

ACTIVITY 6: BUILD-A-CONSPIRACY CHALLENGE

Build-a-Conspiracy Challenge	
Purpose	To explore the <i>core</i> ingredients of a conspiracy theory, how narratives can be manipulated, why conspiracies feel persuasive, early warning signs of unreliable information
Time	50–60 minutes
Materials	Whiteboard or projector, A3/A4 paper (1 per group), pens, Optional: a bag of prompt cards with random nouns/places/people

Instructions

1. Quick Starter: What Makes a Conspiracy Theory? (3 minutes)

Teacher asks:

- “What makes something a conspiracy theory?”
- “What conspiracy theories have you heard *of* (not what you believe)?”

On the board, list the five classic features (keep it simple and neutral):

1. Secret group controlling events
2. Hidden plan or “real truth”
3. Something suspicious or unexplained
4. Us vs. Them framing
5. ‘Evidence’ that fits the story (even if weak or cherry-picked)

Explain:

“You’re going to create your own conspiracy theory using these ingredients—like a recipe.”

2. The Build-A-Conspiracy Challenge (10 minutes)

Step 1: Form groups (30 seconds)

Groups of 3–4.

Step 2 - Give them the prompts (30 seconds)

Each group randomly draws or is assigned:

- 1 everyday object (e.g. toaster, shopping trolley, pigeons, traffic cones)
- 1 location (e.g. supermarket, school toilets, bus stops, Wales)
- 1 group/agent (e.g. dentists, lollipop ladies, squirrels, librarians)

You can generate these quickly or write them on the board.

Step 3 - Build the conspiracy (7 minutes)

Groups must create a conspiracy theory including:

1. The villain: Who's behind it and why?
2. The secret: What are they supposedly hiding?
3. The evidence: (Invented!) Why does this 'prove' it?
4. The cover-up: How are they hiding it from the public?
5. Why people believe it: What makes it convincing?

Encourage them to exaggerate - but remind them:

"The point is to mimic how real conspiracies work, not to target real groups."

Step 4: 30-second pitch (2 minutes)

Each group has 30 seconds to present their conspiracy theory dramatically.

Class votes on fun categories:

- "Most likely to go viral"
- "Most creative secret plan"
- "Most ridiculous 'evidence'"

3. Debrief (2 minutes)

Quick reflective questions:

- “What made your conspiracy theory *sound* believable?”
- “Which bits were the easiest to invent?”
- “How similar was this to real online conspiracy content?”
- “What should we watch out for in real life?”

Close with the message:

“It’s easy to *create* a conspiracy theory. That’s why it’s important to question strange claims, consider real evidence, and check reliable sources.”