It Was Just a Joke: check your reading.

Six questions on one real news article. Each uses a different reading skill, from finding a fact to judging what to trust.

READ THIS FIRST

AI-generated political videos are more about memes and money than persuading and deceiving

Lisa Fazio, Vanderbilt University · The Conversation · December 11, 2025
https://theconversation.com/ai-generated-political-videos-are-more-about-memes-and-money-than-persuading-and-deceiving-268977

How to use it. Read the whole article first. Keep it open while you answer, the way you would at the kitchen table. The questions go roughly from easier to harder. The levels are a guide to how hard each kind of task is on the international adult literacy test, not a score. The answer key is on the last page.

DECODE LEVEL 1

1. In paragraph 14, the author calls social media "a fun-house mirror." What does she mean?

LOCATE LEVEL 1 TO 2

2. An audit posted AI-generated images and videos across five platforms. How many did it post, and how many were properly labeled as AI?

RESTATE LEVEL 2

3. In one or two sentences of your own, what is the article's main point?

INFER LEVEL 3

4. The author says nobody was meant to believe the fighter-jet video really happened. Based on the article, what can a video still do even when nobody believes it?

COMPARE LEVEL 3

5. Paragraphs 10 and 11 compare the 2020 election with today. What is the difference?

EVALUATE LEVEL 4 AND UP

6. Paragraph 2 contains one sentence that is the author's own interpretation, not a documented fact. Which sentence, what word gives it away, and how could you check it?

Answer key

1. Decode. That it shows us a distorted picture of the world: the version we want to see, or the version that grabs our attention and outrage, instead of an accurate one.

Where to look: Paragraph 14

2. Locate. More than 500 were posted, and fewer than one-third were properly labeled. Even posts made with the platforms' own AI tools were often missed.

Where to look: Paragraph 15

3. Restate. Most AI political videos today are obviously fake and are not meant to fool anyone. They work like the rest of social media: entertainment, a way to show which side you are on, some persuasion, and a way to make money, and they spread because they stir emotion.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2, 3, 16 and 17

4. Infer. It can still carry a message and show whose side you are on. Because it stirs emotion, it spreads further, and strong emotion makes people worse at judging what is real. Fake does not mean harmless or meaningless.

Where to look: Paragraphs 2 and 4 to 7

5. Compare. In 2020, people took real things they did not understand, like Sharpie pens on ballots, and treated them as evidence of fraud. Now AI tools let people make the "evidence" themselves.

Where to look: Paragraphs 10 and 11

6. Evaluate. "He likely did it to express his feelings about the protest and to create an in-joke with his followers." The word "likely" marks it as her guess about his reason. You could check what he or the White House said about the video, keeping in mind that a stated reason is also only their account.

Where to look: Paragraph 2

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