Teaching News Literacy in the Age of AI
Discussion Guide

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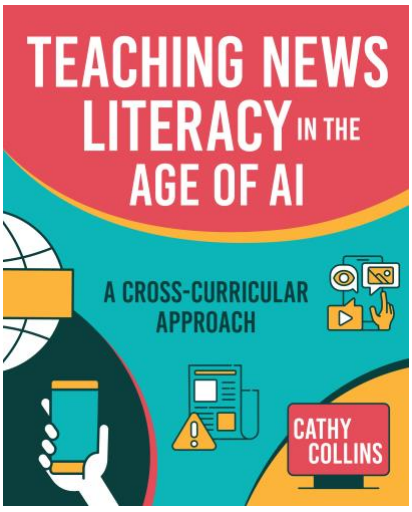

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Discussion Guide

Teaching News Literacy in the Age of AI, by Cathy Collins

How to Use This Discussion Guide:

Welcome—and thank you for spending time with *Teaching News Literacy in the Age of AI*.

This discussion guide was created to support educators, librarians, instructional coaches, and education leaders who want to move from **reading about news literacy** to **bringing it to life** in classrooms, libraries, and professional learning spaces.

You don't need to read this book cover to cover before using the guide. You don't need to be an expert in journalism or artificial intelligence. And you certainly don't need to add "one more thing" to an already full plate.

This guide is designed to be:

1. **Flexible** – use one chapter or all eight
2. **Practical** – grounded in real classroom and school contexts
3. **Conversational** – built for discussion, not compliance
4. **Actionable** – focused on what educators can *try right away*

Who this guide is for

This guide is intended for:

1. K–12 educators across subject areas
2. School and district librarians
3. Instructional coaches and curriculum leaders
4. Professional learning communities and book study facilitators
5. Higher education instructors preparing future educators

Whether you're leading a formal book study, facilitating professional development, or reading on your own, the guide offers multiple entry points.

How to use it

Each chapter section includes:

1. A **chapter snapshot** to ground discussion
2. **Discussion questions** that invite reflection and dialogue
3. **"Try This Tomorrow" prompts** designed for low-prep, real-world use

4. Optional facilitator prompts for cross-disciplinary groups

You might:

1. Choose one or two questions for a short PLC discussion
2. Use a "Try This Tomorrow" prompt as a classroom warm-up
3. Focus on a single chapter that aligns with a current unit or challenge
4. Pair the guide with a staff meeting, department meeting, or workshop

There is no "right" pace or order. Use what serves your learners and your context.

What this guide is not

This is not a scripted curriculum, a checklist, or a compliance document. It's an invitation—to think, to question, to experiment, and to build news literacy practices that fit *your* students and community.

Quick Start

Three Ways to Use This Book Tomorrow

If you're short on time (and who isn't?), start here. These three moves require little to no prep and can be used immediately in classrooms, libraries, or professional learning spaces.

Move 1: Change the Question

Instead of asking:
"Did you hear about this?"

Try asking:
"How does this make you feel, and what do we need to know before reacting?"

This small shift:

1. Slows down snap judgments
2. Centers emotional awareness
3. Creates space for verification and inquiry

It works with headlines, social media posts, breaking news alerts, or even AI-generated content.

Move 2: Teach One Repeatable Routine

Choose *one* routine all students can return to again and again:

1. **SIFT**
2. **Lateral reading**
3. **Source–Context–Purpose**

The goal isn't mastery overnight. It's **habit-building**. Repetition builds confidence and reduces cognitive overload when students encounter complex or emotionally charged news.

Move 3: Make Algorithms Discussable

Ask students (or colleagues):
"Why might I be seeing this?"

Follow up with:

1. Who else might see something different?
2. What might be missing?
3. How could algorithms shape what feels important or urgent?

Note: This is not about demonizing technology. This is about making algorithms *visible* to help learners reclaim agency over their information habits.

A final reminder

You don't need to fix everything at once. One conversation, one routine, or one moment of reflection can make news literacy visible and meaningful right away.

Chapter 1

What Is News Literacy?

Chapter snapshot (for readers)

This opening chapter defines **news literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, and AI**, then connects them to the real-world information environment students live in: algorithms, information overload, fragmented attention, and the growing need for healthy skepticism without cynicism. It also frames news literacy as a pathway to civic engagement and heart-centered student agency.

Discussion Questions

Your "Pumpkin Mobile" moment:
What's one time you had to figure something out using a trusted reference (a person, book, database, or process) instead of a quick search? What changed when the internet made the "quick answer" feel effortless?

1. The News Literacy Project emphasizes teaching **how to think, not what to think**. What does that look like in a classroom where students often want you to tell them what's true?
2. What's the difference between **healthy skepticism** and **cynicism** in your students (or adult learners)? What does each one *sound like* in discussion?
3. Where do you see **news illiteracy** show up most in your context: ELA research, social studies debates, science claims, health trends, or social media sharing?
4. The chapter connects news literacy to **civic life and community engagement**. What kinds of civic engagement feel realistic for your students right now (small, local, and identity-safe)?
5. How do **recommendation algorithms** shape your students' sense of "what matters"? What do they think counts as "news," and where did that definition come from?
6. The cognitive load section argues that overload leads to shallow processing. What classroom routines, even small ones, could help students slow down and *stay with* a story?

Try This Tomorrow (fast, low-prep)

Try This Tomorrow #1: The Two-Minute Credibility Reset (5 minutes)

Put a headline or screenshot of a trending post on the board and ask:

1. What do we know from this?
2. What do we *not* know yet?
3. What would we need to verify before sharing or acting?

Close with:
"What's one next step we could take in under two minutes to check this?"

Examples: search the claim plus "fact check," find a second credible outlet, check the About page, or look at date and context.

Try This Tomorrow #2: Algorithm Awareness Mini-Check (7–10 minutes)

Ask students to privately write:
"What's the last news-like thing you saw online?"

Then prompt:

1. Where did it appear (TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Google, alerts)?
2. Why do you think *you* were shown it?
3. What might someone else see instead?

Wrap with one line:
"Your feed is not the world."

Optional Facilitator Prompt

(Especially useful for librarians, instructional coaches, and school leaders)

If your group includes educators across disciplines, ask:
Where could news literacy live naturally in your curriculum without feeling like "one more thing"?

Examples: science claim evaluation, statistics in media, historical sourcing, ELA argument writing, advisory discussions.

Quick Start

Start Here: Three Moves That Make News Literacy Visible This Week

1. **Move 1:** Replace "Did you hear about…?" with
   "How does this make you feel, and what do we need to know?"
2. **Move 2:** Teach one repeatable routine
   (SIFT (**S**top, **I**nvestigate the source, **F**ind better coverage, and **T**race claims, quotes, and media to their original context, lateral reading, or source–context–purpose)
3. **Move 3:** Make algorithms discussable
   "Why am I seeing this?"

Reflection and Application Questions

1. Beyond spotting credible sources, what does **news literacy help students do** in their lives as learners, community members, and future voters?
2. In your setting, what does it look like when students move from **consuming news** to becoming **proactive citizens**, even in small, age-appropriate ways?
3. How have evolving technologies, especially **AI-driven algorithms and generative tools**, changed what counts as "news," how students encounter it, and how quickly they form opinions?
4. Where do you see students slipping from healthy skepticism into cynicism? What classroom moves help pull them back toward curiosity and evidence?
5. What's one place in your curriculum where news literacy could live naturally without feeling like "one more thing" (ELA, science, math/data, social studies, advisory, library)?

Chapter 2

What Makes Something "News"?

Chapter snapshot (for readers)

This chapter pulls back the curtain on how "the news" gets made. Readers explore **newsworthiness** and the factors behind news judgment (timeliness, proximity, impact, prominence, and more), as well as **agenda setting** and **agenda melding**. It introduces standards of quality journalism, clarifies the roles of **gatekeepers, gatewatchers, and citizen journalists**, and expands the lens to **press freedom** and **diversity in news coverage**—including how AI influences what stories rise, which perspectives are amplified, and what gets overlooked.

Discussion Questions

1. When you think about "newsworthiness," which factors seem most influential in your community right now (timeliness, proximity, impact, conflict, prominence, novelty)? Which ones worry you?
2. This chapter suggests that "the news" is the result of countless newsroom conversations and choices. What do you wish students understood about the difference between **a story** and **the system** that selects and frames stories?
3. Where do you see **agenda setting** at work in your students' lives? What issues seem to dominate their attention, and what might be missing?
4. The chapter discusses **audience demand** and data signals (clicks, shares, views). How should we talk with students about the tension between what audiences *want* and what communities *need*?
5. Gatekeepers, gate watchers, citizen journalists: Which role do your students most often play without realizing it? What responsibilities come with that role?
6. The SPJ Code of Ethics emphasizes accuracy, minimizing harm, independence, and accountability. Which of these feels most urgent for students as they share and comment online?
7. How does press freedom connect to everyday classroom life? What's one way restrictions on information (in any country) could change what people believe is true?
8. The chapter highlights diversity in newsrooms and coverage. What patterns do you notice in the sources students encounter—whose voices are centered, and whose are missing?

Try This Tomorrow (fast, low-prep)

Try This Tomorrow #1: "Newsworthiness Ranking" (10 minutes)

Give students 5 short headlines (real, local if possible, and age-appropriate). Ask them to rank the headlines from **most newsworthy** to **least newsworthy** and explain why using at least **two news judgment factors** (timeliness, proximity, impact, prominence, conflict, novelty, etc.).

Quick debrief:

1. Where did groups agree? Where did they diverge?
2. What does that tell us about audience, values, and perspective?

Try This Tomorrow #2: "Gatekeeper or Gatewatcher?" (5–7 minutes)

Ask:
"Think of the last thing you shared, reposted, liked, or recommended online. Were you acting as a gatekeeper, a gatewatcher, or a citizen journalist?"

Follow-up prompts:

1. What made you share it?
2. What responsibility do you have once you amplify it?
3. What would "verify before amplify" look like in that moment?

Try This Tomorrow #3: "Press Freedom in One Question" (3 minutes)

Write this on the board:
"What changes when journalists cannot report freely?"

Students jot one sentence. Then ask them to add:

1. One consequence for **public knowledge**
2. One consequence for **democracy or community accountability**

Optional Facilitator Prompt

(Especially useful for librarians, coaches, and leaders)

If your group includes educators across roles, ask:
Where are students learning what "counts as news" right now—and who (or what) is doing the teaching?
(News outlets, platforms, influencers, peers, family, algorithms, AI tools.)

Chapter 2 Reflection and Application Questions

1. What criteria should journalists consider when determining the newsworthiness of a story? How do factors like **timeliness, relevance, and impact** shape the decision-making process?
2. What role does **citizen journalism** play in today's media landscape? How can news organizations collaborate with citizen journalists while still maintaining journalistic standards?
3. How does a **free press** contribute to the health of a democratic society? In what ways can restrictions on freedom of expression affect the quality and reliability of journalism?
4. Why does **diversity in newsrooms** matter? What are practical ways news organizations can foster inclusivity and elevate more diverse perspectives in coverage?

Chapter 3 Discussion Guide

Misinformation, Disinformation, and "Fake News"

Big Idea (Educator Framing)

Misinformation thrives when trust is low, attention is fragmented, and emotional reactions move faster than verification. This chapter invites educators to move beyond "gotcha" fact-checking and instead help students build *habits of discernment*, supported by both human judgment and AI-assisted tools.

This is not about turning students into professional fact-checkers. It is about helping them slow down, ask better questions, and recognize when something deserves their trust or their skepticism.

Essential Questions for Educators

Use these to anchor discussion in PLCs, book clubs, or leadership teams.

1. What does it mean to teach *trust* without teaching *naivety*?
2. How has declining trust in journalism changed the way students encounter and interpret information?
3. Where do students most often encounter misinformation in your school or community?
4. How does AI complicate, but also strengthen, our ability to verify information?

Discussion Prompts (Educator-Facing)

1. Trust, Skepticism, and Student Mindsets

The chapter describes a collapse in public trust in the news, especially among young people.

Discuss:

1. Where do you see cynicism versus healthy skepticism in your students?
2. How do students talk about "the media" in your classroom or library?
3. What risks emerge when students believe *nothing* is trustworthy?

Facilitator Tip:
Invite educators to reflect on their *own* media habits before discussing students'. Modeling reflective consumption matters.

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2. Emotional Hooks and Misinformation

Misinformation often succeeds because it triggers strong emotional reactions.

Discuss:

1. What emotions seem to drive the fastest sharing among students (anger, humor, fear, belonging)?
2. How can educators acknowledge emotions without amplifying falsehoods?
3. How does AI-generated content intensify emotional persuasion?

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3. Categories, Purpose, and Motivation

This chapter emphasizes understanding *why* information exists before judging *whether* it is true.

Discuss:

1. How often do students confuse opinion, advertising, and news?
2. Where do educators see blurred boundaries in real classroom examples?
3. How does identifying purpose change the way students approach verification?

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4. AI as Threat and Ally

AI shows up in this chapter as both a challenge and a tool.

Discuss:

1. Where does AI currently help students verify information?
2. Where does it create new confusion or false confidence?
3. What ethical questions should students be asking about AI-generated news?

Try This Tomorrow: Classroom-Ready Moves

🕒 10-Minute Activity: *Pause Before You Share*

1. Show students a trending headline, image, or short video.
2. Ask them **not** to judge its truth yet.
3. Instead, have them answer three questions:
    1. What emotion does this trigger?
    2. What is the likely purpose?
    3. What would I check *first* if I had more time?

Why it works:
It builds metacognition without requiring full fact-checking.

🔍 Verification Mini-Routine (Repeat Weekly)

Introduce a simple, repeatable habit:

1. **Source**
2. **Evidence**
3. **Context**
4. **Reasoning**

Have students practice this routine with *one* piece of content per week across subjects.

🤖 AI Lens Extension

Ask students:

1. "How might AI have influenced why I'm seeing this?"
2. "If AI helped create or distribute this, what should I be cautious about?"

No tools required. Just awareness.

Reflection for Educators

Invite participants to journal or discuss:

1. Which verification skill do my students *most need right now*?
2. What is one small shift I can make to model better news judgment?
3. Where can the library, classroom, or curriculum naturally support this work?

Optional Group Activity: *Design a Verification Moment*

In small groups, educators design a **5-minute verification pause** for:

1. a science news article
2. a social studies headline
3. a viral image
4. a school-related rumor

Groups share ideas and leave with something immediately usable.

Takeaway Thought

Teaching misinformation is not about chasing every falsehood.
It is about helping students develop habits of mind that travel with them.

Chapter 4 Discussion Guide

News Literacy in the Age of AI

Big Idea (Educator Framing)

AI has not broken news literacy. It has *raised the stakes*.
This chapter reframes news literacy as a set of **transferable judgment skills** that matter even more when machines can generate, remix, and distribute information at scale.

The goal is not to turn students into AI experts, but to help them become **thoughtful decision-makers** who understand *when* AI helps, *when* it harms, and *when* human judgment must take the lead.

Essential Questions for Educators

1. What changes when AI participates in gathering, creating, or curating the news?
2. How does AI challenge traditional ideas of authorship, credibility, and trust?
3. What responsibility do educators have to address AI proactively rather than reactively?
4. How can students learn to work *with* AI without outsourcing their thinking to it?

Discussion Prompts (Educator-Facing)

1. "Seeing Is No Longer Believing"

AI-generated images, video, and audio undermine one of our most basic instincts: trusting our eyes and ears.

Discuss:

1. How do students currently decide whether something "looks real"?
2. What risks arise when visual realism replaces verification?
3. How might this change how we teach evidence across subjects?

Educator Reflection:
Where do you still rely on visual credibility in your own information habits?

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2. Deepfakes and Student Well-Being

The chapter's deepfake examples make clear that this is not only a media issue, but a **safety and dignity issue**.

Discuss:

1. How prepared is your school or district to respond to deepfake incidents?
2. What role should education play *before* harm occurs?
3. How can news literacy instruction support social-emotional learning and digital well-being?

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3. AI in Journalism: Tool, Shortcut, or Partner?

The chapter presents two paths: transparent, human-guided AI use and opaque, trust-eroding automation.

Discuss:

1. Which examples of AI use in journalism felt responsible? Which felt deceptive?
2. Why does transparency matter as much as accuracy?
3. How can students learn to ask not just "Is this true?" but "How was this made?"

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4. Trust, Transparency, and Human Oversight

AI-generated content can sound authoritative even when it is wrong or incomplete.

Discuss:

1. How does AI challenge traditional ideas of accountability?
2. What signals of transparency should students look for in AI-assisted news?
3. How can we help students resist overconfidence in "machine certainty"?

Try This Tomorrow: Classroom-Ready Moves

🕵️ 10-Minute Activity: *Who Helped Make This?*

Show students a short news item (text, image, or video).

Ask:

1. Who created this?
2. What role might AI have played?
3. What questions would you ask before sharing it?

Why it works:
It introduces AI literacy without requiring tools or technical knowledge.

🤖 AI + Judgment Mini-Routine

Teach students this simple habit:

1. **What did AI do?**
2. **What did humans do?**
3. **What decisions still matter?**

Apply it to journalism, science summaries, historical analysis, or school announcements.

🧠 Pattern Spotting: AI Tropes

Ask students to identify recurring patterns:

1. overly polished language
2. generic emotional cues
3. familiar visual tropes (e.g., sharks, disasters, dramatic crowds)

Then ask: *Why do these patterns work?*

Optional Group Activity: *Responsible AI in the News*

In small groups, educators design **3 classroom rules** for AI-assisted news use.

Prompts:

1. What must be disclosed?
2. What requires human review?

3. What should never be automated?

Compare results and notice common ground.

Reflection for Educators

Invite educators to reflect individually or in conversation:

1. Where does AI already intersect with my subject area?
2. What do my students most need: detection skills, ethical frameworks, or confidence?
3. How can I model thoughtful AI use without fear or hype?

Takeaway Thought

AI does not replace news judgment.
It reveals how essential it has always been.

Chapter 5 Discussion Guide

Bias, Beliefs, and Conspiracy Theories

Big Idea (Educator Framing)

Bias is not a flaw reserved for "other people." It is a human condition—one that shapes how we interpret information, respond emotionally, and decide whom to trust. In a media environment shaped by algorithms, echo chambers, and AI systems trained on imperfect data, recognizing bias becomes a **civic skill**, not a political stance.

This chapter invites educators to help students develop **self-awareness before judgment**, and **curiosity before certainty**.

Essential Questions for Educators

1. How do personal beliefs and experiences shape our interpretation of news?
2. What's the difference between recognizing bias and accusing bias?
3. Why do conspiracy theories feel persuasive, especially in moments of fear or uncertainty?
4. How can educators address bias without shutting down dialogue or escalating polarization?

Discussion Prompts (Educator-Facing)

1. Invisible Fault Lines

The chapter introduces Robert Maynard's metaphor of *social fault lines*—biases we carry without always seeing them.

Discuss:

1. What "fault lines" show up most often in media students consume?
2. How do educators model acknowledging bias without defensiveness?
3. Why is it harder to see bias in ourselves than in others?

Facilitator Note:
This conversation works best when framed as *shared human experience*, not moral failure.

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2. Comfort News and the Information Diet

Students (and adults) are often drawn to information that feels emotionally satisfying.

Discuss:

1. What does "comfort news" look like in your students' lives?
2. How do outrage and affirmation function similarly in feeds?
3. How might educators help students diversify their "information diet" without shaming them?

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3. Framing vs. Bias

The chapter distinguishes between *how stories are framed* and intentional bias.

Discuss:

1. How can two accurate stories still leave very different impressions?
2. What role do headlines play in shaping perception?
3. How can students learn to notice framing without dismissing journalism altogether?

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4. Audience Bias and "That's Biased!"

Students often label news as biased when it conflicts with their beliefs.

Discuss:

1. How do students define "bias" in practice?
2. What classroom language helps students move from accusation to analysis?
3. How can educators help students separate *discomfort* from *unfairness*?

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5. Conspiratorial Thinking and Emotional Hooks

Conspiracy theories thrive on fear, repetition, and emotional clarity.

Discuss:

1. Why do conspiracy narratives feel reassuring during uncertainty?
2. What emotional needs do they meet?
3. How can educators teach skepticism without ridicule or dismissal?

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6. AI Bias and Human Choices

AI systems often amplify existing inequities rather than erase them.

Discuss:

1. Why does AI feel objective even when it isn't?
2. How can students learn to ask better questions about data, training, and design?
3. Why is AI bias a civic issue, not just a technical one?

Try This Tomorrow: Classroom-Ready Moves

🧠 5-Minute Activity: *Bias or Frame?*

Show a single headline and ask:

1. What facts are present?
2. What perspective is emphasized?
3. What might another frame highlight instead?

No debate. Just observation.

⏸ The "Cognitive Pause" Routine

Teach students to pause before reacting by asking:

1. What's my first reaction?
2. What evidence is actually presented?
3. What might I be missing?

Revisit weekly to build habit, not perfection.

🔍 Conspiracy Speed Bump

When a questionable claim appears, ask:

1. Who's behind this?
2. What's the evidence?
3. What do other reliable sources say?

Frame it as **curiosity**, not correction.

Optional Group Activity: *Design a Balanced Information Diet*

Educators work in small groups to design:

1. one "comfort" source
2. one "challenge" source
3. one "verification" habit

Discuss how this model could be adapted for students.

Reflection for Educators

Invite individual or group reflection:

1. Where do my own biases show up most often?
2. How do I respond when students challenge information emotionally?
3. What routines help keep conversations respectful and grounded in evidence?

Takeaway Thought

Bias is not something we eliminate.
It's something we learn to recognize, question, and manage.

Before We Go Further: Classroom Norms for Navigating News, Bias, and Belief

News literacy work asks students to do something deeply human: make sense of a complicated world while managing strong feelings, identity, and uncertainty. When we explore misinformation, AI-generated content, bias, and conspiracy theories, the *content* matters—but so do the *conditions* we create for learning.

This brief guide helps you establish classroom norms that make it possible to discuss sensitive topics with curiosity, care, and intellectual rigor. Think of these norms as the "seatbelts" for hard conversations: not restrictive, but protective—so students can take healthy risks, practice civic dialogue, and build stronger thinking habits.

Why norms matter here

Students are more likely to:

1. **pause before sharing** questionable information,
2. **evaluate claims** instead of reacting to them,
3. **listen across difference** without shutting down,
4. and **disagree respectfully** when they know what respectful disagreement looks like.

Norms don't eliminate tension—but they *channel* it into learning.

Core Conversation Norms

1) We critique ideas, not people.

1. **Try:** "I'm not sure the evidence supports that claim."
2. **Avoid:** "That's stupid," "Only an idiot would believe that."

2) We lead with curiosity, not certainty.

Curiosity is a superpower in news literacy.

1. **Try:** "What makes you think that?" "What's the source?" "What would change your mind?"

3) We ask: *Who's behind it? What's the evidence? What do other sources say?*

Make this a shared reflex. Post it. Repeat it. Celebrate it.

4) We separate *impact* from *intent.*

A student may not intend harm, but impact still matters.

1. **Try:** "Let's pause—how might that land for someone else?"

5) We use a "pause button" before we share or respond.

If a claim triggers a strong emotion (anger, fear, triumph, disgust), we slow down.

1. **Teacher line:** "Strong feelings are a signal: time to verify."

6) We don't "pile on."

If someone is corrected, we don't turn it into public shaming. We treat correction as learning, not punishment.

7) We can disagree—and still belong here.

Belonging is not earned by having the "right" opinion. Belonging comes from how we engage.

8) We name uncertainty honestly.

In the age of AI, some questions won't have a neat answer in the moment.

1. **Try:** "We don't know yet." "Let's gather better evidence."

What This Looks Like in Practice

Discussion Moves Students Can Use

Post these as "sentence starters" or keep them on desk cards:

1. "What's the strongest evidence for that?"
2. "What source would you trust most on this—and why?"
3. "Is this news, opinion, advertising, or something else?"
4. "What context might be missing?"
5. "Could there be another explanation?"

6. "What do credible sources across perspectives say?"
7. "How might this message be framed differently?"

Teacher Moves That Keep Conversations Productive

1. **Press for evidence:** "Where did we learn that? Can we trace it upstream?"
2. **Invite multiple viewpoints:** "What might someone else notice here?"
3. **Slow the pace:** "Let's take 30 seconds of quiet thinking before we respond."
4. **Reframe heat into inquiry:** "That's a strong claim. What would we need to verify it?"
5. **Protect dignity:** "We correct ideas here, not people."

When a Conversation Gets Heated: A Simple Protocol

Step 1: Pause.
"Let's take a breath. I'm going to pause us."

Step 2: Name what's happening (neutrally).
"I'm noticing this is bringing up strong feelings and assumptions."

Step 3: Return to the norms + the evidence questions.
"Let's go back to: Who's behind it? What's the evidence? What do other sources say?"

Step 4: Choose a reset option (your call).

1. **Quick-write reset (2 minutes):** "What do I think? What do I know? What do I need to verify?"
2. **Small-group reset:** Students discuss with a partner using sentence starters.
3. **Parking lot:** Save the topic for a structured follow-up lesson with sources ready.

Step 5: Close with reflection.
"What did we do well as a learning community? What can we do better next time?"

A 10-Minute Norm-Setting Routine You Can Use Tomorrow

1. **Prompt:** "What makes discussions about news, politics, or belief hard?" (Think–Pair–Share)
2. **Create a class anchor chart:** "What helps us feel safe and respected when we disagree?"
3. **Introduce the Core Conversation Norms** (above) as your "starting set."

4. **Co-sign the norms:** Students initial a poster, add one norm of their own, or vote on the top five.
5. **Practice with a low-stakes example:** Use a silly viral claim or a nonpolitical misinformation example and run the three evidence questions.

This routine builds buy-in and turns norms into habits.

A Note on Neutrality and Care

News literacy is not about telling students what to believe. It's about helping them learn **how to know**—how to evaluate claims, seek evidence, and communicate responsibly.

At the same time, respectful discussion does not require us to treat all claims as equally valid. A classroom committed to truth-seeking prioritizes:

1. **evidence over volume,**
2. **verification over virality,**
3. **reasoning over rhetoric,**
4. **human dignity over "winning."**

Reflection for Educators

1. Which norm will be hardest for your students—and why?
2. What will you do when a claim is repeated confidently but lacks evidence?
3. How will you protect student dignity while also protecting accuracy?
4. What routines can you build so verification becomes automatic?

Chapter 6 Discussion Guide

News Literacy, STEM, and Global Competence

Big Idea at a Glance

This chapter makes the case that news literacy is not an "add-on," but a **core thinking skill** that strengthens STEM learning and global competence. When students learn to analyze scientific claims, data, and global issues through a news literacy lens, they become better problem solvers, more ethical innovators, and more empathetic global citizens.

Use these prompts to help educators connect the chapter's ideas to their own classrooms, curricula, and communities.

Discussion Starters (Educator-Facing)

1. News Literacy as a STEM Skill

1. In what ways do students already encounter *science through news* (headlines, social media posts, viral videos, AI-generated summaries)?
2. Where have you seen students struggle to distinguish between **peer-reviewed science**, **preliminary research**, and **sensationalized claims**?
3. How does the GLAD framework (Get past clickbait, Look for crazy claims, Analyze sources, Determine outside expert opinions) align with scientific thinking you already teach?

Facilitator tip: Ask participants to bring a recent science-related headline and identify which GLAD steps students would need most.

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2. Data, AI, and Trust

1. How does AI change the way scientific data is collected, analyzed, and communicated to the public?
2. Where might AI *support* scientific understanding—and where might it distort or oversimplify it?
3. What responsibility do educators have to help students question **how data is framed**, not just whether it is accurate?

Connection point: This is a natural bridge back to Chapters 2 and 4 (news judgment + AI).

3. Global Competence and Perspective

1. How does news literacy help students understand global STEM issues such as climate change, public health, or access to clean water?
2. What risks arise when global issues are taught without sufficient cultural or political context?
3. How can news literacy help students recognize whose voices are included—or missing—in global science stories?

Prompt for reflection:

"What story does this data tell—and whose story is it?"

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4. Storytelling as Part of STEM Learning

1. How does asking students to *communicate* STEM solutions (through PSAs, infographics, or presentations) deepen their understanding?
2. What changes when students see themselves not just as problem-solvers, but as **communicators and advocates**?
3. How might news literacy practices help students avoid oversimplification when telling stories about complex global problems?

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5. Interdisciplinary Collaboration

1. Where do natural partnerships already exist between STEM, ELA, social studies, and library/media programs in your school?
2. What barriers make cross-curricular collaboration difficult—and what small steps could lower those barriers?
3. How might shared projects tied to the SDGs create common ground across disciplines?

Try This Tomorrow: Practical Classroom Moves

Option 1: Science Headline Audit (15–20 minutes)

1. Bring in 2–3 recent science headlines.

2. Ask students:
    1. What claim is being made?
    2. What evidence is cited?
    3. Who is quoted—and who is not?
    4. What questions remain unanswered?
3. Follow up by comparing coverage from multiple outlets.

Option 2: Data + Story Exercise

1. Give students a dataset related to a global issue (climate, health, energy).
2. Ask them to:
    1. Create one *accurate* headline.
    2. Create one *misleading* headline.
3. Discuss how framing affects public understanding.

Option 3: SDG Media Mini-Project

1. Students choose one SDG connected to your content area.
2. They create a short news-style artifact (article, video, infographic).
3. Require a **transparency note** explaining:
    1. Sources used
    2. Any AI tools involved
    3. Choices made about framing

Reflection for Educators

1. Where might news literacy strengthen STEM learning rather than compete with it?
2. How can we help students hold both **technical accuracy** and **human impact** at the same time?
3. What does it look like to teach science and technology in a way that promotes **global responsibility**, not just innovation?
4. How can we model curiosity and humility when teaching complex global issues with no easy answers?

Optional Extension for Book Groups or PD

Invite participants to redesign **one existing STEM lesson** by adding:

1. one news literacy question,
2. one global perspective,
3. and one opportunity for students to communicate their thinking publicly.

Chapter 7 Discussion Guide

Emerging Careers in Journalism, Media, and AI

Big Idea at a Glance

Chapter 7 reframes news literacy as **career readiness**: the skills students build through reporting, verification, publishing, and ethical communication transfer to journalism *and* to fast-growing pathways in media, AI, and digital storytelling. The chapter also underscores a crucial truth: when students publish, they don't just "practice writing"—they practice **civic participation**.

Discussion Starters (Educator-Facing)

1) "Journalism is struggling… so why teach it?"

1. How does this chapter shift the narrative from "journalism is dying" to "communication work is evolving"?
2. Where do you already see students doing "journalism" informally (TikTok explainers, podcasts, sports recaps, activism posts, meme commentary)?
3. What's one way you could frame journalism skills as **future-proof** rather than job-specific?

Prompt to use in PD:

"What would we lose in a school community if no one learned to report what's happening here?"

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2) Transferable skills beyond the newsroom

1. Which "journalism skills" align most naturally with your school's priorities (writing, speaking/listening, research, SEL, civic learning, media production)?
2. Where do you see gaps that journalism practice could fill (deadline habits, feedback resilience, evidence use, audience awareness)?
3. How might you make those skills visible to students as "marketable" without turning learning into pure job training?

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3) Publishing as empowerment (and accountability)

1. What changes for students when writing moves from "for the teacher" to "for an authentic audience"?
2. How do you currently manage the tension between:
    1. student voice and student safety,
    2. real-world impact and developmental readiness,
    3. honest reporting and school/community pressure?
3. What structures would help students learn that mistakes can be corrected publicly and responsibly?

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4) Student press, censorship, and the school context

This chapter raises a practical and sensitive reality: student journalists can face pressure, pushback, and sometimes censorship.

1. What do educators in your setting need to understand about student speech protections in school-sponsored contexts?
2. How can schools support student voice while maintaining a safe learning environment?
3. What would "support" look like if a student team reported on a controversial issue responsibly and still faced backlash?

Facilitator move: Keep this values-centered and policy-aware: "How do we protect students as learners while honoring the role of student journalism in civic life?"

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5) Youth activism + journalism: a powerful combo

1. How do you distinguish (for students) between:
    1. reporting,
    2. advocacy,

3. commentary,
4. and misinformation?

2. What norms help students engage big issues without sliding into performative outrage, dehumanization, or oversimplification?
3. What does ethical, evidence-based youth voice look like in your school culture?

Try This Tomorrow: Practical Classroom Moves

Option A: "Careers Hidden in a News Story" (15 minutes)

Pick one news story (local is best). Ask students to identify roles behind it:

1. reporter, editor, photographer/videographer, data analyst, fact-checker, audience engagement, social producer, graphic designer, podcast producer, translator, product/UX, AI tool builder, moderator/community manager.

Then ask:

1. Which role would you enjoy?
2. What skill would you need to grow?

Option B: Micro-Reporting Sprint (one class period)

Students produce a tiny, publishable item:

1. a 200-word "straight news account," or
2. a one-minute audio update, or
3. a photo + caption + sourcing note.

Required elements:

1. 2 sources (at least one human)
2. one verification step
3. a transparency line: "How we know this is true…"

Option C: "Fairy Tale Newsroom" (elementary + instant joy)

Students retell a nursery rhyme/fairytale as a news report:

1. headline + Who/What/When/Where/Why
2. one quote ("Little Red Riding Hood said…")
3. one "fact-check" moment (What evidence do we have?)

Optional extension: research the origin of the tale (primary-source lite).

Discussion Prompts for PLCs and Book Groups

Building pathways and partnerships

1. Which opportunities listed (PBS SRL, MediaWise, KQED Youth Media) match your school's capacity and student interests?
2. What's one partnership you could realistically pilot this semester: a local newsroom visit, a remote Q&A with a journalist, a community "beat" project?
3. How could the library/media program serve as the publishing hub for cross-curricular reporting?

Making it safe to publish

1. What do students need *before* they publish publicly (privacy, bylines, permissions, commenting policies, doxxing awareness)?
2. What classroom norms (from your "Before We Go Further" guide) are essential prerequisites for student journalism?

Reflection for Educators

1. Where in your curriculum could students practice *authentic* reporting or storytelling (even in small ways)?
2. How might publishing shift a student's identity from "student" to "contributor"?
3. What is one guardrail you want in place so student voice can be bold **and** responsible?

Chapter 8 Discussion Guide

Integrating News Literacy in Every Classroom

Big Idea at a Glance

This chapter shifts from *why news literacy matters* to *how it becomes sustainable*: through planning, collaboration, and a flexible Action Plan structure that works for "do nows," mini-units, projects, or full courses. The heart of the chapter is a repeatable design move: **start with your learners, then align purpose, standards, inquiry, and authentic products.**

Discussion Starters (Educator-Facing)

1) From "add-on" to "built-in"

1. Where does news literacy already live in your curriculum—even if you've never named it that?
2. What's the difference between "a one-off media lesson" and a coherent, yearlong integration plan?
3. What's one small routine (5–15 minutes) that could make news literacy a *habit*?

PLC prompt:

"If we only have time for one news literacy move per week, what's the highest-leverage move?"

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2) The Action Plan as an instructional design "shortcut"

The template is basically a friendly design engine:
Learners → Purpose → Goal → Standards → Driving Question → Experience → Product → Tools → Assessment → Next steps

1. Which section of the Action Plan will be easiest for teachers to fill out quickly?
2. Which section will require the most support (often: standards alignment, assessment, or authentic product)?
3. How might librarians, tech integrators, and coaches reduce the planning load for classroom teachers?

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3) Driving questions that actually drive

You give a strong example:

"How do news outlets' choices influence our understanding of health discoveries…?"

1. What makes a driving question "sticky" for students?
2. How can driving questions stay inquiry-based without becoming politically loaded or polarizing?
3. What routines help students return to the driving question over time (exit tickets, claim-evidence reasoning, reflection loops)?

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4) "Look for the helpers" as a sustainability strategy

1. Who are the natural partners in your ecosystem (library, STEM, social studies, ELA, counselors, community experts, local journalists)?
2. What's one collaboration model that works in your setting:
    1. co-planned lesson,
    2. shared rubric,
    3. common "do now,"
    4. rotating mini-unit,
    5. showcase night?

Practical prompt:

"What could we co-create once that saves everyone time all year?"

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5) Assessment: measuring *thinking*, not just correctness

Chapter 8 promises assessment ideas—so your discussion can prime educators to assess growth in:

1. credibility reasoning,
2. source evaluation,
3. bias detection,
4. evidence use,
5. verification habits,
6. civil discourse.
7. What does proficiency look like at different grade levels?

8. Which assessments can be "lightweight" (quick checks) vs. "heavyweight" (projects/portfolios)?
9. How do we assess process (verification steps, sourcing notes) rather than only final products?

Try This Tomorrow: 3 Low-Lift Integration Moves

Option A: Weekly "Do Now" (5–10 minutes)

Students respond to one prompt:

1. What's the claim?
2. What evidence is provided?
3. What would you verify next?
4. What's missing?

Teacher hack: keep a shared bank of prompts by discipline.

Option B: "Credibility Snapshot" (10 minutes)

Use a short article/clip and ask students to rate credibility **with reasons**:

1. Who's behind it?
2. What's the evidence?
3. What do other sources say?

They must cite at least one indicator (author expertise, sourcing, data transparency, etc.).

Option C: Add a "Transparency Line" to any assignment

Require one sentence at the end of a product:

1. "Sources I relied on most were…"
2. "One thing I couldn't verify was…"
3. "A potential bias or limitation in my information was…"

This single move trains ethical communication across subjects.

Discussion Prompts for PLCs and Leadership Teams

Building a school-wide approach

1. If your school had a "minimum viable news literacy experience," what would every student get each year?
2. What would be consistent across grades (common language, routines, rubrics)?
3. What would vary by discipline (sources, products, standards)?

Obstacles (and how to plan around them)

Your chapter wisely asks teachers to anticipate roadblocks.

1. Time is the big one—what gets trimmed or swapped, not added?
2. What guardrails are needed for controversy, misinformation, and emotionally charged topics?
3. How do we ensure opportunity (reading levels, multilingual supports, accessible tools)?

Quick "Chapter 8 Teacher Takeaway Box"

If you only do three things from this chapter:

1. Start small with a recurring routine (weekly "do now").
2. Use a driving question that connects to students' lives and your content.
3. Require transparency—make students show their sourcing and reasoning.

Reflection Questions (Student Impact Lens)

1. How will students' relationship to information change if they practice one verification habit weekly?
2. How does news literacy support equity and belonging (who is heard, whose stories get told, whose data gets counted)?
3. What does an "ethical digital citizen" look like in your classroom in 2026?

Closing Thoughts: Progress, Not Perfection

Teaching news literacy in the age of AI is not about mastering every tool, predicting every technological shift, or having the "right" answer at the ready.

It's about **habits**.

It's about helping students slow down, ask better questions, and stay grounded in evidence, empathy, and context—even when the information environment feels loud, fast, or emotionally charged.

If this guide has done its job, it hasn't added more to your plate. Instead, it has helped you:

1. Notice places where news literacy already lives in your curriculum
2. Name thinking moves you may already be modeling instinctively
3. Give students language for questioning without cynicism
4. Create small, repeatable moments that build confidence and agency over time

You don't need a perfect plan. You need a **starting point**.

Maybe that's a two-minute credibility check.
Maybe it's a classroom norm that invites curiosity over confrontation.
Maybe it's letting students create something that feels real and public, even in a small way.

Wherever you begin, know this: **news literacy is a long game**. Its impact often shows up later—in the pause before a share, in a question asked instead of an argument, in a student who chooses to verify rather than react.

Those moments matter.

As educators, leaders and librarians, we are not just teaching students how to consume information. We are helping them decide **who they want to be** in a complex, connected world.

Thank you for doing this work.
Thank you for staying curious.
And thank you for believing that thoughtful, informed citizens are worth the time it takes to teach.

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If you'd like to continue the conversation, explore additional resources, or share how you're using this guide, you can find more at my website, **drcathycollins.com** and through my Substack newsletter, **Smarter News Literacy in an AI World**. Feel free to reach out through email as well! My email: newslit@drcathycollins.com

You're not doing this alone.

Appendix

Facilitator Guide: How to Use This Book for a Book Study

This discussion guide was designed to support **flexible, educator-centered book studies**, professional learning communities, and facilitated conversations. It can be used in formal PD settings or informal learning groups and adapted for librarians, classroom teachers, instructional coaches, and education leaders.

You do not need to read the book cover to cover to begin. Many groups choose to focus on a few chapters most relevant to their context and return to others later.

This guide works best when it is treated not as a script, but as a **conversation catalyst**.

Recommended Group Norms

Before beginning, consider establishing a few shared agreements:

1. Curiosity over certainty
2. Evidence over assumption
3. Reflection over reaction
4. Respect for lived experience
5. Permission to pause or pass

These norms help create the psychological safety necessary for meaningful conversations about news, bias, belief, and AI.

Suggested Structure for a Book Study Session

A typical session (45–75 minutes) might include:

1. **Opening Reflection (5–10 minutes)**
   A short prompt, personal reflection, or headline check-in
2. **Chapter Discussion (25–40 minutes)**
   Use 3–5 discussion questions rather than trying to cover everything

3. **Try This Tomorrow Share-Out (10–15 minutes)**
   Invite participants to choose one small strategy to test before the next meeting
4. **Closing Reflection (5 minutes)**
   What shifted? What questions remain?

Facilitator Checklist

Use this checklist to prepare for each session.

Before the Session

1. ☐ Review the chapter snapshot and discussion questions
2. ☐ Select 3–5 questions aligned to your group's goals
3. ☐ Decide which "Try This Tomorrow" activity to highlight
4. ☐ Prepare one short current example or headline (optional)
5. ☐ Confirm session norms and timing

During the Session

1. ☐ Open with a grounding prompt
2. ☐ Encourage multiple voices and perspectives
3. ☐ Allow productive discomfort without forcing consensus
4. ☐ Keep the focus on habits and practices, not "right answers"

After the Session

1. ☐ Invite participants to try one small classroom move
2. ☐ Capture reflections or takeaways
3. ☐ Preview the next session's focus

Book Study Pacing Options

This guide is intentionally flexible. Choose the pacing that best fits your context.

Option 1: Quick-Start Series (3 Sessions)

Best for short PD cycles or introductory book studies

1. **Session 1:** Chapters 1–2
   Foundations of news literacy and the information environment
2. **Session 2:** Chapters 3–5
   Verification, bias, belief, and conspiracy thinking
3. **Session 3:** Chapters 6–8
   Cross-curricular integration, careers, and action planning

Option 2: Deep Dive (6–8 Sessions)

Best for PLCs, librarians, or instructional teams

1. One chapter per session
2. Allow time for classroom experimentation between meetings
3. Build reflection into each session

Option 3: Pick-and-Choose Pathway

Best for mixed-discipline groups

Suggested combinations:

1. **ELA / Social Studies:** Chapters 1, 3, 5, 7
2. **STEM Educators:** Chapters 1, 4, 6
3. **Librarians / Coaches:** Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8

Facilitator At-a-Glance

Purpose:
Support thoughtful, practical conversations about news literacy in an AI-influenced world

Audience:
Educators, librarians, instructional leaders, and school communities

Time Commitment:
Flexible — 30 to 90 minutes per session

What This Is:

1. A conversation guide

2. A reflection tool
3. A practical classroom resource

What This Is Not:

1. A compliance checklist
2. A one-size-fits-all curriculum
3. A test-prep framework

Key Moves to Emphasize:

1. Slow down
2. Ask better questions
3. Check before sharing
4. Notice emotional reactions
5. Practice evidence-based curiosity

Closing Note for Facilitators

You do not need to be a journalist, AI expert, or fact-checking authority to facilitate this guide.

Your role is to:

1. Hold space
2. Ask good questions
3. Model curiosity
4. Normalize uncertainty

Progress matters more than perfection.

If your group leaves with **one new habit**, **one new question**, or **one small shift in practice**, the conversation has done its job.

Optional Next Steps

1. Invite participants to share classroom artifacts
2. Create a shared "news literacy norms" document
3. Revisit the guide later in the year
4. Extend the conversation with families or students