

# **5 Five Key Questions That Can Change the World**

*Classroom Activities for Media Literacy*

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Elementary • Middle School • High School  
Language Arts • Social Studies



Center for  
Media Literacy

# **5 Five Key Questions That Can Change the World**

## ***Classroom Activities for Media Literacy***

Part II: Practice

**CML MediaLit Kit™**

*A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age*

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**Center for  
Media Literacy**

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***“Think of education  
as a garden  
where questions  
grow.”***

Anna Devere Smith



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A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age

**“...A marvelous piece of work - clear, concise, the distillation of the most available research and practice.**

**...As a framework for taking teachers through all of the necessary stages, components, ideas and assumptions about media literacy, it could scarcely be bettered.**

**I hope it reaches every school and college in the land.”**

Len Masterman,  
author, *Teaching the Media*

## **Media Literacy: Theory to Practice to Implementation**

Like a map for a journey, the *CML MediaLit Kit™* provides both a vision and an evolving guide for navigating today’s global media culture.

With the growth of the Internet and its web of interconnections with television, videos and DVDs, advertising, music, newspapers, magazines, books – and even personal communication through e-mail, cell phones and instant messaging – knowledge and information has changed in major ways.

For one, it is increasingly *visual*. The world is pictured in front of us 24/7 and even printed words are arranged to be skimmed. Secondly, especially with the Internet, *information content is practically infinite*.

So the need of the educated citizen of tomorrow is not to acquire yet more content but to develop and internalize a *coherent and consistent process for analyzing content and managing information*. This not only benefits individuals in making their personal decisions, but also benefits society, since having such a framework allows citizens to have discussions and debates based on common vocabularies and approaches.

Resting on a foundation of the Center for Media Literacy’s 25 years of experience in the field plus the thinking of leading practitioners around the world, the *CML MediaLit Kit™* was created to help establish common ground on which to build curriculum programs, teaching materials and training services in an increasingly mediated world.

We believe that the *CML MediaLit Kit™* provides, for the first time, an *accessible, integrated outline of the established foundational concepts and implementation models needed to organize and structure teaching activities using a media literacy lens*.

As a vision of media literacy, the *MediaLit Kit™* title is simply a metaphor for a collection of the core ideas that are fundamental to media literacy’s inquiry-based pedagogy. As a collection of practical tools, the *CML MediaLit Kit™* consists of the following documents and resources articulating the *theory, practice and implementation* of media literacy in the US educational system.

And yet we have only begun – because *theory, practice and implementation* inform each other and change each other over time. As research and new insights lead to new understandings and specialized applications we will make them available through the CML website: [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)



Center for  
Media Literacy

[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

*CML's website is a  
"virtual encyclopedia"  
of media literacy  
for teachers, researchers,  
and administrators*

**CML MediaLit Kit™**  
[www.medialit.org/bp\\_mlk](http://www.medialit.org/bp_mlk)

**Strategies for Starting  
Media Literacy in  
your School or District**  
[www.medialit.org/  
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**CML Online Catalog  
Of Teaching Resources**  
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**CONNECT Newsletter**  
[www.medialit.org/newsletter](http://www.medialit.org/newsletter)

**How to Teach  
Media Literacy**  
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focus/tea\\_home](http://www.medialit.org/focus/tea_home)

**Reading Room**  
[www.medialit.org/reading\\_room](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room)

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## **Part I: Theory**

### ***Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Overview and Orientation Guide to Media Literacy Education***

A plain language introduction to the basic elements of media literacy education. An invaluable reference for teachers, media librarians, curriculum developers, researchers and all who want to understand what media literacy is all about.

## **Part II: Practice**

### ***Five Key Questions That Can Change the World Classroom Activities for Media Literacy***

25 cornerstone lesson plans help you introduce students to the *Five Key Questions* of Media Literacy and master them through practice. Activities emphasize not just analysis but also creative production. Useful for all grade levels and across the curriculum: language arts, social studies, health, math, and the arts. .

## **Part III: Implementation**

### ***Media Literacy Works! Project SMARTArt: A Case Study in Elementary Media Literacy and Arts Education***

An inside look at a federally funded demonstration project at Leo Politi Elementary School in Los Angeles where teachers developed innovative strategies to link media literacy to state standards for the arts as well as for language arts and English language development. Includes lesson plans, student animation and findings on how the *Five Key Questions* make media literacy implementable across the curriculum and what it takes for a media literacy program to be replicated in a school or district and sustained over time. Located at: [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

## **Part IV: Resources**

**1. Poster Sets:** (#1447) Colorful laminated posters designed for classroom or library illustrate the core elements of media literacy including the *Five Core Concepts* and the *Five Key Questions*.

**2. Video: *Mind Over Media*:** (#1351) A 60-minute video introduction to media literacy education for administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders. Four 15-minute segments make it ideal for in-services and workshops.

For complete description or to order, go to [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog) and put order number in the keyword search box.

# **CML's Five Key Questions: A Practical Approach to Media Literacy In the K-12 Classroom.**

**“It’s not the answers  
that show us the way,  
but the questions.”**

Rainier Maria Rilke

**“Think of education  
as a garden where  
questions grow.”**

Anna Devere Smith

**“The ability  
to question is  
the cornerstone of  
an educated life  
and the foundation  
for true democracy.”**

Center for Media Literacy

**“At the heart  
of media literacy  
is the principle  
of inquiry.”**

Elizabeth Thoman  
Center for Media Literacy

It seems too easy. Five simple questions. How can five questions change the world?

Like you, teachers everywhere are asking how to prepare their students for living all their lives in an increasingly mediated culture. At the Center for Media Literacy, we’ve been working for over two decades to develop creative ways to communicate and share the skills of media literacy education.

*Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* is the culmination of three years of planning, research and writing to create a practical guide to implementing the core skills of media literacy in the K-12 classroom.

## **Core Elements of Media Literacy**

Under the umbrella we call the *CML MediaLit Kit™*, we have identified the core elements of media literacy pedagogy – and practice. At the core of CML’s media literacy pedagogy is the *Five Key Questions*, an innovative recasting of the *Five Core Concepts* which the early media literacy field adapted from traditional rhetorical analysis of primarily print literature. (See sidebar on page 4)

In *MediaLit Kit™* / Part I, we provided an overview and orientation to each of the elements. In this *MediaLit Kit™* / Part II – *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* – we provide 25 lesson plans, five for each of the Questions, that will help you not only introduce the *Five Key Questions* to your students but also master them through practice.

For it is the learning, practicing and mastering of the *Five Key Questions* – over time – that leads to an adult understanding of how media are created and what their purposes are along with an informed ability to accept or reject both explicit and implicit messages.

In our work with teachers over the years, we realized that *concepts* are difficult to teach but questions are powerful. Learning to ask a series of *Key Questions* about today’s media culture provides an internal checklist against which to analyze and evaluate *any* media message from *any* source. That’s empowerment!

## **Not a New Subject to Teach, but a New Way to Teach**

The good news is that introducing these ideas can be done easily – and best – within the context of language arts, social studies or health standards that you already have to cover. Media literacy is not necessarily a new subject to teach. But it can be a new way to teach – everything!

Still wondering how five questions can change the world? We propose that if they are the *right* five questions, they will lead to many other questions which, in turn, open up a lifetime of inquiry that will transform the way students live in and negotiate the complex media environment of their generation.

So whether you teach kindergarten or high school, we invite you to use these lesson plans in YOUR classroom and experience the “aha” that signals the dawn of insight, the excitement of making connections, the growth of understanding. Then you’ll see how CML’s *Five Key Questions* can, indeed, change the world – one student at a time.



# ***Five Key Questions of Media Literacy***

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- 1. Who created this message?**
- 2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?**
- 3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?**
- 4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?**
- 5. Why is this message being sent?**

## ***Five Core Concepts***

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- 1. All media messages are ‘constructed.’**
- 2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.**
- 3. Different people experience the same media message differently.**
- 4. Media have embedded values and points of view.**
- 5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.**

(See page 82 for a handy reproducible chart aligning the Key Questions and Core Concepts.)

## **Where do the Key Questions Come From?**

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The *Five Key Questions* flow from the *Five Core Concepts* which have evolved from traditional categories of rhetorical and literary analysis. We can crystallize them with the following keywords:

- #1. Authorship
- #2. Format
- #3. Audience
- #4. Content
- #5. Purpose

Over the years, media literacy practitioners around the world have adapted and applied this analytical construct to today’s mediated ‘texts’ – from television and movies to billboards, magazines, even bumper stickers and T-shirts!

We acknowledge the many thinkers and teachers in the media literacy field, especially our Australian and Canadian colleagues, whose decades of experience and thoughtful reflection have laid a firm foundation on which to build a practical pedagogy for learning and teaching in a 21st century media culture: the *CML MediaLit Kit™*

## What is Media Literacy?

Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education.

It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet.

Media Literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society, as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

Center for Media Literacy

# How This Book is Organized

Teaching media literacy is a Pandora’s box – introduce one idea and a dozen more pop out. But it precisely this multi-layered approach to our multimedia culture that makes media literacy so exciting in the classroom.

Unlike other collections of media literacy lesson plans that are typically organized by genre (advertising or news, for example) or by issue / topic (violence, gender, obesity etc.), this collection is designed to help students learn and master the *Five Key Questions of Media Literacy* as a foundational *framework* for navigating the media culture in which they are growing up. By focusing primarily on the *Key Questions*, these lessons empower students with the ability to apply the questions to *any* genre or *any* topic and thus to internalize the skills required for lifelong learning in a constantly changing world.

## 1. The 25 Lessons

There are five lesson plans (A through E) for each of the *Five Key Questions / Core Concepts*. In the 25 lesson plans we cover a variety of content topics and explore a mix of media formats, from printed newspapers and magazines to television, movies, the internet, radio, even maps and money!

Each chapter begins with a short background essay for teachers to explore the richness conveyed in each *Key Question*. Then each of the five lessons begins with a brief paragraph connecting the objectives and activities of the lesson plan to just one aspect of the *Key Question*. This introduction is followed by

- **Objectives** – what skills and knowledge the students will learn.
- **Correlation to McREL National Standards** – Language Arts and/or Social Studies.
- **Materials and Preparation** needed to conduct the lesson.
- **Teaching Strategies** – step-by-step instructions to help you organize and conduct the lesson.

## 2. Organized But Flexible

It is recommended that the lessons be done in order from A through E. The first lesson plan (A) in each question is a cornerstone activity designed to get at the heart of the key question and its core concept. The “A” lessons, in effect, explore a set of basic communications skills or core knowledge about human communication as they relate to the five key questions. The four additional lesson plans (B, C, D, E) build incrementally on knowledge gained in the basic “A” activity. The “E” activities are the most sophisticated. Most activities are scalable up or down from lower grades to high school. Look for the following icons to help you

⤴ = scale down for younger students

⤵ = scale up for older students

Although *Key Question #1* is a logical starting point, the *Key Questions* can be introduced in any order. Indeed students may be exploring *KQ#3* in Social Studies at the same time they’re learning about *KQ#2* in Language Arts. This is the value of the *CML MediaLit Kit™* framework when adopted by a school or a district – students learn media literacy concepts and skills *consistently* from class to class and grade to grade.

### 3. Media Literacy is Multi-Layered

Because teachers may wish to know which lessons cover common media categories, lessons B, C, D and E can be identified by whether they deal primarily with News, Advertising, or Entertainment media. A fourth Miscellaneous category provides flexibility to include minor topics and categories.

The following chart shows which lesson plans cover which topics. Note that B, C, D, E activities are scattered around the categories. For example, the “B” (second) activity in *KQ#1* is framed around Advertising; in *KQ#2*, the second activity is about News; in *KQ#3*, it’s in the miscellaneous column and in *KQ#4*, it’s in News again. In *KQ#5*, the second lesson also deals with Advertising.

**Lesson Plan Matrix by Content Covered**

KQ	Basic Communication Knowledge / Skills	News	Advertising	Entertainment	Miscellaneous
#1	1A	1C	1B	1D	1E
#2	2A	2B	2E	2D	2C
#3	3A	3E	3D	3C	3B
#4	4A	4B	4C	4D	4E
#5	5A	5D	5B	5C	5E

### 4. The ‘Inquiry’ Method

All lessons are developed using the ‘Inquiry’ Process so central to media literacy learning. As explained more fully in the *MediaLit Kit™ / Part I: Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the inquiry process includes both analytical (deconstruction) skills as well as production (construction) skills. When analysis is combined with creative production, theory unites with application, thereby allowing students to discover and express their learning in an interconnected and natural process. Each enriches the other.

Some of the analysis and critical thinking skills your students will explore include:

- *distinguish* advantages and disadvantages of different media.
- *define* factors that go into news judgments.
- *compare and contrast* various techniques of persuasion.
- *analyze* the role of sound effects, music and dialogue in media messages.
- *uncover* the ‘points of view’ embedded in news and information media.
- *summarize* the differences between generalizations and stereotypes.

Some of the production projects your students can experience in these lessons include:

- Put *sound effects* to a story or scene from a play
- Take *digital photos* to explore elements of visual language
- *Rewrite a story* from a missing point of view
- Create an *ad campaign* for a specific target audience
- Develop and defend a lineup of *news stories* for the nightly news.
- Conduct a *research project* on gender and age preferences for different movie genres

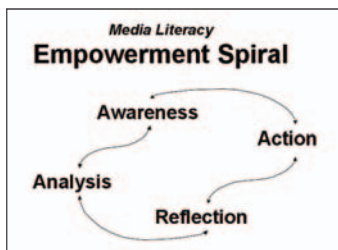
**“The question IS the answer.”**

Jamie McKenzie,  
Assessing Growth in Questioning

### Essential Questions for Teachers

1. Am I trying to tell the students what the message is? Or am I giving them the skills to determine what THEY think the message(s) might be?
2. Have I let students know that I am open to accepting their interpretation, as long as it is well substantiated, or have I conveyed the message that my interpretation is the only correct view?
3. At the end of the lesson, are students likely to be more analytical? Or more cynical?

Faith Rogow, PhD



## Questions to Guide Young Children

### KQ #1:

- What is this?
- How is it put together?

### KQ#2.

- What do I see or hear? Smell? Touch or taste?
- What do I like or dislike about this?

### KQ#3:

- What might other people think and feel about this?
- What do I think and feel about this?

### KQ#4.

- What does this tell me about how other people live and behave?
- Is anything or anyone left out?

### KQ#5.

- Is this trying to tell me something?
- Is this trying to sell me something?

CML MediaLit Kit™

## 5. The Empowerment Spiral

To use the 25 lesson plans in this book, you do not need to have extensive knowledge of the media field or even professional competence in journalism, video production or filmmaking. What you will need is skill in organizing and facilitating student-centered learning. The best preparation is simply an inquiring mind and a willingness to answer a student's question with "I don't know. How could we find out?"

As you work with the lesson plans in this book, you'll find that many of them are organized using the four-step matrix of the Empowerment Spiral, also known as "Action Learning." Based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the matrix breaks complex concepts into learning steps – *Awareness, Analysis, Reflection, Action* – that stimulate different aspects of the brain and enhance our ability to evolve new knowledge from past experience. Learn more about The Empowerment Spiral in the *CML MediaLit Kit™* / Part I.

## 6. Additional Questions

At CML, we believe that success will have been achieved when *all students* graduate with the ability and proficiency to apply CML's *Five Key Questions* routinely and regularly to their media experiences – whether they are watching live news coverage of a world event, flipping through ads in a magazine, surfing the Internet or sharing a movie with a friend.

But it should be obvious that the *Five Key Questions* are just the tip of the inquiry iceberg. Though simple on the surface, each one contains within it the possibility of more focused questions. We call these *Guiding Questions*. You'll find sample *Guiding Questions* next to the introductory essay for each of the *Five Key Questions*.

As you work with them, many other questions will also come to mind. Your students, too, will pose questions – often profound ones that lead to those important "aha!" moments that make teaching so rewarding.

Those who teach younger students will more likely want to use the *Questions to Guide Young Children*. (See sidebar this page.) In this list, each of the *Five Key Questions* is broken into two simpler questions, providing more developmentally appropriate tools for children to process their media messages and experiences. The chart on page 83 aligns the *Questions to Guide Young Children* with both the *Five Key Questions* and the *Five Core Concepts*.

Conversely, older students in high school and college can handle more complex analysis and so you may find the *Expanded Questions for More Sophisticated Inquiry* a useful reference. (See page 84)

But the essence of media literacy always comes back to the *Five Key Questions* and the *Five Core Concepts*. They serve as the "Big Ideas" or the "enduring understanding" that students will need in order to navigate their way through life as citizens in a global media culture. Together, they are a unique contribution to 21<sup>st</sup> Century education and a powerful set of tools for preparing future citizens to understand, share in and contribute to the public debate.

## Process Skills: The Key to Success

### Access / Analyze / Evaluate / Create

In its report, *Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, a public-private organization of leaders and educators in business and education, outlined what it will take to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century work and living environment:

“People need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills – by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, making decisions... (They) need to become lifelong learners, updating their knowledge and skills continually and independently.”

Using *CML's MediaLit Kit™* as a framework, students not only gain knowledge about the *content* of contemporary media but perhaps more importantly, learn and practice the *skills* needed to navigate one's way in a global media culture. These skills include the ability to:

- *access* the right information *when you need it*;
- *analyze and evaluate* what you find;
- *formulate* questions to *clarify* your search;
- *summarize and integrate* what you conclude and then,
- *communicate* it – clearly – to someone else.

Media literacy education, with inquiry as its core, provides the bridge over which students can pass to learn the critical process skills they'll need to not just survive but thrive as adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

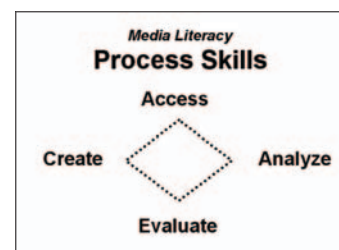
## Media Literacy in Educational Content Standards

Media literacy is most successful when it is integrated across the curriculum and, thus, related to national, state or district educational standards and assessment rubrics. Although you will seldom find the words “media literacy” in state or national standards, the underlying concepts of core subject standards describe the very skills that inquiry-based media education also emphasizes. Examples of common standards that clearly dovetail with media literacy education can be found in the sidebars on this page.

The curriculum connections chart within the Table of Contents (p 2-3) can help you identify which lesson plans are most suitable for Language Arts, Social Studies, Health, Math and the Arts. Each lesson plan further correlates the lesson to McREL National Standards for both Language Arts and Social Studies.

In the late 1990's, recognizing the growing influence of media and of students' need to “read” media messages, McREL added two new strands to their Language Arts standards:

- #9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.**
- #10: Understands the characteristics and components of the media.**



### Some Media Literacy Standards

**“Conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems . . . gather, evaluate and synthesize data from a variety of sources (print and nonprint) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.”**

International Reading Association,  
Standard 7

## Some Standards...

“Understands the main idea or message in visual media. . . knows how different elements help to establish plot, setting, and character in visual narratives.”

McREL Language Arts K-2 / Standard 9, Benchmark 1, 3

“Compare, contrast and critique various media coverage of the same event such as in newspapers, television and on the Internet.”

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills / English IV; 21 / grade 9-12

“Understands persuasive techniques in advertising such as exaggerated claims, appealing lifestyles, bandwagon, glittering generalities, celebrity endorsements. . .”

McREL Language Arts 6-8 / Standard 9, Benchmark 9

“Create a media product, e.g. a 5-minute documentary, a print ad, an editorial, a flier, a movie critique, . . . to communicate a specific message to a specific audience.”

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills / Language Arts / Grade 10

“Analyze how media influences the selection of health information, products and services.”

National Health Standard 2 / Grades 5-8

The numerous Benchmarks identified for each of these strands constitute a major contribution to integrating media literacy within K-12 English / Language Arts. Although media literacy is not so clearcut in McREL’s social standards, it is fundamental to teaching democratic values and can be found in benchmarks such as understanding the role of the media in political campaigns or the agenda setting function of the news.

The following list identifies the Internet locations (URLs) for McREL’s compendium of K-12 standards as well as national standards published by each of the major professional teacher organizations. Individual state standards are often based on or adapted from these national standards and are increasingly available on the Internet.

McREL index to all standards  
[www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp](http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp)

McREL Language Arts  
[www.mcrel.org/compendium/SubjectTopics.asp?SubjectID=7](http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/SubjectTopics.asp?SubjectID=7)

International Reading Association  
– with the National Council of Teachers of English  
[www.reading.org/resources/issues/reports/learning\\_standards.html](http://www.reading.org/resources/issues/reports/learning_standards.html)

National Communication Association  
(Speaking, Listening and Media Literacy standards)  
[www.natcom.org/nca/Template2.asp?bid=269](http://www.natcom.org/nca/Template2.asp?bid=269)  
– click on “NCA K-12 Standards of Communication” (PDF)

National Council for Social Studies  
[www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary/](http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary/)

National Association for Health Education  
[www.aahperd.org/aahe/template.cfm?template=natl\\_health\\_education\\_standards.html](http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/template.cfm?template=natl_health_education_standards.html)

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics  
[www.nctm.org/standards](http://www.nctm.org/standards)

National Council for the Arts  
[artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards/standards.cfm](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards/standards.cfm)

## Words of Wisdom

The following reflections come from over two decades of CML’s work and experience in the field of media literacy education. We share them both as an inspiration and a challenge as you explore yourself and then introduce your students to the *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World!*

- **To teach, one must first understand.** Teachers interested in media literacy need to explore and internalize for themselves the *Five Core Concepts* of media literacy. This foundation, in turn, provides the ability to convey and illuminate the *Five Key Questions* for students. Applying the *Five Key Questions* then gives students the tools with which to negotiate meaning for themselves.
- **Developing a common vocabulary** around media literacy within classes, and within overall teaching and learning communities, is essential. Once there is a common understanding of the *Five Core Concepts* and *Five Key Questions* of media literacy, progress in applying media literacy is rapid.



- **Media literacy is a skill** and teaching it is different than teaching factual knowledge. Media literacy provides a process for learning – the process of inquiry – which can be applied to *any* content or subject area. The *Five Key Questions* are a starting point but it takes repeated practice of *applying* the questions to different media and in a variety of activities to really master the process. It’s like learning to tie your shoes or ride a bike – you usually don’t “get it” the first time. Becoming media literate takes practice, practice, practice!
- **When you hear the classic definition:** “Media literacy involves learning to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms,” it seems overwhelming. Where do you start? But if the focus of media literacy instruction becomes introducing and reinforcing the use of the *Five Key Questions*, teachers have an immediate entry point. Plus it’s a handy way to make connections to the curricula you are already working with in other subject areas.
- **The *Five Key Questions* are the focal point** of learning the media literacy process for students. Why? Because learning to apply *Five Key Questions* is doable and engaging. Students like to ‘pull back the covers’ and see what’s behind media messages – and they enjoy expressing their own point of view.
- **After a while,** familiarity with the *Five Key Questions* becomes like shorthand. Students point out, ‘That’s #1!’ or ‘That’s #4!’ It’s fun for them to quickly discern how messages are created, the impact they have and how they are received, and to share their insights with others.
- **Some teachers immediately make the connections** between media literacy and other subject areas. Others need more time to work with the *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions*. Generally, it takes about a year for teachers to feel confident about teaching media literacy – and by then, their teaching is transformed forever.
- **Citizens of all ages would benefit** from knowing the *Five Core Concepts* and *Five Key Questions* of Media Literacy. They are a fundamental skillset for participants in a democratic society.

## Contact Us!

### *We Invite Your Feedback and Response*

*Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* represents the latest thinking about media literacy education by the Center for Media Literacy, a nonprofit educational organization that has pioneered many developments in the field over its 25-year history.

Fundamental to our work is communication and feedback with people like you – teachers, librarians, youth and afterschool leaders. With the help of a wide and growing community of users, we learn from one another and thus move the practice of media literacy forward.

We invite you to become part of the CML user network by sending us your comments and reflections about teaching the *Five Key Questions*, how you used these activities, how you may have changed them or what successes (or difficulties) you encountered. Throughout the book on pages 41, 55, 67, you will find Feedback Forms to send us your reflections, notes or comments. And of course, we’ll contact you if we plan to use your words in print or on our website. *Thanks for taking the time to let us hear from you!*

## Some Standards...

“Knows about people who have made significant contributions in the field of communications – telegraph, telephone, radio, television, computer . . .”

McREL K-4 History /  
Standard 8, Benchmark 13

“Understands the different ways in which people are stereotyped in visual media . . . and that people could have been represented differently.”

McREL Language Arts 3-5 /  
Standard 9 Benchmark 4

“Analyze the effect on the viewer of images, text and sound in electronic journalism; identify the techniques used to achieve the effects.”

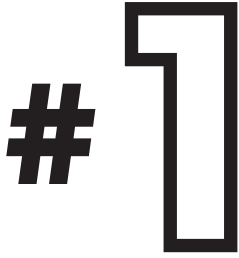
Indiana Language Arts  
Standard 7.7.7



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Keyword:

## Authorship

### Guiding Questions:

- What kind of “text” is it?
- What are the various elements (building blocks) that make up the whole?
- How similar or different is it to others of the same genre?
- Which technologies are used in its creation?
- What choices were made that might have been made differently?
- How many people did it take to create this message? What are their various jobs?

### Key Question #1

## Who created this message?

### Core Concept #1

## All messages are ‘constructed.’

To explore the idea of ‘authorship’ in media literacy is to look deeper than just knowing whose name is on the cover of a book or all the jobs in the credits of a movie. *Key Question #1* opens up two fundamental insights about all media – “constructedness” and *choice*.

The first is the simple but profound understanding that media texts are not “natural” although they look “real.” Media texts are built just as buildings and highways are put together: a plan is made, the building blocks are gathered and ordinary people get paid to do various jobs.

Whether we are watching the nightly news, passing a billboard on the street or reading a political campaign flyer, the media message we experience was written by someone (or probably many people), images were captured and edited, and a creative team with many talents put it all together.

The second insight is that in this creative process, *choices are made*. If some words are spoken; others are edited out; if one picture is selected, dozens may have been rejected; if an ending to a story is written one way; other endings may not have been explored. However as the audience, we don’t get to see or hear the words, pictures or endings that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted! Nor does anybody ever explain why certain choices were made.

The result is that whatever is “constructed” by just a few people then becomes “normal” for the rest of us. Like the air we breathe, media get taken for granted and their messages can go unquestioned. Media are not “real” but they affect people in real ways because we take and make meaning for ourselves out of whatever we’ve been given by those who do the creating.

The success of media texts depends upon their apparent naturalness; we turn off a TV show that looks “fake.” But the truth is, it’s all fake – even the news. That doesn’t mean we can’t still enjoy a movie or sing along with a favorite CD or tune in to get the news headlines.

The goal of *Key Question #1* is simply to expose the complexities of media’s “constructedness” and thus create the critical distance we need to be able to ask other important questions.



# 1a

## What is Communication?: One-Way vs. Two-Way

---

Most media we experience on a daily basis send messages only one-way, without any real opportunity for us to respond or question. This one-way communication has many limitations that we seldom think about. In order to understand that “all media are constructed” this introductory activity demonstrates the difference between getting information from TV, radio or even a newspaper (one-way communication) and talking with a friend (two-way communication). While we may not be able to change the dynamic of mass media, understanding its limitations is a first step toward being able to think and challenge messages we get through mass media.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. List multiple forms of media.
2. Distinguish advantages and disadvantages of one-way and two-way communication.
3. Understand some of the limits and advantages of mass media communication.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S10/B1)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B1, B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B3)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. White board, chalkboard or overhead projector for the teacher to draw a design for the whole class to see. Two sample designs are included at the end of this plan.
2. Paper and pencils/pens for half the class, who will participate in the role of receivers.

**Definitions**

1. *Media* – any tool or technology used for sending and/or receiving messages.
2. *Mass Media* – any tool or technology used for sending messages from a central source to many receivers; usually only one-way communication is possible.
3. *Media Text* – any message sent via media; could be words, pictures, sounds – or multimedia.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Whole Class Introductory Discussion**

- Generate a list with students of different ways we communicate.
- Discuss the differences between one-way communication and two-way communication. Have students separate this list into one-way communication and two-way communication. A Venn diagram could be useful since some communication can be both. Ask:
  - ? Which type of communication is most prevalent?
  - ? What are the advantages and limitations to each?
- Explain that we will be experimenting with one-way and two-way communication in order to understand the limitations and advantages of mass media compared with face-to-face communication.

## II. Partner Activity: One-Way vs. Two-Way Communication

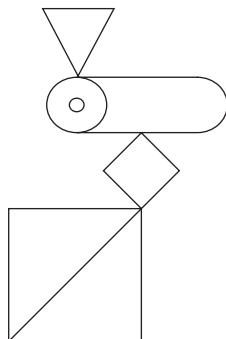
- In pairs, students sit back to back, one partner facing the board or chart paper and the other facing the opposite direction without touching each other.
- **Sender:** This student is responsible for looking at the design at the front of the room and describing to his/her partner what to draw and how. Senders may not turn around and look at his/her partner's drawing or anyone else's drawings.
- **Receiver:** This student faces away from the front. His/her job is to listen to the sender's description and draw the design as instructed – without turning around or looking at the design at the front or at anyone else's drawing. He/she may not speak, ask questions or make any sounds or signals.
- Teacher shows a simple design on the board or chart paper. (See example below or create your own.)
- Allow several minutes for **senders** to explain to **receivers** how to draw the design. **Senders** may explain the design to their partners several times to make sure they get all the details but they cannot receive any signals or questions to guide them in what to say or how many times to explain the drawing.
- When everyone has finished (or is totally frustrated!) the teacher covers the drawing while students, without talking or showing their drawings, start a new sheet of paper.
- Teacher removes the cover and shows the same design again.
- This time, the **sender** tells his/her partner how to draw the design and the **receiver** is allowed to speak and ask questions so that the communication goes both ways. However, the **receiver** still may not look at the drawing in front or at other people's drawings.
- Using a similar but different design, have students switch roles so that everyone experiences both positions of sending and receiving one-way and two-way communication.

## III. Reflection

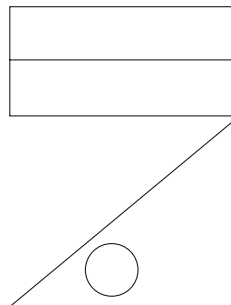
- Compare the drawings and analyze the results of this experiment.
  - ? What are the advantages and disadvantages of predominantly one-way communication vs. two-way communication?
- Discuss the implications of this experiment with mass media:
  - ? When do media claim to offer two-way communication yet only offer a few more one-way choices?
  - ? Are letters to the editor in a newspaper two-way communication if the paper edits the letters and chooses which letters to publish or not?
  - ? Are talk shows two-way if all calls are screened?

### Sample Designs:

For Older Students



For Younger Students



# 1b

## Inside Advertising: Matching Messages and Media

---

The same message sent through the Internet, or on TV, or in a book, is significantly different depending on the medium used. This activity highlights how the characteristics of each medium can alter the message being sent. Since ads are present in all commercial media, they provide a window into the structure of different types of media. Through creating the same ad for different media, students experience and reflect on the unique characteristics of each medium and how that can influence a message.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize various techniques and ‘languages’ used in different media.
2. Understand how different media change a message to fit their particular structure.
3. Manipulate a message in order to communicate in different media formats.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S10/2)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B7), (S10/B2)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B3), (S10/B3)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B10)

**Curriculum Integration:**

This lesson integrates well with Health by analyzing products that students may be studying in Health, such as: tobacco, alcohol, healthy foods, junk foods, etc.

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Magazines that students can cut up.
2. Scissors, poster board or paper and glue or tape.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Distinguishing Product From Brand**

- Discuss the overt function of advertising – to sell products.
- Explore the difference between *product* (type of item being sold); *brand* (name of a specific product); and *corporate identity* (name of the company). For example: If the product is *candy*, the brand could be *M&M’s*, even though the company that makes them is *Mars, Inc.* Show examples from magazines and have class practice distinguishing between products, brands and corporate identities.
  - ↪ For younger students, the teacher may need to first explain the difference between ads and editorial in newspapers and magazines. Practice recognizing ads if needed before going on.
- Once students understand this distinction, have them look through magazines to locate full-page ads.
  - ↪ Younger students can tear out the entire page and then cutout the brand name and (if visible) cutout a picture of the product and (if revealed) the corporate name. Glue them side-by-side on another sheet of paper.

- Older students can list products and brands from magazine ads in three columns with “product,” “brand,” and “corporate identity” as titles on the top of each column.

## II. Changing Media–Changing Ads

- Have students discuss the differences and similarities between advertising printed or broadcast on radio, TV, magazines, newspapers, billboards, etc. In groups, have students list the differences that would be necessary between ads for the same product found in different types of media. (For example: a radio ad might have a musical jingle whereas a magazine ad would not have any sound but might have photographs or drawings.)
- Choose one product for the whole class to advertise (such as sneakers or soda). Break students into teams and have each group create an advertisement for the chosen product in a different medium. Using stick figures and simple graphics they should create their ad on poster paper, or write a script to perform for the class:
  - Radio
  - TV
  - Magazine
  - Newspaper
  - Billboard
  - Internet Pop-up Ad
  - T-shirt or Bumper sticker
- Have student teams present their ads to the whole class and then discuss:
  - ? What differences and similarities did you find by putting the same message into different media?
  - ? How can the type of media influence the message?



### **Teaching Tip: Class Magazine Box**

Many media literacy activities call for students to cut up magazines to analyze the advertising, create collages, etc. In order to get magazines that speak to students’ interests and to help insure diversity in images, invite the class to bring outdated magazines from their homes to fill the box. Encourage them to bring in an array of youth-oriented publications, news, sports, nature and fashion magazines – and especially ethnic magazines, including those in different languages and portraying different cultures.

# 1c

## The World in 22 Minutes: Constructing a TV News Lineup

---

An important part of understanding the constructedness of media is recognizing that choices are made and that those choices can influence people and society. The decision of what to include and what to leave out is made all the time as media creators struggle to balance competing needs. By enacting the role of news producers and organizing a simple 22 minute TV newscast, students experience the process of making the critical choices about what gets aired and what is never seen.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Experience the role of news editor.
2. Define factors that go into news judgments.
3. Explore the constructed nature of news media with a consciousness of the way subjective choices influence the news that gets reported.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S9/B2), (S10/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B11), (S10/B3)

Civics Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S19/B3) (S19/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S19/B6)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Several sets of the front pages of two different newspapers from the same date. (See Teaching Tip on p. 20) You will need enough copies of both newspapers so that each group of 4-6 students can have one copy each.
2. Copies of Handout 1C: “The World in 22 Minutes.” (You may alter the titles of the sample news stories if you wish to make the exercise more real to your own locality.)
3. Chart paper and markers.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Comparing Newspapers**

- Distribute to each group of 4-6 students, a set of two front pages that appeared on the same day in two different newspapers. Have groups discuss and answer the following questions:
  - ? Compare *front pages*. Which stories are on both front pages? Which are only on one front page? What feelings or impressions do you get from the different front pages?
  - ? Compare *headlines* for the same story in the two papers. How do the headlines differ in tone and implication? How do the headlines influence the way one could read the story?
  - ? Compare *photographs* connected with the same story in the two newspapers. In what ways are the photos similar or different? What do the photos suggest about the story?
  - ? What are some ways you see that headlines and photographs affect interpretations of news stories?

## II. Constructing the TV lineup

- Distribute handout 1C to each group plus a large piece of chart paper and markers.
- Each team will arrange a 22 minute news broadcast by evaluating the sample news stories, discussing their competing importance, strategically choosing which stories to include and which to leave out, and arranging them in order. Explain the “Rules of the TV News Game” and the competing needs of each rule.
- Each teams should print their list of stories large and post it on the wall for the whole class to see. One student from each team should present their team’s lineup, explaining why they selected certain stories and left others out.

## III. Reflecting on Differences and Similarities

- Compare and contrast program lists posted on the walls.
  - ? What similarities and differences exist?
  - ? How do you feel about what you had to drop?
  - ? What were some of the hard decisions?
  - ? What insights does this give you about the news broadcasts that you watch everyday?



### ***Teaching Tip: Front Pages from Around the World***

Finding a variety of newspaper front pages is easy on the website of the Newseum, an interactive museum in Washington, D.C. devoted to the news and a free press. You can download front pages from over 400 newspapers in 47 countries; the “map view” helps you locate your own local newspaper as well as cities near and far. However, as smaller cities often focus on their local area news, check major city newspapers to find different treatments of the same national or international stories. Pages print out 8 1/2 x 11. <http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages>

# The World in 22 Minutes

## *Exercising Your News Judgment*

As the producers of the local TV newscast, *The World in 22 Minutes*, your team must exercise “news judgment” and select the best lineup of stories that will keep your viewers watching!

### Rules of the TV News Game

Making decisions about what stories to include – and in what order – takes lots of strategic thinking. Plus you must keep in mind the following rules:

1. **Newsworthiness** – What is the importance of the story? Does the story contain critical information that your viewers should know about? What will hold your audience’s interest? Will it move them?
2. **Strive for Balance** – Include the positive as well as the negative; breaking news as well as “human interest” features; stories of success as well as stories of conflict.
3. **Timeliness** – Do you need to run the story today or will the story keep for another day?
4. **Picture Quality** – TV news needs good quality pictures and graphics to keep viewers watching. Choose wisely.
5. **Time Restrictions** – Can the story fit into the 22 minutes allotted for your broadcast?

### Tips to keep in mind

- Make sure to select stories that add up to no more than 22 minutes. (commercials and promos take the other 8 minutes.)
- Your first story (the “Lead”) should be the one that is most compelling in both content and pictures. You don’t want your audience to click over to the competition!
- Please note that these sample news stories are unusually long for the purpose of this exercise. Most news stories rarely last more than two minutes and are often as short as 15 seconds.

## *Sample News Stories*

Story Summary	Picture Quality	Length
1. Community group protests toxic waste disposal site.	so-so	1.5 mins.
2. Vice President comes to visit regional high school.	good	2 mins.
3. Striking workers arrested after violent outbreak.	good	2.5 mins.
4. Opening of community center for kids at risk.	so-so	2 mins.
5. Former mayor dies suddenly of heart attack.	good	3 mins.
6. Football team makes state regionals.	so-so	2.5 mins.
7. Local insurance company charged for defrauding elderly.	good	2 mins
8. Pop star comes home for charity event at local hospital.	good	2 mins.
9. Welfare recipients say lines are getting worse.	so-so	1 mins.
10. Weather report with pending storm graphics.	good	2 mins.
11. Profile: local citizen with a garage full of TVs.	good	2 mins.
12. Monsoon devastates rural parts of Indonesia.	good	1.5 mins.
13. Economists predict gas prices will continue to rise.	so-so	1 min.
14. Pomegranates: the new miracle food.	good	2 mins.
15. New ab machine boasts more muscle for less workout.	good	2 mins.
16. Popular SUV recalled for faulty seatbelts.	poor	1.5 mins.

# 1d

## Behind the Screen: Movie Makers and Their Choices

---

DVD movies with their production segments and “the making of” videos have helped audiences better understand how movies, TV and other media are created. The number of people required and the complex structure of the creative process are some of the many layers that can be explored with the question “Who created this message?” But this activity goes beyond just learning about jobs in the media industries; it helps students grasp the concept that many ordinary people are making choices and decisions that can powerfully affect the way the rest of us see and understand our world.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Increase their knowledge about the people involved in creating media.
2. Build deeper comprehension of the complexity involved in making movies.
3. Be able to analyze some of the influences of the choices that are made by the numerous people involved in movie production.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S10/B4)
- Grades 3-5: (S10/B3)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B5)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B3)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. TV/VCR or TV/ DVD player
2. Popular feature film on video or DVD
3. PowerPoint handouts with 3 slides and lines, see Teaching Tip on p. 23 for details.
4. For younger students, read the book: *The Bionic Bunny Show* by Marc Brown and Laurene Krasny Brown. This inexpensive paperback explains how an ordinary bunny is made into a superhero TV character with wardrobe, special effects, and the hard work of talented technicians. If not already available in your media library, order from CML/GPN online resource catalog at: [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog). Put product number “1203” in the keyword search window.)

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Listing Jobs**

- Show a short clip (3-5 minutes) from a popular feature film. Begin the discussion by asking:
  - ? Who created this media text?
  - 🔗 For younger children, read *The Bionic Bunny Show*.
- Have students work in teams to generate lists of all the people involved in making this movie. If students don’t know the job title then have them list the job description. If students don’t know what the job is but know a title (such as: Best Boy) list the title.
- Have each team share their answers and generate a whole class list of all the jobs. Some job examples: director, producer, cinematographer, actor, writer, editor, make-up, wardrobe, sound technician, lighting, location manager, set designer, etc.



- Show the credits at the end of the movie and try to find additional jobs that were not mentioned. Do not try to get them all, but do find at least ten. Some alternate sources for finding movie industry job titles are:
  - Check the Internet web site for the movie.
  - If you use a DVD it may have an extra feature in which some of the crew talk about making the movie.
  - Go online and look at Reel Jobs: [www.skillsnet.net](http://www.skillsnet.net)

## II. Drawing Jobs

- To apply their knowledge, have teams create a cartoon strip (storyboard) with at least three frames that show the behind the scenes action of the making of the feature film being studied. Each frame should show a specific person doing a production job.

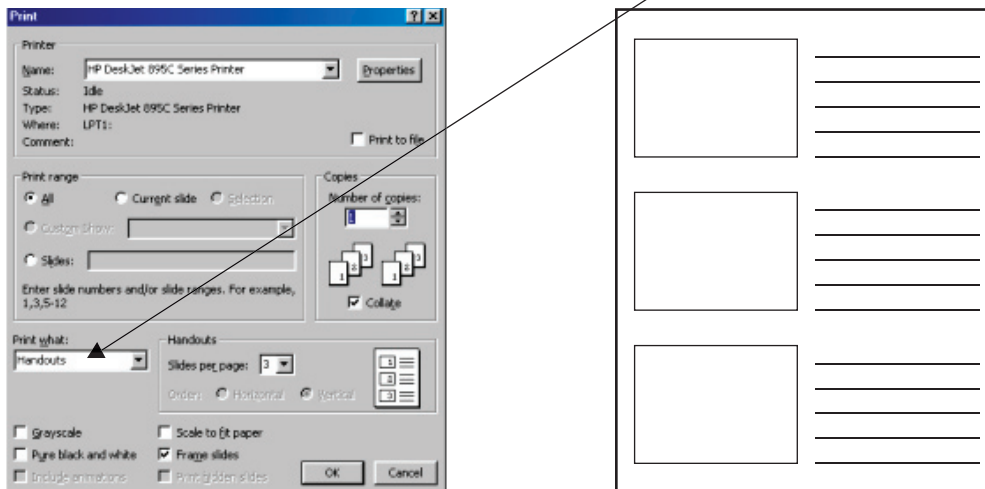
Discuss the activity and ask:

- ? Which jobs seem the most exciting?
- ? Which jobs do you think are most important and why?
- ? Which jobs require making the most decisions that affect the entire movie?
- ? Which job would you prefer and why?



### **Teaching Tip: Make a Template for Storyboarding**

Microsoft's PowerPoint program has the option of printing handouts that can be adapted to make a copyable template for students to create storyboards. On one page you can get 3 empty frames with lines next to them for writing dialogue and directions. Once in the PowerPoint program, go to "File," then to "Print." In the Print menu window is an option to "Print what:." Click on the drop down arrow and choose "Handouts" and the option for "Slides per page:" If you choose 3 slides per page you will get a print out of a page like this:



# 1e

## Maps and the Pictures in our Heads

---

When we list types of media, we seldom include maps. But maps, as mass produced representations, are ideal for deeper explorations of media “constructedness” – for example, that mediated messages contain both truths and distortions, that choices of what to include and exclude can have political and social consequences, and that media cloaked in a scientific “aura of credibility” are seldom questioned. Through uncovering the bias and subjectivity inherent in maps, students puncture the false assumption that maps (or any media) are ever truly “objective.”

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Evaluate the advantages and limitations of different maps.
2. Deepen the process of understanding that all media are created and therefore, like maps, contain both truths and distortions.
3. Explain how the design of a map (scale, color, projection, etc.) can influence our understanding of what it represents.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B1), (S10/B2)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B10)

Geography Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B1, B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S1/B1)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. World Maps: Mercator, Peter’s Projection, What’s Up? South! Map and a globe. Some of these maps can be found at: [www.petersmap.com](http://www.petersmap.com)
2. Copies of Handout 1E #1 “Challenging Maps” or 1E #2 “A Quick Quiz about World Maps” with relative land size questions. #1 is for elementary grades and #2 is for upper grades.
3. For a wealth of instructional strategies on helping kids make their own maps – from floor plans or their bedroom to a map of the neighborhood – check out *I See What You Mean: Children at Work with Visual Information*. (If not already available in your media library, order through CML/GPN’s online catalog at [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog). Put product number “1036” in the keyword search window.)

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Basic Mapping**

- Show a globe and discuss our planet and how maps can show us our world. Ask:
  - ? What information can we learn from a map?
  - ? What are some different types of maps?
- Show the *Mercator Map* and discuss the difficulty of getting a round object onto a flat surface (from three dimensions to two dimensions). Ask:

- ? Can maps be misleading? How?
- ? What information do we not get from maps?

## II. Comparing Relative Land Size

- Distribute Handout. Have student teams compare and discuss relative size of the landforms pictured in the handout. They should begin by answering just the first question, comparing the relative land size of Europe vs. South America.
- In a whole group discussion, review their answers to the first question. Once they know the correct answer, discuss different world maps, analyzing their advantages and disadvantages. View the *Peter's Projection Map* and the *What's Up? South! Map*.
- Have students return to their team to discuss and answer the remaining question(s).
  - ↳ Younger students compare Greenland vs. Africa.
  - ↳ Older students compare Scandinavia vs. India and Greenland vs. China.
- With the whole class, have students present and defend their answers. Use different maps to arrive at answers with which everyone can agree.

## III. Making Maps

- To apply their understanding of 'constructedness,' have students make different types of maps: of their classroom, of their street, or neighborhood, or bedroom, three-dimensional maps, picture maps, etc.

Analyze student made maps by discussing what things each person included and what items are missing. Also question what things are drawn bigger and what things are drawn smaller.

Scale, projection and symbols are three aspects of maps that involve many decisions and affect the final look of the map. For older students, the lesson can be expanded in both depth and breadth by using the following suggestions for further inquiry.

### ↳ Scale:

1. **Compare** a small-scale map to a large-scale map. For example: compare a world map to a state map, or compare a community map to a map of the classroom.
2. **Identify** the ratio of a classroom map to the actual thing: one piece of paper is equal to the entire room.
3. **Compare** that ratio to the ratio of a world map.
4. **Discuss** the following questions: What *detail* is missing from a large-scale map that is included in a small-scale map? What are the advantages and disadvantages of including or excluding those *details*?

### ↳ Projection:

1. **Identify** from what perspective we are looking at the map: are we above looking down, from below looking up, or from a side?
2. **Discuss** the following questions: What is in the middle of the map? What is on top and what is on bottom? How else could we view this same scene and make a different map? Why is this view better or worse than another view?

### ↳ Symbols:

1. **Identify** and record symbols used on different maps.
2. **Analyze** what symbols are easiest to read and recognize, then ask why.
3. **Create** symbols for class maps.
4. **Analyze** the colors used in maps and **experiment** with changing colors for different effects.
5. **Experiment** with a foreign map in a different language.

Thanks to Costas Criticos for the idea of this exercise described in *La Educacion para los Medios de Comunicacion*, Roberto Aparici, ed.; Mexico: Universidad Pedagogica Nacional, 1997.

## Challenging Maps



1. Compare the land size and choose the best sentence.

- Europe is the same size as South America. (Europe = South America)
- Europe is smaller than South America. (Europe < South America)
- Europe is larger than South America. (Europe > South America)



2. Compare the land size and choose the best sentence.

- Greenland is the same size as Africa. (Greenland = Africa)
- Greenland is smaller than Africa. (Greenland < Africa)
- Greenland is larger than Africa. (Greenland > Africa)

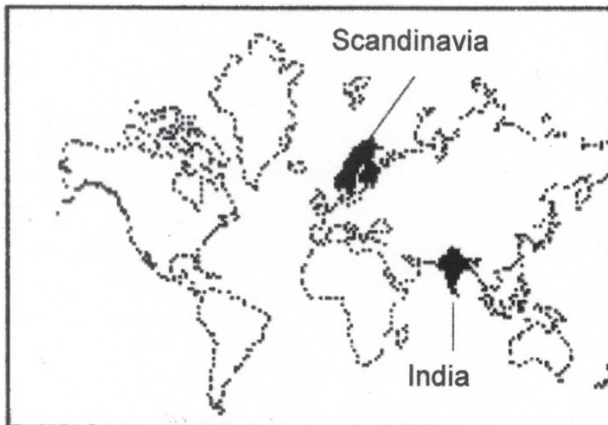
## A Quick Quiz about World Maps

Compare the relative land size and choose the box that best completes each sentence.



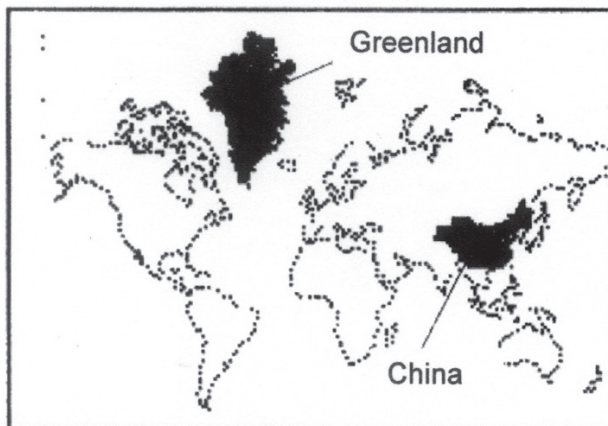
### South America is

- the same size as Europe.
- two times larger than Europe.
- half the size of Europe.



### Scandinavia is

- the same size as India.
- three times larger than India.
- one third the size of India.



### Greenland is

- the same size as China.
- four times larger than China.
- one fourth the size of China.

# #2

*Keyword:*

**Format**

**Guiding Questions:**

- **What do you notice... (about the way the message is constructed)?**
  - Colors? Shapes? Size?
  - Sounds, Words? Silence?
  - Props, sets, clothing?
  - Movement?
  - Composition? Lighting?
- **Where is the camera? What is the viewpoint?**
- **How is the story told visually? What are people doing?**
- **Are there any symbols? Visual metaphors?**
- **What's the emotional appeal? Persuasive devices used?**
- **What makes it seem "real?"**

*Key Question #2*

## **What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?**

*Core Concept #2*

**Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.**

The second *Key Question* explores the ‘format’ of a media message and examines the *way* a message is constructed, the creative components that are used in putting it together – words, music, color, movement, camera angle and many more. The goal of *Key Question #2* is to help students build an internal checklist that they can apply to *any* media message *anytime*.

To build this checklist, we have to, first, begin to *notice* how a message is constructed. Through the activities in this unit, students will grow in understanding how all forms of communication – whether magazine covers, advertisements or horror movies – depend on a kind of “creative language”: use of color creates different feelings, camera close-ups convey intimacy, scary music heightens fear.

“What do you notice. . .?” is one of the most important questions to ask in the media literacy classroom. And, of course, all answers are acceptable because different people notice different things. (More about this in *Key Question #3*.)

Because so much of today’s communications, including the news, comes to us visually, it is critical that students learn the basics of visual communication – lighting, composition, camera angle, editing, use of props, body language, symbols, etc. – and how the use of these techniques influences the various meanings we can take away from a message. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media, especially visual language, not only helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation but also increases our appreciation and enjoyment of media as a constructed “text.”

Just as writing improves not only one’s reading skill but also one’s appreciation for good writing, the best way to understand how media are put together is to do just that – make a public service announcement, create a website, develop a marketing campaign for a school activity. The more real world the project is, the better. Digital cameras and computer authoring programs provide easy ways to integrate creative production projects in the classroom from writing and illustrating their own stories in kindergarten to creating a personal video documentary in the upper grades.

The four major arts disciplines – music, dance, theatre and the visual arts – can also provide a context through which one gains skills of analysis, interpretation and appreciation along with opportunities to practice self-expression and creative production.



# 2a

## Basic Visual Language I: Three Building Blocks

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Because so much of today's communications, including the news, comes to us visually, it is critical students learn the basics of visual communication. This activity introduces three fundamental elements of visual language: *camera angle*, *lighting* and *composition*. As students photograph each other with different *lighting*, from opposite *camera angles* and in varied *compositions* they begin to see how these techniques influence the various meanings we can take from a visual message.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize choices that photographers make when taking pictures.
2. Understand how different aspects of a photograph can influence its meaning.
3. Use three basic visual techniques to take photographs – *camera angle*, *lighting* and *composition*.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B3)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B5), (S10/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B2)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B8)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Camera (any type will work but a digital camera is best)
2. Overhead projector or flashlight.
3. The teacher will need to find a way to get the pictures that the students will be taking printed or projected so that the class can compare and contrast the images. Digital pictures can be imported into most writing documents or PowerPoint software and then projected or printed. Reflection is best when students can analyze their *own* photographs.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Introduction to Visual Images**

- Begin by creating awareness for visual images through brainstorming about the places where visual images can be found, such as photographs in magazines, books, and newspapers, TV, videos, and movies, even clothing and cereal boxes, etc. Ask students:
  - ? Where do we see messages that are not made up of words?
  - ? Do non-word messages have their own special kind of language?
- In order to understand visual language students need to learn three of the basic building blocks of visual language: *camera angle*, *lighting* and *composition*. They will take photographs and compare and contrast the differences they notice between each set of pictures.

**II. Photo Exercise #1: Camera Angle**

- Ask the tallest and the shortest students to be the first models. Choose three other students to be photographers.

- Have the shortest student stand carefully on a chair and have the first photographer *sit on the floor* to take a picture looking up at him/her (low angle looking up).
  - ↻ For younger children, use the analogy of a *worm* looking up from the ground.
- Have the tallest student sit on the floor and help the second photographer *stand on a chair* to photograph looking down at him/her (high angle looking down).
  - ↻ For younger children, use the analogy of a *bird* looking down from the sky.
- Finally, have the third photographer shoot a picture from eye level of both students standing side by side.
- Compare the photographs to discover how camera angle influences our perception of the person being photographed. Discuss when different camera angles are used on TV news, popular movies, or newspaper photographs.

### III. Photo Exercise #2: *Lighting*

- Choose a volunteer to be the model and two students to be photographers. Have the model sit in a chair and use a bright light (an overhead projector works well or a flash light) to shine up from below the model's face. Turn off the classroom lights to make the room darker. Lighting from below is called "monster lighting" and is often used in scary movies. The photographer should take the picture of the model's face at eye level.
- Next, change the light to come from above. Turn on the classroom lights since they also give light from above. Take this picture from the same camera angle as the last.
- Encourage students to compare the extreme differences in lighting and reflect on when they have noticed lighting in movies or photographs and how it makes them feel.

### IV. Photo Exercise #3: *Composition*

- Choose one student as the model and two students to take pictures. Have the model sit in a chair at the front of the class. The first photographer should take a photograph that is an extreme *close-up*. This means getting so close to the model (prefer to use a camera with a zoom lens because some cameras cannot focus closer than three feet) that his/her entire face fills the frame and you can only see the eyes.
- Next, have the other photographer take a picture of the same model but from as far away as possible so we can see the model in the context of the whole room. This is often referred to as a *wide shot*.
- Have students compare these two compositions to see the differences between very close and far away. Often the *close-up* conveys intimacy, intensity or strong emotions while the *wide shot* gives context and space. Challenge students to reflect on how they would use composition to convey different emotions for different parts of a favorite story.



### **Assessment Tip: Learning Transfer**

During discussions or reflective writing, higher-level understanding may be reflected in students' ability to transfer these ideas to other situations such as TV, movies, advertising, news photos, etc.



# 2b

## Basic Visual Language II: How to Analyze a Visual Text

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Through cooperative observation, analysis and discussion, students learn to recognize how the basic building blocks of visual language – *lighting*, *camera angle* and *composition* – are used in real-life media texts. As they compare and contrast different magazine covers featuring the same person, they begin to notice how visual techniques convey both obvious and subtle meanings. In this process, they discover many more visual techniques, such as body language, symbolism, color, etc., that influence feelings as well as ideas. For a practical application, students use their growing repertoire of visual techniques to construct two very different photographic images of the same person.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify techniques used to communicate visually.
2. Compare and contrast different visual techniques found in mass media.
3. Apply their understanding by creating photographs that use a variety of visual literacy techniques.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B4)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B6)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B9)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B9), (S10/B3)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Download the two full-size magazine covers featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger (*Muscle&Fitness* and *Esquire*) from the CML website: [www.medialit.org/pdf/CML\\_DeconstructionMags.pdf](http://www.medialit.org/pdf/CML_DeconstructionMags.pdf)  
Also download the image of the two covers side by side. It is recommended you use a video projector to project the images for the class to discuss, as directed below.
2. An important aspect of this lesson depends on teachers guiding students to distinguish what they actually *see* from what they *think* and *feel* about what they see. Guiding students to be descriptive rather than judgmental is a challenging but valuable skill for media literacy teachers to acquire. Before working with students, do the exercise yourself, or better yet, with one or several colleagues, to become aware of the difference between what is actually on the magazine covers and how we feel about the person portrayed on the covers.
3. If possible, also read the section on “How to Conduct a Close Analysis of a Media Text” in *MediaLit Kit™ / Part I: Literacy for the 21st Century*. ([www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org))
4. Camera (any type will work but a simple digital camera is best)

**Teaching Strategies:**

- Show the cover of *Muscle & Fitness* magazine with Arnold Schwarzenegger as a body builder and action movie character. Ask students to set aside any ideas they have about Mr. Schwarzenegger as a personality and focus strictly on what they can describe from the cover. List on the board the various answers students give to these questions:

- ? What do you think about this person based strictly *on the cover of this magazine*?
  - ? What adjectives describe how he looks to you?
- Then show the cover of *Esquire* magazine with Mr. Schwarzenegger as a businessman and political candidate. Again, setting aside what we know about him as a personality, list the adjectives students produce while answering the same question:
  - ? What do you think about this man based *strictly on the cover of this magazine*?
  - ? What adjectives describe how he looks to you?
- After listing an abundance of adjectives from both covers, discuss why such different adjectives were given to describe the same person. Show the covers together and invite students to explain what is different between the covers that might contribute to creating different feelings.
- First, have students look just at the two *photographs* of Mr. Schwarzenegger. If they need help, you can group their responses into categories and take them one at a time: what is different about body language? Eye contact? Facial expression? Clothing? Make up? Background? Camera angle? Lighting? etc.
  - ↴ This is an opportunity for older students to separate *connotation* from *denotation* as they explore the emotions they feel *connoted* in the message and then deconstruct the photographs and graphic elements they see *denoted*.
  - ↴ For young children, ask them to distinguish between what they *think* about the person in the picture from what they actually *see* in the picture.
- Next, ask students to comment on the overall *cover design* including title, headlines (font, color, size) and all the other graphic elements that are different between the two covers.
  - ? How do these elements reinforce the feelings about the subject that they identified at the beginning of the exercise?
- As a culminating activity, have students create different photographs of their peers using the same techniques that they identified in the Schwarzenegger covers. Have them photograph the same person to look positive in one picture and negative in the other.



### **Assessment Tip: The Importance of Reflection**

The quality of the photographs the students create can be authentic assessment of their comprehension and application of the ideas. However, good photographs could possibly be more a reflection of their skills with the camera than their understanding. To better assess for understanding, also have students write a reflection explaining how and why they used specific construction techniques to convey different feelings.

# 2c

## Frame It!: The Power of Editing

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Regardless of how an image is put together, the choice of what to include and what to exclude is a critical part of the construction process. The first moment of choice is the *framing* of the image – looking through the camera and deciding what will be in the picture and what will be left out. Once the image is captured, the process of *editing* allows further decisions about what will be left in and what will be cut out (and therefore left never seen). This activity provides several opportunities for students to experience the limitations of framing and the power of editing – using simple cropping tools to deepen their understanding of how these choices shape the media they encounter daily.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Experience and reflect on how framing focuses the eye and influences the meaning we make from visual images.
2. Understand the power of editing through “cropping magazine pictures.
3. Deepen their comprehension about the choices involved in the construction of visual media texts.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B2), (S10/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B5)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B6, B11)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Copies of Handout 2C: “*Frame It!*” Copy on card stock if possible.
2. Several magazines with lots of pictures.
3. Paper to cut L shaped cropping tools (card stock is best). Each student will need one sheet of paper to make two right angle tools. (See illustration below for where to cut.)
4. Dark pens or markers.
5. Scissors.

**Teaching Strategies:**

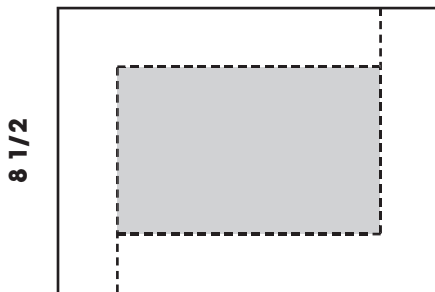
**I. Frame It!**

- Have students cut out the frame from Handout 2C. Guide students through the questions on the handout allowing time for them to walk around the room, looking through the frame and *noticing* how the frame both includes and leaves out.
  - ? Hold the frame at arm’s length, then move it closer to your eye. Describe how what you see changes.
  - ? Walk around holding your frame about 6 inches from your face. Look at people or objects from different angles: stand on a chair; sit on the floor, walk around in a circle. What do you notice?
  - ? Look through a magazine or newspaper using your frame. What difference does it make when you can only see part of the page or a picture?
- Discuss with students their reactions and comments about this experience. Have them share their impressions and their answers to the above questions.

## II. Power of Editing

- Have each student cut two L shapes to use as cropping tools.
- Explain how sometimes *cropping* can change the interpretation of an image through the *inclusion* or *exclusion* of elements in the picture. Have students look through magazines for pictures that they can change the meaning of through cropping out elements.
- Once they find a picture they want to crop, they should move their L shapes around the page to crop out portions of the photo they don't want. The cropped photo can be any size or shape. Use a marker to outline the new photo.
  - ↻ For younger students, have them simply look for a “picture within the picture” and identify how the new picture differs from the original.
- To conclude, have students present their picture to the class and explain why they think the meaning has changed through their cropping. Ask them to comment on the following questions:
  - ? How did you decide on what to leave out?
  - ? How does your cropping change the meaning?

### TO MAKE CROPPING TOOLS



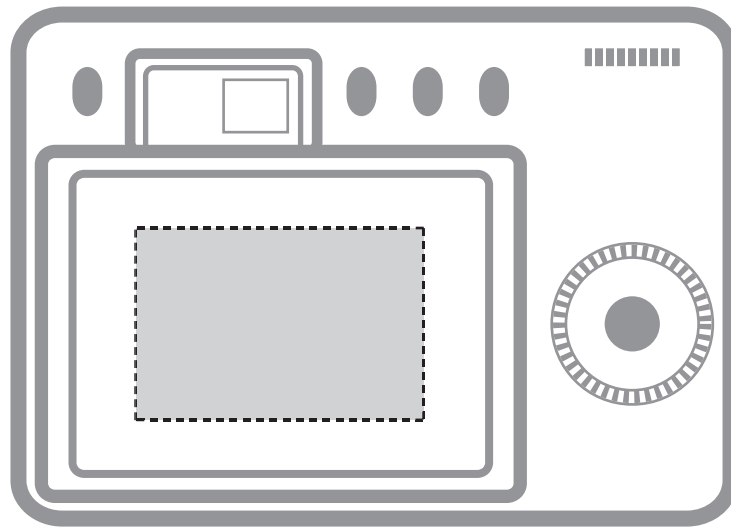
11

### USING THE CROPPING TOOLS



## Frame It!

*Cut along the dotted line to make your own media frame.*



### *Exercises*

1. Hold the frame at arm's length, then move it closer to your eye. Describe how your view changes.
2. Walk around holding your frame about six inches from your face. Look at people from different angles – stand on a chair, sit on the floor... What do you notice?
3. Look through a magazine or newspaper using your frame. What difference does it make when you can only see part of the page or picture?

# 2d

## The Language of Sound: Tools, Tricks and Techniques

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The often unnoticed influences of sound effects, music, and narration that accompany visual images are essential elements in the construction of TV and movies. Each of these has their own language that plays important roles in creating emotions and constructing meanings. Through separating the sounds and images, this activity aims at building awareness of different ways sound effects and music function to shape our experiences with visual images on television and in the movies.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize influences of music and sound effects on TV images
2. Analyze the role of sound effects, music and dialogue in the construction of TV and other multimedia presentations
3. Apply their understanding of the relationship between visual images and sound through adding sounds to their own story telling.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B5)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B5)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B8)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. In preparation for this activity the teacher will need to record or find three short (15-20 seconds up to a minute in length) scenes that contain the following:
  - a. an action scene that could have explosions, fighting, car chases, etc. (with lots of sound effects)
  - b. animals in the wild
  - c. an ambiguous scene that is unknown to students where the characters are speaking a foreign language (foreign films work well for this activity).
2. TV/VCR or DVD player
3. Sheet or blanket to cover the TV screen
4. Music system to play a cassette or CD
5. CD or cassette of different musical genres, such as: classical, jazz, reggae, etc. that seem to evoke different feelings, e.g. – happy, scary, dramatic, romantic, etc

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Sound Effects: Seen But Not Heard**

- Mute the sound on the TV or turn it completely off and then show the first video clip, the action scene.
- After viewing, have students write what they noticed and thought.
- Then show the clip again, this time with the sound on.
- Once again, have students write what they noticed and thought. Then have students share their ideas and comment on the difference between viewing with sound and viewing without sound.

## II. Background Music: Heard But Not Seen

- Mute the sound on the TV or turn it completely off and then show the second video clip with animals in the wild.
- After viewing have students write what they noticed and thought.
- Keep the TV sound off and show the same clip again, this time with your own music accompanying it. Then have students write what they noticed and thought.
- Discuss what they wrote and ask them how their ideas about the images changed or remained the same.
- Show the same video segment again, this time with much different music. What ideas do they have about the image now? Ask students to discuss how music interacted with the images and the ideas they had about those images.
  - ↴ Older students could bring in their own music that they think illustrate the power of music to influence our feelings about a visual message.

## III. Music & Sounds: Seeing, Hearing and Believing

- Cover the TV screen with a tablecloth or sheet so that only the sound can be heard. Play the third video clip (a foreign film can work well) and have students write what images they think would accompany those sounds.
- Once everyone has had a chance to write down their reflections, ask them to tell what sounds they heard and share what thoughts they had.
- After the discussion, remove the cover and view the video with both sound and picture. Ask students to reflect on the differences between the two experiences.

## IV. Creating with Sound

- Have students add sound effects and background music to the telling or reading of a story or a scene from a play.
  - ↴ Younger students can each make a different sound for different parts of the story while it is being told orally in class.
  - ↴ Older students can tape record their sounds effects or create a sound track for a multimedia presentation.



### **Teaching Tip: Encouraging Reflection**

Allocating a few minutes for students to write down their ideas before sharing them with the group is an excellent way to promote independent reflection that is not influenced by peers. Providing time for personal reflection also supports different learning styles.



### **Backgrounder: Visit a Sound Effects Studio**

Within the 30-minute video, *Buy Me That, Too!* is an enlightening and informative 5-minute segment on the magic of sound effects, including a visit to a sound effects studio where technicians demonstrate how they create sounds – from dog footsteps to playing in leaves. (If not already available in your media library, order from CML/GPN online resource catalog at: [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog). Put product number “1204.002” in the keyword search window.)

# 2e

## 10 Ways to Sell an Idea: The Basics of Persuasion

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The power of advertising is its ability to persuade and advertisers have a wide array of techniques to use in constructing their persuasive messages. This activity introduces ten common techniques that can be found in many ads. Students identify and deconstruct examples of these techniques in magazines and then create their own ads using some of these strategies. By combining analysis with production, students not only become conscious of the ways advertising works but also more active and critical with the advertising they encounter every day – whether on T-shirts, television, the Internet, billboards, or at the mall.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize various techniques of persuasion used in advertising
2. Understand how advertisers use persuasion techniques for manipulative reasons.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of different techniques of persuasion through creating posters about some of the strategies advertisers use to convince consumers.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B7)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B9)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B10)

**Curriculum Integration:**

This lesson integrates well with Health issues by analyzing ads for tobacco, alcohol, healthy and junk food, etc.

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Copies of Handout 2E: “10 Techniques of Persuasion.”
2. Magazines to cut up.
3. Ten name cards, each with the name of one the techniques of persuasion written large.
4. Ten sheets of poster paper.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Discussion**

- Begin with a discussion about advertising:
  - ? What is the purpose of advertising?
  - ? Where do you see ads?
  - ? Do ads ever lie or mislead us? How do ads work?

**II. Introduce Techniques of Persuasion**

- Teacher reviews and discusses the list of ten basic techniques of persuasion with the class.
- Inform students that many ads use several techniques at the same time.
  - ↻ For younger students, introduce only a few techniques at a time.
  - ↻ For older students, also explore more sophisticated techniques of persuasion such as bandwagon, testimonials, plain folks, name calling, use of prizes, etc.



### III. Search and Sort

- In groups, have students search magazines to find examples of the different techniques. Use the name cards as designated collection points for the ads. Rip out the ads and place them in the appropriate pile.
- Once completed, go through the piles with the whole class to review some of the choices made. Ask students to defend why they made some of the less obvious decisions and review ads that use more than one technique. Also discuss which techniques are most and least popular and why they think that is so.

### IV. Creating Collages

- Once the ads are separated into ten piles, assign each team one technique of persuasion. They will need to create a poster by cutting up the pictures and words from that pile of ads to create a collage that visually shows their technique of persuasion.
- When the collages are completed, attach the title of the technique of persuasion to the poster and use it as a resource for students to refer to when analyzing other ads or creating their own ads.

## 10 Techniques of Persuasion

The following is a list of various strategies that advertisers use to entice us to want the product being advertised.

1. **Humor** Funny or crazy images.
2. **Macho** Strong, tough, powerful – usually males. May carry weapons or be pictured in dangerous situations. Cowboys.
3. **Friends** Groups of people enjoying each other and doing things together. Buddies, pals and friendship.
4. **Family** Mother, father, children or a family. May also be intergenerational group.
5. **Fun** Everyone is happy – smiling and laughing. Often images of people doing fun things and having a good time.
6. **Nature** Outdoor settings – mountains, ocean, desert, snow, flowers, etc. May or may not have people included.
7. **Sexy** Emphasis on physical attributes of models, usually female; may wear revealing clothing and be shown flirting through attitude or body language.
8. **Cartoon** People or animals portrayed as drawing or animation, often humorous.
9. **Celebrity** Someone most people recognize – athlete, musician, politician, or movie star.
10. **Wealth** Expensive and elegant places and things. Big houses, new cars, jewelry, designer clothing, etc.

*Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*

# Reflections / Notes

Lesson plan # \_\_\_\_\_ : RE:  Key Question  Quote  Success story  Problem I encountered

Lesson plan # \_\_\_\_\_ : RE:  Key Question  Quote  Success story  Problem I encountered

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade / Subject \_\_\_\_\_

School / Org. \_\_\_\_\_ City / State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Best phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Center for Media Literacy**

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# #3

Keyword:

**Audience**

## Guiding Questions:

- Have you ever experienced anything like this in your life?
- How close is this portrayal to your experience?
- What did you learn from this media text?
- What did you learn about yourself from experiencing the media text?
- What did you learn from other people's response? From their experience of life?
- How many other interpretations could there be? How could we hear about them?
- Are other viewpoints just as valid as mine?
- How can you explain the different responses?

## Key Question #3

# How might different people understand this message differently from me?

## Core Concept #3

**Different people experience the same media message differently.**

**H**ow do audiences interact with the media in their lives? Our bodies may not be moving but in our heads, we're constantly trying to connect what we're hearing, seeing or reading with everything else we know. *Key Question / Core Concept #3* incorporates two important ideas: first, that our *differences* influence our various interpretations of media messages and second, that our *similarities* create common understandings.

When you think about it, no two people see the same movie or hear the same song on the radio; even parents and children do not "see" the same TV show! Each audience member brings to each media encounter a unique set of life experiences (age, gender, education, cultural upbringing, etc.) which, when applied to the text – or combined *with* the text – create unique interpretations. A World War II veteran, for example, brings a different set of experiences to a movie like *Saving Private Ryan* than a younger person – resulting in a different reaction to the film as well as, perhaps, greater insight.

The line of questions in *Key Question #3* turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers as just passive "couch potatoes." We may not be conscious of it but each of us, even toddlers, are constantly trying to "make sense" of what we see, hear or read. The more questions we can ask about what we and others are experiencing around us, the more prepared we are to evaluate the message and to accept or reject it. And hearing multiple interpretations can build respect for different cultures and appreciation for minority opinions, a critical skill in an increasingly multicultural world.

Our similarities are also important to understanding how media makers "target" different segments of the population in order to influence their opinion or, more typically, to sell them something. The concept of "target audience" will be explored more deeply in *Key Question #5*.

Finally, exploring this question reminds teachers that they must not only be open to various interpretations among their students but also that students and teachers don't experience the same media the same way, either! The goal of media literacy is not to ferret out one "right" interpretation that resides in the head of the teacher but rather to help students think through the "constructedness" of a media message and then substantiate their interpretation with evidence.

# 3a

## Do I See What You See? Interpreting Media Experiences

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The ways human beings are similar allow us to share and communicate with each other, but we seldom think about how our *differences* also influence the process of communicating. In this activity students experience two events, one live and one mediated. They communicate what they remember, then reflect on the multiple interpretations that emerge. The challenge of this activity is to let go of the need for “right” or “wrong” interpretations and learn to appreciate that different perspectives are possible due to the many differences in *who we are*: gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity, health, family upbringing, and so much more. Accepting these differences is essential in our multicultural society, since media messages will always be interpreted in different ways. *Key Question #3* helps us understand that the *meaning* of a message is not just in the message – but also in us.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Experience different ways of understanding events in our lives.
2. Build empathy toward different points of view.
3. Understand how personal experiences and biases influence the process of communication.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B1)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B12)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S1/B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Prepare an event with another person who can enter the class and create an exciting situation (see “Live Event” below for example).
2. TV/VCR and a short video clip (5-10 minutes) of an unusual scene, possibly from a foreign film or alternative video production.
3. If no TV/VCR is available you can use a modern art photograph or painting that has more ambiguity than clarity. Try to find an image that will be open to diverse interpretations.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Live Event**

- Stage an event in which all the students witness the same situation. This could be a simple confrontation to a more elaborate hoax. Make it short but exciting. The following are two examples:
  - ↻ For younger students, have two older children suddenly disrupt the class by arguing about something that happened on the yard.
  - ↻ For older students, have an administrator appear in the classroom to strongly reprimand the teacher about his/her clothing or appearance in front of the entire class.

- Immediately after the event, stop whatever the class is doing and have students write down everything they just saw and heard. They will want to talk about it but ask them to write first.
- Ask for volunteers to share their writings. Have students listen for adjectives and descriptions that differ between students. Also focus on what may be missing in each person's report – or what may have been written down but did not happen.
- Discuss the differences in how students interpreted the same event differently. Ask students to explain how it is possible to have different accounts of the same event.
- Brainstorm and chart all student ideas about what makes humans different and could possibly contribute to our different interpretations of the same event. This list should include many items such as: gender, religion, ethnicity, class, age, health, etc.

## II. Mediated Event

- Show the class a short video clip (5-10 minutes) or a visual image (the more ambiguous the better) with no discussion before or afterwards. Try to find a video clip or image that is out of the ordinary and not from the students' culture. Ask the students to watch without commenting.
- Make sure students do not talk about the event or video clip prior to writing or during their writing. The goal is to get their own interpretations without being influenced by others.
- After viewing, have students write down everything they saw and heard in order to retell the story.
- Once all have finished writing, students swap papers. They read their partner's paper and *underline* all the bits of the story that they could actually see or hear.
- Next, have students *circle* anything they find that is interpretive, things that were not seen or heard in the video or visual image but were DEDUCED or CONNOTED from the message.
- Finally, conduct a discussion about what was interpreted in the paper that was never seen or heard. Ask:
  - ? Where did those interpretations come from?
  - ? What things were omitted?
  - ? Did any of our prejudices, biases, or personal experiences surface?

# 3b

## Silent Symbols Speak Loudly: Icons, Brands & You

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Brands, icons and symbols permeate our visual culture. Too often we assume that everyone interprets symbols the same way. Yet, as we know from current events, symbols like the American flag can mean different things to different people. In activity 3A we learned that what the audience brings to a message is also part of the process of understanding the message. In this lesson, students analyze the symbols on the common \$1 dollar bill (paper money is media too!), explore the variety of meanings in the symbols and then create their own money with symbols that are meaningful to them. Through creating media (money) that represents themselves, they not only express their own ideas of who and what is important and but also wrestle with the concept that different people have different ways of seeing and interpreting the world around them.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Build awareness of the visual symbols around them.
2. Understand how different people can read the same symbols differently.
3. Use symbols they choose to express their concerns, interests and ideas.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B1)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B6)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B1, B6), (S10/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B1, B6), (S10/B10)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Copies of Handout 3B: “Make Your Own Money!” one copy per student. For younger students, you may wish to make enlarged copies.
2. Pictures of students or famous people (small enough to fit inside the oval on the handout).
3. Crayons or markers
4. Glue and scissors
5. For information on the symbols used in US currency visit this web site: [www.frbsf.org/currency/iconography/index.html](http://www.frbsf.org/currency/iconography/index.html)

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Symbols**

- Explain that symbols are ways to communicate visually without words. Draw some symbols on the board and ask students to identify their meanings. The following are some examples for younger and older students:





- Change the **context** of the symbol to see how meanings can change. For example:
  - A symbol of a heart on a hospital door signifies cardiologist while the same symbol on a Valentine’s Day card signifies love or friendship.
  - A skull and cross bones on a ship’s flag signifies pirates but on a bottle it signifies poison.

## II. Symbols in Money

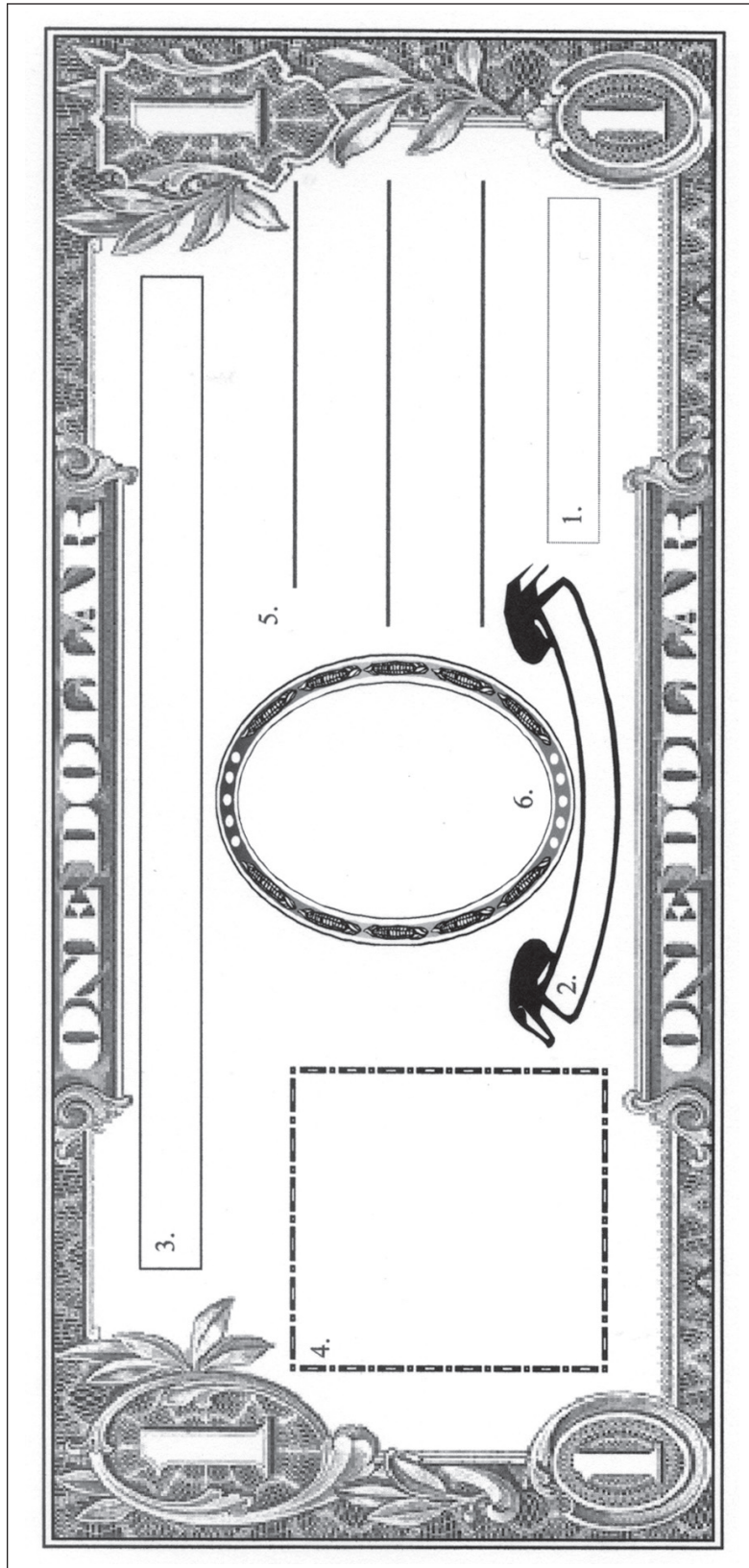
- Discuss money and the symbols they find on a \$1 bill. Ask students to bring in any money they have from other countries or play money from games to share with the class. Analyze the US dollar bill as well as any other money by asking:
  - ? What are different messages that the symbols could be communicating?
  - ? How might different people understand these symbols differently?
- Distribute Handout 3B. Before students begin writing and drawing, encourage them to think about who and what are the most important things and people they want represented on their own money.
- Have students begin creating their money by writing their name in box #1.
  - ↳ Younger students should write their own name in box #1 and then they can copy teacher writing or use drawings to answer most of the other questions.
  - ↳ Older students should sign their signature in handwriting for box #1 and then all other writing should be printing.
- Under the oval, in box #2, students need to write the name of the person whose picture they want to put on their currency. This should be someone they feel is so important that they want everyone to see this person often.
- In box #3, write the name of any country they want their money to represent.
- In box #4, students need to think about what symbol or symbols best signify the values and message they want to communicate. They should draw a large symbol to fill the entire box so that it is easy to read from a distance.
  - ↳ Older students might want to combine symbols to tell a more complex message.
- On the lines marked #5, write a brief motto or message that is so important to them they want others to think about it.
- In the oval marked #6, a picture of someone important to the students should be placed.
- Encourage students to color in their money with crayons or markers while not coloring on top of any writing or drawings.
- All students should explain their choices, older students can write why they chose the symbols and motto they used.



### **Assessment Tip**

The deeper learning from this activity should be assessed more for examples of understanding about communicating with symbols than artistic abilities.

# Make Your Own Money!



**Box 4: Why did you choose this symbol?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Box 5: Why did you choose this motto?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Boxes 2 and 6: Why did you choose this person?** \_\_\_\_\_

# 3c

## Movies R Us: Understanding Audience Research

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*Key Question #3* incorporates two important ideas: first, that our *differences* influence our various interpretations of media messages and second, that our *similarities* create common understandings. These similarities unite us into groups that tend to have similar responses to the same media message. Media makers (movie producers, book and music publishers, etc.) research both our similarities and differences in order to design media texts to appeal to specific groups, or “audiences.” In this activity, students conduct two surveys about popular movies – one based on gender (boys and girls at the same grade level) and the other on age (youth and adults) – to explore how different audiences respond as groups and how media products appeal to specific audiences. Understanding these connections is an important step in grasping the symbiotic relationship between audiences and media products.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Understand that groups of people with similarities form media “audiences.”
2. Organize and conduct a survey, then graph and analyze the results.
3. Recognize the *interrelationship* between themselves as audiences and the media they enjoy.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B3)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B12), (S10/B8, B9)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S1/B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Paper and pencils for conducting surveys
2. Copies of Handout 3C: “Movie Survey Forms.” One per student or team.
3. For graphing results, have graph paper available or computer software such as Excel.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Discuss differences & similarities**

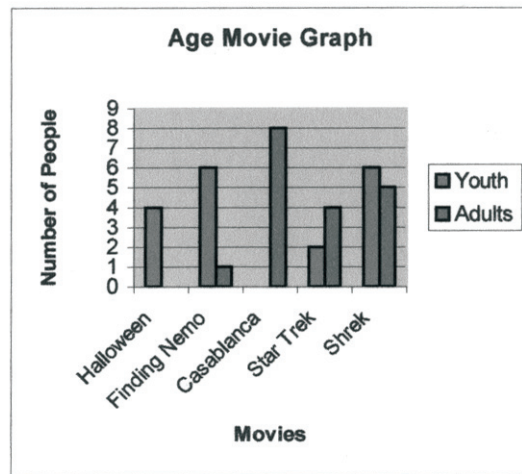
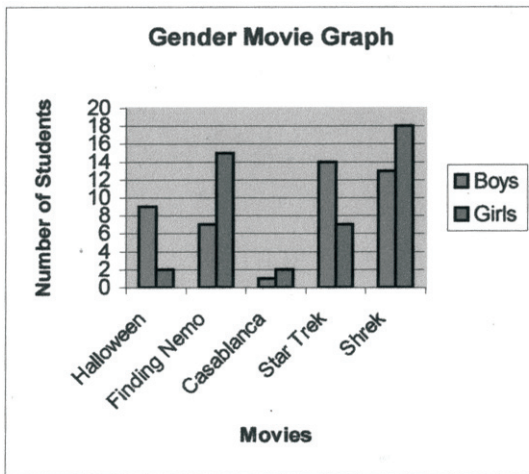
- Review the ideas from previous activities in which students reflected on the many characteristics that make humans different (gender, class, race, language, age, culture, mood, personality, health, etc.).
- Introduce the idea that our similarities are also important and that these commonalities create “audiences.” Ask:
  - ? What are some similarities that groups of people share?
  - ? What types of audiences could we categorize at our school?

**II. Creating Surveys**

- Have class select five popular movies, each from a different genre such as: action, romance,

horror, comedy, cartoon, documentary, etc. Movies selected can be new or old but should be titles that are familiar to most people. Fill in the names of the movies on the survey forms and organize teams to interview boys and girls for the gender survey or youth and adults for the age survey. They should ask the people they survey to choose only their single favorite of the five movies. The gender survey must poll an equal number of boys and girls. The age survey must question an equal number of youth and adults.

- Tally the responses and graph the results using graph paper or an Excel spreadsheet or other graphics program. (See sample below.)
- Break the class into five groups. Each group uses the completed graphs and analyzes one movie using the following questions:
  - ? What are some of the various characteristics of *boys*, *girls*, *youth* and *adults* that possibly contributed to this movie being their favorite choice?
  - ? What characteristics *of the movie* make it more or less appealing to each audience?
  - ? What connections can you find between characteristics of the movie and characteristics of the audiences who liked (or didn't like) each movie?
- Each group reports to the whole class on their findings about how movies are designed to appeal to specific audiences.



### Movie Survey Form: Gender

Survey equal numbers of boys and girls. Checkmark which of the five movies they like best.

Movie Title	Boys	Girls
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6..		
7.		
8.		

### Movie Survey Form: Age

Survey equal numbers of youth and adults. Checkmark which of the five movies they like best.

Movie Title	Youth	Adults
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

# 3d

## Ads R Us: Understanding Target Marketing

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A major aspect of *Key Question #3* is the idea that different people experience media messages differently. It is also true that *similar* groups of people tend to respond *similarly* to the same message. Because of this, advertisers often create different ads to sell the same product to different (niche) audiences. They spend large amounts of research time and money to learn what appeals to people based on their gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity, health, family upbringing, etc. This information guides them to develop ads that will appeal to groups with similar fantasies, fears, desires, insecurities, hopes – and dreams. In this activity groups of students create different ads for the same product – but for different audiences. As they design the ads, students will experience how their ideas, attitudes and even stereotypes about the audience influence the messages they create.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Build awareness of the way in which advertisers shape ads for specific audiences.
2. Analyze the target audience intended for an advertisement.
3. Create their own targeted ads to demonstrate their understanding of *Key Question #3*.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B5)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B8)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Choose a generic item such as a plain white hand towel, a plant, glass of water, etc. as the “product” for which students will create an advertising campaign.
2. Markers and poster paper

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Introductory discussion**

- Discuss how advertisers create their ads for a specific niche market, often distinguished by age, ethnicity, gender, income level, geographical region, etc.
  - ? Have you ever seen different ads for the same product?
  - ? Why do you think advertisers create different ads for different audiences?

**II. Organizing the activity**

- Break the class into 5-10 groups and assign each group of students a different target audience, such as:
  - Preschoolers
  - Elementary School Boys
  - Teenage Girls
  - College Students
  - Athletes
  - Janitors
  - Moms
  - Dads
  - Grandparents
  - Teachers

- Explain that each group will have to plan a strategy to sell the same product that the teacher has chosen to a different group of people (the target audience). Have each group discuss their target audience and plan an advertising campaign that will motivate their potential customers enough to want to buy the generic product.
- Pass out large sheets of poster paper per group to outline their campaign, draw a sample ad and/or storyboard a commercial.
- Each group should present their campaign to the entire class; then discuss the work.
  - ? On what characteristics of your target audience did you focus?
  - ? Reflect on your process of strategizing the campaign for your target audience:
    - Did you use (or reject) any stereotypes that might be offensive to some groups?
    - What strategies did you reject – and why?
    - What did you learn about how advertising works?
  - ? What principles of persuasion can we learn from this activity? Do the principles change for different audiences?
  - ? Are you a target audience for some advertisers? Which ones?



# 3e

## Valuing Different Views: Taking a Stand on Media Violence

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Violence is a controversial issue that touches us all either through the media or in person. In the public debate about media in our culture, concerns about violence in media often float to the top. While violence is a very common word, it is also a complex concept that contains many different insights and interpretations. In this activity students are required to “take a stand” about issues of violence in order to demonstrate how we all carry different perspectives and understandings. A key facet of understanding is empathy and that requires learning how to value different points of view.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize and appreciate the value of multiple perspectives and differences of opinion.
2. Build empathy and open-mindedness for other points of view.
3. Become aware of the complexity of social and cultural issues such as violence in media.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B6, B12)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S1/B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Prepare a space for students to move from one side of the room to the other. Mark a line on the floor with masking tape. At one end of the line place a sign on the wall that reads “Violence” and on the opposite wall place a sign that reads “Not Violence.”
2. Chart paper or board space to write down class responses.
3. Paper and pencil for each student to write.
4. Poster paper and markers enough for groups of three students each.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Defining “violence**

- Explain that the current controversy about media violence assumes that everyone knows – and agrees – on what “violence” is – or isn’t. This may not be easy. Create a class chart and record answers to the questions:
  - ? What words are associated with the word “violence”?
  - ? What actions are associated with violence?
- Have the students write their own answer to the question: “What is violence?” Allow for time since this can be a difficult task. Encourage students to keep trying until they come up with at least a sentence or two that they can contribute to building a class definition.
- Ask volunteers to read their definitions, add any new words or ideas to the class chart on defining violence. In between presentations, discuss why it can be so difficult to define something that seems so simple.

## II. Specific scenarios

- Explain that students will now have a chance to see how their definitions hold up in specific scenarios. Inform them that you will be asking a series of questions about violence and media violence and each person needs to “take a stand” – walking to the place on the line that represents their position on the question – at either end of the line or somewhere in-between.
- As you ask the following questions (or others that you may want to substitute), stop periodically and ask different students to explain their “stand,” especially if a question creates a clear split within the group. After a question that generates lively discussion with various points of view, invite students to change their “stand” if they’ve been convinced by something they have heard. The goal is to experience that “violence” is a difficult concept to pin down because each of us has our own interpretations based on past experience, gender, age, and many other factors.
- Questions:
  - ? Is hitting someone violence?
  - ? If a parent slaps a child, is that violence?
  - ? Is calling someone an insulting name violence?
  - ? In a movie, when the bad guy dies in a hail of machine gun fire, is that violence?
  - ? On the news, if they report a murder and you see a body covered with a blanket behind police tape, is that violence?
  - ? Is *thinking* about killing someone violence?
  - ? What about plotting to put a bomb in a public space? Is that violence?
  - ? On TV, when a character is murdered off screen, is it violence?
  - ? When there’s a spectacular car crash in an auto race, is that violence?
  - ? What if no one is hurt and the driver walks away?
  - ? If a cartoon character is smashed by a boulder, is that violence?
  - ? Would you consider live news coverage of the aftermath of a terrorist bombing where many people died, violence?
  - ? Is live news coverage that shows victims wounded or killed in a natural disaster, like a fire or an earthquake, violence?
- Next, form groups of three, and *as a team* have them write a new definition of violence that reflects their individual insights as well as the experience of “taking a stand,” and experiencing others’ points of view. Give each group a piece of poster paper and markers and ask them to write their final definition large.
- Display the posters and compare the definitions, pointing out similarities and differences.
  - ⤴ For older students, try to craft a definition for “What is violence?” that the whole class could agree on.



### **Teaching Tip: Watch this Lesson!**

Watch a master teacher conduct this lesson plan in the video, *Mind Over Media: A Video Introduction to Media Literacy*. Cue the video to the beginning of part 3 where high school teacher Kenny Smith is leading his class through this exercise. (This low-cost video is available through CML/GPN’s online catalog at [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog). Put product number “1351” in the keyword search window.)

*Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*

# Reflections / Notes

Lesson plan # \_\_\_\_\_ : RE:  Key Question  Quote  Success story  Problem I encountered

Lesson plan # \_\_\_\_\_ : RE:  Key Question  Quote  Success story  Problem I encountered

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade / Subject \_\_\_\_\_

School / Org. \_\_\_\_\_ City / State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Best phone # \_\_\_\_\_

**Center for Media Literacy**

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# #4

*Keyword:*

**Content**

## **Guiding Questions:**

- What kinds of behaviors / consequences are depicted?
- What type of person is the reader / watcher / listener invited to identify with?
- What questions come to mind as you watch / read / listen?
- What ideas or values are being “sold” to us in this message?
- What political ideas are communicated in the message? Economic ideas?
- What judgments or statements are made about how we treat other people?
- What is the overall worldview of the message?
- What ideas or perspectives are left out? How would you find what’s missing?

*Key Question #4*

## **What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?**

*Core Concept #4*

**Media have embedded values and points of view.**

In looking at the content of a media message, it is important to understand that there are no value-free media and never will be. All media carry subtle messages about who and what is important.

Because all media messages are constructed, choices have to be made. These choices inevitably reflect the values, attitudes and points of view of the ones doing the constructing. The decision about a character’s age, gender or race mixed in with the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors that are portrayed, the selection of a setting (urban? rural? affluent? poor?), and the actions and re-actions in the plot are just some of the ways that values become “embedded” in a TV show, a movie or an ad. Even the news has embedded values in the decisions made about what stories go first, how long they are, what kinds of pictures are chosen, and so on.

Sometimes, like us, media makers are careless and turn a generalization (a flexible observation) into a stereotype (a rigid conclusion). We should expect them, however, to strive for fairness and balance between various ideas and viewpoints. But we also need to know how to locate alternative sources of both news and entertainment and to be able to evaluate the alternatives as well for their own embedded values.

What’s significant about *Key Question / Core Concept #4* is not that ideas and values are embedded in media messages but that the values of mainstream media typically reinforce, and therefore, affirm, the existing social system. This explains two of the major complaints many people have about media: 1) Less popular or new ideas can have a hard time getting aired, especially if they challenge long-standing assumptions or commonly-accepted beliefs; 2) Unless challenged, old assumptions can create and perpetuate stereotypes, thus further limiting our understanding and appreciation of the world and the many possibilities of human life.

If we have the skills to question and rationally identify both overt and latent values in a mediated presentation, whether from the news, entertainment – or now especially from the Internet – we are likely to be much more astute in our decision-making to accept or reject the overall message. That’s vital for effective citizenship in a democratic society.

Being able to recognize and name missing perspectives is also a critical skill as we negotiate our way *each day of our lives* through an increasingly multicultural world.

# 4a

## Peeling the Onion: Uncovering Values and Viewpoints

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Media messages are like onions. Whether words, pictures, audio, or all three together in a multimedia experience, each message consists of many layers of meanings made up of ideas, attitudes and opinions that can be either obvious or subtle. *Key Question #4* helps to peel back the layers to reveal how the choices made in constructing a message inevitably communicate values, lifestyles and points of view. The content of any message can therefore be analyzed through a series of questions that help students first, recognize, and then uncover, the many ideas embedded. Next, students are challenged to create a value-free message. Finally, students apply the inquiry process and work as judges to uncover the multiple meanings and subtle values that are inherent in all communication.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Build an understanding of the differences between subjectivity and objectivity.
2. Develop their inquiry skills through analyzing messages for points of view.
3. Uncover and identify values and lifestyles embedded in media messages.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S9/B2), (S10/B6)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B2), (S10/B2)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S1/B1)
- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S1/B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Photographs – select a large photograph from the front page of a newspaper or in a magazine such as *Time* or *Newsweek*. Make enough copies for the class or scan it in order to project it for the class.
2. Paper, markers, digital cameras, or any other material for creating media.
3. Recommended: Complete lesson 2A and 2B “Basic Visual Language I and II” before this lesson.

**Definitions:**

1. *Values*: principles, beliefs, standards, or ideals considered to be worthwhile or important.
2. *Lifestyles*: the way people live and the things they do; often categorized by culture, socioeconomic class or generalities such as “humble”, “flashy”, “consumer”, “hip”, etc.
3. *Points of view*: perspectives of different people, about life in general or a specific aspect of society or culture, for example, could be a political point of view such as liberal, conservative or centrist; could be a philosophical point of view such as optimistic or pessimistic, etc.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Introductory Discussion**


- Discuss the distinction between *values*, *lifestyles* and *points of view*. Ask:  
? What are some values that people believe in?

- ? What are values that some people oppose?
  - ? What are different types of lifestyles?
  - ? Describe various points of view for the same topic.
- Show the class the photograph and discuss the *obvious* messages that are easy to read. Then encourage students to uncover the more *subtle* messages that may be embedded in the photograph (for example – gender roles, age and class characteristics). Ask:
- ? What lifestyles and values are *implied* in this photograph?
  - ? What points of view could be interpreted from this photo?

## II. The Challenge

- Explain that *Key Question #4* claims all media messages are subjective and contain values, lifestyles and points of view. Challenge students to prove this wrong by creating a media text (photograph, drawing, story, bumper sticker, ad, etc.) that is completely objective, free of any values or points of view. Have them work in teams and allow them to create any type of media to communicate their message.

## III. The Jury

- Once each team has created its media text, the class becomes the jury. Each team presents their media text to the whole class who will then seek to uncover any values, lifestyles and points of view embedded in the message. The purpose is not to prove a group's message right or wrong, but rather to explore all the possible values and viewpoints that can be embedded in every media messages, even when we're trying not to! The teacher may want to model the process by using this example:
  - A simple drawing of a stick person  could be analyzed as promoting values of individualism since there is only one person represented. An opposite analysis could suggest that this message represents homogenized generic values that dehumanize the human person. From a health perspective, it could demonstrate a person who is able-bodied, has all their limbs and can stand.



### **Teacher Tip: Message Subtleties**

Differences between obvious and subtle values, lifestyles and points of view in any message depend on many factors, such as the content of the message, how the message is constructed, the context surrounding the message, the audience, and countless other factors. Although we clearly recognize that advertising images have embedded values, so do pictures and images in the news. Indeed the ability to recognize and question the values and viewpoints in news photos and footage is critical because image-driven media, both print and electronic, is where most people get their information about the world. This activity using photos from newspapers or news magazines can provide an excellent opportunity to help students understand not just the obvious but the *multiple* layers of meaning that are conveyed in all messages, including in the news.



### **Assessment Tip: Participation is Key**

Participation, openness and creativity should be the qualities most valued when assessing this lesson. Active participation is necessary for students to learn from each other and to learn by challenging each other. It is also essential that all students are open-minded to allow themselves and others the freedom to be creative.

# 4b

## More Than Meets the Eye: Embedded Values in the News

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As we learned in the previous lesson, all media have embedded values and points of view. This even applies to the news despite the widely assumed premise that news reporting is ‘objective.’ It is important that students do not confuse the admirable goal of *fairness* and *balance* with the impossibility of *objectivity*. While journalists may *want* to represent everyone objectively, the reality of journalism is that choices must be made – and those decisions transmit the values, lifestyles and points of view inherent in all human communication. Through comparing and contrasting news photographs of two different ethnic groups, students can discover the embedded values that often go unexamined. If left unexamined, these can create and perpetuate stereotypes.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize the subjective values inherent in photographs.
2. Compare and contrast news photographs for fairness and balance.
3. Analyze values, lifestyles and points of view in news media.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B5, B12), (S10/B10)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Two copies of the same newspaper with many sections such as: Sports, Business, International News, Metro, Entertainment, etc. Avoid the Classified Section as it has few editorial photos. Double copies of the same newspaper are necessary in case some photos are on the back of other photos that have been cut out.
2. Poster paper, scissors, tape and markers.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Newspaper Review**

- Break the class into groups. Pass out one section of the newspaper to each group. Have them look through their section and write down the main themes they see repeated. Ask:
  - ? What kind of information did you find most often in your section?
  - ? What do you think the main themes of your section are?
- Have someone from each group share their findings and explain their section to the class.
- Explain the difference between editorial photographs and pictures used in advertising. Advertising is usually separated from the editorial content by a box, although sometimes it is difficult to distinguish. The reason to differentiate between advertising and *editorial* photos is because newspaper editors have control over all editorial pictures that appear in the newspaper, but not the pictures in advertisements. In order to evaluate choices made by editors, we will focus only on editorial photographs.



## II. Searching for Photographs

- The teacher will need to choose two ethnic groups, the majority group and a minority group. Explain that the goal of this activity is to investigate how the newspaper portrays people of these two ethnicities. For example:
  - In most parts of the US, Whites (Caucasians) are the majority group and African Americans are a minority group. Depending on the demographic make-up of your region, choose a majority and minority group to focus this exercise on.
- A second goal of this investigation is to uncover any patterns in the choices of editorial photographs in the newspaper. The students will need to cut out all pictures they find in their section of people from both ethnic groups. Each team should have two identical copies of the newspaper section.
- When they have cut out all photos, separate them into two stacks: one for photos that have more people from the *majority* ethnic group and the other for photos that have more people from the chosen *minority* ethnic group. Any photos that have even numbers of people from both groups should be counted in both categories.
- Once all the photos are cut out from each section, have students draw a line down the middle of their poster paper to glue the pictures of people from the majority ethnic group on one side and the photos of people from the chosen minority ethnic group on the other side. Title each poster with the name of the newspaper section the photos came from. Then they should count and graph the number of people pictured from both groups.

## III. Analyzing Data

- Probe the results from the whole class. Ask:
  - ? What patterns do we see?
  - ? Do different sections contain more pictures of one ethnicity than another? What possible reasons would explain this?
  - ? What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in these pictures? What is omitted? Is this fair? Why or why not?

## IV. Extensions

- Older students could do this activity several times, looking at different representations each time (gender, age, class, etc.).
- It can be useful to repeat this activity on different days to see if the graphs demonstrate repeating patterns.
- Once students have discussed the *quantitative* differences through counting the amount of photographs, their learning can be deepened through a *qualitative* analysis. Have students look at the pictures they glued on their posters and think about what words best describe the pictures and the actions the people pictured are doing. Create two lists of adjectives and verbs – one to describe the photographs of the majority ethnic group and one to describe the photos of the minority ethnic group.
- Discuss their lists and question what values are represented in or missing from the photographs of people in each ethnic group. Encourage students to wrestle with the following questions:
  - ? How are people from different ethnicities portrayed differently?
  - ? Why might the portrayals be different?
  - ? What portrayals for both ethnicities are missing?
- Writing letters to the editor can be one way of trying to get answers to their questions. Students can send the scientific data they collected to the editors and challenge the newspaper to explain recurring patterns they have found or questions the exercise has raised.

# 4c

## Media Stereotypes: How Differences Divide

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Respect and harmony in a multicultural society depend on people's ability to understand and recognize the difference between a generalization (a flexible observation) and a stereotype (a rigid conclusion). The goal of this activity is for students to recognize the role media play in creating and perpetuating stereotypes. Using gender as the subject of inquiry, students collect and analyze pictures of females and males from magazines and then write a generalization and a stereotype for each image. By creating their own generalizations and stereotypes students sharpen their awareness of the difference between the two and become more sensitive to the values and points of view implicit in media portrayals.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Understand the difference between generalizations and stereotypes.
2. Compare and contrast gender representations.
3. Critically analyze media for gender stereotypes.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S19/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B5), (S10/B10)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Enough magazines for every student to be able to cut up part of one. If possible, it is best for students to bring in magazines from their homes so that the images reflect their own media environment.
2. Poster paper and tape or glue.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Generalization vs. Stereotype**

- Explain to students the differences between a *generalization* and a *stereotype*. Both are ways of organizing information with truths and falsities, but they differ in their form and use.
  - Generalizations are flexible descriptions about *some* or *many* that can help to begin an inquiry and expand possibilities.
  - Stereotypes are rigid conclusions about *all* or *most* that tend to end inquiry and limit possibilities.
  - For example: "Some white people have no rhythm" is a generalization but "White people can't dance" is a stereotype.
- Create generalizations through discussing differences between boys and girls.
  - ? How do they dress differently?
  - ? What do they do differently?
  - ? How are they treated differently?
  - ? What things does each group tend to like and/or dislike?
- Have students take some of the ideas mentioned and practice saying or writing them as generalizations and then changing them into stereotypes.

## II. Creating Collages

- Pass out magazines to every student and have them cut out pictures of males and females from the magazines and separate into two piles.
- Have students create two class collages by gluing or taping all their pictures of males on one piece of poster paper and the images of females on another

## III. Uncovering Differences

- Compare the two collages and create a Venn diagram to analyze the differences and similarities in the portrayals. Discuss what values and lifestyles students see most often represented.
- In teams, have students write sentences about men and women based on the collages and Venn diagram. For each idea they should write two sentences: a generalization and a stereotype.
- Share their sentences and question the values communicated in both generalizations and stereotypes.
- Discuss the role media play in creating and/or perpetuating stereotypes.
  - ? When are media “simply entertaining” and when are they “teaching”?
  - ? When do media images become stereotypes?
  - ? Do media create new stereotypes or just repeat stereotypes already common in society?
  - ? Should media try to end using stereotypes that may be harmful?



### **Teaching Tip: Understanding Gender Differences**

It is important for students to understand that males and females act, dress and think differently in different cultures because the majority of our gender identity is *learned*. For example, research has proven that boys are not naturally more aggressive and girls are not biologically more nurturing; these are all learned behaviors. Where do we learn these behaviors? Although media images are not the primary source of learned behaviors (parents and family have a much stronger influence) have students consider what role media may play in shaping our desires, ideas and identities.

# 4d

## Heroes, Heroines and Who I Want to Be

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The significance of exploring the lifestyles, values and points of view in media is not just seeing how they are embedded but also recognizing how they reinforce, and therefore affirm, existing social roles and structures. For young children today, dolls, toys and action figures provide significant role models that shape their ideas about who they are and who they want to be. As children grow, their role models shift to TV characters, movie icons, pop stars and celebrities. In this activity students work in teams to explore the attributes of popular media heroes/heroines and compare them with real people they know and admire.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify characteristics of a hero and heroine.
2. Compare media role models to real life people.
3. Analyze the values and lifestyles promoted in mass media.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades K-2: (S9/B6)
- Grades 3-5: (S9/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B4)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B5), (S10/B10)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S1/B1)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Have younger students bring in dolls and action figures.
2. Poster paper and markers.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Discussing Heroes/Heroines**

- Many of today's role models and heroes are characters that students see on TV or in the movies. Ask the students to help you generate a list of the TV or movie characters they look up to or admire. These could be fictional such as a character from a drama or sit-com or real people such as Oprah Winfrey or a sports star.
- Ask students to look at the list quietly and select two names from the list that they would call a "hero" or "heroine."

**II. Dissecting Media Heroes/Heroines**

- Put students in teams of two to discuss their combined list of heroes/heroines. After hearing each other, they should select one media hero or heroine from their combined list and draw a picture of this person on their poster paper. (Artistic ability is not the point; they could use a stick figure with external characteristics.) They should analytically dissect their hero/heroine by writing on their drawing the answers to the following questions.
  - ? What does he/she look like? (eyes, hair, height, weight, etc.)

- ? What type of personality does he/she have? (funny, sensitive, kind, tough, rude, giving, etc.)
- ? What are his/her goals? (save lives, make money, win games, make friends, etc.)
- ? What values do they embody – either explicitly by words and language or implicitly by looking or behaving in certain way.
- ↳ Younger students can answer these questions about the dolls and action figures they bring to class.
- Student teams should present their posters and discuss the values that their hero/heroine represents.

### III. Reality Check

- Have students repeat the exercise but this time list names of real people in their school, family, or community whom they consider to be a hero/heroine. Make a similar poster about them and their traits.
- As a final analysis, have students compare their media hero/heroine to their real life hero/heroine. This can be done as a Venn diagram, written essay, or oral discussion.

# 4e

## What's Missing? Making Room for Multiple Perspectives

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Sometimes what is missing from a media message can be more important than what is included. Using stories and events found in classroom texts, students select one story and generate a list of all the people who are missing from the story but who could have been affected by the events. Then they choose one of the missing persons and retell the story from his/her perspective. Being able to recognize and name missing perspectives is a critical skill in today's media culture.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify missing characters from a text, particularly a school text.
2. Increase critical thinking by supplying missing perspectives in a text.
3. Build empathy through understanding different points of view.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B4)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B6), (S10/10)

Behavioral Studies Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S1/B4)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. From any classroom book or textbook select a story students are familiar with. For example, a short story from a Language Arts text or in Social Studies, a story from history.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Review the Story**

- Discuss the basic parts of the story. Ask and chart:
  - ? Who are all the characters?
  - ? What is the plot?
  - ? Where is the setting?
- Explain that sometimes who or what is missing from a media text can be more important than who and what is there. Have students reflect on the plot and setting of the story and think of people who could have been at that setting and in this plot but are not mentioned in the story as we have it. Chart their responses to create a list of the missing people. Ask:
  - ? Who are some characters that could have been in this story?

**II. Rewriting the Text**

- Briefly discuss a couple of the new characters that the students mentioned. Have the students comment on how the story might change if these new characters were present. Also encourage them to imagine what these new characters would think about the original characters and plot.
- Assign students to work in pairs to choose a missing character and rewrite the story from

that person's perspective. Give plenty of time and encourage students to adapt the plot to fit the needs of their character.

- Have each team read their stories to the whole class. Then discuss the way the plot may have changed because of these new perspectives. Ask students to explain their responses to the following questions:
  - ? Does this new character add important issues or concerns that were missing?
  - ? How does this new character add to the quality of the story?
  - ? Why do you think the author did not include this character in the original story?

### III. Real Events

- Using a story from a news magazine or newspaper, students do the same activity with real life events to understand the importance of asking “what is missing” from news reports we receive daily in our lives.
  - ? For younger students, select an appropriate story from the news about a child. Tell or read the story to them. Chart on the board or chart paper the people mentioned in the story and who they are. Then have students discuss who else in the child's life could have been affected by the story. What perspective could these missing people contribute?

### IV. Extensions

- It could also be helpful for students to read books, magazines or newspapers that offer different perspectives than the typical mainstream media versions.
  - ↳ *Encounter* by Jane Yolen is an outstanding children's picture book where an indigenous boy tells the way he saw Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas.
  - ↳ Compare alternate versions of the *Cinderella* story, the *Three Little Pigs* or other classic children's books.
  - ↳ *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn and *Lies My Teacher Told Me* by James W. Loewen are two readily available books that provide perspectives missing from many US history textbooks.



*Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*

RE:  Key Question    Quote or testimonial    Success story    Problem I encountered

**I'd like to say. . .**

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade / Subject \_\_\_\_\_

School / Org. \_\_\_\_\_ City / State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Best phone # \_\_\_\_\_

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# #5

Keyword:

**Purpose**

## **Guiding Questions:**

- Who's in control of the creation and transmission of this message?
- Why are they sending it? How do you know?
- Who are they sending it to? How do you know?
- What's being sold in this message? What's being told?
- Who profits from this message? Who pays for it?
- Who is served by or benefits from the message
  - the public?
  - private interests?
  - individuals?
  - institutions?
- What economic decisions may have influenced the construction or transmission of this message?

## Key Question #5

# Why is this message being sent?

## Core Concept #5

**Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.**

With *Key Question #5*, we look at the *motive* or *purpose* of a media message – and whether or how a message may have been influenced by money, ego or ideology. To respond to a message appropriately, we need to be able to see beyond the basic content motives of *informing*, *persuading* or *entertaining*.

Much of the world's media were developed as money making enterprises and continue to operate today as commercial businesses. Newspapers and magazines lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, commercials are part and parcel of most TV watching. What many people do not know is that what's really being sold through commercial media is not just the advertised products to the audience – but also the audience to the advertisers!

The real purpose of the programs on television, or the articles in a magazine, is to create an audience (and put them in a receptive mood) so that the network or publisher can sell time or space to sponsors to advertise products. We call this “renting eyeballs.” Sponsors pay for the time to show a commercial based on the number of people the network predicts will be watching. And they get a refund if the number of actual viewers turns out to be lower than promised. Exploring how media content, whether TV shows, magazines or Internet sites, makes viewers and readers of all ages receptive target audiences for advertisers creates some of the most enlightening moments in the media literacy classroom.

Examining the purpose of a message also uncovers issues of ownership and the structure and influence of media institutions in society. Commercially sponsored entertainment may be more tolerable to many people than, say, a commercial influence over the news. But with democracy at stake almost everywhere around the world, citizens in every country need to be equipped with the ability to determine both economic and ideological “spin.”

But there's more. The issue of message motivation has changed dramatically since the Internet became an international platform through which groups and organizations – even individuals – have ready access to powerful tools that can persuade others to a particular point of view, whether positive or negative. The Internet provides multiple reasons for all users to be able to recognize propaganda, interpret rhetorical devices, verify sources and distinguish legitimate websites from bogus, hate or hoax websites.

# 5a

## Why We Communicate: Three Basic Tasks

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Knowing why a media message is being sent is important because it gives us a context for interpretation and clues for how to respond. Students begin their exploration of motive by generating ideas about why people communicate and organizing them in the three basic categories that media scholars identify: to *inform*, to *persuade* or to *entertain*. They will then choose one topic and create three media texts that communicate that topic in each of the three ways: *informing*, *persuading* and *entertaining*. By stimulating the process of questioning motivations of media messages, this activity prepares students for understanding the deeper motivations of *power* and/or *profit*.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify the three common reasons for communication: information, persuasion and entertainment.
2. Create media messages for different purposes.
3. Develop understanding about how the purpose of a message shapes the message.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S10/B2)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B2)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B1)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Blackboard, whiteboard or overhead projector to chart student responses.
2. Paper for teams of students to make their own posters.
3. Markers or crayons.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Extracting Student Knowledge**

- Begin a class discussion about the different reasons people have for communicating. Generate a list of their reasons by asking the following questions:
  - ? Why do people talk?
  - ? Why do you think people write, take pictures, make movies, play music?
  - ? Why do people put messages on clothing, posters, flags, bumper stickers, milk cartons, medicine bottles, advertisements, etc.?

**II. Organizing and Classifying**

- Explain that some academics who study communication have identified three common categories as reasons why people communicate:
  - to *inform*
  - to *persuade*
  - to *entertain*
- Have students work in teams to separate the class list of reasons that they generated into these three basic categories. Some messages may have several purposes and some might not

fit any of the three categories. For the messages that don't fit the three basic reasons, create a fourth category that for the time being can be labeled, *miscellaneous*. (Other motivations could include self-expression, warning, celebration, questioning, challenging, etc.)

- Discuss the choices the teams made and check for class consensus. If issues arise in which agreement is difficult, use the miscellaneous category as a positive opening to demonstrate that there are more than just three reasons but these three are very common.

### III. Creating Messages for Multiple Purposes

- Have each team choose any topic of interest and challenge them to create three media texts that transmit a message about their topic for three different purposes. For example:
  - If they choose football, they could create an advertisement to *persuade* boys to join a football league, then a wall poster to *inform* people about the rules of football, and finally a cartoon to *entertain* others about some aspect of football.
- To conclude the activity, have teams present their three messages and how each message accomplishes the goal. With each presentation have all students consider:
  - ? Are there still other possible motivations behind each poster/message?



### ***Assessment Tip: Independent Thinking***

While the goal of this activity is for students to organize their ideas into three basic categories of motivations, students should be encouraged and praised for finding and arguing for other motivations that don't fit the basic three groups.

# 5b

## The Business of Media: Who's Renting My Eyeballs?

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Advertising is the motor that drives commercial media. But there's more to the economics of media than how advertising works. What most of us don't know but need to, is how programs are selected and structured in order to entice a receptive audience to stay tuned until the commercial comes on. In this activity students keep track of the different advertisers in their favorite TV shows and then analyze the connections between the program and the sponsors to determine "Who's renting my eyeballs?!" Exploring how programs are created to make students "targets" for advertisers creates powerful moments in the media literacy classroom.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Keep track of the advertising they are seeing.
2. Analyze the relationship between commercials and the TV programs they sponsor.
3. Build an understanding about the economic structure of commercial media.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B7)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B8), (S10/B7)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B1, B5, B8)

**Curriculum Integration: Health**

To integrate this lesson with Health, have students keep track of healthy food and junk food commercials that are broadcast during children's programs. The marketing of sugary cereals and other junk food often targets young children.

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. TV/VCR
2. The teacher will need to videotape *only the commercials* during two half-hour TV programs. Set the VCR to record and watch each program carefully, pausing when the program starts and taking the pause off when a commercial appears. Don't worry if you miss a few seconds either way. In order to examine commercials that are targeting different audiences one program should be a children's cartoon show and the other the evening news.
3. Copies of Handout 5B: "Who's Renting My Eyeballs?" for homework.
4. An overhead projector, chart paper, blackboard or whiteboard for whole class to see.
5. If possible, read the short background essay "How TV Works" located on the Internet at: [www.medialit.org/reading\\_room/article83.html](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article83.html)
6. It is recommended that Lesson 3D: "Ads R Us: Understanding Target Marketing" be completed before using this lesson.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Considering Commercials**

- Discuss TV commercials and the purposes of advertising. Ask:
  - ? Who pays for television programs?
  - ? Why are there commercials on TV?

- Show the videotaped commercials that ran during the children’s cartoon. While watching, have students call out all the products being advertised in each commercial and list their responses in one column on the board or chart paper. Try to be specific: not just “candy” but “Snickers candy bars.” Stop the tape as needed to get the listings complete.
- Next show the videotaped commercials from the early evening news. Once again, have students call out the products being advertised and chart their responses in a second column: not just “Ford” but “Ford pick-up trucks.”
- Now create two more lists on the board or chartpaper with words and phrases describing the audiences for the two shows. Ask:
  - ? What are some characteristics of the audience that most often watch children’s cartoons?
  - ? Describe the audience that would most often watch the evening news?

*Note: It is important to complete these four lists before continuing with the lesson. Make sure they are available and visible to all students.*

- Compare the two lists of commercials and discuss the differences and similarities of the types of products being advertised. Ask:
  - ? What types of products are being sold during the children’s cartoon?
  - ? What types of products are being sold during the evening news?
  - ? What type of products do you think would be advertised during
    - ... a basketball game?
    - ... a golf match?
    - ... a daytime soap opera?
    - ... cooking show?
    - ... beauty pageant?
    - ... wrestling match?
    - ... financial news?
  - ? Why are different products sold during different shows?
- Using the lists of audience characteristics for cartoon shows and for the news, explore how different kinds of TV programs attract different kinds of viewers. And how different kinds of viewers then become a “target audience” for advertisers to sell their products to by buying commercials that pay for the program. Advertisers don’t want just anybody watching their commercials but *specific kinds of people* who are likely to buy (or want to buy) the product being advertised. So they advertise primarily in the shows that are likely to attract the kinds of people who would be interested in their product. For example: during Saturday morning cartoons there are many commercials for children’s toys because cartoons attract young children to watch TV – so when the toy commercial comes on, children will be there watching! Children are the target audience that toy companies want to attract. So they sponsor TV cartoon shows that appeal to children.
- Could it be that the purpose of TV programs is not just to entertain us but to also provide an entertainment that will gather a large group of viewers with similar interests so that advertisers can “rent their eyeballs?” Ask:
  - ? What kinds of advertisers might want to “rent *your* eyeballs”?

## II. Keeping Track (homework)

- Invite students to see who might want to rent their eyeballs. Distribute Handout 5B: “Who’s Renting My Eyeballs?” Have students choose three TV programs to watch at home over the next few days. Some might choose totally different programs (a sitcom, a drama and a news show) or they might choose 3 similar programs. As they are watching, they should write down the products advertised in each program, being as specific as possible. (Diet Pepsi, Gap jeans, etc.) Include commercials for movies and other TV programs. (Students may find it helpful to videotape the programs so that they can go back and make sure they have all the commercials accounted for.)

### III. Revealing Patterns

- After students complete the “Who’s Renting My Eyeballs?” homework, have a class discussion about what they noticed and what if any patterns surfaced.
  - ↻ For young students, choose a product from one student’s list and have everyone who saw a commercial for that same product raise their hands. Then list the TV programs that were being watched while that commercial aired. Next, choose a different type of product and do the same thing. Try to generate different lists to see if patterns surface of similar products advertised during similar programs.
  - ↻ Older students can conduct a more formal investigation about the relationships between advertising and programming. They will need to structure their research so that different students view very different types of programs in order to compare different target audiences.
- Students may, at first, resist accepting the fact that *they* are targets for advertising. Understanding that *all of us* are targets for advertising and that commercial media is primarily about buying and selling audiences are two of the most important concepts to grasp to become media literate.



#### **Backgrounder: The Amazing Cost of Commercials**

A further point to explore is that the amount and type of people watching any particular show determines the price of the commercial. Since some viewers have more money to spend on future products, (for example, recent college graduates) the price of advertising to them is more expensive than to viewers who have little money to spend (e.g. elderly people on Social Security). Certain shows and specific time slots attract certain audiences and through analyzing the size and type of the audience a price is established for the advertising airtime. For example, the price of commercials in the Super Bowl is directly related to the millions of males, especially age 18-45, who will be watching.





# 5c

## Hidden Messages: The Growth of Product Placement

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Keeping track of who is renting our eyeballs is more difficult today as “stealth ads” become embedded into the content of movies, TV shows and video games. Known as *product placement*, it is an increasingly common practice whereby advertisers pay media makers to use or display their products as props yet never reveal this arrangement as a form of advertising. Having students locate product placements in media programs helps them understand the economics of the media they consume. Creating their own product placements for good causes reveals the strategy behind the practice.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Identify product placements they see in TV programs and movies.
2. Build awareness of the pervasiveness of advertising in their culture.
3. Develop critical skills necessary to think independently in a media saturated consumer society.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B7)
- Grades 6-8: (S9/B9)
- Grades 9-12: (S9/B4, B10), (S10/B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. VCR & TV
2. Videotape short segments from TV shows or choose scenes from video or DVD movies that have numerous product placements.

**Resource Tip: Brandchannel.com** is a website that tracks brand appearances and product placement in each week’s number one film. An online archive back to 2002 cross-references both brands and movies.

3. Access to Internet or overhead projector.
4. Read the Backgrounder below to help you explain product placement.
5. For more understanding of product placement and its pervasiveness today visit the websites recommended throughout this lesson.

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. “Stealth” Advertising**

- Begin a discussion about advertising by questioning where we typically see ads. Then challenge students to think about all the places where ads are “hidden.” Ask:
  - ? Where is selling going on without a specific ad or commercial?
  - ? Have you ever seen something that you would consider a hidden ad?
  - ? When you see the specific name of a product in a movie or TV show, do you think that is an ad? Why or why not?
  - ? Have you ever heard the term “product placement?”
- Have students go online to product placement industry web sites to see examples and read how the industry describes product placement.

- Entertainment Resources and Marketing Association (ERMA) is an organization made up of agencies and corporations that provide product placement to the film industry. Their list of members has many product placement agency links:  
[www.erma.org/ermaHome.html](http://www.erma.org/ermaHome.html)

## II. Finding the Ad

- Show short video clips from television programs or movies and have students spot and create a list of the product placements.
- Discuss different ramifications of product placement. Have students wrestle with questions such as:
  1. How can viewers know when a product is used for artistic or narrative reasons and when it is simply a paid product placement?
  2. Who benefits from product placement and who is hurt by it?
  3. Is it lying if money is paid for an ad that is never identified as advertising?
  4. Why are product placements not listed at the end of a TV show or movie?

## III. Placing the Product

- Break students into small groups and have them choose a favorite TV show that all members of the group are familiar with. Then have them select a client organization and create a skit that places a *public service* message for the client – eat healthy, don’t smoke, stay in school, say no to drugs, save the whales, etc. – into the fabric of a typical episode of the show. The challenge is to make their message appear natural and not stand out as an obvious advertisement. For example:
  - If the client were the American Cancer Society (ACS), they may want to get an anti-smoking message on. The product placement could involve having a character die from smoking tobacco, holding a dialogue between characters about the dangers of tobacco, an actor wearing an anti-smoking t-shirt, or placing a “no smoking sign” somewhere in the production set.
- Students can perform their skits for the entire class. The more air time they can create for the client without turning off the audience by appearing to “preach” their message, the more successful is the product placement.

### **Backgrounder: Product Placement**

Product placement is a strategy for businesses and advertisers to get their product, brand name, or service shown within the content and context of a TV show, movie, video game, or other mass media. Product placement allows advertisers to reach millions of viewers and since the product’s appearance seems “natural,” most viewers would not consider it advertising, even though considerable expense and planning were required for the product to appear. As a business practice, product placement is legal, but as long as the process and payment are hidden, the true intent of the message is veiled and ethical questions should be raised.

Products have been placed into TV programs and movies for years, yet the business of product placement really took off in 1982, when Elliot offered *E.T.* a handful of Reese’s Pieces candy. Once the movie was released, sales for Reese’s Pieces shot up 65%. Product placement is now a 1.5 billion dollar a year business that has created special product placement departments at almost every movie studio. Check out *Business Week’s* Product Placement Hall of Fame: [www.businessweek.com/1998/25/b3583062.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/1998/25/b3583062.htm)

The goal of this lesson is not to mobilize students against the practice of product placement but simply to educate students about the increasing use of product placement in almost all entertainment media today. Only when they can “see” product placement and understand its purpose, will they be able to evaluate its influence in their lives and behavior.

# 5d

## How Much of Media are Ads?

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Another interesting question about the economics of media is to explore “What percent of our media is advertising?” Students can create their own research to answer this question by counting and comparing the amount of advertising to the amount of editorial content in different kinds of media. In this activity students measure the column inches on a newspaper page, count the number of commercial minutes during a TV news program, or tally the number of ad pages in a magazine. Through graphing and analyzing this data, students gain an understanding of the pervasiveness of advertising and the interrelationship between advertising and content in mainstream media.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Build an awareness of the pervasiveness of advertising in our society.
2. Conduct original research to assess the amount of advertising in media.
3. Analyze the interrelationship between advertising and editorial content.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 3-5: (S9/B7)
- Grades 6-8: (S10/B4, B5)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B1, B5, B7)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. TV/VCR
2. Videotape of a half-hour TV program with all the ads from beginning to end.
3. Several magazines of different genres – news, fashion, sports, etc. Ask students to bring in magazines from their home or that they read.
4. Newspapers
5. Graph paper or access to Excel or other computer graphing program.
6. Stopwatch.
7. Optional for older students: Access to the Internet

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Hypothesis**

- Remind students that in the prior activities we learned that advertising is the motor driving most media in our lives. Using the scientific method, students will investigate the prevalence of advertising in three different types of media: newspapers, magazines and TV programs.
- Begin your experiment with hypotheses. Have students make predictions about the percentage of advertising they think they might find in each medium. 50-50? 60-40? 75-25?
- Hypothesize answers to the following:
  - ? How many pages are ads in a 100-page magazine?
  - ? How many minutes of a half-hour TV program are ads?
  - ? If there are 30 pages in a newspaper and each page has 300 column inches, how many column inches of the entire newspaper is advertising? editorial?

- ↳ Younger children can estimate number of pages of newspaper rather than trying to count column inches.
- ↳ Older students can convert to percentages.

## II. Collecting Data

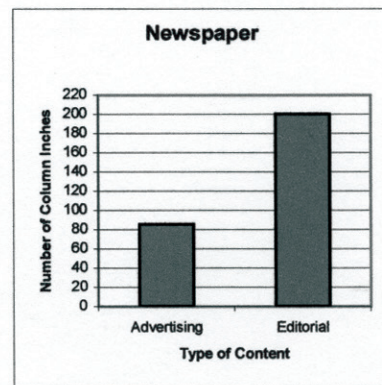
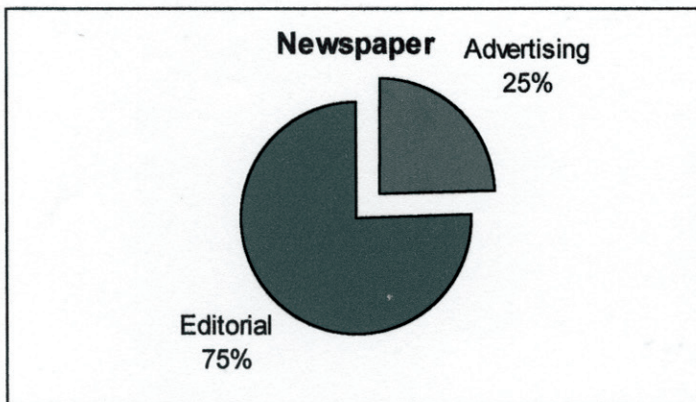
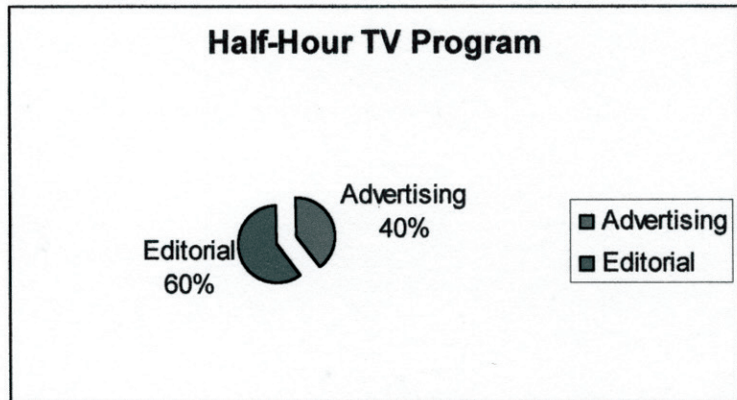
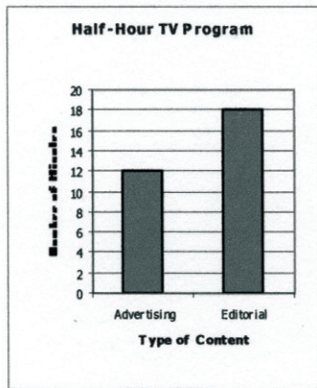
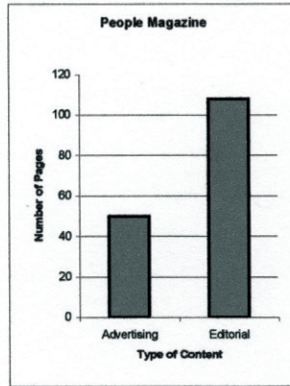
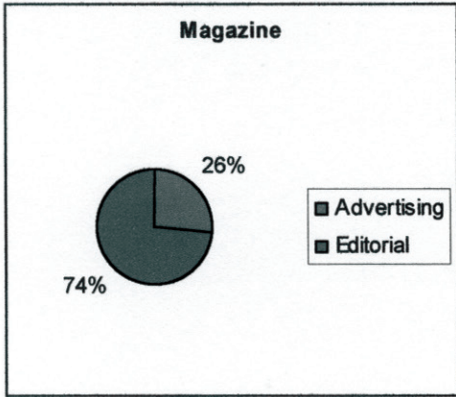
- Once the students have established their hypotheses, break the class into teams of two or three students to gather the data.
  - Give several teams different sections of the newspaper to measure and count column inches of ads vs. editorials.
  - Give a couple of teams a different magazine each. They will probably finish first so they can also be responsible for creating the class chart and preparing the graphs.
  - Have one team view the TV news program and using a stopwatch, log the number of minutes of commercials.
- The information needs to be recorded and organized. Students can graph and chart the raw data with a computer program like Excel or by hand with graph paper. Visual organizers can help students compare the data more easily. See examples below.

## III. Music & Sounds: Seeing, Hearing and Believing

- Cover the TV screen with a tablecloth or sheet so that only the sound can be heard. Play the third video clip (a foreign film can work well) and have students write what images they think would accompany those sounds.
- Once everyone has had a chance to write down their reflections, ask them to tell what sounds they heard and share what thoughts they had.
- After the discussion, remove the cover and view the video with both sound and picture. Ask students to reflect on the differences between the two.

## IV. Reflection

- Compare the final data with their original predictions. Even if the majority of the content is editorial, discuss the significance of the amount of advertising. Encourage students to question the implications of their findings on society and on themselves. Ask:
  1. What are some questions we might ask about the relationship between media makers and advertisers?
  2. How much power can advertisers have over editorial content?
  3. If a magazine has so many ads, why isn't it free? What about cable TV?
  4. What are some pros and cons for society if a newspaper (or any news media) is more concerned about selling ads than reporting the news?
  5. What other questions does this research raise and how can we find answers to those questions?
  6. What kinds of magazines have the largest percentage of ads?  
Are there any magazines where advertising and editorial seem to be hard to distinguish?
  7. If so, what can we apply from the Lesson 3B about "target marketing" and "renting eyeballs?"



# 5e

## Power, Persuasion & Propaganda: Exploring Multiple Motives

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While commercial media is created to generate profit, non-commercial media has many motivations – from influencing people how to vote or sharing ways to protect the environment to convincing us the world is flat or promoting racist beliefs. With so much information available today through media, students need to be able to recognize media messages that are motivated by power and persuasion in order to become independent and critical thinkers. First, students will search for and discuss media messages that have purposes other than just making money. Then group production projects will help students discover the power of propaganda for both positive and negative ends thus yielding greater understanding of the multiple (and at times ulterior) motivations in today’s media landscape.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to...

1. Recognize different motives even in non-commercial media.
2. Analyze the role of media in a democratic society.
3. Wrestle with ethical issues concerning media and the public good.

**Correlation With McRel National Standards:**

Language Arts Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 6-8: (S10/B2)
- Grades 9-12: (S10/B6, B11)

Civics Standards and Benchmarks

- Grades 9-12: (S19/B6)

**Materials/Preparation:**

1. Access to the Internet
2. Chart paper or black board

**Teaching Strategies:**

**I. Review and Reflect on Motives**

- Mention that now with the Internet there are many media messages that have motives other than just selling a product to make money.
- Begin a class chart that lists all the different motives beyond just making money that organizations could have for creating media. List as many motives as possible. Start with questions like:
  - ? Why do you think PBS broadcasts *Sesame Street*?
  - ? Why do the Democratic Party and the Republican Party both make TV commercials?
  - ? Who creates the commercials that tell you smoking is dangerous?
  - ? What kinds of information would you find on a website “.org” “.com,” “edu”. Others?
  - ? How can you tell if an Internet site has accurate information?

**II. Creating Media with Multiple Motives**

- Divide the class into teams and assign each team the job of creating a media message with one or more motives that are not specifically commercial. The messages can be in any format that works best: poster, written or tape-recorded radio ad, TV commercial



performed live, illustrated print advertisement, etc. The students may choose their own scenario or use one from the list below.

- You work for a cigarette marketer which lost a lawsuit that now requires you to create anti-smoking posters targeting women. Since selling tobacco is your business you also want these posters to make your company look good.
- You work for the dairy industry and must create fun toys that encourage children to drink milk.
- You work for the American Nazi party and you want to create a web site that convinces people that Martin Luther King, Jr. was bad person.
- You work for a school district that has low test scores. Create a flyer to convince parents that this is still a great district.
- You work for an oil company that has been receiving lots of bad publicity recently because of accidents that have caused millions of barrels of oil damage on the environment. You must create a commercial that promotes an environmentally friendly image for your company.
- You work for the US Army and you need to recruit more soldiers. Research shows that more people will join if you portray the Army as an excellent career opportunity for high-tech training. Create a radio ad that will attract as many recruits as possible.
- You work for a local TV channel that is sponsoring a reading contest for children so they can increase their ratings with young families. Create bookmarks that connect watching TV with reading books.
- You work for the teacher's union and must create a full-page newspaper ad to create a positive image of teachers and the union.
- You work for a breakfast cereal company and your owner is very patriotic. Design the cover of a box of sugary cereal to appeal to kids but, most importantly, also be very patriotic.

### III. Discovering Motives

- Once all the teams have created their media message, they should present them to the class.
- Encourage the class to uncover the various motives in each one.
- Ask them to relate this experience to real media messages they encounter daily.





# Five Core Concepts & Five Key Questions

	Keywords	Core Concepts	Key Questions
<b>#1</b>	Authorship	All media messages are “constructed.”	Who created this message?
<b>#2</b>	Format	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	What techniques are used to attract my attention?
<b>#3</b>	Audience	Different people experience the same media message differently.	How might different people understand this message differently from me?
<b>#4</b>	Content	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
<b>#5</b>	Purpose	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why was this message sent?



# Five Core Concepts & Five Key Questions

## *Plus: Questions to Guide Young Children*

	Core Concepts	Key Questions	Questions to Guide Young Children
<b>#1</b>	All media messages are “constructed.”	Who created this message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is this?</li> <li>• How is it put together?</li> </ul>
<b>#2</b>	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	What techniques are used to attract my attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I see and hear? Smell? Touch or taste?</li> <li>• What do I like or dislike about this?</li> </ul>
<b>#3</b>	Different people experience the same media message differently.	How might different people understand this message differently from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do I think and feel about this?</li> <li>• What might other people think and feel about this?</li> </ul>
<b>#4</b>	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this tell me about how other people live and believe?</li> <li>• Is anything or anyone left out?</li> </ul>
<b>#5</b>	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why was this message sent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this trying to tell me something?</li> <li>• Is this trying to sell me something?</li> </ul>

## Expanded Questions

*For more sophisticated inquiry*

As students become more skilled in media literacy, more complex analysis is possible. The following outline is another way of asking questions in order to explore the connections and interconnections between the *content*, *form*, *purpose* and *effects* of a media message. The numbers at the end of each question indicate which *Key Question* it expands.

### 1. Messages and Values — exploring the *content* of a media message.

These questions help us understand how the symbol system of a message influences its interpretation by different people; how the symbols that are selected for a message tap into our existing attitudes, knowledge and understanding of the world.

1. What makes this message seem realistic or unrealistic? (#2)
2. How does this message fit with your lived experience of the world? (#3)
3. How are various social groups represented? (#4)
4. What social or ideological messages are a part of the message's subtext? (#4)
5. What kinds of behaviors and what kinds of consequences are depicted? (#4)
6. What type of person is the reader invited to identify with? (#4)
7. What is omitted from the message? (#4)
8. Whose point of view is presented? (#4)

### 2. Codes and Conventions — exploring the *form* of the message.

The following kinds of questions help us appreciate the “constructedness” of messages, how ideas and concepts are created, expressed and “packaged” for specific audiences.

1. What is the message genre? (#1)
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention? (#2)
3. What conventions of storytelling are used in this message? (#2)
4. What types of visual and/or verbal symbolism are used to construct the message? (#2)
5. What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message? (#2)
6. What technologies were used to construct this message? (#1)
7. How is this message similar and different from others with similar content? (#1)

### 3. Producers and Consumers — exploring the *purpose* and *effects*.

These type of questions help us see the multiple decisions that are made from beginning to end as the message is created and distributed plus the multiple interpretations that are created in the audience as they watch, see or listen:

1. Who created this message? (#1)
2. What is the producer's purpose? (#5)
3. Who is the target audience? (#5)
4. How have economic decisions influenced the construction of this message? (#5)
5. What reasons might an individual have for being interested in this message? (#3)
6. How do different individuals respond emotionally to this message? (#3)
7. How might different individuals interpret this message differently? (#3)

– With thanks to Cary Bazalgette and Renee Hobbs.

## *CML Educational Philosophy*

# **Empowerment through Education**

The Center for Media Literacy advocates a philosophy of *empowerment through education*.  
This philosophy incorporates three intertwining concepts:

### **1. Media literacy is education for life in a global media world.**

For 500 years, since the invention of moveable type, we have valued the ability to read and write as the primary means of communicating and understanding history, cultural traditions, political and social philosophy and the news of the day. In more recent times, traditional literacy skills ensured that individuals could participate fully as engaged citizens and functioning adults in society. Today families, schools and all community institutions share the responsibility for preparing young people for living and learning in a global culture that is increasingly connected through multi-media and influenced by powerful images, words and sounds.

### **2. The heart of media literacy is informed inquiry.**

Through a four-step ‘inquiry’ process of  
*Awareness . . . Analysis . . . Reflection . . . Action,*  
media literacy helps young people acquire an empowering set of “navigational” skills which include the ability to:

- *Access* information from a variety of sources.
- *Analyze* and explore how messages are “constructed” whether print, verbal, visual or multi-media.
- *Evaluate* media’s explicit and implicit messages against one’s own ethical, moral and/or democratic principles.
- *Express* or *create* their own messages using a variety of media tools.

### **3. Media literacy is an alternative to censoring, boycotting or blaming ‘the media.’**

Deeply committed to freedom of expression, media literacy does not promote partisan agendas or political points of view. The power of media literacy is its ability to inspire independent thinking and foster critical analysis. The ultimate goal of media education is to make wise choices possible.

**Embracing this philosophy,  
the Center for Media Literacy is committed to media education  
as an essential and empowering life-skill for the 21st Century.**