

Real or Deepfake? Spotting AI-Generated Videos

Grades 6-8 Media Literacy | 40-Minute Lesson Plan

1. OVERVIEW



Students will analyze short video clips to look for clues that suggest AI generation. They will discuss their observations and defend their judgments using evidence. Students will also learn a simple verification routine to use before trusting or sharing media they encounter online.

Research shows people are often much more confident in spotting deepfakes than they actually are (Köbis et al., 2021, iScience), so students need habits of verification, not just gut instinct.

2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- Students will identify common visual and audio artifacts of AI-generated video.
- Students will apply a verification routine before trusting or sharing content.
- Students will justify real-vs-fake judgments with evidence-based reasoning.

3. MATERIALS



- Projector
- 4 short video clips selected by the teacher
- Printed student worksheet
- “How to Spot a Deepfake” reference chart

Clip selection criteria:

- 3 AI-generated clips and 1 real clip
- 15–30 seconds each
- low-stakes, fun topics such as animals or sports stunts
- play them as screen recordings so titles, usernames, and comments do not reveal the answers

4. LESSON FLOW



A. Hook (5 min)

Teacher script/instructions: Play one obviously impossible AI clip, such as a cat performing an Olympic dive. Replay in slow motion. Ask: “How do you know?” Capture a few student observations.



B. Mini-Lesson (8 min)

Introduce the heading “6 detection signals”

- malformed hands/fingers
- lighting/shadow mismatches
- hair and edge blur
- lip-sync drift
- physics violations
- too-smooth skin texture



NOTE: These clues are useful, but they keep disappearing as AI models improve. Verification habits matter more than artifact-spotting alone.



C. Core Activity (15 min):

See page 2 for full directions.



Face swap? Extra clues

- face-boundary blending or warping
- face/neck skin-tone mismatch
- face looks sharp while the background or hair looks unusually soft
- facial lighting does not match the rest of the scene



Clip source ideas

- AI clips: use short screen-recorded examples from official showcase or demo channels for AI video tools.
- Real clips: choose simple nature, animal, or sports footage.
- Keep all examples low-stakes and age-appropriate.

Real or Deepfake? Spotting AI-Generated Videos

Grades 6-8 Media Literacy | 40-Minute Lesson Plan

4. LESSON FLOW (continued)



C. Core Activity: “3 Fakes, 1 Real” (15 min)

- Students watch all 4 clips and independently write whether each one is real or fake, using evidence from what they notice.
- Use this sentence stem exactly: “I think video #___ is real/fake because ___.”
- Four-corners debate: Each corner of the room represents one clip as the one students believe is real.
- Students move to the corner matching their choice, compare evidence with peers, and defend their reasoning.
- Invite a few students from each corner to share why they chose that clip.



D. Verification Routine (7 min)

Teach the 3-step habit

- 1 **Pause before reacting.**
- 2 **Reverse image search a key frame** (for example, Google Lens or TinEye).
- 3 **Use lateral reading:** open a new tab and search what other sources say.



NOTE: When artifact clues are unclear, verification routines are the safer way to check whether something is trustworthy.



E. Exit Ticket (5 min)

Students complete a quick exit ticket answering:

- One thing that surprised me today was...
- One habit I will use this week is...

5. DISCUSSION SENTENCE FRAMES

- “I noticed ___, which makes me think the video is ___.”
- “One piece of evidence is ___.”
- “I agree/disagree with ___ because ___.”
- “Another possibility is ___.”
- “Before I share this, I should ___ first.”

Real or Deepfake? Spotting AI-Generated Videos

Grades 6-8 Media Literacy | 40-Minute Lesson Plan

6. DIFFERENTIATION



Support for struggling learners:

- Provide a simplified checklist with 3 clues to watch for.
- Allow partner discussion before whole-class sharing.
- Pause clips more than once.



Extension for advanced students:

- Ask students to compare artifact-spotting with verification routines and explain which approach is more reliable as AI tools improve.

7. TEACHER NOTES



Sensitive Content Advisory

Preview all clips before class. Keep examples low-stakes and fun for this age group. Avoid showing harmful, sexual, violent, political, or otherwise disturbing deepfake content to students. The goal is media literacy practice, not shock value.

- Choose clips that are engaging but emotionally low-risk.
- Remind students that being fooled at first is normal; the goal is careful reasoning, not perfection.

8. STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Standard	How this lesson aligns
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Students evaluate information presented in video form and interpret visual details as evidence when deciding whether content is real or AI-generated.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1	Students participate in collaborative discussions, build on others' ideas, and clearly justify their own reasoning during the debate activity.
ISTE Digital Citizen (1.2)	Students practice responsible digital behavior by pausing before sharing and considering the trustworthiness of online media.
ISTE Knowledge Constructor (1.3)	Students use simple research strategies, including reverse image search and lateral reading, to verify information from digital sources.

Teacher tip: The most important takeaway is not spotting every fake, but building a habit of verification.