MEDIA LITERACY EXERCISE:

The Devil Baby of Hull House

Instructions:

1. Read the newspaper articles on this page and the next.
2. For each article, make note in the boxes below of the events/people/locations reported and indicate whether they sound true or false.
3. Then, draw a box around all words and phrases that give clues as to what parts of the story might be true or false. (For example, calling it “one of the strangest myths” hints that the writer does not believe the story is true.)

“True”-Sounding Places, People, Events:

“False”-Sounding Places, People, Events:

The Barre daily times., November 01, 1913, Page 3, Image 3
THIS IS THE WAY THAT "DEVIL-CHILD" STORY IS RUMORED

The West Side of Chicago is playing a rather weird Hallowe'en game. A story concerning the birth of a devil-child to an unbelieving mother has made its appearance and has found many who think that it is true.

A mother, so the story runs, lay on her death bed. She denied the existence of the Almighty. The end seemed near. Her husband had faith. He didn’t want to see her die railing against the God he believed. So he called in a holy man to try and convert her.

The good man came. He showed her a picture of the Crucifixion. She looked at it with a cold, cynical look. Then she laughed bitterly.

"Take it away," she cried, and her voice arose higher, "take it away. I would sooner have a devil in my house."

The room suddenly darkened. And then a streak of red light stole in. The good man and the husband watched it with religious awe. An expression of fear and horror came over the face of the woman on the bed. She tried to close her eyes. She couldn’t. The strange red light fascinated her. Then the light passed.

And lo! a strange figure is on the bed beside the woman. The three turned to look at it. A cry of agony escaped the woman. The object on the bed seemed half-devil, half-child.

The good man sank to his knees and prayed. The husband turned his face to the wall and moaned piteously. Then he began to cry hysterically.

"Kill that thing," he screamed. "Great God, why have you done this to me. Kill it, I say."

But the good man merely prayed. The husband, frantic with grief, picked up a club and rushed toward the bed.

Then the strange little thing stood suddenly erect. He looked queerly at the husband, and the man stopped, spell-bound.

The devil-child spoke, and his voice sounded as old as the world.

"Kill me, and you’ll have seven more like me."

The husband fainted.

Several people believe this story. A report was spread in that mysterious underhand manner that the devil-child was taken to Hull House. Several hundred telephone inquiries have been received there.

"I suppose some deformed baby was born somewhere on the West Side," said Miss Jane Addams, head of the settlement house, "but to see the way otherwise intelligent people let themselves be carried away by the ridiculous story is simply astonishing. If I gave you the names of some professional people—including clergymen—who have asked me about it, you simply wouldn’t believe me."

The police of the Maxwell street and the Desplaines street stations have turned away several people who come to the station looking for information.

One old woman came into the Desplaines street station and claimed that she knew the story was true, that the family lived on Waverly court. An investigation was made and nothing found.

Capt. Thomas F. Meagher of the Desplaines street district said several people said the baby was born in a house near the north end of Douglas Park.

"True"-Sounding Places, People, Events:

"False"-Sounding Places, People, Events:
MEDIA LITERACY EXERCISE:

Teacher’s Key

These are suggestions as to what students might write in the “true”- and “false”-sounding boxes. Answers will no doubt vary widely. Similarly, you or your students may find additional words or phrases in the articles to draw boxes around.

“True”-Sounding Places, People, Events:
This happened in Chicago.
Many people visited Hull House.
A mother gave birth to a baby in a poor part of Chicago.
The academy of sciences and the art institute were overwhelmed with people asking if the story was true.
Jane Addams does not believe the story is true.

“False”-Sounding Places, People, Events:

Thousands of people visited Hull House to ask about this?
The baby was born with horns and a tail and could already speak.
The baby was a devil and threatened the mother.
“The devil-child’s powers are deadly.”
“True”.-Sounding Places, People, Events:

It happened on the West Side of Chicago
Many people believe this story is true.
Many people have called Hull House to ask if it was true.
Jane Addams does not believe the story is true.
A woman said the story is true and the family lives on Waverly St.
Capt. Meagher was told by several people that the story is true of a family in Douglas Park.

“False”.-Sounding Places, People, Events:

A strange figure, half-devil, half-child, appeared to a dying woman, her husband, and a holy man.
The devil-child spoke to and threatened the three people.
The family exists and they lived on Waverly St.
The family exists and they lived in Douglas Park.