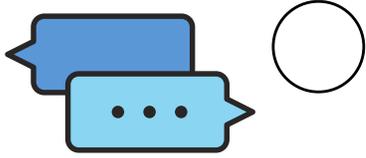
**Instructions:** In Part 1, you learned about the key terms. Match each example below to your learning and answer the bottom three prompts.



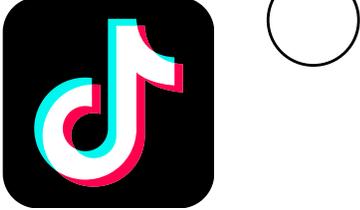
I am looking for a new pair of shoes online. The next day, I log into Instagram and see 3 different shoe ads.



I tend to like posts by politicians I agree with, regardless of if I understand what they are saying.



I follow a forum that is moderated by vegans. Anything relating to meat, they choose to delete.



"if this TikTok ends up on your feed, it is because you are in a \_\_\_\_\_"



\_\_\_\_\_ are a set of step by step instructions that both humans and computers use.



Videos about COVID-19 being a hoax are an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

*(find an example of one key term)*

**This is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Why are these terms important to know?**

**A social media tactic I can put to use in my own life.**

# SOCIAL MEDIA INVESTIGATION

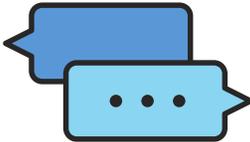
**Instructions:** In Part 1, you learned about the key terms. Match each example below to your learning and answer the bottom three prompts.

 **6**

I am looking for a new pair of shoes online. The next day, I log into Instagram and see 3 different shoe ads.

**4**

I tend to like posts by politicians I agree with, regardless of if I understand what they are saying.

 **3**

I follow a forum that is moderated by vegans. Anything relating to meat, they choose to delete.

 **5**

"if this TikTok ends up on your feed, it is because you are in a \_\_\_\_\_"

**1**

\_\_\_\_\_ are a set of step by step instructions that both humans and computers use.

**2**

Videos about COVID-19 being a hoax are an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

*(find an example of one key term)*

**This is an example of \_\_\_\_\_.**

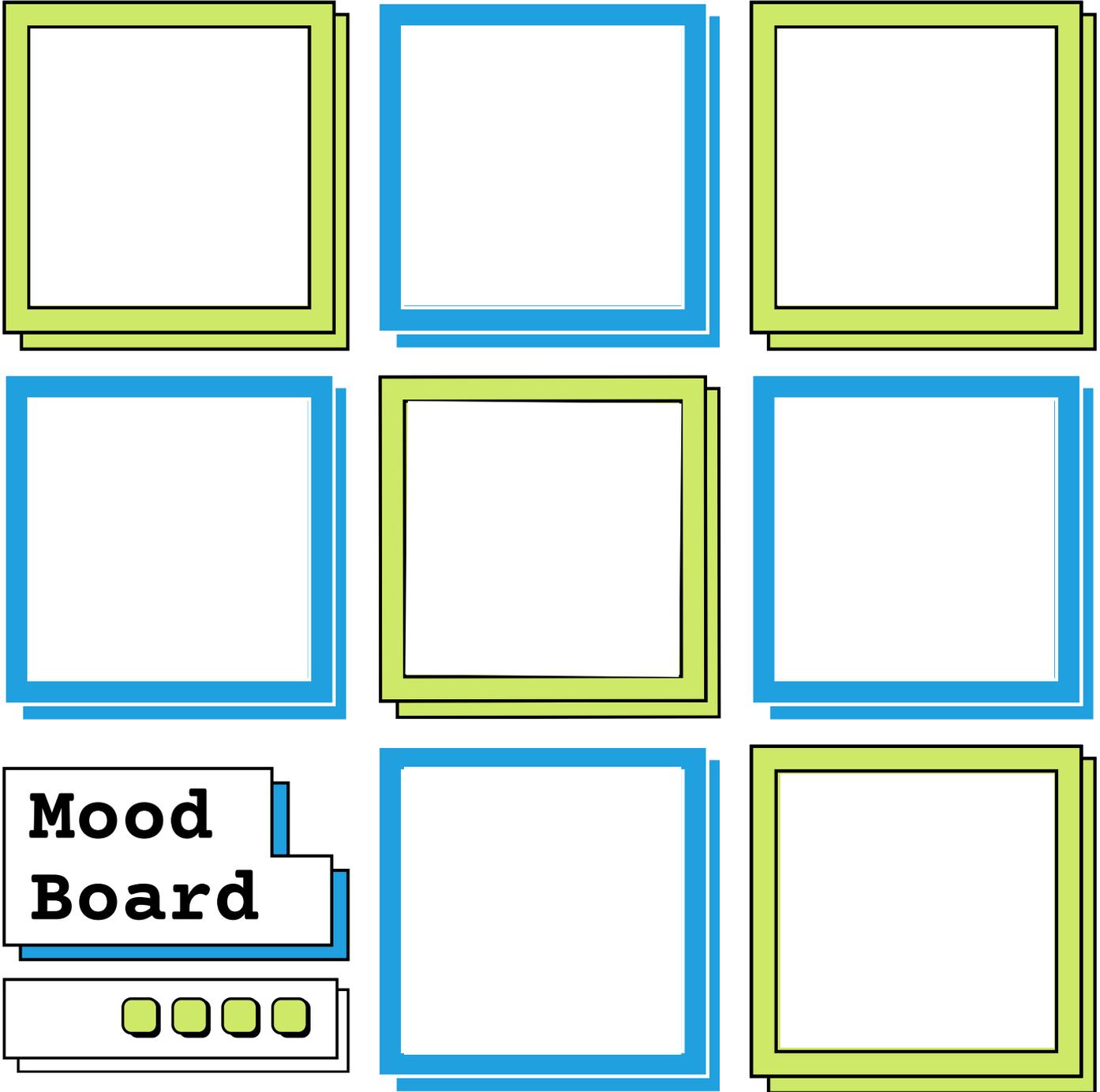
**Why are these terms important to know?**

**A social media tactic I can put to use in my own life.**

# WORKSHEET B

# MOOD BOARD

**Instructions:** Use the template below to create your ideal social media mood board. Use pictures, words or any form of visual to complete your board.



# RESOURCE SHEET

## KEY TERMS

**Algorithm:** *"Algorithms are instructions for solving a problem or completing a task. Recipes and math equations are everyday examples of algorithms. Algorithms are everywhere on the web; the internet runs on algorithms. We can think of algorithms as the recipes or equations that coders use to take information and produce things that help us achieve (or in some cases prevent) all sorts of tasks, including searching for information, sending emails, browsing social media, consulting GPS mapping systems, streaming music or TV shows, dating, recognizing voice-activated commands, language translation, recognizing faces, sorting photos, driving a car, buying a home, and applying for university or a job"* (Brisson-Boivin & McAleese, 2021).

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**Confirmation Bias:** *Tendency to seek out information we believe or want to believe is true, as well as ignore or minimize facts that threaten what we believe.*

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**Echo Chamber:** *"Echo chambers are social spaces in which ideas, opinions and beliefs are reinforced by repetition within a closed group"* (Be Internet Legends and Be Internet Citizens, 2020)

**Example:** *"Facebook vegan group that deletes posts that include different viewpoints or ideas"*

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**Fake News:** *News, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive.*

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**Filter Bubbles:** *"Filter bubbles occur when users are suggested content based on previous internet search history and interactions. Over time they can isolate users from any viewpoints or interests different from their own. Long-term, this can limit people's understanding of complex topics or events and reduce empathy and dialogue between different groups"* (Be Internet Legends and Be Internet Citizens, 2020)

**Example:** *YouTube recommending conspiracy theory videos or conspiracy theory videos coming up on your "For You" page on TikTok*