What questions should you ask to understand media messages about elections?

Who created this media content?
Knowing who created what we consume about elections is an important step in assessing the reliability and agenda behind a message. If it is difficult to find information about the content’s author, the source may not be credible.

Why was this media content created?
All media messages have an agenda and purpose behind their creation. For example, some things are meant to inform, some are meant to share opinions, and others are meant to entertain. Reflecting on the intent of messages about elections is key to determining our response to the information and assessing its reliability.

What is left out that might be important to know?
Elections are complicated. It is very difficult to find all the important details in one article, news segment, or online post. Asking ourselves, “What is missing?” is a great way to build our media literacy skills.

How does this make you feel?
Media messages are created to persuade us to react in a certain way. It is important to assess what reactions the author or source is trying to elicit, especially regarding a topic as important as elections. Think about how you feel: the stronger the emotion (good or bad), the more likely you’ll want to pause before reacting.

How might different people understand this message differently?
We all come to media messages with our own experiences, beliefs, and biases. Recognize that different people may respond in different ways to election-related messaging that you share.