

# CONSPIRACY THEORY

OR NOT?

## CHECKED MORE THAN HALF?

Then it's likely a conspiracy theory.

- The story starts in a believable manner and with clear facts, but **gradually becomes more unlikely.**  
Read/watch/listen again: from what point do you start doubting the message?
- There is **extreme distrust** of scientists, news media, or the government.
- The story is presented as being the **revelation of the 'real' truth.**
- Discussions are **not held on public forums** (but in private chats, for example).  
It's often easier to convince someone 1-on-1.
- There is a 'powerful' group who is **keeping the real truth hidden.**  
Often there is mention of the 'elite'.
- The story is often **removed from social media.**
- Everything is part of a **bigger plan.** The story reveals the plan.
- Fact checkers** and journalists indicate that the story is not true.
- The story elicits **strong emotions.**  
Through its use of language and/or imagery.
- People who contradict the story** are depicted as gullible and uncritical.  
They are for example referred to as 'sheeple': people who don't use their own consciousness and critical thinking.

## ATTENTION ⚡

A conspiracy theory has a specific structure:

- A (powerful) group ...
- ... has a secret plan ...
- ... which is bad for the majority ...
- ... but beneficial for the (powerful) group.

# PROPAGANDA

OR NOT?

## CHECKED MORE THAN HALF?

Then it's likely propaganda.

- The message encourages you **to think or do something.**  
Careful! If the sender of the message wants you to buy something, it's an advertisement.
- The message is **short and easily repeatable.** Pay attention to the use of **slogans.**  
For example: 'This body is in danger', 'Make America Great Again', 'Wir schaffen das', 'Save the planet', 'Own people first', ...
- The message appeals to a **specific group** of people.
- The message uses **lies, half-truths and out-of-context statements.**  
Tip: perform a fact-check.
- There is a clear **opponent.**
- The message contains **stereotypical depictions** of the opponent.
- The message is only found on **certain media channels.**
- The message presents a complex matter as **very simple.**  
Pay attention to the use of words like 'always', 'invariably', 'everyone', 'never', ...
- The message makes use of **certain symbols.**  
For example:  
 struggle       (nuclear) disarmament       revolution
- The message tries to **elicit emotions.**  
It makes you scared, frustrated, angry, happy, sad, determined, doubtful, ...

## ATTENTION ⚡

The power of good propaganda depends on these main characteristics:

- Eliciting emotions
- Attacking opponents
- Simplifying information
- Appealing to a certain target group

WHAT'S NEW?