

# Digital Citizenship

## Lesson Title: Post Reactions

### Middle School



#### Essential Question:

How do we evaluate, react and respond to posts on social media?

#### Materials:

- *OMG...* Handout

#### Procedure:

1. Begin by asking students the difference between reacting to something and responding to something. (Answer: react means to feel or act a certain way in response to something; respond means to answer or give a reply using words or actions.)
2. Discuss how students might react and respond to the following:
  - A person much bigger than you raises a fist at you.
  - A person with flowers extended approaches you.
  - Someone says, "That's a nice outfit."
  - Your teacher hands your test back with a big, red ZERO on the top.
  - The principal calls you into the office.

Does everyone have the same reactions and responses? Why or why not? Did you have to stop and think about how you should respond to any of the above situations? Why or why not?

3. Post the picture and quotation of Abraham Lincoln. What is your first reaction? What is your response to this post? What is the message? How do you know? What does the message assume? Why is it important for us to have a discussion about the accuracy of online content? (Students will likely mention the importance of accurate facts and information for various projects, papers and research.)
4. Explain to students that it is important to evaluate online content we see in social media. This lesson is about whether or not students stop and think about whether everything they see online is true or not and how we react and respond.

5. Discuss the difference between reacting and responding to posts online. Do most people stop and think and evaluate whether something is true or not before reacting and responding? Why or why not?
6. Ask students if they have ever stopped to consider how their perceptions and emotions affect how they interpret social media and cause us to make assumptions. Consider writing the following in a place everyone can see.

**perception:** how our minds and senses support our understanding of something emotions:  
how we feel

**interpret:** how we show how we understand something

**assumptions:** something that is supposed to be believed without question

7. Post/Write the following statement in an area everyone can see and explain that the group will try to figure out the truth of the situation according to perceptions, emotions, and interpretations: "Who would ever show up there?"
  - Ask students to think about how their perceptions: what do their minds tell them is going on in this post? What information do they have that helps them consider this?
  - What are the emotions associated with a post like this? How does this post make them feel? What if it was posted by a person about whom they feel strongly? How would that affect their perception?
  - What is their interpretation of the post? Do they have enough information to prove their interpretation is true? Explain their answers.
  - What do they assume? Why? How can they prove their assumptions are true?
8. Distribute the OMG Handout and explain that students will work with a partner to do the same exercise, read, react, and respond, with the social media posts provided.
9. Gather back as a group and compare and contrast their responses. What assumptions did they make? Why?
9. Social media and our assumptions about what we see online (and for some of us, what we post online) can do some potential damage. As part of her process called "The Work," Byron Katie suggests we ask four questions about the assumptions we might make. For our purposes, let's apply those questions to posts we might see on social media:
  - Is it true? (Yes or no. If no, move to 3.)
  - Can you absolutely know that it's true? (Yes or no.)
  - How do you react or what happens when you believe that thought?
  - Who would you be without the thought? Put another way, what if the "story" we've been creating and telling ourselves simply was not true?

## Conclusion

End with a review of the themes of the lesson and a closer activity/discussion. Choose one of the responses from the worksheet and apply Katie Byron's four questions. How, if at all, does it change their reactions/responses? Would the four questions help you from making poor assumptions about social media posts? Why or why not? Why should we think about how we react and respond to posts on social media?

## OMG... what do you think?

Let's say you read these posts on your Facebook page or in a text from a friend or acquaintance. What is your first reaction? How do you feel? Write short responses on the lines below.

OMG. Party of the year. This is the BEST.

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OMG. Nailed that test. College here I come.

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OMG. Biggest loser ever.

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OMG. Who would EVER show up there

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OMG. Worst outfit ever.

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OMG. Would rather die.

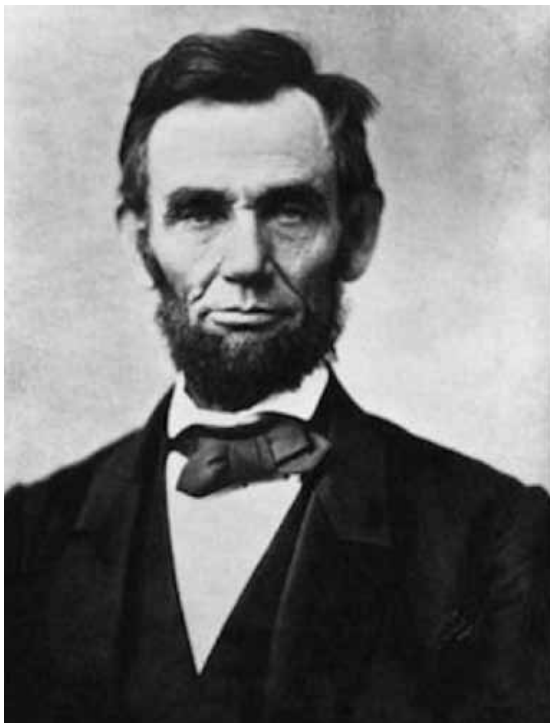
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OMG. Wait til they find out.

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**“Don’t believe  
everything you  
read on the  
Internet just  
because there’s  
a picture with a  
quote next to it.”**

**—Abraham Lincoln**

*Source:* <http://weknowmemes.com/>