
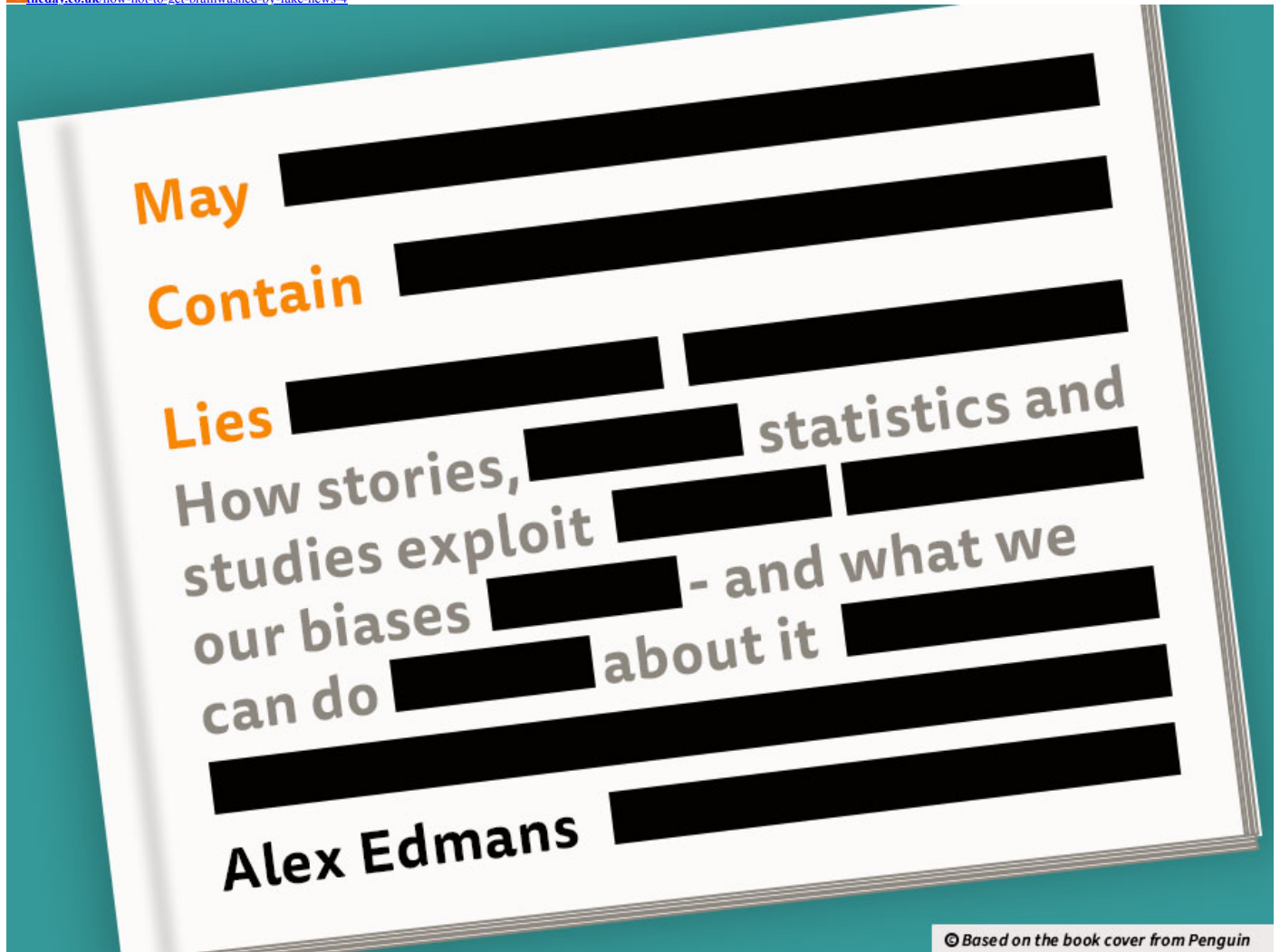


How not to get brainwashed by fake news

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Always beware: If anyone says they have found the holy grail in any field; they usually haven't.

Can we train ourselves to be lie-detectors? The world is flooded with lies, fakes and misinformation. One expert is claiming the only answer is retraining ourselves to think differently.

What's happening?

Today, most of us spend much of our time being fed information: from books, websites, messages, TikTok.

But because we know so much, we probably also believe a lot more that is wrong. Lies get more views than truths. On X, fake news stories are 70% more likely to be retweeted than true ones, and spread six times as fast.

Find out more

What can we do about this flood of fake stories? One writer thinks we should change the way we think. Alex Edmans is a finance professor whose new book, *May Contain Lies*, promises to help us work out what is true and what is false.

Edmans thinks we believe **misinformation** because we like hearing news that confirms our **biases**. When we find a fact that seems to confirm what we already believe to be true, we stop looking.

He gives an example from his own life: for years he repeated the claim that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become an expert in something.

But when he actually looked at the data behind this claim it did not check out.

Can we train ourselves to be lie-detectors?

Some say

Yes! We cannot hope for a world in which no-one tells any lies. But we can train ourselves to think about what we hear and decide whether it is true or not.

Others think

No! You cannot possibly be an expert in anything. The average person cannot possibly do enough research to work out if everything they hear on social media is true or not.

Some people say

"We swallow greedily any lie that flatters us, but we sip only little by little at a truth we find bitter."

Denis Diderot (1713 – 1784), French philosopher

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What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you see fake news online? How do you know?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Should we treat misinformation like a disease?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain about this story and one thing we cannot say for sure.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are the boss of a social media company. What do you do to fight fake news?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In groups, can you think of one fact you have seen on social media recently. How can you work out whether it is true or not?

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - You wake up in a world where people can only tell the truth. Write a diary entry describing how your day goes.

Glossary

X - A social media network, formerly known as Twitter and owned by Elon Musk.

misinformation - Intentionally inaccurate and misleading information.

Biases - Beliefs that systematically and unfairly distort a person's decisions, in favour or against one group or another.