A read-aloud for kids, parents and teachers

Read It Together

Where Was It Written Down?

What a source is, what only looks like one, and the most useful sentence in research

Last time the machine was sure and wrong. So here is the big question. How would we know?

Not by asking who feels sure. By finding where it was written down, by someone who was there or who studied it.

Forty-five minutes. A grown-up, a child or a class, and somewhere to look things up that is not the machine.

Step 1 · The starter · 5 min

Two claims on the board

Write the confident wrong answer from last time, or make a fresh one at the front. Beside it, write a true claim about the same thing.

Ask: which one is true? Then the real question: how would we know, without asking anyone in this room how sure they feel?

The answer we want: find where it was written down by someone who was there, or who studied it, and who can be named.

That place has a name. A source.

Check one claim as a class

Say the claim exactly. Not roughly. Exactly.

Find the source the grown-up brought: a book, an encyclopedia, a museum page, a printed sheet.

Compare. Does the source say the same thing?

Write down where you found it, so another person could find it too.

Do the four moves slowly and say each one out loud. This is the pattern for the next part.

Step 3 · Cards in pairs · 15 min

Five cards, three verdicts

Each pair gets a claim on a card. Some are true and easy to find. One is false and easy to catch. One is true but hard to find with what is in the room. One came from a chat machine, complete with a source that looks real.

Write three lines: the claim in your own words, what you found and where, and a verdict.

The verdicts: confirmed, contradicted, or could not find a source.

Do this together

The pair with the hard card will want to guess. Do not let them. "Could not find a source" is a full-marks answer. Say it yourself, out loud, at least once today.

Watch your words

Things that look like sources

Lots of things feel like proof and are not. Here are the ones that catch people out.

> Someone might say: Everybody knows it.
>
> **Lots of people agreeing is not a source. Where was it written down?**

> Someone might say: It has a million views.
>
> **A view count tells you it was popular, not that it was true.**

> Someone might say: I asked the machine again and it said yes.
>
> **That is not a second opinion. It is a second guess.**

The plenary · 10 min

The source that was not there

Ask the pair with the machine's card what happened when they looked for its source. Usually, it does not exist.

Why would a machine that predicts likely words produce a likely-looking source for a thing that is not there? You already know. It picked the words that usually come next.

Then ask the pair with the hard card to read their verdict aloud. "We could not find a source for that." Treat it as the best answer in the room. It is.

Next time · Plate 4

Whose words are these?

We have checked claims about the world. Next, claims about work. If a tool helped me write it, did I write it?

The same habit, turned around. Say exactly what was done, and by whom.

For the grown-up

Why this plate matters

Two failures pull in opposite directions. One is "everybody knows": treating agreement or popularity as evidence. A view count, a thumbs-up, a friend's certainty. None is a source.

The other is checking the machine against the machine. Asking it again, or asking whether it is sure. That is not a second opinion, it is a second guess.

The sentence "I could not find a source for that" needs to be modelled by you, out loud, without embarrassment. Children learn it by watching an adult say it.

Prepare the cards in advance, and keep the hard-to-source one hard. The lesson is built to make looking carefully, finding nothing, and saying so respectable.