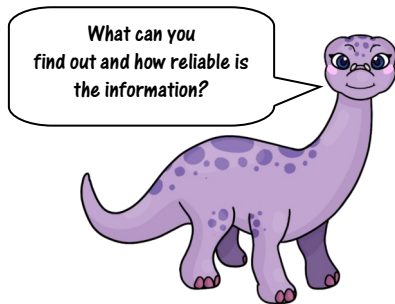


Brontosaurus Learning

Making science fun!



Challenge!

Tree Octopus

What you will need:

- A computer with internet access
- Somewhere to take notes

What you will do:

- 1 Research the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus. You should try to find your own information, but you might like to start here: www.zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/
- 2 Make sure you cover the following areas:
 - Appearance:** What it looks like
 - Habitat:** Where it likes to live
 - Location:** Where in the world can you find it?
 - Is it endangered?** Why or why not?
 - Other interesting information:** What else can you tell us about it?



What Next?

This is the important part: You need to find the source of your information. This means you must write down where your information came from, including the book or web site you read and who wrote it. Then you need to answer these questions about its credibility. Credibility is how likely the source is to be telling the truth.

- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much do you trust this information? Why?
- How much do photos help with credibility?
- Do links to other sites help with credibility?
- How many different sources of information did you find?
- What other things help you to believe information is correct?

Extra Challenge:

- Use the same questions to research the Mountain Walrus. You can start here: web.archive.org/web/20020124024407/http://www.end.com/~jynx/walrus/. Don't forget to complete the credibility questions too.

TEACHING NOTES:

Brontosaurus Learning Challenge 03

Topic: Research Skills

Key Concepts:

- ◆ Consider the source

Resources:

- Access to the internet
- Notepaper, pencil

Lesson Notes:

This challenge is designed to trick your students. It uses an entirely false web site about an entirely imaginary animal, the tree octopus.

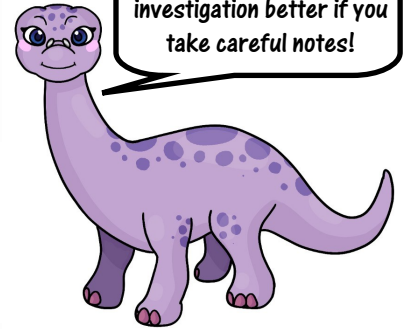
The challenge requires students to research the tree octopus with the assumption that they will not initially question the source of the information, so you must allow them to work through the challenge without giving them clues! After they have looked at the information, the questions about the credibility of the source should start them thinking, but do not be surprised if they are still convinced the site is legitimate.

At the end of the lesson you will need to have a class discussion to reveal the truth, then discuss how we know it is a joke site, eg: No reliable sources like encyclopedias, it's a fake organisation (Green Peas) etc. You will also need to discuss how it is a very clever fake – it looks professional, there are photos, the language is appropriate etc. This may also open the door to a discussion of how photos can be altered, including airbrushing of photos of models so we can't see what they really look like.

Remember that you need to support the students in this process – we are tricking them, but be sure that they understand that it is in fun and not critical of their abilities. Keep the discussion fun, even though the topic is serious.

I usually finish by brainstorming a list of ways to check the credibility of the source, then type it up and give a copy to the students to refer to when they are doing research, plus put one on display near the computers.

Investigation Record



Experiment Title:

Scientist (that's you!):

Materials: What will I need?

Investigation—what am I going to do in this experiment?



Diagrams are a great idea!

Hypothesis: What I think will happen:

Observation: What I SAW happen:

Diagrams are a great idea!



From my investigation I learnt:

Great work scientist!