What Is AI? (3-5)

What is artificial intelligence and what are its potential benefits and drawbacks?

Note: This lesson was modified by the SPS Digital Learning Team from the original CommonSense Education's lesson plan.

Learning Objective: I can identify what Artificial Intelligence is and discuss how AI can be helpful or harmful for people.

Lesson Time: ~15 minutes

Lesson Materials:
- Lesson PowerPoint (PDF)
- [Video](#)

Vocabulary:
- **artificial intelligence (AI**) – a computer program or app that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence
- **generative AI** – a type of AI that can create content, including text, images, and audio

Lesson:
1. Pass out the student handout to the students and review directions.
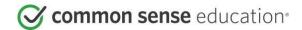
2. Show PowerPoint to your students.
   Ask: *Have you ever heard about artificial intelligence, or AI?* (Slide 4)

   Invite students to share their prior knowledge. If your students are already familiar with artificial intelligence, you can ask the follow-up questions on Slide 5.

3. **Say:** *We're going to watch a video that explains what AI is. And we'll talk about a specific kind of AI that is quite popular right now, called generative AI* (Slide 6).

4. Show the What Is AI? video (Slide 7) and have students complete the active viewing guide on the AI Explained handout.

   Refer to the Teacher Version of the handout to guide the discussion. You can also refer to slides 8–10 and define generative AI as a type of AI that can create content, including text, images, and audio (Slide 10).

5. **Say:** *In the video, they mentioned some of the cool things generative AI can do, as well as some of the potential concerns, or things we should look out for when using it. Given what you know, do you think generative AI will be mostly helpful or harmful to people and our lives? Pick the side that you agree with the most. Be sure to have at least one reason to support your opinion* (Slide 11).

Note: [This article](#) provides additional context for educators on the benefits and risks of generative AI.

6. Have students position themselves physically to show where they stand, forming a line along one wall. You can also have students share with a thumbs-up/down.

   Then review slides 12–15, inviting students to share their perspectives and add to the reasons that are listed. As students listen to their classmates' perspectives, their own stance may shift. If students have physically located themselves on a line or in different corners of the room, invite them to shift their location to represent any changes in their thinking.

7. **Say:** *Balancing the potential benefits and drawbacks of a new technology can be tricky. When it comes to AI and generative AI, we must think critically about its impacts and remember that we're each in control of how we use it* (Slide 16).

AI Explained Student Handout:

Active Viewing

As you watch the **What Is AI? video,** answer the questions in the chart below.

	Things I have learned
What is Artificial Intelligence?	
How does artificial intelligence "learn?"	
What makes "Generative AI" unique?	

AI Explained Teacher Handout (Key)
Active Viewing

As you watch the **What Is AI? video**, answer the questions in the chart below.

Things I have learned

What is Artificial Intelligence?

00:05 - 00:18

∉ AI is a computer program that is able to do things that often require human intelligence, like being able to identify the name of an object you see, understanding human speech, and even talking.

How does artificial intelligence "learn?"

00:37- 01:15

∉ Artificial intelligence learns by analyzing data, or information.
∉ The more information you give to an AI, the more accurate it can become at completing a task. It's like teaching a dog to know what a toy is.
∉ The more opportunities you give the dog to be exposed to toys (data), the better it can get at knowing how to differentiate between what is and is not a toy.

What makes "Generative AI" unique?

01:17 - 01:42

∉ Generative AI is more complex because it is able to create things from scratch like images or text.
∉ It's like a creative robot.
∉ Generative AI is also trained on a lot of information from the internet.