

When no news is real news – the journalists who lied and got caught

Open a newspaper and you expect to read, more or less, the truth. So what happens when it turns out that journalists invent their stories? Ask Janet Cooke or Stephen Glass or Ingo Mocek. They all spent parts of their careers inventing stories before being caught and **fired**.



Imagine the scene: Washington DC, 1980. Janet Cooke writes a long article for *The Washington Post* describing the world of eight-year-old Jimmy, a child living in terrible conditions in the poorest part of the city.

She writes about every detail of his life, even describing the 'baby-smooth skin of his thin brown arms'. The story shocks Washington, and Cooke wins a Pulitzer Prize for outstanding journalism. But when the city government tries to find Jimmy to help him, Cooke goes quiet.

Under pressure, she eventually admits that Jimmy doesn't exist.

Stephen Glass, a **star reporter** at *The New Republic* magazine, invented stories for years. 'My life was one very long process of lying and lying again to work out how to cover those other lies,' he says. Glass made great efforts to avoid getting caught. He created fake notes, fake faxes, fake email

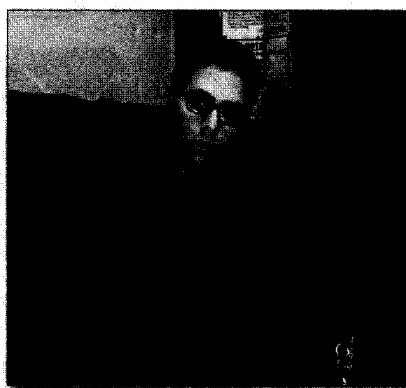
addresses; he even designed a website for a company that didn't exist. Eventually, he got caught when he wrote a story about a fifteen-year-old boy at a conference of computer **hackers**. His editor **insisted** on seeing the conference room. Of course, there was no conference room. And no conference either. And no fifteen-year-old boy. Glass's career as a journalist was finished, but he wrote a novel about his life, *The Fabulist*.

And sometimes **celebrities** and their fans are involved too. In 2010, the German magazine *Neon*, published an interview with Beyoncé. The article contained a lot of information about the star and her marriage to rapper Jay-Z which Beyoncé's fans thought



might not be true. The editors questioned the journalist, Ingo Mocek, about the article she had written. It turned out that she had invented much of the information – in fact, the interview probably never took place at all. Ingo Mocek was **fired**, and *Neon* made an apology to Beyoncé and her management.

The message for us, the public? Don't believe everything you read, even if it comes from your favourite, trusted newspaper!



Reading

6 a Read the article and choose the best endings (a, b or c) for the sentences.

- 1 Janet Cooke was
 - a a very poor woman.
 - b a journalist.
 - c a newspaper editor.
 - 2 She invented a story about
 - a a child living a difficult life.
 - b a man called Jimmy.
 - c the government.
 - 3 The city government
 - a fired Cooke.
 - b tried to find the boy.
 - c didn't believe the story.
 - 4 Stephen Glass created
 - a a magazine.
 - b a false identity for himself.
 - c fake papers to pretend he was telling the truth.
 - 5 Stephen Glass was caught
 - a quickly.
 - b by the police.
 - c after many years.
 - 6 When Beyoncé's fans read the article, they
 - a thought it was well-written.
 - b did not believe it.
 - c were angry with Beyoncé.
 - 7 Ingo Mocek lost her job because she had
 - a been rude to Beyoncé during the interview.
 - b interviewed Beyoncé without permission.
 - c not interviewed Beyoncé at all.
- b** Find the words or expressions in **bold** in the article that mean ...
- 1 people who break into technological systems illegally _____
 - 2 top journalist _____
 - 3 removed from a job _____
 - 4 demanded _____
 - 5 in a stressful situation _____
 - 6 famous people (e.g. pop stars) _____