

Student Discussion Worksheet

Directions: Answer the first set of questions, titled “Spider sense,” with your class. Then read the online *Science News* article “[News stories have caught spiders in a web of misinformation](#)” and answer the remaining questions as instructed by your teacher. A version of the article, “News stories give spiders a bum rap” appears in the September 24, 2022 issue of *Science News*.

Spider sense

1. When you think about spiders, how do you feel? What do you do when you see a spider?
2. What have you heard about spiders? Think about stories your friends or family have told you, urban legends you’ve heard, things you’ve read, etc.
3. What facts do you know about spiders? When you see a spider, do you know information about the species of spider you see?
4. Why do you feel and act the way you do around spiders? Is your reaction to a spider based on facts? How has the information gathered from others’ perceptions of spiders affected your own feelings toward them?

Know your info

1. What is information, and what is required for something to be considered information? What is misinformation?
2. Where does misinformation come from? How can it be harmful?
3. What does it mean to sensationalize something? How does sensationalizing relate to misinformation?
4. Why might people pass along misinformation? What are some impacts of the spread of misinformation?

Correcting misinformation

1. Look up a fact about spiders that you find interesting. Write two brief social media posts, one about the information you acquired and one that sensationalizes the information, creating misinformation.
2. Which post do you think would spread more readily on a social media platform? Explain.
3. Is there a way to hook your reader with the information you found about spiders without creating misinformation? Rewrite your post to accomplish this.
4. Have your feelings toward spiders changed? Why or why not? What will you do when you see a spider in the future?
5. When communicating about a topic, how can you avoid creating or spreading misinformation or sensationalizing information?

