



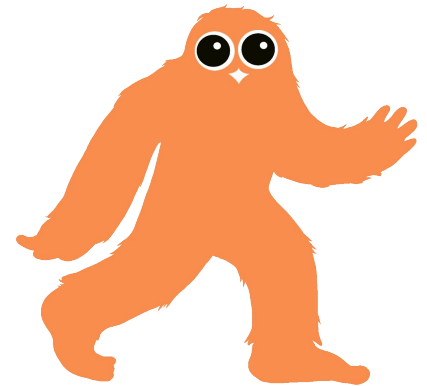
## Level 3: Media Literacy for Positive Participation

### DON'T LET THAT PHOTO FOOL YOU

Given the ubiquity of photo-editing tools and new AI technologies, it is more important than ever for students to be able to detect when an online image has been altered or generated entirely by AI. In this lesson they will learn the reasons why images are edited and generated, what questions to ask when they encounter a suspicious image, and what tools they can use to investigate any questionable images they find. Most importantly, they will consider what harms there may be to society when photos do, indeed, fool the viewer.

#### KEY STANDARDS

ISTE Standards: Knowledge Constructor (1.3.b, d), Innovative Designer (1.4.d).  
CASEL Competencies: Social Awareness (3.a), Relationship Skills (4.a, b, d),  
Responsible Decision-making (5.a, d, e, f).  
CCSS.ELA.LITERACY: W.8.1, W.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4, L.8.1.



#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will....

- ✓ Learn that photos on the Internet can be easily edited, altered, or even generated entirely by artificial intelligence (AI).
- ✓ Understand the reasons why images are altered and know how to detect them.
- ✓ Consider what harms there may be to society when Internet users are fooled by photos they see online.

#### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Allow students to share any altered images they found since your last class.

*Ask: If seeing is believing, how often do you think you are you being misled?*

#### THE LESSON

1. Screen [Video 1]. It provides a nice introduction to and overview of this lesson.

## THE LESSON, cont.

2. Countless photo-editing tools available for use today make it easier than ever to alter images. And, as students have learned in previous lessons, new AI technologies allow anyone to generate an entirely new images from simple prompts. This means that many of the photos we see online (including in social media) are retouched, improved, altered, or even completely fake.
3. There are many reasons why people alter photos; explain and discuss some of them below (as you do so, screen corresponding images in the Slides).
  - Image 1: To change a part of the photo, like the background, or to crop something out/add something in.
  - Image 2: To make a photo funny or to create a meme.
  - Image 3: To tell a different story, including to provide a revised version of events.
  - Image 4: To shock or create urgency.
  - Image 5: To project a popular or idealized version of beauty or perfection.
  - Image 6: Or it might just be a completely new image generated by AI!
4. Remind students that just as they should be critical thinkers when it comes to reading information online, they should use critical thinking skills when it comes to analyzing visual images by asking themselves:
  - *What message is the image (or video) creator trying to convey?*
  - *Why might they be telling me this?*
5. When students encounter an image that seems questionable to them, they can determine its origin or find photos similar to it by conducting a “reverse image search.” Explain how to do this on a desktop computer:
  - First, get the link (URL) of the image in question by right-clicking on it and selecting “Copy Image Address.”
  - Go to Google search and click on the camera icon (far right in the search bar).
  - Paste in the image link (URL) OR drag the image in from another window.
  - You will see a page that provides information about the original source of the image and that shows images similar to it.
6. Tell students they can also find out about a video’s origin by taking a screenshot of the video and following the steps above.



## EXTRA

If you have time, screen [Video 2] (“What Happens When Photoshop Goes Too Far?”) from *PBS News Weekend*.

## ACTIVITY (OR HOMEWORK)

Break students into pairs and have them work together to answer questions in the “Don’t Let That Photo Fool You” Student Packet (if this is homework, students can do it individually).

When finished, discuss students’ answers. Then, for each image ask this very important question:

*What harms, if any, might any of these altered photos pose to society?*

## GOAL.

Students are able to recognize and understand how and why online images are altered, as they consider the social and ethical impact of such alterations.

## FOR STUDENT:

### Why Are Images Altered?

#1: To change a part of the photo, like the background, or to crop something out/add something in.

This manipulated image (left) was shared widely on social media during the 2019-2020 Australian bushfires. The two original photos are on the right.



Source: Dr. T.J. Thomson, QUT's Digital Media Research Centre

## Why Are Images Altered?

#2: To make a photo funny or to create a meme.



London Christiansen



James Fridman  
@fjamie013

Hey James, Jamie? My friend is kinda short.  
Think you can fix it?

Fixed.



Source: <https://www.jamesfridman.com>



## Why Are Images Altered?

#3: To tell a different story, including to provide a revised version of events.

An image published on major news station's homepage (bottom photo) showed a masked man with an assault rifle and tactical vest standing in front of a sign reading, "You are now entering Free Cap Hill" (Seattle's Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone, which protesters occupied in the Spring of 2020 following the death of George Floyd). The news organization eventually admitted that the image had been spliced together using two different photos which were taken more than a week apart (see one of the originals, top photo).

The original photo, from Getty Images, shows the armed man in front of a car.



He was digitally placed in front of the entrance sign.



Source:

<https://www.salon.com/2020/06/15/unethical-fox-news-removes-digally-altered-images-of-police-brutality-protests-in-seattle>

## Why Are Images Altered?

#4: To shock or create urgency.

What were meant to be before (2009) and after (2019) images were shared on social media to warn people about the terrible impact of one of the biggest environmental problems in 21st century, deforestation. Unfortunately, the images used to spread the message were misleading—the before and after photos of a rainforest cut down completely, are actually the same photo.



Source:

[https://www.boredpanda.com/fake-news-photos-viral-photoshop/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=organic](https://www.boredpanda.com/fake-news-photos-viral-photoshop/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic)



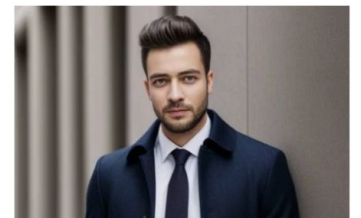
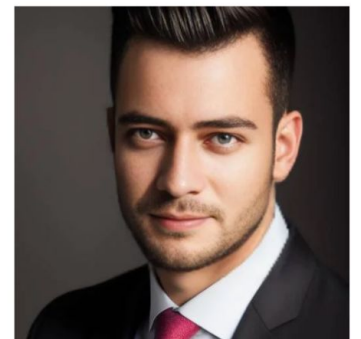
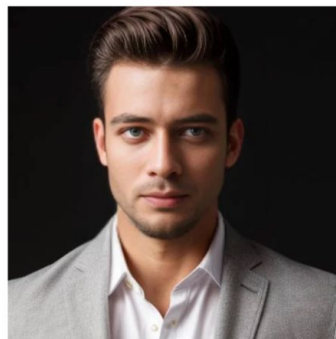
## Why Are Images Altered?

#5: To project a popular or idealized version of beauty or perfection.



## Professional AI Headshot Generator for Generating Kinds of Headshots

Whenever there's need for corporate headshots, realtor headshots, or actor headshots, consider giving Fotor's AI headshot generator a try. It can effortlessly transform your everyday snapshots into AI professional photos. Check out these AI generated professional-looking and studio-quality business headshots, and get more inspiration!

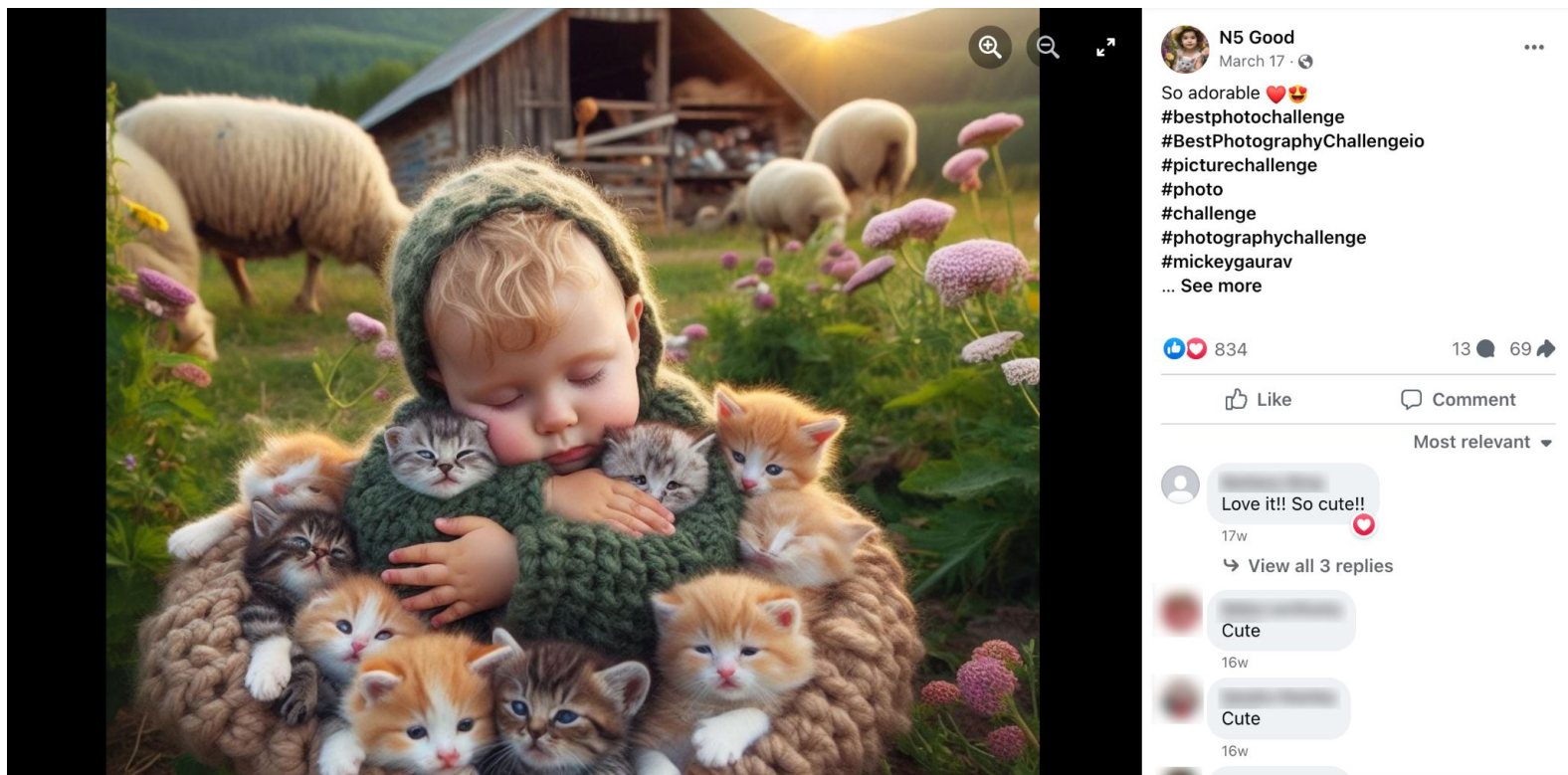


Source: <https://www.fotor.com/features/ai-headshot-generator/>



## Why Are Images Altered?

#6: An image generated by artificial intelligence (AI) might trick people into thinking it is real, as this image that appeared on Facebook did.



Source:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-users-say-amen-bizarre-ai-generated-images-jesus-rcna143965>

**DON'T LET THAT PHOTO FOOL YOU!**

These AI-generated images of Pope Francis dressed in a puffy, ankle-length hooded down jacket went viral on the Internet. Many people believed it was real.



Carefully evaluate these images. What message do you think the images' creator is trying to convey?

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Why might the images' creator be trying to convey this? (Think of the reasons why images are altered.)

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How might you know that this image had been altered?

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Source:  
<https://assets1.cbsnewsstatic.com/hub/i/r/2023/03/28/fabd7f51-3635-4172-8d82-29eb27691013/thumbnail/1240x780g2/cd8b154b1e8cf23be7e82397ad721da7/960x0.jpg>

A 19-year-old living in London, named Byron Denton, posted this photo of himself (on the right) on Instagram. It made him look like he was living the life of a super-rich influencer (see the original photo, on the left). The image of Denton “lounging in a private jet,” received 1,000 likes in just seven seconds. As you can see by looking at the two images, all it took to trick people was some creative editing.



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How might you know that this image had been altered?

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Source:  
<https://assets1.cbsnewsstatic.com/hub/i/r/2023/03/28/fabd7f51-3635-4172-8d82-29eb27691013/thumbnail/1240x780g2/cd8b154b1e8cf23be7e82397ad721da7/960x0.jpg>



The man in these photos is Veerender Singh Jubbal. In the photo on the left, Jubbal is taking a selfie as he prepares for a date. Someone got ahold of his photo and altered it to make Jubbal look like a terrorist (photo on right). This happened immediately following a terrorist attack in Paris. The edited image went viral on the Internet and was even shared by some news organizations around the world.



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From [Forbes](#): “Catherine, the Princess of Wales, recently found herself in hot water when a manipulated family image went viral, sparking intense debates about the ethics of photo manipulation. As the truth about the edited image unfurled, it became apparent that this was no ordinary touchup. According to investigations, the photo had been meticulously altered, blurring the lines between reality and illusion.”



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How might you know that this image had been altered?

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Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elijahclark/2024/03/12/kate-middletons-photo-scandal-and-the-rise-of-ai-doctoring/>