TEACHER'S MANUAL

The game Somethin' Fishy is designed to explore the mechanics of conspiracy theories and the psychology behind mind manipulation. This teacher's manual guides how to facilitate gameplay, encourage discussions, and use the game as a learning tool to help students critically engage with ideas about truth, persuasion, and misinformation.

For the best experience, we recommend printing the game components on harder paper or cardstock. This prevents accidental movement of tokens due to breathing or table vibrations. Each player needs 9 'Power Dice,' and the game requires one 'Main Die.' If you are missing a total of 37 dice, you can also print them out using the provided design. Also, to ensure a smooth gameplay experience, we recommend designating a clear, empty space for rolling the dice, such as a separate area on the table or an empty box.

Key Themes & Discussion Starters

Conceptions of truth:

- **Truth as a Mood**: Some ideas feel true because they resonate emotionally, even if they lack evidence. Truth might be found through emotional and subjective experiences.
    - Can you think of a time when you believed something because it "felt right" rather than because of strong evidence?
- **Truth as a Simulacrum**: Truth is shaped by cultural and educational backgrounds.
    - How do personal experiences influence what we accept as true?
- **Truth as a Battlefield**: Competing communities assert their version of truth. Truth becomes a site of conflict and persuasion.
    - How do social media platforms contribute to the spread of conflicting "truths"?
- **Truth as Liberation**: Truth can justify both freedom and oppression. It has been used to justify wars, deportations, and colonization.
    - Can you think of historical examples where "truth" was used to oppress certain groups?

Psychology of conspiracists:

- **Ontological Security**: People turn to conspiracy theories when they feel uncertain about their place in the world.
    - How do major global events (e.g., pandemics, economic crises) make people more vulnerable to conspiracy theories?

- **US vs. THEM Mentality**: Conspiracy theories divide people into "good" and "bad" groups.
    - What are some real-world examples of this division in politics, media, or history?

Game Mechanics and Real-World Connections:

- **Resonance**: Emotional manipulation, fear tactics, and group identity.
    - How do political leaders or influencers use emotional appeals to shape public opinion?
- **Redescription**: Shifting narratives to make falsehoods seem true.
    - How do news headlines or deepfake videos contribute to misinformation?
- **Reason**: The illusion of logical argument.
    - Can you spot logical fallacies in viral misinformation?
- **Research**: The appearance of legitimacy.
    - How do cherry-picked data or misleading graphs influence public perception?
- **Rewards**: The incentives behind spreading false narratives.
    - How might financial or political gain motivate the spread of conspiracies?
- **Resistance**: Strategies for countering misinformation, such as critical thinking, media literacy, and fact-checking.
    - What are effective ways to challenge misinformation without escalating conflicts?
- **Real-world events**: The role of misinformation in major crises, elections, or global conflicts.
    - Can you think of a recent event where misinformation had a major impact?

Guiding the Game Session

1. Before Playing
    - Explain the objective: Players will experience how conspiracy theories spread and influence minds.
    - Discuss the role of the 7 "Re" factors in persuasion.
2. During Gameplay
    - Prompt players to consider why certain strategies are effective.
    - Ask students to reflect on how their gameplay mirrors real-life tactics.
    - Observe and note interesting gameplay moments to discuss afterward.
3. After Playing
    - What strategies were most effective in changing minds?
    - Did you notice moments where emotions influenced decisions more than logic?

    - How does this game reflect the way real-world conspiracy theories spread?

Extension Activities

- **Case Study Analysis**: Research real-world conspiracy theories and analyze how they use Resonance, Redescription, and Research.
- **Debate Challenge**: Assign students different roles (conspiracist, fact-checker, neutral observer) and have them debate a topic.