Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. The Gazette appears to be using two techniques named in the reading. First, pink slime news: the site mimics a local newspaper, with a clean newspaper layout and a masthead logo, while its About page lists no staff names, no physical address, and no founding date. Second, the synthetic expert technique: Dr. Michael Torres has no academic profile and no university webpage, and his profile picture comes back as an AI-generated photograph on a reverse image search. Together they are a textbook AI-assisted local disinformation operation.

2. Fake local news is especially dangerous because the collapse of genuine local journalism has left real information voids in many communities. When no legitimate local outlet is covering city council races, a fake local site becomes the only apparent source — and readers have nothing to compare it against. At the national level, multiple competing sources create natural cross-checking; locally, there may be no competing coverage at all.

Multiple Choice

1. C
2. D
3. C

Matching

1-D, 2-C, 3-E, 4-B, 5-A

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) pink, 2) lateral, 3) profile

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Previously, creating convincing misinformation required organized teams, significant budget, and specialized skills — it was expensive and slow. AI tools have collapsed the production cost to near zero and eliminated the skill barrier. This matters because it means any individual with a grievance or an agenda can produce sophisticated misinformation at a scale that previously required institutional resources.

Q2: Synthetic experts exploit the human heuristic of trusting credentialed authorities. When a claim is attributed to a named professor with institutional affiliation and a professional headshot, readers' critical evaluation drops

significantly — we outsource judgment to perceived expertise. By fabricating that expertise, disinformation campaigns bypass the most common individual defense without readers having any way to detect it without specific verification techniques.

Q3: Because legitimate organizations like AP and Bloomberg use AI for real reporting, readers can't use 'AI-generated' as a simple disqualifier. This means evaluating the source's verifiable identity — real named staff, verifiable institutional affiliation, cross-coverage by independent outlets — becomes essential. Lateral reading remains the most reliable approach: checking what other credible sources say about the publication, not just evaluating its content in isolation.