



# Roman Rumours

## Missions and Aims:

An introduction into our projects mission and aims, outlining the issues we intend to address and a summary of our long and short term outcomes.

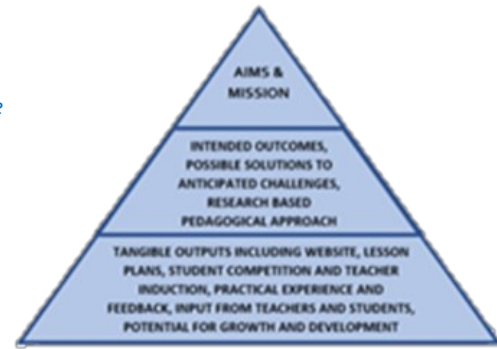
## Our Mission

- Teaching critical reading  
Through analysis of contemporary news
- Improving digital literacy  
Through engaging with news media
- Encouraging collaborative consensus  
Through facilitating informed debate
- Exploring sensitive topics  
Through fostering a safe learning environment
- Developing a sustainable feedback loop  
Through focused, reflective systems

Welcome to... **Roman Rumours**  
Our project ultimately aims to provide lessons in digital literacy for high school students by using Latin to unpick subjective reporting in media headlines

## Our Approach

- A cohesive, outcomes focussed system where all outputs serve an overarching aim
- A sustainable model which uses feedback constructively and can grow organically



## Our Aims

**EDUCATE** students on narratological bias and facilitate deep discernment of modern news headlines and articles, encouraging critical thinking and active consumption.

**UTILISE** our knowledge base as Classicists as the primary foundation for our teaching tools



**FACILITATE** constructive learning and discussion surrounding sensitive topic



**FOSTER** digital literacy and encourage students to challenge their own positionality and that of others in a thoughtful and respectful way.



## Short Term Impacts

### Responsible Debaters



Starting **conversations** which encourage students to consider their **positionality**  
Collaboratively **constructing** guidelines around **responsible debate**

### Destigmatisation

**Breaking silence** on uncomfortable but **pervasive** issues  
**Empowering** victims and bystanders to **speak up**



### New Vocabulary



To help students **articulate** themselves on issues they are **attuned** to but do not have the language to **unpack**

### Presentation Skills

The lessons practise **transferrable skills** in confidence, presenting, collaborative work and responsible debate



## Issues to Address

### Identifying and Meeting Existing Demand

- Demand identified for methods of approaching sensitive topics
- Feedback gained from High School Classics department
- Kept abreast of relevant discourse on social media

### Identifying Topics to Cover

- Noted which culturally ingrained narratives are pervasive in both the ancient and modern world
- Selected Classical content which highlights this continuity and the importance of dismantling such narratives
- Designed lesson plans around sexual assault, victim blaming, and xenophobia

### Identifying the Need to Cover Sensitive Material

- Rhetoric tends to be more pervasive around sensitive topics
- When sensitive topics are not discussed, the primary voice becomes that of the media, granting it greater authority



It is often said that the past can be a useful mirror, or a kind of a training ground for tackling issues that are too daunting to face down in the present. But for my students and myself, the mirror turned into a more uncanny thing, staring right back at us. We sat with the disquiet of wondering if we were treating our own communities with the same distance we did the ancient world (Salminen, 2018)

## Long Term Impacts



### Digital Literacy

A significant predictor of likeliness to engage with online content rather than passively consuming

### Citizen Scholars



Equipping students to challenge the information they encounter at their formative age will encourage citizen scholarship and promote active engagement

### Community



Our project will create a supportive community of teachers which will organically expand as our project grows, providing each other with support and us with feedback

### Continues Dialogue



We want the reach of our project to go beyond the lessons, and have included conversation starters for follow up chats with parents and peers as well as the resources on the website, including the competition

### Interest in Classics



To avoid our project becoming over-ambitious and losing focus, we have not made fostering an interest in Classics a primary aim, but are aware that for some students it could be a long term impact

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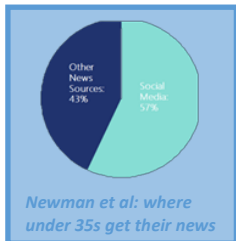
## USP and Scope:

A brief introduction to why we believe our project is relevant and necessary now. We believe using Classics, and Latin in particular, is the best way to teach about perceived media objectivity. Our mission and aims both inform and are informed by our practical decisions regarding target audience and scope.

## Why Now?

**Coronavirus Lockdown**  
we will combat the issue of sensationalisation and limited viewpoint diversity by providing the skills needed to deconstruct these narratives and a constructive and safe environment in which open collaboration is encouraged

**Social Media**  
research shows that young people source information from social media but these sites function as ad-based business models which profit from increased engagement and, therefore, have a vested interest in stoking fantastical stories



**Contemporary News Reporting**  
in recent weeks and months, the media has contorted major news stories to tell narratives they believe will sell, but these are not victimless narratives but perpetuate a culture of misogyny, racism, and xenophobia

our lessons encourage students to question recent media and reflect on contemporary usage of harmful rhetoric to inculcate immediate change

## Why Classics?

### Our Key Needs:

- non-spoken
- temporal distance
- visual similarity

### Appeals to Students

a pre-existing interest in antiquity and its association with personal interest as opposed to an education context can aid engagement and signal a clear, fun break from the rote learning of other lessons

### Distance from Topics

we will use the ancient world as a way into conversations about sensitive topics throughout and integrate it into the lesson plans thereby allowing students to discuss this rhetoric and experiment with its usage without becoming distracted or overwhelmed by recent stories

yet, we are also trying to create an environment in which the students can sit with and explore their discomfort; our similarities with the ancient world and our use of the same archaic and charged rhetoric as the ancients is part of the discomfort they will have to address

### Coded Language

- like **Latin itself**, 'News-speak' is a coded and creative language, with its own rules, but no spoken nuance
- like **Latin translation**, our students will be working to recontextualise News-speak and try to imagine what differences are apparent when translated into a spoken, nuanced language

### Vocabulary Inference

we are using the comprehensible input method of teaching Latin by using vocabulary which will be visually similar to English and encouraging the students to infer the meaning themselves, replicating this form of language acquisition

Bracey, 2020: "Comprehensible Input (CI) says languages are acquired exclusively by interacting with input (listening and reading) that is understood (comprehensible), ie you learn a language by hearing and reading words in that language that you already know the meaning of

we will alert students to the way that media implicitly teaches us new vocabulary and concepts but also have potentially undue authority regarding how to understand that vocabulary

## Why Young Teenagers?

**Active Social Media Users** especially on insufficiently regulated platforms such as TikTok and Twitter

**At a Formative Age** and we believe that if we treat them with respect, in creating their own guidelines and leading discussion and presentations, this will be reciprocated towards the subject matter

**At the Beginning of their Political Lives** so finding their own sources and potentially beginning to use their voices for activism and advocacy

Kahne and Bowyer, 2019: There is strong evidence that educational efforts to foster digital engagement literacies can respond to these problems by increasing youth engagement in online forms of political participation

**Personal Experience** which likely either does or will align with the topics we are broaching such as xenophobia and sexual violence

## Why Form Time?

- short lessons which are only 20 minutes long
- they do not require ability setting
- routine time to aid knowledge retention and recollection
- encourages them to see the skills as interdisciplinary and widely applicable and recognise this as a life skill, rather than an educational one

## Why Fife?

### State Schools

socio-economic class affects digital literacy, although everyone comes into contact with media reporting and therefore needs to be equipped with the adequate skills for critical analysis

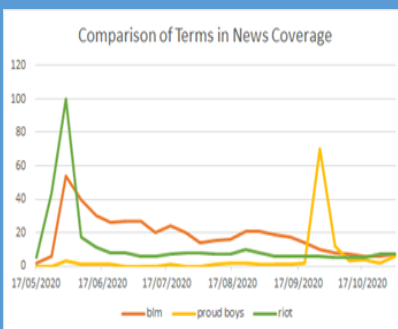
### University Programmes

we can partner with programmes such as the [ID4004 Teaching Module](#) and [First Chances](#) working within Fife schools to forge initial connections and expand our outreach

### Curriculum for Excellence

- understanding the learners:** their feedback on the lessons designs and develops their future learning
- knowing big ideas:** clear links to and utility of future skills
- knowing your own learning and support needs:** choice of activities dependent on student ability and enable them to choose their own activity
- meaningful learning networks:** working with university programmes
- being clear on practical approaches:** clear links between classroom learning and real-world applications

## An Example:



the use of the term 'riot' and 'BLM' in media coverage spiked at the same time implying that the two were used in similar news articles which teaches those unfamiliar with BLM to associate the movement primarily with riots. By contrast, when Proud Boys spiked (during riots in which they were armed, threatened violence, and broke a journalist's arm), they were not labelled as riots so will not gain this association; this shows the political angling of media and the power this has in vocabulary inference



# Roman Rumours

## Methods and Outputs:

A summary of the various methods we have used to create our project, and why we have used them. We have various tangible outputs, several of which will provide quantitative evidence for how successful our project has been.

## Bloom's Taxonomy & Educational Theories



**Creating** a group headline at the end of the Twitter activity and the work produced for the competition, and accompanying blog

**Evaluating** the Twitter scenario and arguing a certain positionality



**Analysing** positionality and reasons that certain rhetorical techniques are used by comparing and contrasting ancient rhetoric with modern headlines

**Applying** the rhetorical terms students have learned to modern sample headlines, and using this knowledge to rephrase them



**Understanding** why particular rhetorical techniques are used, and identifying where students may have encountered them before

**Remembering** key terms and features from the rhetoric slides by defining, and discussing, them



the **social constructivism theory** teaches that 'all knowledge develops as a result of social interaction and language use, and is therefore a shared, rather than individual, experience...In other words, the journey is just as important as the destination' (Lynch, 2016)

## Website

Each tab on our website has a targeted function:

- about us: a personal element, outline of our aims and our mission
- helplines: access to resources and support for individuals affected by any topics covered
- student blog: showcase of student work; useful evidence for those considering getting involved in the project
- teacher forum: part of the feedback loop; space to share experiences and resources, as well as to build a community
- student feedback form: part of the feedback loop; anonymous
- lesson resources: access to our lesson plans and PowerPoints; these resources will grow in tandem with our project
- glossary: technical & politically correct terms
- resources: for those who wish to pursue Classics further

lesson resources will be accessible by a login only so that we can ensure that our resources are used responsibly and to maximum effect; this involves making contact, and establishing relationships, with anyone using them

## Lesson plans & PowerPoints

Lesson Plan 1 (Catullus)

Lesson Plan 2 (Ovid)

PowerPoints (Catullus & Ovid)

click me!

### Class time focused

while we were eager to encourage students to continue discussion beyond the classroom, we were conscious that not all home environments would be conducive to take home activities; this is why we developed the idea of 'dinnertime discussions', an informal way for students to spark up conversations about what they have learned with peers over school meals, or with family at dinner time

- students are not disadvantaged if they cannot have these conversations at home
- due to our awareness of disparities between home environments, there is an emphasis in our lesson plans to allow time to encourage discussion in class (even if this means the lesson takes longer than expected)

### Relevance of topic choices

othering is largely driven by politicians and the media, as opposed to personal contact (Powell, 2017)

the influence of media is evident in the way that rape victims are treated in the criminal justice system; criminal justice professionals are not immune to the effects of media, and since the media perpetuates rape culture, police, attorneys, judges, and jurors are often sceptical of rape victims and may even harass them (Thacker, 2017)

## Feedback loop

### Relationships

offering our consumers the opportunity to be in constant communication with us through both formal and informal interactions will increase transparency and establish a foundation of trust to build our project on



### Development

the constant cycle of feedback will provide us with evidence for what parts of our project work, and why; this will allow us to make developmental changes centrally and/or locally according to need



### Efficient

our feedback loop is efficient by nature because staff and pupils are able to voice opinions formally through scheduled meetings, but also informally as and when their problems/ideas arise



### Function

each part of the feedback loop has a very specific purpose:

- menti survey: conducted at the start & end of each lesson; assesses familiarity with technical terms & will indicate progress
- teacher forum: online platform for informal discussion about experience of the project, this will create a community of teachers discussing current topics and exploring areas for future development
- student blogs/presentations: evidence for how students have progressed
- student feedback: students can share their own experiences of the project, how it has impacted them, and whether they would like other topics to be featured in the future
- one-on-ones: staff can ask any questions they have about the resources and will meet the friendly faces behind our project

## Guidelines for safe & responsible debate

Why we need to establish guidelines:



productive discussion



responsible debate



active participation

this fulfils one of our primary aims of fostering actively participating citizen scholars who are able to respect the positionalities of those around them

## Setting the tone

encouraging the students to engage with one another in this way and to discuss their feelings openly will encourage them to engage with the sensitive topics with a similar level of thoughtfulness and maturity



Hong (2013): students respond well to a 'recognise, reflect, and respond' approach whereby the discomfort itself is acknowledged verbally and students are encouraged to reflect not only on the subject matter but on the dynamics of discussion

## Competition

Purpose:



publicity



dialogue



growth



evidence

Case study:

Fatima Khaled is the head teacher of the Peace School in London, which focuses on critical and creative skills in preparing young people to be active citizens of Britain and the wider world – aims which resonate with our own project. Fatima praises the 'Critical Connections: Multilingual Digital Storytelling Project' led by Goldsmiths for using a creative competition as a teaching method for several reasons:



positive shift in student attitudes



encourages student ownership



challenging & exciting learning context



relevant to real world, personal experiences

# Roman Rumours

Our future: funding, advertisement and sustainable growth.

A summary of our amount, sources, and uses of funding. Specifically, advertisement and how we approach the growth of our project in a realistic and sustainable way.

## Funding

### How much and why?

Modest amount of **£1000**. This is because our team will be made up of volunteers and the online resources we create will be free once people sign up to it. As it is our first project, we may find that this is too much or not enough, however we can learn from this for our expansion.

### Where from?

Sources of funding are mainly academic funds such as:



Classical association fund, Institute of Classical Studies Grant, Classics in Communities Grant, St Andrews University Community Grant

### Uses

- Advertisement and how we efficiently market our project
- Prizes for our rewriting headlines competition in the form of money or voucher rewards per school and a larger prize for the whole of Fife as incentives.
- General project maintenance : online and physical resource production, training of volunteers depending on expansion; we are considering meeting teachers in person post-covid and so travel arrangements would be needed.

## Advertisement

### Our three forms:

- Radio
- Spotify
- Social media

### Radio

We have chosen Kingdom FM, the official radio station for Fife. Our main reason for this is to target parents and teachers on their way to school as their website states they reach 85,000 people in Fife per month.

### Spotify

Spotify provides us with the ability to target both students and adults. Like radio, we would release a 30 second advert which would provide a punchy summary of our project.



The main selling-point of Spotify is its analytics feature. This provides information for when your target audience are most active on the app. This would allow us to tailor the content and timing of our advert to more successfully engage with our target audience.

### Social media

- We plan to have a diverse social media presence in the form of Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram.
- The variety is due to our appreciation that different age groups are drawn to different social media. There are also the restrictions to consider, such as Twitter where users must be 13+.



### @RomanRumours

Inspired by Professor Morley's @Thucydidesbot, we intend to create an @RomanRumours twitter account in order to pick out and deconstruct news headlines which misrepresent the truth of events and provide a more accurate alternative headline. This will assist in our expansion as ideally older students and those in further education may see this page and be inspired to look into our project. We accept it may not stop clickbait headlines being created, but it will encourage those viewing them to think more about what they are reading.

For younger students, we intend to create a more interactive challenge on a social media that they use such as TikTok or Instagram.

## Expansion considerations.

**Time** More areas and schools will cause an immense strain on our team hence the training of new volunteers mentioned in our uses.

**Money** With growth will come a proportional increase in expenses regarding our uses. We shall require a larger advertising campaign, more resources and more prizes for our competitions. Therefore we must consider more funding and perhaps even national partnerships.

**Ethical guidelines** As we move from region to region, we must ensure that the local guidelines for approaching sensitive topics are strictly adhered to.

**Brand** A core part of our project is the personal connection we make with teachers across various schools. It is vital that this is maintained if we grow.

## Solutions

We have also considered how we may approach and solve these issues. We appreciate there are some problems we won't foresee and that appear during the running of the project.



### Grow sustainably

- Once our project is successful and effectively organised in one area, we could then move to a neighbouring region. For example, moving from Fife to the Edinburgh area. We are conscious not to stretch too far too quickly.

### Data

- Our Menti surveys and teacher feedback loops will provide us with the data needed to acquire additional funding as we can prove our project is effective with tangible data. This additional funding can be used for a larger marketing campaign such as an advert on national radio and perhaps TV.

### Social media

- Social media will play a huge role in gaining a national following in the form of competitions, adverts, and even brand ambassadors with large follower base.

## Ambition

- \* Expand our scope from students aged 13-14 to students across all age groups of secondary school.
- \* Strong social media presence in the form of an interactive website as well as social media accounts.
- \* Move into higher education and the business world in the form of workshops to encourage adults as well as students to think about what they are reading.

We believe it is important to look towards the future in an ambitious but realistic way as there is nothing to lose. The balance between optimism and realism is essential for our project to be successful in an ever-innovating world and so we plan to innovate with it.

We are confident that our project could be successful and spread across the UK, why? Because that's the thing with Roman Rumours,

**they spread...**





# Roman Rumours

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