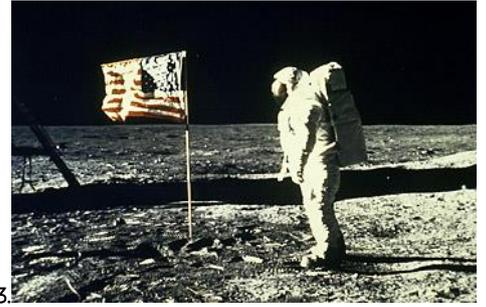


Conspiracy Theories – Introduction - Teacher's Notes

What do you know about the following events:



1. **Assassination of John F. Kennedy**, mortal shooting of John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, as he rode in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. His accused killer was Lee Harvey Oswald, a former U.S. Marine who had embraced Marxism and defected for a time to the Soviet Union. Oswald never stood trial for murder, because, while being transferred after having been taken into custody, he was shot and killed by Jack Ruby, a distraught Dallas nightclub owner.

2. **September 11 attacks**, also called **9/11 attacks**, series of airline hijackings and suicide attacks committed in 2001 by 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda against targets in the United States, the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history. The attacks against New York City and Washington, D.C., caused extensive death and destruction and triggered an enormous U.S. effort to combat terrorism. Some 2,750 people were killed in New York, 184 at the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania (where one of the hijacked planes crashed after the passengers attempted to retake the plane); all 19 terrorists died (see Researcher's Note: September 11 attacks). Police and fire departments in New York were especially hard-hit: hundreds had rushed to the scene of the attacks, and more than 400 police officers and firefighters were killed.

3. **The moon landing** Apollo 11, U.S. spaceflight during which commander Neil Armstrong and lunar module pilot Edwin ("Buzz") Aldrin, Jr., on July 20, 1969, became the first people to land on the Moon and walk the lunar surface. Apollo 11 was the culmination of the Apollo program and a massive national commitment by the United States to beat the Soviet Union in putting people on the Moon.

(summaries taken from <https://www.britannica.com/>)

- ☞ How much of what you know about these events/stories do you believe to be true and how much do you think could be fake?
Students can talk about what they know of the stories both factual and from the conspiracy theories that are widely known.
- ☞ Why do you think these stories are subject to three of the most enduring Conspiracy Theories?
All three stories have a great historical significance and are complex stories involving governments and authorities, so highly susceptible to accusations of cover-up stories and fake evidence.
- ☞ What other conspiracy theories have you heard of?

Some possible responses – the first three in this list are quite recent examples:

- QAnon
- Flat Earthers
- COVID conspiracy theories
- Area 51 and Roswell – Aliens/UFOs
- Paul Is Dead
- The Illuminati/Secret Societies Control the World
- The Reptilian Elite
- Holocaust Denial
- AIDS & the CIA

🔊 How would you define a Conspiracy Theory?

- *a theory that rejects the standard explanation for an event and instead credits a covert group or organization with carrying out a secret plot*
- *a belief that a particular unexplained event was caused by such a covert group*
- *the idea that many important political events or economic and social trends are the products of deceptive plots that are largely unknown to the general public*

Are they always based on real events?

As some of the examples of Conspiracy Theories given above show, some are about people (Paul McCartney, the Illuminati) more than events or places (Area 51, Roswell, Flat Earth)

Vocabulary

Compare these pairs of words. Are they synonyms? If not, how do we use them differently?

Rumour – Gossip

Misinformation - Fake news

Plot – Conspiracy

Although the meanings are close and they could be described as synonyms, there are differences in how we use these terms. Depending on the level of the student/s there are definitions from Cambridge Learners Dictionary below which you can give them after they've discussed their own ideas first. Or they can discuss with the teacher facilitating and eliciting examples that help explain the differences.

These are adjectives we can use to describe opinions or ideas. Put them into the chart according to whether you think they express moderate or extreme views. Try to identify and group together adjectives that have similar meanings

Preposterous
Plausible
Radical
Feasible

Credible
Outlandish
Far-fetched
Dangerous

Conventional
Logical
Accepted
Ridiculous

Absurd
Ludicrous
Rational
Reasonable

Neutral/Moderate	Extreme
<i>Plausible</i> <i>Feasible - could be true</i> <i>Credible</i> <i>Conventional - what most people believe</i> <i>Accepted</i> <i>Logical</i> <i>Rational - based on facts</i> <i>Reasonable</i>	<i>Preposterous</i> <i>Outlandish</i> <i>Far-fetched - difficult to believe, not likely to be true</i> <i>Ridiculous</i> <i>Absurd</i> <i>Ludicrous</i> <i>Radical</i> <i>Dangerous - strong opinions that go against the status quo</i>

Antonyms

Seven of these adjectives can take the opposite meaning by adding a prefix such as **un-**, **ir-**, **im-** or **il-**. Write down the adjectives with their correct prefixes:

unfeasible
unconventional
unreasonable

incredible
implausible

illogical
irrational

Definitions from Cambridge Learner's Dictionary:

RUMOUR - a fact that a lot of people are talking about although they do not know if it is true:

to spread rumours

to deny rumours

[+ (that)] *I heard a rumour that you were leaving.*

GOSSIP - conversation or reports about other people's private lives that might or might not be true:

an interesting piece of gossip

A gossip - someone who likes to talk about other people's private lives

To gossip – verb – to talk about other people's private lives

MISINFORMATION - wrong information, or the fact that people are misinformed:

There's a lot of misinformation about the disease that needs to be corrected.

information intended to deceive:

His election campaign was based on misinformation about the rival candidates.

FAKE NEWS - false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke:

There is concern about the power of fake news to affect election results.

PLOT - a secret plan made by several people to do something that is wrong, harmful, or not legal, especially to do damage to a person or a government:

The plot was discovered before it was carried out.

[+ to infinitive] *The police have foiled a plot to assassinate the president.*

Also - the story of a book, film, play, etc.

CONSPIRACY - the activity of secretly planning with other people to do something bad or illegal:

The three men are accused of conspiracy.

[+ to infinitive] *She has been charged with conspiracy to murder.*

I think there was a conspiracy to keep me off the committee.