

In France, School Lessons Ask: Which Twitter Post Should You Trust? | The New York Times

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VAULX-EN-VELIN, France — A group of teenagers recently swarmed into a room at Collège Henri Barbusse near Lyon, France, for a class typically dedicated to learning Spanish. But on that Wednesday, an unusual lesson awaited them.

Five posts from Twitter were up on the board. The assignment: Decipher whether they were trustworthy or suspect.

The ninth graders quickly focused on [a post](#) by the far-right politician Marine Le Pen, related to a headline-grabbing incident in France when a teenager had threatened a teacher. One student said Ms. Le Pen's post could be trusted because her account had been verified by Twitter. But Samia Houbiri, 15, piped up that Ms. Le Pen simply wanted attention.

"She picks a topic, she exaggerates things, and then people will say, 'She's right, I should vote for her,'" Ms. Houbiri said.

At the front of the class, Sandra Laffont, a journalist teaching the workshop, nodded and said, "Politicians may sometimes exaggerate reality because their goal is to convince people that their ideas are the right ones."

The class was part of a novel experiment by a government to work with journalists and educators to combat the spread of online misinformation. France is coordinating one of the world's largest national media and internet literacy efforts to teach students, starting as early as in middle school, how to spot junk information online.

[...]

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