

**Post-Election, Post-Truth:
Using Comprehensive Media Literacy to Assess and Evaluate News
and Current Events¹**

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massmedialiteracy.org

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What is media literacy?

In 1992, a group of American scholars met to discuss the need to make sense of the power of mainstream media and concretize a definition of what it would mean to study the media. The Aspen Institute defined media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, and produce a variety of media².

Over the years, this definition has been altered and expanded in various ways. In the age of digital, mobile media, marked most clearly by social networking, these three areas – access, analyze, produce – have taken on new meanings, however, the core principal remains the same: Young people deserve to be formally educated about the media, including what influence it has on their daily lives. Furthermore, their educators – including classroom teachers, librarians, community workers, and youth advocates – deserve to be trained in media literacy as well.

Comprehensive media literacy asks participants to take a critical distance from the text in order to ask questions of it: What is known about the text and, possibly even more important, how is this known? This approach means that individual participants need not come to the same “conclusion,” but rather, will become clear on their own positions and interpretations as part of the larger media context. Through a critical, comprehensive approach to media literacy, participants may still enjoy and get pleasure from a variety of media, while also having a more thorough awareness of who owns the content, how it was produced and distributed, and how one’s own lens contributes to sense-making. A critical approach to media literacy invites the user to recognize the position of the entity that created the media, what they may be attempting to influence, and what there is to gain. Our approach to media literacy illustrates that we are not just clarifying our own position, but also recognizing the position of others.

Mass Media Literacy (MML) developed a set of concepts and understandings as a way to codify comprehensive media literacy learning. These concepts and understandings detail what is learned from the media and how we, as scholars and learners, can scaffold critical analysis in an organized manner, building our learning, questioning, and inquiry from a strong foundation.

² Aufderheide, P (1993). *Media literacy: A report of the national leadership conference on media literacy*. Queenstown, MD: The Aspen Institute.

MML: Who we are

Mass Media Literacy (MML) is a grassroots, Massachusetts-based organization that works for educator and student training in media literacy and supports legislation that requires media literacy training for all MA public school educators.

MML has trained teachers in media literacy, developed and implemented curriculum for K-12 classrooms in Massachusetts, presented media literacy workshops at public schools, presented at local and national conferences on teacher training in media literacy, worked with legislators to better understand the permutations of media literacy, and developed and published research on the necessity and efficacy of media literacy.

We take a comprehensive approach to media literacy, rooted in social justice; this means we do not deny the pleasures gained from the media. Instead, we teach teachers and students to see the media as multidimensional forces that have a great deal of power in our global culture. We believe this is necessary learning and work so that all educators and students will have a full understanding of the media industries.

Our curriculum pieces work within state standards, across subject matters, and adhere to Common Core standards; educators are trained how to use the concepts of media literacy to teach their subjects. We work directly with educators to build and implement curriculum for specific lessons as well as larger projects.

We work through a set of Concepts and Understandings that frame a comprehensive list of questions to ask of the mainstream media as well as a Scope and Sequence which details, by grade, what students will have learned on their way to becoming media literate.

MML's efforts are critical, rooted in social justice, and focused on the inclusion of the "behind the scenes" work of the mainstream media, including ownership, production, and distribution, which is often ignored by American media educators. We feel that the true power of the media lies beyond the content, so we make sure to analyze what's on the screen as well as what's behind it. We are committed to independent analysis and therefore do not accept corporate money for research or practice.

Making sense of the current news and information environment

“Just the facts:” Reviewing the 2016 election

November 8, 2016: Hillary Clinton (D) vs. Donald Trump (R)

Fivethirtyeight.com: Hillary Clinton @ 85% chance of winning

New York Times: Hillary Clinton @ 90% chance of winning

Breitbart: Hillary Clinton will win (through a rigged election, with massive voter fraud) the election

As of December 2016, Clinton had approximately 2.5 million more votes than Trump; the electoral college was encouraged to re-evaluate their voting, but with minor exceptions, this did not happen (on December 19, they granted him 306 electoral votes)

Election was swiftly characterized as part of the “post-truth” environment

Post-truth: adjective; relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief (Oxford English Dictionary)

Implication that truth has become irrelevant

Used seriously by pundits and critics to discuss our apparent comfort with false information (as long as it feeds our emotions)

Used humorously by comedians to critique the presentation of “news;” Stephen Colbert & *truthiness*: the quality of seeming or being felt to be true, even if not necessarily true

Helpful definitions³

Fake news

Fake news is information that is clearly and demonstrably fabricated and that has been packaged and distributed to appear as legitimate news. This narrow definition seeks to distinguish fake news from other types of misleading information by clarifying that the former is patently false and was created and presented in a way meant to deceive consumers into thinking it is real. Fake news refers to a specific piece of *information*; it does not refer to any particular type of news outlet, individual, or other actor.

Satire

Satire is writing or art designed to make social commentary based on mockery and imitation of real-life events or actors. Satire is different from fake news in that its purpose is to entertain or inspire consumers, rather than to deceive them. Some fake news sites may claim to be satirists but do not openly advertise themselves as satire, therefore suggesting an intent to

³ From <http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/12/15/understanding-fake-news-universe/214819#d1>

deceive. An example of legitimate satire is *The Onion*, which is widely known and transparently presented as such.

Propaganda

Propaganda is misleading or highly biased information that is specifically designed to confirm or promote a particular ideological viewpoint. Propaganda is distinct from fake news in that it originates from politically motivated actors with the intention of driving public discussion, apart but not separate from financial and ideological gain. It is not necessarily completely fabricated, and it is not always – though most of the time – designed to appear as legitimate news. Propaganda can be packaged as fake news, with the result is both (a) patently false and (b) designed to appear real.

Caveat to “fake news”

Since “fake news” has entered popular parlance, it has become a generic, umbrella term to mean what the user wants it to mean. “Fake news,” as a term, is used to mark truly fabricated data; it is also used to denigrate opinions, beliefs, facts, or feelings different from the user (therefore, I can label anything I don’t like as “fake” and consider that the “full stop” to the conversation). According to Sullivan (2017), actual “fake news” is made up of “deliberately constructed lies.”⁴ This genuine meaning has been co-opted to cancel out what one does not want to hear. In his January 2017 pre-inauguration press conference, Trump would not answer a CNN reporter’s question on Russian intelligence hacking, calling the whole organization “fake news;”⁵ this attack threatens the basic premise of a free and independent press. Immediately following the inauguration, Trump’s key advisor, Kellyanne Conway, and press secretary Sean Spicer, began employing the term “alternative facts” to re-interpret (verifiable) data that was not flattering of the President⁶.

Why does this matter?

Social media has enabled “news” to be updated immediately and constantly (and puts pressure on news organization to always have new information)
(Established, mainstream) news organizations must compete in a crowded field (with less trust for mainstream/traditional)
Social media (and a broader reliance on web-based information) has invited non-legitimate sources to prosper (regulating content on the internet is difficult to impossible)

How are we implicated in this?

⁴ Sullivan, M. (January 8, 2017). “It’s time to retire the tainted term ‘fake news.’” *Washington Post*. Avail: washingtonpost.com

⁵ Sutton, K. (January 11, 2017). “Trump calls CNN ‘fake news,’ as channel defends its reporting on intelligence briefing.” *Politico*. Avail: politico.com

⁶ Reuters (January 23, 2017). “Trump’s spokesperson promises reporters ‘never to lie.’” *New York Times*. Avail: nytimes.com

Stanford History Education Group⁷

- Research from Jan 2015-June 2016
- 56 tasks, 12 states, cross-economic, middle school through college, 7804 student responses
- Goals:
 - Middle school: distinguish an ad from a news story
 - High school: know the authorship of information/graphics
 - College: know who/what is behind a website
- What they found:

Overall, young people's ability to reason about the information on the Internet can be summed up in one word: bleak. Our "digital natives" may be able to flit between Facebook and Twitter while simultaneously uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to evaluating information that flows through social media channels, they are easily duped.

⁷ sheg.stanford.edu

Making sense of media literacy: Concepts and Understandings

1. Construction and Deconstruction

Media are constructions – they are created by someone in order to share a message

Production, ownership and distribution of media are owned by a small number of multinational corporations

Media construct reality; our reality is shaped, in part, by media; media construct culture; culture is shaped, in part by media

Interpreting meaning from media messages is based on individual perspectives and is situated in our understanding and experience of reality; a breadth of interpretations can be made by individual agents and these interpretations deserve respect

Media use persuasive techniques to convince audiences of a text's worth

Mass media encourages audiences to solve problems through consumption

Media can be deconstructed by asking the following questions:

Who produced the media and for what purpose?

Who is being targeted and who is being left out (consider gender, race, class, sexual orientation, geography, perceived dis/ability and age)?

What are the text (explicit) and subtext (implicit, subtle) messages?

What perspectives/issues are being left out?

Does this text/subtext teach tolerance, aggression, or encourage some other response?

Is there a mental, physical, or emotional health message in this text?

What is the mental, physical, or emotional health message in this text?

What is the environmental message and/or impact?

What tools of persuasion are used?

2. Audience

Media texts are made for audiences

Actual audiences are unknown; sense making of the audience can be understood through the following questions:

Who is the intended audience of this text? How known?

According to the mass media, what is the "correct" response to this text? How should the audience behave? What other interpretations might be available?

Audiences can be fans of media and find pleasure in media texts; critical media literacy respects fan culture while also providing an avenue for understanding institutional motivation

Audiences are local, national, global and come with unique biographies; audiences can and do interpret media in a variety of ways

Audiences, especially young people, learn about their own values, prejudices, hopes and dreams by analyzing their reactions to media messages

3. Industry and Context

Media are powerful
 Dominant culture is rarely analyzed in mass media
 The political/democratic process is rarely analyzed in mass media
 Stories both shape and frame our understanding of the world
 Mass media have commercial interests; the corporate media's main goal is to make money
 Corporations own and control most media production and distribution
 Media present value statements and perpetuate dominant ideology
 Media makers use ideology to maintain hegemony mass media messages construct identities of appropriate gender, race, economic class, sexual choice, and perceived dis/ability:
 Mass media messages are *gendered*:
 Cultural ideals of female beauty and male masculinity are constructed by mass media
 Physical appearance is valued more than development of self
 Girls/women exist for male pleasure in mass media
 Boys/men are supposed to be hypermasculine and seek feminine adoration in mass media
 Women and girls are sexualized in mass media
 Male dominance is normalized in mass media
 Mass media messages are *race/ethnicity* biased:
 Bodies of color are disparaged in mass media
 Light-skinned bodies of color are more prevalent and are treated better than dark-skinned bodies of color
 'Ethnic' actors are often expected to play roles that do not match their race/ethnicity
 White, 'non-ethnic' bodies possess unearned privilege in the mass media
 Mass media messages favor the middle and upper- *socioeconomic classes*:
 Lower- and working-class bodies are disparaged in mass media
 Mass media misrepresents the quantity and ratio of lower-, working-, middle- and upper class bodies
 The middle- and upper-classes are regularly rewarded in the mass media
 Wealth is glorified in mass media
 Mass media represent *sexuality/sexual identities* in biased ways:
 Mass media messages reinforce heteronormativity
 LGBTQ bodies and concerns are often disparaged or ignored in the mass media
 LGBTQ bodies and concerns are criminalized or victimized in the mass media
 Sexual orientation is mostly absent in media
 Mass media encourages violence to solve problems
 Mass media develops our thinking of "other" and creates stereotypes
 Mass media impacts public health
 Good and evil are presented as absolutes without complexities

Violence is sanitized and without consequence in the mass media

4. Distribution and Production

Traditional media distribution is bolstered by an increasingly digital distribution model (that provides an illusion of choice for audiences)

Access to technology influences media production

Media Literacy students produce their own media to apply practical, hands-on skills that complement and enhance theoretical and analytical learning

Audiences, especially young ones, can be inspired to create their own media by deconstructing existing media

Applying Comprehensive, Critical Media Literacy: 4 stories

STORY 1: Baseline of Trustworthy News

APPENDIX A: Trustworthy news story

Questions to ask of any current event:

- * Who are the subjects? What are their positions? Who are their supporters/detractors? (How can we learn this most responsibly?)
- * What is the mainstream/traditional news writing/imaging about the candidates? What/who are their sources? What is their motivation/interest? (What level of trust do/should we have for mainstream/traditional news?) To whom are they writing/broadcasting (intended audience)? Via what medium?
- * What are alternative sources writing/imaging? What/who are their sources? What is their motivation/interest? (What level of trust do/should we have for mainstream/traditional news?) To whom are they writing/broadcasting (intended audience)? Via what medium?
- * Evaluate language and images

Please note: just because a story is “true” does not mean it is without bias. Critical media literacy explores the bias of mainstream and alternative media.

Using comprehensive media literacy to evaluate a “trustworthy” story

Construction and Deconstruction

Why was this story written/published?

Who published this story? What might their position be (if known)?

What reality does this story present?

What techniques are used to convince us of the veracity of this story?

Audience

Who is the intended audience of this text? How is this known?

According to the mass media, what is the “correct” response to this text? How should the audience behave? What other interpretations might be available?

Industry and Context

Is this story about politics? If so, how are politics discussed?

What are the potential commercial gains/losses from this story? Who might profit?

Distribution and Production

How was this story published?

Where was it found?

STORY 2: Fake News

One of the top “fake news” stories of the election was the announcement that Pope Francis had endorsed Candidate Trump. This was wholly untrue, but captured our attention for a time this summer. Below is a transcript of the fake news story, plus the rebuttal by Snopes.com⁸.

WTOE 5 News (wtoe5news.com) (July 2016):

News outlets around the world are reporting on the news that Pope Francis has made the unprecedented decision to endorse a US presidential candidate. His statement in support of Donald Trump was released from the Vatican this evening: “I have been hesitant to offer any kind of support for either candidate in the US presidential election but I now feel that to not voice my concern would be a dereliction of my duty as the Holy See.”

Verification against the story:

<http://www.snopes.com/pope-francis-donald-trump-endorsement/>

No verification for “news outlets around the world”
wtoe5news.com is a fake-news website (it no longer exists)

Construction and Deconstruction

What reality does this story attempt to create?

How can this story be interpreted?

What persuasive techniques are (falsely) used to convince audiences of the text’s worth?

Audience

Who is the intended audience of this text? How is this known?

Industry and Context

How is our understanding of the world shaped by this text?

What does it promote/challenge about our worldview?

What profit might this story make?

Distribution and Production

How was this story accessed?

⁸ *Please note:* the wtoe5news.com website is no longer in operation

STORY 3: Satire

Humor and satire are often used to get to deeper truths about our fears and behaviors. The classic example is Jonathan Swift's 1729 manifesto, *A modest proposal*, which advocates for the poor to sell their babies as food for the wealthy as a way to prevent famine. A more modern example is the 2016 Man Booker award winner, Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*, which creates an argument for re-segregation. Both texts use contemporary (to their time) social struggles as a way of exploring difficult issues – especially those that come with “easy” solutions.

The Onion: President Trump and daily intelligence briefings

The actual story: In December 2016, President-elect Trump stated that he did not need to receive daily intelligence briefings, a practice followed by all US Presidents, beginning in 1946 with a daily intelligence summary and becoming more structured in 1964: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/12/us/politics/president-daily-brief.html?_r=0

See Appendix B for *New York Times* story

The satirical story: *The Onion* claims that President Trump will, instead, brief intelligence agencies:

<http://www.theonion.com/article/trump-gives-intelligence-agencies-their-daily-brie-54961>

See Appendix C for *The Onion* story

Construction and Deconstruction

How is reality shifted between the real and satirical stories?

What tools of persuasion are used to make the satirical story seem, on a level, plausible?

Audience

Who is the audience of *The Onion*? How do they/we know this story is satire?

How/why does this story make us laugh?

What level of truth must be understood in order to comprehend the story as satire (and, therefore, funny)?

Industry and Context

How does satire help us make sense of politics?

What is the goal of *The Onion* in sharing this story?

Distribution and Production

How is this story accessed?

STORY 4: Propaganda

Classic propaganda, especially that from WWII, used images instead of the written word because it was accessible by all, could be easily consumed, often came with a short and memorable slogan, and was a quick call to action. Propaganda can certainly be lengthy in terms of words, but is often considered most effective when it speaks in a visual language.

Anti-Trump/Putin propaganda



To understand the above image as (in the United States) anti-Trump propaganda, one must recognize the participants (Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump); be aware of the motivation for them kissing (close ties between the two, repeatedly denied by Trump); and understand how the homoerotic message challenges both their public displays and promotions of masculinity (Putin as an accomplished martial artist; Trump as sexually powerful with women).

In the 21st century, Twitter can be used as a tool of propaganda – with Tweets limited to 140 characters, short, sharp statements can be sent out to innumerable readers. They are easy and quick to read – and nearly impossible to refute without greater evidence than is allowed within the character limits.



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump

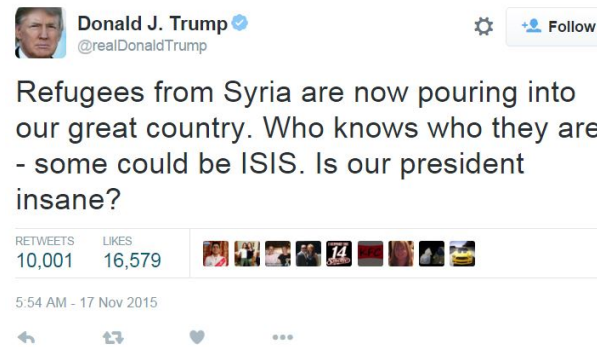
The failing @nytimes story is so totally wrong on transition. It is going so smoothly. Also, I have spoken to many foreign leaders.

11/16/16, 7:12 AM

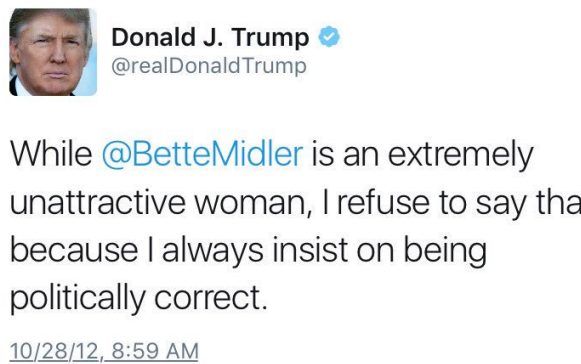
No evidence provided; simple attack on the *NYT* and defensiveness re: relationship with foreign leaders



No evidence provided; sweeping generalization, attack on an entire nation



No evidence provided; speaks to fears of the people; attack on ethnicity; attack on current administration; reinforcement of American might/power



Unclear purpose; attack on gender; deliberately contradictory language, difficult to parse through

Construction and Deconstruction

- What is the purpose of these tweets?
- What are the text (explicit) and subtext (implicit, subtle) messages?
- What perspectives/issues are being left out?
- Does this text/subtext teach tolerance, aggression, or encourage some other response?
- What tools of persuasion are used?

Audience

- Who is the intended audience of this text? How known?
- Who finds pleasure/justification from these tweets?
- How do these tweets speak to American fear?

Industry and Context

- In this selection of tweets, what messages sent about gender, male dominance, race/ethnicity, white privilege, and construction of “the other”?
- How is good/evil presented in simple terms?

Distribution and Production

How are these tweets accessed?

Putting it all together: Applying Concepts & Understandings

Case Study Saturday Night Live: relationship between President Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin

While it is helpful in learning the Concepts and Understandings to separate and explore them individually, they all work together and overlap. To make sense of this, we will use a particular element of the political process – humor – to apply the Concepts and Understandings as a whole unity. So much of the news during and after the election has been serious, dark, and emotionally damaging; this can be challenging for students to connect with, especially if they do not see their daily lives changing in immediate, concrete ways. During and after the election, *Saturday Night Live* made a satire of the absurdities of the process.

Can humor be used to cut through contentious political language? Can humor offer an entry point for students to discuss news validity, while also practicing the key concepts of comprehensive media literacy? Can satire invite us to see a larger “truth” not easily discussed in mainstream media? How does the popularity and accessibility of *SNL* help – or hinder – the process of media analysis?

To watch the video, please go to the following links:

<http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/donald-trump-christmas-cold-open/3442500?snl=1>

Trump’s response, via Twitter, to Alec Baldwin portrayal



The texts can be analyzed through the following excerpts from the Concepts and Understandings:

Construction and Deconstruction

What is the construction of *SNL*'s satire?

SNL is part of NBC, a part of Viacom (one of the largest global conglomerates); what do they have to gain/lose from this message?

How do individuals interpret this message? (Can be class discussion, or review comments and/or popular press about the show)

Who produced the media and for what purpose?

Who is being targeted and who is being left out (consider gender, race, class, sexual orientation, geography, perceived dis/ability and age)?

What are the text (explicit) and subtext (implicit, subtle) messages?

What perspectives/issues are being left out?

What tools of persuasion are used?

Audience

Who is the intended audience of this text? How known?

Is this audience likely to appreciate/dislike this topic of satire?

According to the mass media, what is the "correct" response to this text? How should the audience behave? What other interpretations might be available?

What is the pleasure found in this text?

Industry and Context

How does *SNL* analyze dominant culture? How can we analyze *SNL* as a part of mainstream media?

How do we understand the world through satire?

What are the value statements underlying this message?

Distribution and Production

How is this text accessed?

**Student-directed learning:
Practicing critical media literacy to evaluate and understand news making**

Critical media literacy scholars argue that students learn media literacy through both analysis and production. Drawing from the analysis of the 3 news stories, plus the analysis of pop culture satires, this lesson invites students to direct their own learning by producing their own media that complements and enhances theoretical and analytical learning.

Choose a mainstream news story OR a current event at your local school/organization. Drawing from the Media Matters definitions of fake news, satire, and propaganda, and working in groups, have students create 3 separate texts on the same topic: a deliberately fake story; a satirical take on the issue; and a piece of propaganda.

These can take the form of “traditional” news (newspaper/magazine article; broadcast news script for TV or radio), images, or tweets (or any social media platform). No sophisticated technology is needed – students/groups can create storyboard, scripts, and social media text all “offline.”

For storyboard template:

<https://www.printablepaper.net/category/storyboard>

For script template:

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/51313284/newscast-script-template>

When the three pieces are created, have the students regroup as a whole and, drawing from the Concepts and Understandings, have students analyze their peers’ work to make sense of how the story was created, manipulated to fit each category, and how the messages are sent/received.

Helpful Resources

Free Press (<http://freepress.org/>)

Works to keep the internet free and open, curb media consolidation, protect press freedom, and ensure diverse representation in media

Global Critical Media Literacy Project (<http://gcml.org/>)

Open source resource with critical media lesson plans, discussions on key issues, and student- and faculty-generated content

Politico.com

Independent journalists, on the record work, emphasis on politics and policy

Project Censored (<http://projectcensored.org/>)

Emphasis on free press, independent investigative journalism, cover stories “forgotten” or ignored by mainstream press

Snopes.com

Website powered by researchers and writers who investigate, analyze, and evaluate rumors & innuendo; independent entity, no sponsorship (do participate in Google ads)

Executive summary of SHEG research

Stanford History Education Group research: sheg.stanford.edu

Specific tactics for how to identify & discuss fake news:

School Library Journal

<http://www.slj.com/2017/01/industry-news/the-smell-test-educators-can-counter-fake-news-with-information-literacy-heres-how/#>

Media Matters for America:

<http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/12/15/understanding-fake-news-universe/214819>

NPR:

http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=2039

Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/its-time-to-retire-the-tainted-term-fake-news/2017/01/06/a5a7516c-d375-11e6-945a-76f69a399dd5_story.html?utm_term=.39125ed1f6ef

APPENDIX A: Trustworthy news story

Trump to Order Mexican Border Wall and Curtail Immigration

By JULIE HIRSCHFELD DAVIS, DAVID E. SANGER and MAGGIE HABERMANJAN. 24, 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Wednesday will order the construction of a Mexican border wall — the first in a series of actions this week to crack down on immigrants and bolster national security, including slashing the number of refugees who can resettle in the United States and blocking Syrians and others from “terror prone” nations from entering, at least temporarily.

The orders are among an array of national security directives Mr. Trump is considering issuing in the coming days, **according to people who have seen the orders**. They include reviewing whether to resume the once-secret “black site” detention program; keep open the prison at Guantánamo Bay; and designate the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.

According to a draft, the order on detention policies would start a review of “whether to reinstate the program of interrogation of high-value alien terrorists to be operated outside the United States, and whether such a program should include the use of detention facilities operated by the C.I.A.” But one section of the draft would require that “no person in the custody of the United States shall at any time be subjected to torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as describe by U.S. or international law.”

The proposed orders could lead to sweeping and controversial changes in the way the United States conducts itself at home and around the globe in the name of security, potentially leading to the reinstatement of policies that have been repudiated by much of the world.

“Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow,” Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter on Tuesday night. “Among many other things, we will build the wall!”



Donald J. Trump

Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow. Among many other things, we will build the wall!

9:37 PM - 24 Jan 2017

Mr. Trump will sign the executive order for the wall during an appearance at the Department of Homeland Security on Wednesday, as Mexico's foreign minister, Luis Videgaray, arrives in Washington to prepare for [the visit of President Enrique Peña Nieto](#) of Mexico. Mr. Peña Nieto will be among the first foreign leaders to meet the new president at the end of the month.

The border wall was a signature promise of Mr. Trump's campaign, during which he argued it is vital to gaining control over the illegal flow of immigrants into the United States.

Mr. Trump is also expected to target legal immigrants as early as this week, **White House officials** said, by halting a decades-old program that grants refuge to the world's most vulnerable people as he begins the process of drastically curtailing it and enhancing screening procedures.

In the draft of a separate executive order now being circulated inside the administration, Mr. Trump would examine the question of whether the Central Intelligence Agency should reopen its so-called black sites, secret interrogation and detention centers that it operated overseas. Former President Barack Obama ordered the closings of all in the first week of his presidency in 2009.

The black sites were a highly classified program, so their mention in an executive order would be highly unusual.

The draft of a second executive order would also order a review of the Army Field Manual to determine whether to use certain enhanced interrogation techniques.

Another executive order under consideration would direct the secretary of state to determine whether to designate the Muslim Brotherhood a foreign terrorist organization. That designation has been sought by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

The refugee policy under consideration would halt admissions from Syria and suspend it from other majority-Muslim nations until the administration can study how to properly vet them. This would pave the way for the administration to slash the number of displaced people who can be resettled on American soil, and would effectively bar the entry of people from Muslim countries — including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Syria — at least for some time.

The plan is **in line with a ban on Muslim immigrants that Mr. Trump proposed during his campaign**, arguing that such a step was warranted given concerns about terrorism. He later said he wanted to impose “extreme vetting” of refugees from Syria and other countries where terrorism was rampant, although the Obama administration had already instituted strict screening procedures for Syrian refugees that were designed to weed out anyone who posed a danger.

The expected actions drew strong criticism from immigrant advocates and human rights groups, which called them discriminatory moves that rejected the American tradition of welcoming immigrants of all backgrounds.

“To think that Trump’s first 100 days are going to be marked by this very shameful shutting of our doors to everybody who is seeking refuge in this country is very concerning,” **said Marielena Hincapié, the executive director of the National Immigration Law Center**. “Everything points to this being simply a backdoor Muslim ban.”

For Mr. Trump, whose raucous campaign rallies frequently featured chants of “build the wall,” the directive to fortify the border was not unexpected, although it may not be enough by itself to accomplish the task. Congress would need to approve any new funding necessary to build the wall, which Mr. Trump has insisted Mexico will finance, despite its leaders’ protestations to the contrary. The order would shift already appropriated federal funds to the wall’s construction, but it was unclear where the money would come from.

The Government Accountability Office has estimated that it could cost \$6.5 million per mile to build a single-layer fence, and an additional \$4.2 million per mile for roads and more fencing, according to congressional officials. Those estimates do not include maintenance of the fence along the nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico. **Representative Nancy Pelosi of California, the Democratic leader, said she thought even Republicans might balk at spending what she said could be \$14 billion on a wall.**

Mr. Trump has said immigration will be on the agenda when he meets with Mr. Peña Nieto.

The order to build the wall is likely to complicate the visit of Mr. Videgaray, who has a history with Mr. Trump. It was Mr. Videgaray, then Mexico’s finance minister, who orchestrated Mr. Trump’s visit to Mexico before the election, a move seen by many Mexicans as tantamount to treason. He was forced to resign because of the fallout, but his reputation was restored after Mr. Trump’s victory, and he was given the job of foreign minister, in part to capitalize on his relationship with the new American leader.

It is unclear whether Mexican officials were informed of Mr. Trump's decision to sign the executive order during Mr. Videgaray's visit.

Mr. Trump's refugee directive is expected to target a program the Obama administration expanded last year in response to a global refugee crisis, fueled in large part by a large flow of Syrians fleeing their country's civil war. Mr. Obama increased the overall number of refugees to be resettled in the United States to 85,000 and ordered that 10,000 of the slots be reserved for Syrians. He set the number of refugees to be resettled this year at 110,000, more than double the 50,000 Mr. Trump is now considering.

By the end of last month, more than 25,000 refugees had been resettled, according to State Department figures, meaning the plan Mr. Trump is considering would admit only 25,000 more by the end of September.

Appendix B: *New York Times* coverage of intelligence brief

What Is the President's Daily Brief?

By **CHARLIE SAVAGE** DEC. 12, 2016 *New York Times*

WASHINGTON — President-elect [Donald J. Trump](#) has indicated that he does not intend to receive daily intelligence briefings about global affairs and national security threats after his inauguration, breaking with a tradition that commanders in chief from both parties have followed since the Cold War.

Mr. Trump has received [only a few briefings](#) since his election victory, largely declining the intelligence community's offer to give him the same "President's Daily Brief," or P.D.B., that President Obama receives each morning. Defending his practice in a [Fox News interview](#) broadcast on Sunday, Mr. Trump noted that Vice President-elect Mike Pence and "my generals" were receiving the daily briefings, and said he saw no need to do so, too.

"You know, I'm, like, a smart person," Mr. Trump said. "I don't have to be told the same thing and the same words every single day for the next eight years. It could be eight years — but eight years. I don't need that. But I do say if something should change, let us know."

What is the P.D.B.?

The President's Daily Brief is a summary of high-level intelligence and analysis about global hot spots and national security threats written by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. While the intelligence community produces many reports and assessments, the P.D.B. is written specifically for the president and his top advisers. Its origins trace back to a daily intelligence summary given to President Harry S. Truman starting in 1946, [according to the C.I.A.](#) Its current form began with C.I.A. briefings for President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, according to David Priess, a former C.I.A. analyst and intelligence briefer during the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, who has written a history of the P.D.B.,

What is in it?

The intelligence community tailors the P.D.B. to each president's interests and style of absorbing information. At times, the briefing has included a "deep dive" into a specific question that a president may have asked or information that briefers believed he needed to know, such as the early August 2001 briefing Mr. Bush received at his Texas ranch reporting that Osama Bin Laden was determined to strike inside the United States. After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Mr. Bush received a

supplement called the “threat matrix,” which listed more detailed intelligence about potential terrorist plans. Under Mr. Obama, the brief has taken on some new topics and different forms, including a periodic update on cyberthreats against the United States. The P.D.B.’s form has also evolved. For example, Mr. Bush preferred oral briefings to accompany the document, while Mr. Obama has preferred to read the briefing on a secure tablet computer that lets him page through underlying specific details.

Is it dangerous not to receive it each day?

Several former senior intelligence officials said that getting the briefing every day is not strictly necessary, especially if Mr. Trump delegates substantial amounts of authority to his subordinates. But they stress that regular briefings are still important because it is helpful in a fast-moving crisis if a president already has a baseline of knowledge about topics, such as a foreign leader’s thinking and military abilities. Also, briefings permit a president to quiz briefers on inconsistencies and questions of fact or interpretation that form the basis for the most important national security decisions — those only the president can make.

Matt Olsen, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center, said that “it’s critical for the president to get an intelligence briefing, if not every day, almost every day” rather than just checking in periodically.

“Ultimately these decisions come to the president, so as much as you could rely on staff to track intelligence, you are being called on constantly to make operational decisions that put American lives in jeopardy,” he said.

Why might it seem boring?

One possible problem, said Andrew Liepman, a former senior C.I.A. official who helped write P.D.B. entries on the Middle East and terrorism for several presidents, is that the intelligence community has developed a formulaic and repetitive style of writing. The reason, he said, is policy makers wrestling with difficult dilemmas have tended to seize on any variations in analysts’ wording as meaning that something significant must have changed — even if nothing has.

“I think over time, the intelligence community has overcorrected and become almost boring and robotic in its language,” he said. “The community takes great pride in that predictability and consistency.”

Another possible problem, said Michael Morrell, a former C.I.A. deputy director and analyst who helped brief Mr. Bush, is that Mr. Trump is being offered a P.D.B. that was written for Mr. Obama at the end of eight years in office.

“It is tactical — it presupposes a tremendous amount of knowledge on the part of the reader, and the number of strategic places in there are few and far between because of where Obama is in his presidency and how much he knows,” Mr. Morrell said. “So I’m not surprised Donald Trump looks at this and says, ‘This is weird.’”

But if that is the case, Mr. Morrell added, it is the responsibility of Mr. Trump’s briefers to use the P.D.B. as a jumping off point for a broader discussion that will engage him.

How might it evolve for Mr. Trump?

It is the job of the intelligence community to figure out how to brief Mr. Trump so that he will recognize the value of intelligence, Mr. Priess said. He suggested that they try being more succinct.

“It may be that he is more suited to intelligence briefings essentially in the form of tweets — short, punchy statements that leave out some of the nuances but give him the core message without giving him the sense of being talked down to or getting repetitive text,” he said. “Sometimes you’ve got to come up with a way to make this more interesting.”

Appendix C: *The Onion* coverage of intelligence briefing

Trump Gives Intelligence Agencies Their Daily Briefing

NEWS IN BRIEF January 3, 2017

VOL 53 ISSUE 00 Politics · Politicians · Donald Trump

NEW YORK—Sitting down with top officials from the CIA, FBI, and Defense Intelligence Agency in a Trump Tower conference room, President-elect Donald Trump reportedly gave U.S. intelligence agencies their daily briefing Tuesday morning. “With the inauguration just weeks away, the president-elect held a meeting today to bring leaders of the intelligence community up to speed on critical information that will affect his diplomatic and defense decisions as the nation’s commander-in-chief,” said Reince Priebus, Trump’s chief of staff, noting that the president-elect was planning to give briefings to intelligence officials every morning during his presidency in order to keep them closely apprised of the greatest areas of concern and latest threats to the nation. “There’s a considerable amount of secret and highly sensitive intel about military operations and diplomatic affairs that only Mr. Trump has the expertise to provide, and it’s imperative that he convey these findings to our nation’s intelligence directors. This is an invaluable service provided by Mr. Trump, and these meetings will be as frequent and as thorough as necessary to ensure the urgent information that Mr. Trump has gathered reaches those in our intelligence community.” Priebus added that the specifics covered during the briefings would be kept classified, as much of it would be incredibly shocking to the American populace.

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