

Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking

Student Workbook

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Edited by KC Lynch

Produced by NW Center for Excellence in Media Literacy. Our goal is to improve the training, research, and service opportunities for both adults and teens across Washington State who are interested in media literacy education and have particular interest in addressing teen health issues from a media literacy perspective.

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Introduction

As you are learning to think critically about media, you will be experiencing, thinking about, talking about, and making reports about many different kinds of media.

Media

The Media are the channels that bring us our communication. **Media** means more than just the traditional mass communication, such as the press, the broadcasting industries, and films. A medium (the singular of media) is a way of communicating meaning within a culture. Here is a partial list of media:

- Movies, radio, video, television, theater, recorded music
- Newspapers, magazines, junk mail, advertising, comic books
- Computer software, video games, the Internet

As you become more experienced in the skills of critically thinking about media and your understanding of the media increases, you will add other items to this list.

Popular Culture and the Media

Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking includes examining the popular culture and the media texts within it. The following are examples of media texts in popular culture:

- Coffee shops, including the pictures, posters, room layout, even the logos on their products;
- Sports events, including all the souvenirs used to promote and celebrate sports and sports personalities.

Mass

The term **mass** when applied to media describes one set of media that are different from the rest. A **mass medium** is one that can be presented in exactly the same way to multiple audiences in different locations. A movie is a mass medium, but live theater is not a mass medium because it can be different each time it is performed.

Text

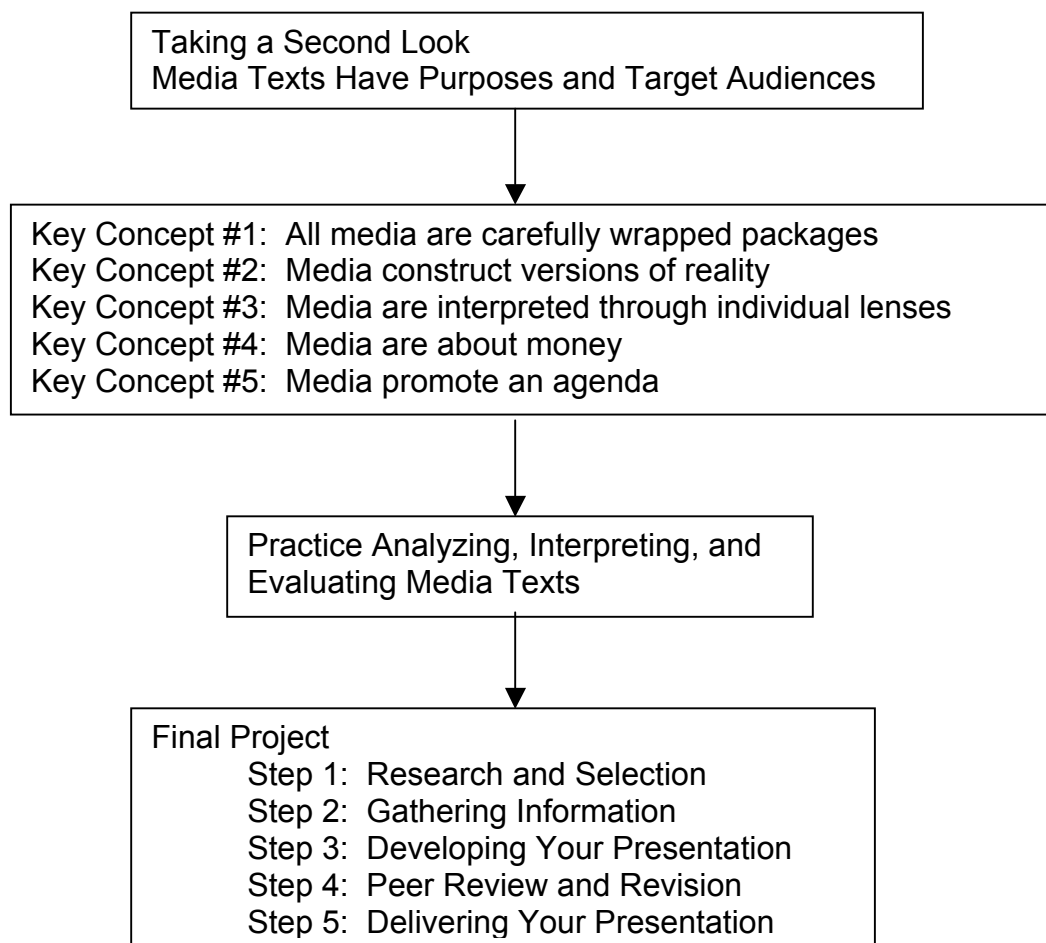
The media communicate messages through texts. You are probably used to thinking of the word **text** as a description of a particular kind of book you see in schools, but in the following activities you will learn to use **text** to describe anything that is a communication. A text could be:



- A recorded song
- A television commercial
- A newspaper article
- A webpage

Graphic Overview of *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking*

Below is a graphic overview of the materials presented in this model. As you follow the arrows, you will see the progression of skills needed to analyze mass media. The final assessment gives you the opportunity to demonstrate the skills you've learned.





Extended Overview of Information Found in *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking*

Taking a second look

Often we miss things the first time we hear or look at media. Taking a second look requires us to find things in the media text that may have escaped our attention the first time. It teaches us how to discover the second and third levels of meaning in media texts.

Media texts have purposes and target audiences.

Every media text has a specific purpose or purposes. The purpose of a text is what the text is trying to achieve. Purposes can be to persuade, to entertain, to inform, to explain, to make a profit, etc.

Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages.

This key concept states that all media are constructions. That means that all media texts are carefully put together, just like roads, cars, and buildings. Sometimes what we like best about a text is the fact that it is so well manufactured. We love special effects in movies, for instance. At other times, we tend to forget that the media are carefully constructed, and we assume that texts are natural. We know that the shot in the rock video was probably rehearsed a dozen times and may even have been filmed many times before it looked just right, but we often forget that we know it.

Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality.

Did you see the Titanic sink? Have you heard Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech? Your answer to these questions might be a loud and confident "yes," but Key Concept #2 tells you to think again. You may think you have experienced these events because you have seen a movie or a television program about them, but those are only versions of the events shown from one point of view. What we see in the media is almost never the real stuff. It is a version of reality. Often the media version is very close to the real event, but sometimes people who witnessed the event will tell you that the media version of it was nothing like the real event at all.



Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses.

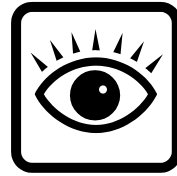
The way that you make sense out of media texts may have you “thinking about it again” as you find different meaning or interpretations in media texts. Sometimes you’ll find yourself entering into a kind of *negotiation* with a text as you seek a satisfactory interpretation. You may “swing back and forth” from one opinion to another, trying to discover the meaning of the text or your own personal reaction to it.

Key Concept #4: Media are about money.

This key concept points out that media cost money to make. Like all businesses, the media industries are trying to make a profit. Even the news broadcasts! Good media students don’t forget that the media are trying to sell something: ideas, products, or even a way of life. It’s entertainment, for sure, but it’s also selling a product nearly all the time.

Key Concept #5: Media promote an agenda.

Media texts, like people, express values, an ideology, or a set of social and political beliefs. Often the attitudes of the media text are a reflection of the attitude of the person or people who made it. When you experience a media text, you can tell what its producers stand for, what they believe in, and what view of the world they are trying to present to you.



Taking a Second Look

Media education is about taking a second look. (Even if what you are "looking" at is music or radio.) Most of the time we give our media just a single dose of our attention and then move on. We have technology like the remote control to help us move on. Newspapers are so big we have to turn the pages quickly to get through all of them. We look at magazines with a "riff" of the pages, usually starting at the back, waiting for something to "catch our attention. "

Very little of what we see or hear in the media ever gets a second look. We are constantly moving on.

Sometimes, when we do take a longer look at our media, we find things there that had escaped our attention the first time. These surprises are sometimes:

- Amusing: Perhaps we hear a line of dialogue we had missed before, or see a detail in the background of a film we hadn't noticed.
- Disappointing: We might see a flaw in the special effects of a video that interrupts the realism.
- Annoying: We might hear a line in a song we had missed before and find that it bothers us.
- Enlightening: We might understand something in a newspaper article more clearly the second time around.

Think of a time when taking a second look at a media text has led you to modify your reaction to the text. Make a few notes, but do not write out the recollection completely. Then find two or three classmates to form a group, and tell each other your experiences. From the ones told in your group, pick the one that best illustrates the theme of "taking a second look", and use it as your group's contribution to a class discussion.

Media education is about taking a second look.

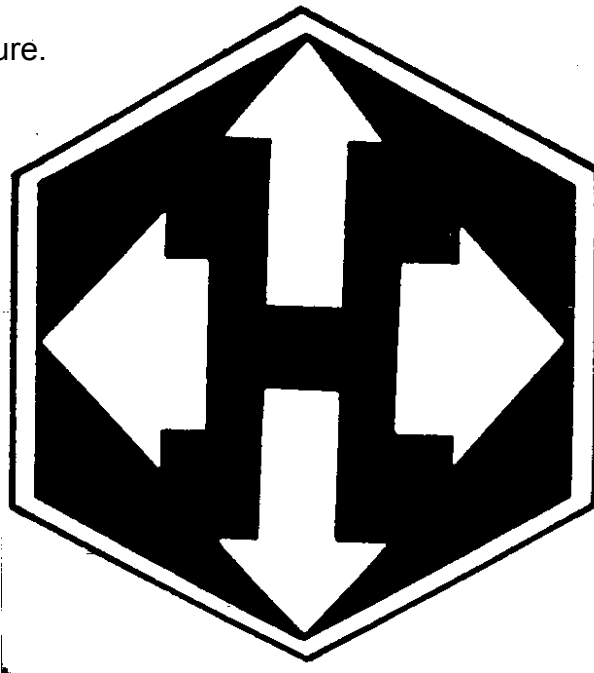


Let's begin with some simple examples. Look at the picture below. Make a mental note of what you see. Now, turn it upside down and take a second look. What's the difference?



Here's a point to think and talk about. Was that second interpretation of the picture always there for you to perceive, or did it appear only when you turned the picture upside down?

Try another picture.



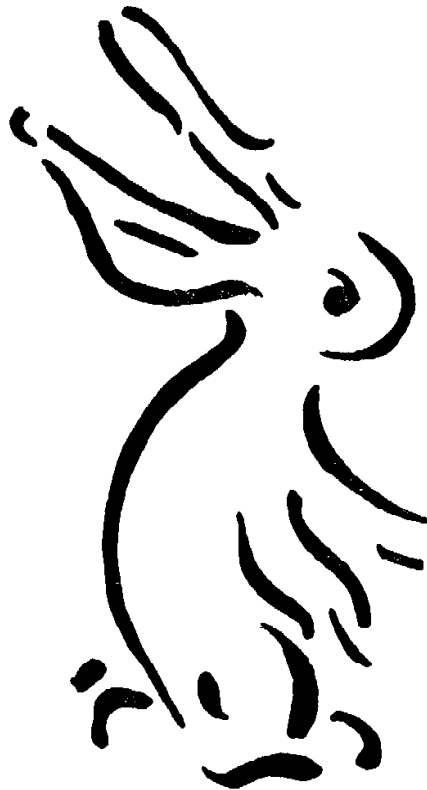


Write down what you see when you first look at the image. Do you see a black letter "H" within a white diamond, or do you see four white arrows on a black background?

Usually some people see one thing and others see the other. A few are aware of both images right away. At first, many people can see only the image they saw the first time. They have difficulty seeing the alternative image, and may even deny that it is there at all.

A question to think about here is: are the alternatives still there even if some people cannot see them?

Let's look at a third image.



What so you see in the picture? Again, some people will see a rabbit, and others will swear it is a picture of a pelican. As in the picture of the "H" (or of the arrows), some people will have more difficulty than others in seeing both.

Try this one on your friends. Copy the top image on the next page onto a piece of paper, and show it to one person after saying, "I want you to write down the letter I am going to show you." Then, show the same image to another person, but this



time, say. "I want you to write down the number I am going to show you." What happens? How can you explain it?

B

By now you will be close to forming some theories about what people see and why. For instance, some people will see what they are expecting to see, and will have difficulty seeing anything else (e.g. "A letter is a letter, and can not be a number at the same time.") Other people will see what they first see, and have difficulty seeing anything different.

Before we go on to something more complex, here are a few more examples to practice taking a second look.



This illustration changes into a man's profile when the page is given a quarter turn.



What did your second look reveal about each of those?

Now, here is a difficult one.



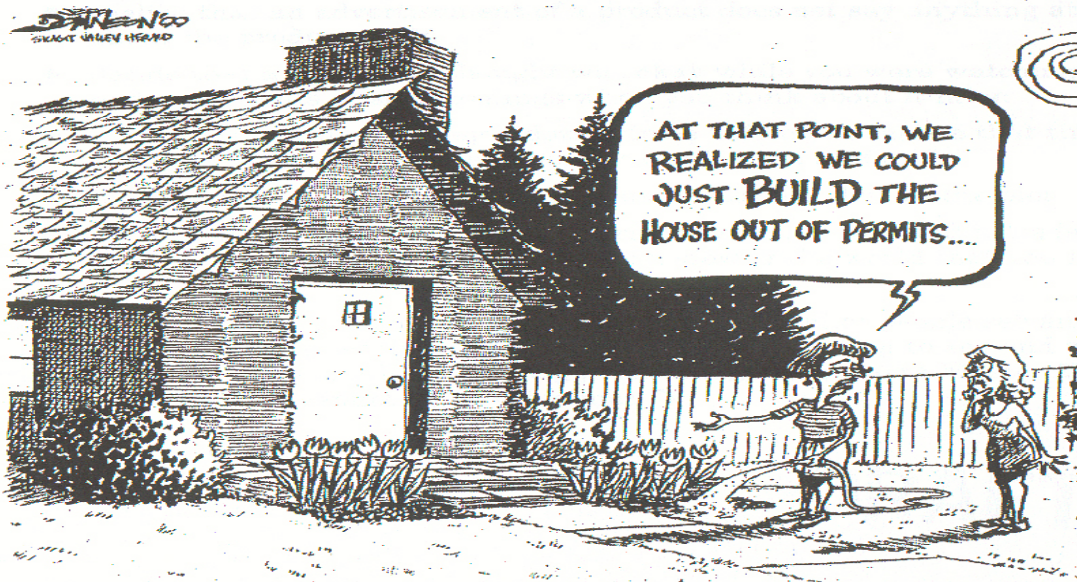
Work with a partner to see what you can find in this image. You may have to get help from another pair of students after a while.

The final example in this series is a reproduction of a painting by the famous Spanish artist, Salvador Dalí. The title of the Painting is *Old age, Adolescence and Infancy*. It was painted in 1940, and is on display at the Salvador Dalí Museum, in St. Petersburg, Florida.

To examine this text, you will need access to the Internet. The image is available at the Dalí Museum's website: www.salvadoralimuseum.org. Form groups of four, and make notes on the results of your joint second looking.



Here is a political cartoon that offers rewards to people who take a second look.



For most people, the first look will focus on the dialogue bubble – the political message against government regulation. But most people who take a careful second look at the details of the picture are rewarded with a humorous commentary on the political message in the dialogue bubble.

So far, your experience in this section has been in finding a second or a hidden picture within visual texts. However, taking a second look can be applied to any media texts. You may:

- Realize that an advertisement of a product does not say anything at all about the product itself.
- Decide that a movie you thought was okay while you were watching it had some faults or shortcomings when you think about it later.
- Read a poem or hear a song a dozen times before you realize that there is a level of meaning deeper than the one “on the surface.”
- Read a mystery story a second time and discover a flaw in the plot



- Listen to the songs of a certain performer over and over, and it leads you to understand that the performer has a view of the world that you find particularly attractive (or objectionable).

Even if you have never experienced any of the examples listed, you can probably remember a time when you discovered something new in a media text after taking a second look. Remember, taking a second look is most useful when it leads to seeing something new.



Find three media texts and fill in the charts below:

Media Text #1

In the first look I saw...

In the second look I saw...

Media Text #2

In the first look I saw...

In the second look I saw...

Media Text #3

In the first look I saw...

In the second look I saw...



Review

Learning to take a second look at media texts is probably the most important skill you will ever learn in media education. Practice taking a second look:

- When you read newspapers
- When you flip through magazines
- When you listen to music or radio
- When you watch TV, videos or films

Try keeping some personal notes about what you have found in different texts from taking a second look. These examples will be useful later in this unit on media education.

The next five lessons will help you guide yourself when you are taking your second looks, by teaching you the five key concepts of media education: five things about media texts that you can look for to help you better understand media.

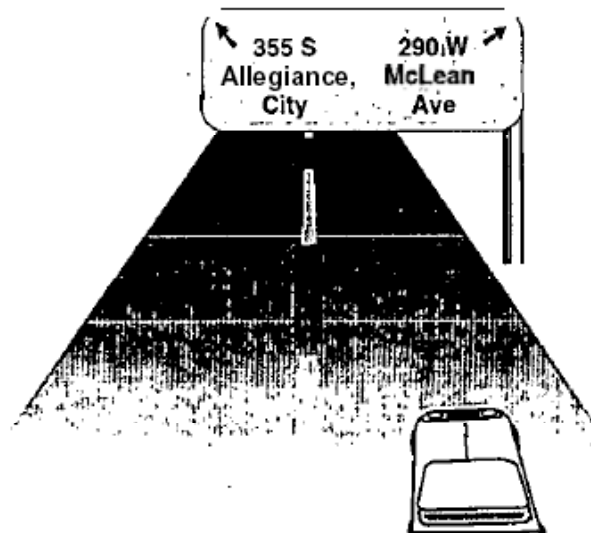
Media Texts Have Purposes and Target Audiences



Every media text is tied to a specific purpose or purposes designed for a target audience. There is always a reason for the creation of a media text. This reason is usually tied closely to the audience that the media text is trying to target. When considering media purposes, first consider the broad purposes. Some broad purposes of media texts may be:

- to instruct
- to inform
- to sell
- to persuade
- to explain
- to provide pleasure
- to provide direction
- to argue
- to profit

Look at the following text:



What do you think is the broad purpose of the text?



Next, find media texts that are examples of the purposes listed below. Find at least *two different media texts* to support each broad purpose.



Broad Purposes **Media text example #1** **Media text example #2**

| | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| To argue | | |
| To inform | | |
| To profit | | |
| To persuade | | |
| To explain | | |



For media texts to be effective, the text will usually try to convince the target audience to believe in or do something. In creating effective media texts, several things are considered when determining the characteristics of the target audience. Factors such as age, sex, education, economic and social status, occupation, and lifestyle may define the target audience and determine the purpose and construction of the media text. During the process of considering the relationship between **target audiences** and **broad purposes**, the purposes become specific. Some specific purposes of media texts may be:

- to sell (purpose) a perfume to teenage girls (target audience)
- to entertain (purpose) a class of kindergarteners (target audience) by performing a skit
- to inform (purpose) college students (target audience) about possible careers

Find a media text for each of the examples below. Identify the broad purpose, target audience, and the specific purpose of the media texts.



| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The broad purpose of the newspaper editorial ▪ The target audience of the newspaper editorial ▪ The specific purpose of the newspaper editorial | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The broad purpose of the TV commercial ▪ The target audience of the TV commercial ▪ The specific purpose of the TV commercial | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The broad purpose of the political speech ▪ The target audience of the political speech ▪ The specific purpose of the political speech | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The broad purpose of the instructions ▪ The target audience of the instructions ▪ The specific purpose of the instructions | |



More Activities on Media Purposes and Techniques

Working with a partner, start your list of media purposes with:

- Profit
- Pleasure

and then expand the list by thinking of the following:

- an editorial in a newspaper urging readers to turn out to support a local sports team
- a commercial for a product
- a political speech in a debate
- a set of instructions for installing a software
- a message from the government in praise of itself

What would be the purpose in each case for the media texts in the list above?

Stay with the same partner to do this next exercise, which is really the same as the last one, only inside out.

List two examples of a media text for each of the purposes listed below.

- To argue
- To inform
- To propagandize
- To persuade
- To explain

Next, form a group of four by combining with another pair of students. Check out the work each pair did on the first two exercises, then pick out two different texts to use in a challenge with another group in class. Make sure that all members of your group are agreed on the purpose of the two texts you have chosen, and then see if the other group agrees with you.

Make a class display of sample texts classified by their purposes. Attach a short, written rationale to each text in the display.

In order to achieve their purposes, media texts employ techniques. Each medium has its own techniques, and the more familiar we become with each medium, the more techniques we can discover. This program is too short to try to explore all the



techniques of media communication, but we can make a start by studying some of the most common ones, especially the ones used in print media.

- Generalization ("Everyone agrees that...")
- Popular appeal ("It's the "in thing" to...")
- Identification/analogy ("You'll feel like a millionaire if you...")
- Appeal to reason ("The only rational conclusion you can make is...")
- Appeal to emotion ("How would you feel if...?")
- Celebrity endorsement ("I'm a film star, and I'm going to vote for...")
- Just plain folks ("We don't need any fancy arguments when our common sense tells us...")
- False logic ("My grandmother took these pills and she was 98 when she died, so if you take them...")
- Avoiding the issue (" You ask why our vehicles have so many accidents. Well, let me tell you, those same vehicles are the best value on the market.")

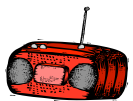
TV, film and radio also use these techniques. But they also have additional techniques specific to each medium. Here are a few examples:

Film and TV



- The use of music to signal the emotion of the text such as a suspense film
- The use of editing to give rhythm and pace to a visual text such as a rock video
- The use of a laugh-track in a TV sitcom to tell the audience when to be amused
- The use of camera angles, lighting, color, camera movement and framing to add detail and interpretation to a sequence of pictures such as a chase

Radio and recorded music



- The use of sound effects to make a text sound more real, such as in a radio drama
- The use of overdubbing to make music richer and deeper, or to make one artist sound like a chorus
- The use of editing to bring material from many sources into one program, such as in the news



ACTIVITY: "OK, 'Leo," break's over."

This activity is for groups of 4 or 5 participants. Time allowed for group work: 15 minutes.



The group task is to analyze the cartoon above, explaining how it works as a piece of humor.

Use the following questions as a guide for your group's discussion of the cartoon. Appoint one group member to make a clean copy of your group's final decision about each question. Appoint another member who will later present your group's findings to the class.



What is the joke?

Some people may not find the cartoon funny. What could be some reasons for this?

People who do find the cartoon funny will have some knowledge or experience in common. What will that be?

What exact visual details in the cartoon do you need to see before you can "get" the joke?

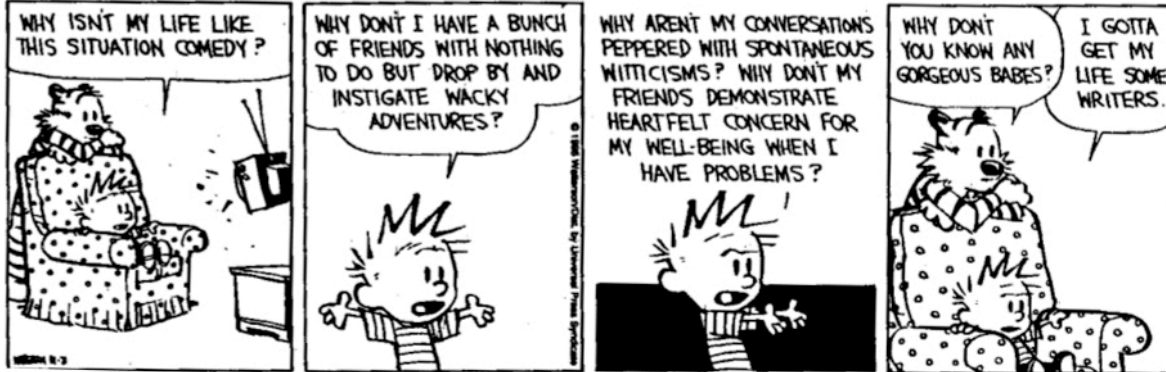
Look up the word "allusion." Explain how this cartoon is an example of an allusion. Describe another example of allusion that you know of. (Perhaps from a song or a music video.)

Make notes for your group's report for the class.

Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages.



CALVIN AND HOBBS / Bill Watterson



The first key concept of media education states that all media are constructions. That means that all media texts are carefully put together. Sometimes what we like best about a text is the fact that it is so well manufactured. We love special effects in movies, for instance. At other times, we tend to forget that the media are carefully constructed, and we assume that texts are just natural. We know that the shot in the rock video that we like was probably rehearsed a dozen times, and may even have been filmed many times before it looked just right, but we often forget that we know it.

Look at the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon above. In it, Calvin is complaining that life on TV seems to be much better than his own life. The joke is that he ends up thinking he can fix things, not by recognizing that real life is not like TV, but by trying to make real life more like TV - by getting some script writers for his own life.

When we say that the media are constructions, we are referring to things such as:

- Movies and TV are not simply natural events in our lives, but are deliberately made using cameras, lights, and technology of all kinds. They use camera angles, special lenses, editing, music and scripts to bring us the pictures that look so "natural" to us when we see them.
- Newspapers and magazines are not simply natural events in our lives, but are deliberately made using photographs, drawings, colors, headlines, **bold**, *italics*, underlining, CAPITALS, large fonts, different fonts. They use layout



techniques and graphics, among a thousand other things to attract our attention.

Media texts come to us like carefully packed suitcases. Everything is in its proper place, and looks as if it could not possibly belong anywhere else. When we unpack the suitcase, we often appreciate the way some of the items have been tucked away inside others, or the ways some important items have been placed on top, in full view, easy to find. Sometimes we do not notice an item in the case until it is almost completely empty, or sometimes we forget to look in a zippered pocket in the side. Sometimes we have returned home convinced something was left behind, only to be told by the person who packed the suitcase where the missing item had been concealed.

Unpacking media texts can be a similar experience. We learn how parts of messages are carefully left lying on top of the media suitcase to be obvious, and how other parts are carefully tucked away to be found only by those who know how to look for them. We learn where the zippered pockets are located in the various kinds of media texts.

The media student is aware that media are constructions and resists the temptation to take the content of media as always factual, natural or reliable. Successful students of media have learned to question - even to interrogate - their sources of information and entertainment by looking at the construction in each text and asking if it is playing a part in influencing their understanding of the text.

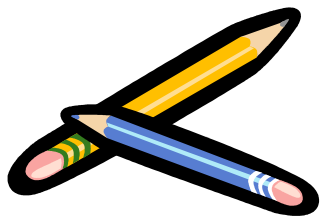
Sometimes this ability to unpack the media text is called "critical viewing" (or "listening"). You should always remember though, that critical in this context means "asking tough questions" not "being negative." Another name for unpacking is "deconstruction." If we talk of media texts as being constructed, then it should be clear what we do when we de-construct them.

Throughout your work in media education you should always remember that one of the most important functions of media is to entertain us. We spend so much of our time with the media because we get pleasure out of it. Going to the movies is fun. Watching TV is relaxing. Reading can be fun, relaxing and rewarding. Just because we learn how to ask tough questions does not mean that we have to give up our enjoyment.

Sometimes we are right to forget we know about how the media suitcase is packed. Sometimes unpacking the suitcase spoils the enjoyment; sometimes it improves it.

Unwrapping the Package

Let's begin by deconstructing the front page of any newspaper by answering the following questions. The first one has been done for you.



What construction elements on the front page tell me what is intended to be looked at first?

What do I already know about the construction of newspaper front pages that helps me find my way around the newspaper?

- headlines with large, bold print
- lead stories with catchy titles
- bylines

What are the construction elements on the front page that are intended to encourage me to open the paper and look at other pages?

Why might some newspapers use more pictures and color on their front pages than other newspapers?


In deconstructing on a subtle or embedded level, media students should be aware that those constructing media texts employ techniques. The techniques used in constructing media text are chosen for a target audience. Each medium has its own techniques. Although there are many techniques, we can start by studying some of the most common ones.

- Generalization (“Everyone agrees that...”)
- Popular appeal (“It’s the ‘in thing’ to...”)
- Identification/analogy (“You’ll feel like a millionaire if you...”)
- Appeal to reason (“The only rational conclusion you can make is...”)
- Celebrity endorsement (“I’m a film star, and I’m going to vote for...”)
- Just plain folks (“We don’t need any fancy arguments when your common sense tells us...”)
- False logic (“My grandmother took these pills and she was 98 when she died, so if you take them...”)
- Avoiding the issue, changing the subject, answering a question different from the one that was asked (“You ask why our vehicles have so many accidents? Well, let me tell you, those same vehicles are the best value on the market.”)

Practice spotting media techniques and their target audiences by completing the following chart:

| Example | Technique | Target Audience |
|--|-----------|-----------------|
| All the smart people shop at... | | |
| You don’t need an expert to tell you this is a wise decision. | | |
| Cy Young award winner eats at Joe’s Diner. | | |
| You, too, can look like supermodel Jane Doe if you buy... | | |
| For a better chance at the big prize, get your lottery tickets here. | | |
| Cute puppies attract crowds at city park. | | |
| Crime in mall has citizens terrified. | | |
| Get with it! Buy one now. | | |

Look at the text below:



Occupant
444 Debbie Drive
Glenbrook, IL 00000

YOU HAVE WON \$10,000,000!

If you have the winning number



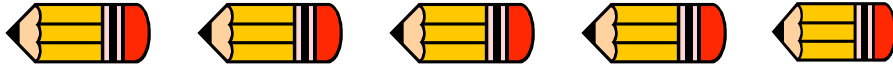
Which techniques listed on the previous page are used in the text above? Describe how they are used in the text.

Who is the target audience?

How are the techniques effective for the target audience?



Search through magazines and newspapers for examples of two media texts that show different purposes and techniques. Complete the following form for the two texts:



1. Describe the media text for Example 1:

2. Define its purpose (or purposes):

3. Name the technique(s) that this media text uses and give support for your answer:

4. Identify the target audience and explain why the techniques used are effective for this audience:

1. Describe the media text for Example 2:

2. Define its purpose (or purposes):

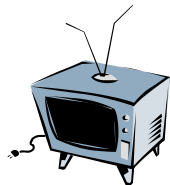
3. Name the technique(s) that this media text uses and give support for your answer:

4. Identify the target audience and explain why the techniques used are effective for this audience:



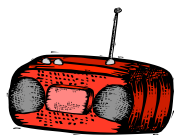
All of the previously mentioned techniques are used in print media as well as other media, but each medium also has its own techniques as well. Here are a few examples:

Film and television



- use of music to signal the emotion of the text, such as in a suspense film
- use of editing to give rhythm and pace to a visual text, such as a rock video
- use of a laugh-track in a television sitcom to tell the audience when to be amused
- use of camera angles, lighting, color, camera movement and framing to add detail and interpretation to a sequence of pictures such as in a car chase scene

Radio and recorded music



- use of sound effects to make a text sound more real, such as in a radio drama
- use of overdubbing to make music richer and deeper or to make one artist sound like a chorus
- use of editing to bring material from many sources into one program, such as the news



Form and content are closely related in media.

When you are surfing on TV, rapidly clicking from one channel to the next, how do you know when you want to stop to take a longer look? What is it in the bookstore magazine rack that catches your eye and makes you reach out to look through a magazine? When you are in a friend's home, how do you know which books on the shelf might interest you?

Often, there is something in the form or format of media that attracts us. It may be:

- the style of cover on a magazine
- the fact that a book is a paperback of a certain size (rather than a hardcover book or a paperback of another size)
- the fact that we saw in a couple of seconds that one image was from a show with a host holding a microphone, an audience in theatre seats and a group of people seated on chairs in front of the audience

Each one of these clues is a clue in the format or construction of the text that tells us about what we can expect in the content.

Of course, if there are signs that attract us, the same signs might put other audiences on their guard. Some people hearing a certain sort of music as they flip through radio stations will hurry on to the next, while others will tune it in as a favorite.

Work with a partner to decide what kind of content you would expect from these formats:

- A magazine on newsprint paper small enough to fit in your pocket
- A hardcover book too tall to fit on any shelf
- A TV program that opens with an announcer sitting behind a desk
- A radio program that begins with solemn music
- A newspaper in the "tabloid" format
- A newspaper in the "broadsheet" format
- A TV program (or cable channel) that has several "windows" in its screen, each showing something different
- A glossy magazine with pages 14" X 11"
- A newspaper with nothing on the front page except a headline and a photograph



Discuss in groups of three the way that the cartoon "Non Sequitur" illustrates key concept # 1. Use the following questions as guides.

- What is the content of the message?
- What is the form used for transmitting the message?
- What other form could the message have used?
- How would the message have been different if it had been sent in another form?

Make up some message scenarios like the one in the cartoon and demonstrate how form and construction influences the content (e.g. a young man hires a sky-writer to propose marriage to his girl friend, or a teacher gives a student a letter asking for a change of behavior in class).

Collect a number of different reports of an event or topic in the news from a number of very varied sources. Study them to see how the form of the medium may have influenced the content of the report.



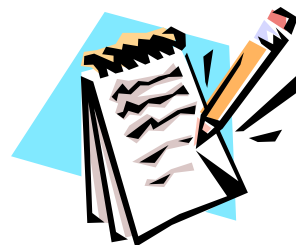
Activities

1. Form groups of four, and select one of the following media as your group's topic:

- A movie
- A TV drama
- A TV news program
- A newspaper
- A magazine
- A radio show (not a music show)
- A music CD
- A computer game

Appoint a recorder in your group and examine your media sample carefully together to find examples in it that show that it is "constructed." Appoint another member for your group to make a short presentation to the class outlining the group's findings.

Which medium did you choose?



What media text did you choose?

Identify the audience, purpose, and techniques used in the text.



How is the text constructed on an obvious level?

How is the text constructed on a subtle level?

How does the “construction” of your media text achieve its purpose and appeal to the target audience?

2. Prepare an explanation of media construction for someone who does not understand the concept using this text, or another one you have chosen from your own experience as an example. Imagine that your audience is one of the following:

- A child of eight
- An adult who has never thought much about media texts
- A person your own age, who has lived in a culture without media
- Another audience of your own choice

Deliver your explanation in class, and have your classmates assess how well you communicated with your intended audience.

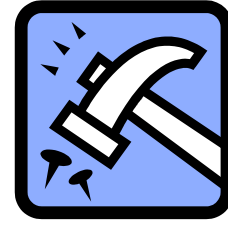
**Charting Key Concept #1:
All media are carefully wrapped packages.**

In the first column is the name or title of the text. Next to it, write in an example from the text that illustrates the key concept. In the third column - the really important column - you write down your explanation of why the example you have picked fits the key concept. This is where you "make" your point, by explaining exactly how the example and the concept are connected.

In this first chart, one row has been filled out for you as an example for you to follow in your own work.

| TEXT | EXAMPLE FROM TEXT | EXPLANATION LINKING EXAMPLE TO KEY CONCEPT |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Calvin and Hobbes</i> | TV programs are scripted. The things that happen in them are thought out in advance by the writers. | When we watch TV programs, we sometimes think they are just taking place, but thinking about script writing, even in news and documentary programs, reminds us that TV programs are carefully put together, or constructed. When Calvin realizes this, he complains about it, because he realizes his life is not put together the same way. |
| <i>The text your group of four worked with</i> | | |
| Another text you have chosen yourself. | | |

Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality.



How much of your information and entertainment do you get from the media? The answer to this question is often, “almost all of it.”

This realization might lead you to ponder just how much of your experience is *real*. Perhaps it helps to explain why rock concerts are so popular when music videos are available to watch in the home.

Even local events (things that happen in your own community) usually happen when you are not there, so you have to rely on reports to know about them. You may be in the habit of saying things like, “I saw the car crash on television last night” or, “I know what the mayor said from this morning’s paper.” But, if you think about these statements, you will have to agree that you did not actually see the accident itself, but only a *representation* of it, almost certainly made up by a reporter who arrived after it happened. You did not actually hear the mayor’s speech but only read a report about it. If you had actually been present at either event, your experience of it would probably have been much more complete and perhaps quite different from the experience you got from the media version of it.

Why is it important to know that media always constructs reality? How can you use this key concept to analyze the *point of view* of a media text?



Sometimes it is only after you realize that something in the depiction of an event was incomplete or distorted that you understand you are talking about a representation, not about a real event.



Key Concept #1 told us that all media are constructed. Key Concept #2 takes us further – to the understanding that what the media construct for us is not reality itself, but only a version of reality.

Read the following articles, “The Camera Always Lies” and “Women of the ‘90s: A Cyber Fantasy”.

THE CAMERA ALWAYS LIES

By Chris M. Worsnop □ 1999



I spent a couple of hours recently going over old photographs with my daughter. We kept coming across pictures of her when she was younger, and she asked if we could throw some of the pictures away. Why did she want to do this? Simply because she didn't like the way the camera “made her look.” Even at the age of ten, she knows that the pictures she was looking at were not so much a reflection of any reality that existed at the moment they were taken, as they were a representation of that moment, (or rather a part of it) a version of it, an interpretation of it – to her mind, a misinterpretation of it. She was clearly objecting to the interpretation, not the picture. Still, we didn't throw any away.

Consider this scene: A group of about a dozen protesters parades in a street, holding placards in the air. A television news team has been sent to cover the event, but there are not enough in the parade to make a good picture. The reporter sets up the camera and the paraders move in closer together, walking in a tighter formation. They all want to be on television. The pictures on that night's newscast show close-up shots of what looks like a large group of protesters, jostling shoulder to shoulder.

We're a very sophisticated visual society. We understand that Hollywood filmmakers and their counterparts around the world have developed many ways of creating the impression of a thing happening without actually having to go to the expense of making it happen. We are quite content to see models of ships fighting momentous battles at sea; we accept that horses and space ships go faster when the camera is cranked slower than usual; we understand that prehistoric monsters are hard to find and that they are usually represented in films through the use of special effects; we go to films sometimes just to see the quality of the special effects.

It hardly matters what the circumstances are: it doesn't take a person long to realize that there is no such thing as objective reporting; that no picture can possibly tell the whole truth, even if only because the camera does not have the range of vision of the human eye; that no report is free of some sort of interpretative bias; that any message we receive through any of the mass media is, almost by definition, only a version, a selection, an interpretation of reality, an attempt to make us see something the way the maker of the image wanted us to see it.

The realization is one of the most important understandings that a student of media will ever have: All media are engines that construct reality for their consumers.

The camera always lies - even when it is trying its hardest to tell us the truth.



Woman of the '90s A Cyber Fantasy

By Linda A. Fox
Toronto Sun

How often do you instantly recognize the cover girl smiling at you from the front of a top-flight magazine?

Probably not very often, unless it's Linda Evangelista or Monika Schnarre, or in the good old days, Christie Brinkley.

When you pick up the September issue of *Mirabella*, however, you think you recognize the stunning cover girl.

She has an aquiline nose, wide eyes and an oh so sexy, full-lipped mouth. She also has traces of sand and drops of moisture clinging to her perfect skin. She could be super-model of the '90s.

Alas, she's really a nobody. She's a figment of the techno-hyped, photo / computer enhanced world of non-reality. But she's drop-dead gorgeous.

Mirabella's editor-in-chief, Gay Bryant, was looking for the all-American beauty. Someone personifying the ethnic diversity of North America.

Top-notch Shanghai-born photographer Hiro knows beautiful faces. *Mirabella's* editors asked him to find the fairest in the land for the cover.

Nadine Johnson, of *Mirabella's* public relations staff, told the Sun, that Hiro took his assignment one step further.

"Photographers have been using computers to enhance and retouch faces and bodies for years," she said. "Hiro took six or seven individual unknown beauties and came up with the woman for the '90s on our cover."

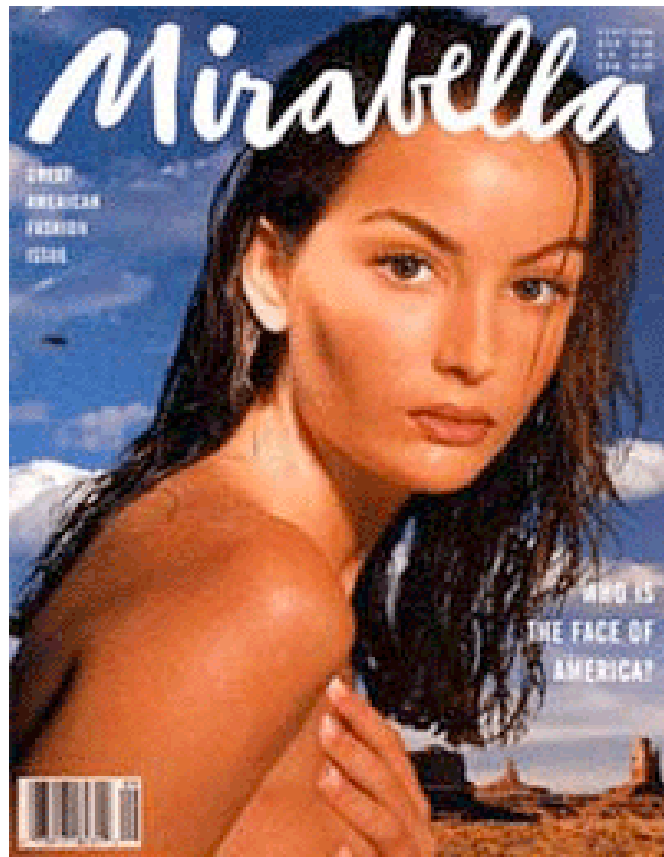
Computer retouching systems have changed the way fashion magazines retouch photos. With a cordless magnetic pen, blemishes are removed, spaces are filled in, making the finished product not a retouch, but a whole new face or person.

Female Ideal?

"We feel that beauty is in the eye of the beholder," said Johnson. "And the computer-generated images is a still life of the female ideal."

Johnson maintains it is not a dishonest image to portray a woman who is a composite of parts. Both magazines and newspapers enhance photographs of crime scenes or accidents, she says.

"I think the difference is we are admitting our woman is not real," said Johnson. "While in other media profiles, the public is asked to accept the enhanced as reality."





After reading the two previous articles, consider how these articles relate to Key Concept #2, Media construct versions of reality.

The Camera Always Lies

*Women of the '90s:
A Cyber Fantasy*



| | | |
|--|--|--|
| What is the main idea of the article? | | |
| What is the author's point of view? | | |
| How does this article relate to Key Concept #2? | | |



The picture below says it all. Media construct versions of reality.





Next, look at the picture below:



The picture shows fake snow being sprayed for a scene in a movie. When the film crew shoots some scenes of this snowman, the pictures are going to look as if they were shot in winter. A U.K. company called Snow Business (www.snowbusiness.com) made the fake snow for this scene, using materials like paper, plastic, starch or foam.

The best filming weather is in the summer, so filmmakers often have to construct winter conditions to fit their shooting schedules. Rainstorms in films are another example of “manufactured weather.”

Can you think of any other examples of manufactured weather in the media?



Charting Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality.

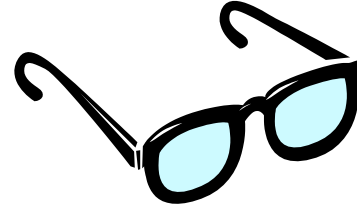
Use each of the texts in this unit to complete your chart outline for Key Concept #2.

| TEXT | EXAMPLE FROM TEXT | EXPLANATION LINKING EXAMPLE TO KEY CONCEPT |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <i>Hamburger ad</i> | | |
| <i>The Camera Always Lies</i> | | |
| <i>Seeing is no longer believing when computers alter images</i> | | |
| <i>Woman of the 90s: A Cyber Fantasy</i> | | |
| Another text you have selected yourself | | |

Make out another chart or make a note linking these same texts to key concept # 1



Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses.



When two people hearing the same joke react in different ways, you have an example of how audiences negotiate different meanings in messages. What might be funny to one audience can be offensive to another, and yet the text itself is identical to both audiences.

Liking and disliking are just two of the most obvious choices that audiences have with texts. Key concept #3 tells us that what makes audiences react differently to the same texts is not entirely caused by the texts, nor entirely by the audience, but is a mix of both text and audience.

Supposing you invited a new school friend to your house, and you prepared all your favorite foods for the occasion, only to find that your new friend didn't like any of them. Or supposing you organized a school dance and provided only the kind of music you like personally. In both of these cases you would not be able to blame the music or the food for the fact that some people liked them while others did not. Nor could you blame the people. What you have to do is accept the fact that people have different preferences.

Sometimes, though, it is not as clear-cut as like and dislike.

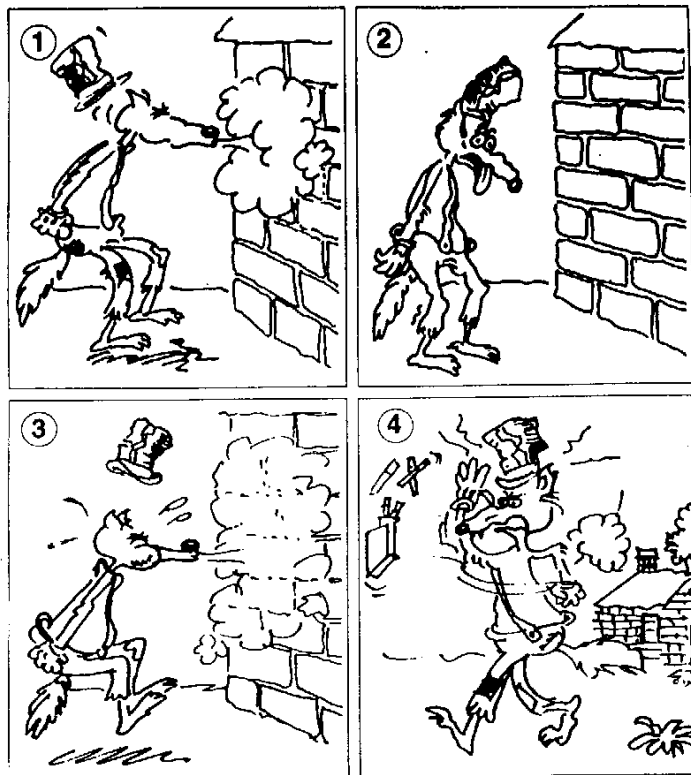
Did you ever come out of a movie saying something like: "I can't make up my mind if I liked it. Sometimes I think it was a good movie because of a) and b), but then sometimes I thought it was bad because of c) and d). I guess overall I would say it was" Most people have had this experience. It is an example of an audience member "negotiating" meaning in a text, the way other people negotiate a curfew with their parents. They try on one idea for size, and test the arguments in support of that idea; then they try on another idea and its arguments, and eventually pick one or the other or even a third idea as best.

For the first text in this unit, think of a TV program or a movie you know that shows one or more characters smoking cigarettes - or, in more recent years, a cigar. Work with one or two classmates to see how each of you negotiates a meaning in the text you have chosen. Keep notes of your discussion, so that you can report later to the class. Here are some questions that may help your discussion:

- Is anyone in the group prepared to say outright that texts showing tobacco consumption are bad? Why?
- Is anyone prepared to say outright that there is no problem in texts that show tobacco consumption? Why?
- Are any members of the group ambivalent (having two different, sometimes conflicting reactions) or undecided? Why?
- What has this exercise taught you about the way audiences "negotiate" meaning in a text? How?

Here's another thing to consider. What audiences take out of a text is partly a question of what they bring to it. For instance, if a text about hunting deer in the bush were being considered, wouldn't you expect that an audience of city-dwelling, domestic-animal lovers would interpret the text differently from a rural audience of people for whom the raising and killing of animals for market is a way of life? The reason for the difference in interpretation of the text would be in the backgrounds of each audience - in what each audience brings to the text as its own set of experiences and expectations.

Here's a simple illustration of this concept.



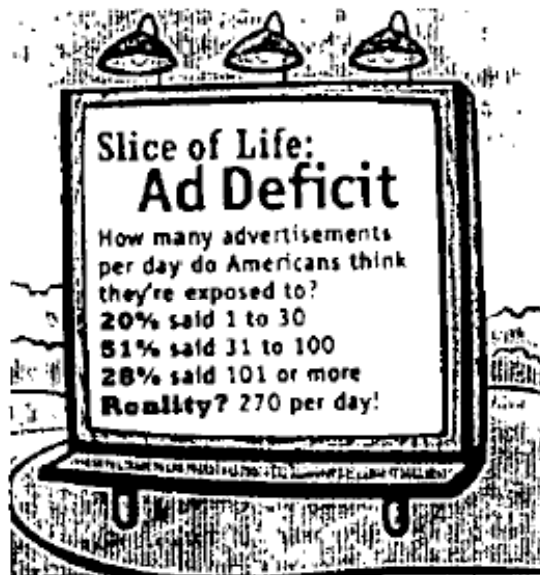
Try talking in a group of three to tell the story each of you sees in this four-panel cartoon. Compare the stories you tell and try to explain why some of them are different from others. Always connect your explanation to key concept # 3.

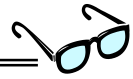
There are probably as many stories as there are people looking at the cartoon, but mostly two stories come out on top:

- The story about the wolf who tried to blow over a house but could not because cigarette smoking had left him (or her) short of breath. In disgust the wolf walks off throwing a pack of cigarettes away with a gesture that suggests he or she will quit smoking.
- The story about the ending of the nursery story of the three little pigs and the big, bad wolf. The wolf is at the last of the three houses, the house made of bricks, and he fails to blow the house down, when he had succeeded in blowing down the two previous houses made of straw and sticks. The wolf, unable to accept defeat, blames his cigarette smoking habit for the failure, and stalks off in disgust, throwing away his cigarettes.

The second of these stories (or meanings) depends on information that the audience provides. People who are not familiar with the story of the three little pigs do not bring their experience of that story to this text, and therefore cannot negotiate the same meaning from the text as other audiences can who know the story. Both stories rely on the previous knowledge in the audience about the effects of cigarette smoking.

Take a look at the text below:





In a small group...

- Identify the possible target audience (or audiences),
- Identify the purpose of the text, and
- Examine this text using Key Concept #1 (All media are carefully wrapped packages). Be sure to consider every part of the text: the written part, the use of fonts and font sizes, the illustration of the billboard, the statistics, etc.




Write your group's comments here:

Next, each student should choose an audience role to play in looking at the text on the previous page. Each group member then takes on the chosen role and interprets the text through the eyes of that role. Possible roles to play are:

- an advertising executive
- a consumer
- a television or radio executive
- a statistician

Use the chart below to record how your chosen role interpreted the text.

| Role title | In-Role Response | Explanation  |
|------------|------------------|---|
| | | |

How does the above activity illustrate Key Concept #3, Media are interpreted through individual lenses?

We have emphasized before that the media are sources of enjoyment. For all that they are commercial businesses - out to make a profit first, last and foremost - they are in the business of giving pleasure. Another way of looking at it is to say they are in the business of audience pleasing. After all, we go to movies because we enjoy the experience. We buy magazines because we expect to find some pleasure within their pages. We watch TV because it is a pleasant way to pass time. We buy music recordings because we like to listen to them over and over again.

Audiences get a lot of pleasure out of the media. Nothing wrong with it! As students of media, you are becoming more and more aware of how the media work and are constructed. This might make you a more discriminating media consumer than before, but it should not spoil your enjoyment of media.

Take the example of special effects (SFX) in movies. Everybody knows that computer technology is making special effects more and more realistic and more and more fantastic. SFX can create realistic-looking images of cyborgs who can



regenerate their own bodies before our eyes after they have been totally destroyed. SFX can create a landscape filled with running dinosaurs, or an image of a ship in the ocean that looks as real as the real thing. SFX can create meetings between fictional characters and dead U.S. presidents.

We enjoy SFX! They have their own way of pleasing us.

But what pleases one person may not please everybody. Some people delight in watching horror or "slasher" movies. Some audiences think of them as a form of comedy, others think of them as a kind of emotional roller-coaster. Either way, the audience is finding a pleasure in the text that fits with their liking of laughter or thrills. On the other hand, there are plenty people who do not like horror or slasher films at all.

These people see no humor in the films, and do not like to be scared out of their wits.

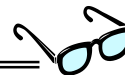
Another example is computer games. There is no shortage of people who take enormous pleasure out of spending time at the computer playing video-style games. There is no shortage, either, of people who consider playing computer games a complete waste of time. (It might be more accurate to say that some of those people have not yet found the computer game that would keep them at the keyboard or joystick for more than a few minutes.)



Work in groups of three.

List first individually, then as a group, your favorite media - the ones that give you enjoyment and pleasure. Use the chart on the next page as an organizer.

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Medium | | | | |
| Personal Reason for Liking the Medium | | | | |
| Source of Enjoyment in the Medium | | | | |
| Level of Agreement in Student Group | | | | |
| Reasons for Agreement or Disagreement | | | | |
| Explanation of How this Connects to Key Concept #3 | | | | |



**Charting Key Concept #3:
Media are interpreted through individual lenses.**

| TEXT | EXAMPLE FROM TEXT | EXPLANATION LINKING EXAMPLE TO KEY CONCEPT |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <i>TV or film containing tobacco use</i> | | |
| <i>The wolf and cigarettes</i> | | |
| Another text you have selected yourself | | |

Make out another chart or make a note linking these same texts to key concepts #s 1 & 2.

Key Concept #4:

Media are about money.



First, meet in groups of four to talk about the following:

- When you look around your classroom, how many ads can you see? Look at things like student clothing, classroom display materials, and book covers on textbooks.
- When was the last time you watched a TV channel that did not have commercials?
- How many radio stations can you name that do not have commercials?
- How many pages of the newspaper in your community are taken up with advertising? What percentage of the total column inches is devoted to ads?
- How many pages of your favorite magazine are taken up with advertising?
- List ten other places where you can find ads.
- List ten ways that the names of products are brought to your attention other than through direct advertising (e.g. a radio announcer mentioning a product by name).

Since the media are businesses, they have to make some money. Businesses cannot operate without income. In our society, the media get much of their income from advertisers. Newspapers could not survive only on what we pay to buy the daily paper, and we do not pay anything at all for network TV or radio. Even films now depend less than before on the money we pay at the cinema for their revenue, and more on sales of videos, related toys and other paraphernalia.

Big budgets are available to pay for high quality TV shows, movies and music videos because these products are commercially successful. If they did not make money, they would have lower budgets and perhaps less quality. TV shows that do not make money for their sponsors get cancelled. The same can be said about professional sports. (And professional sports are a form of mass entertainment, after all.) If audiences did not flock to the stadium, or watch sports on TV in the millions, there would be no money to pay the sports celebrities their huge salaries, and the quality of the game "entertainment" might suffer.



It is a mistake to think of commercialism in media as a bad thing. If there were no ads, how would consumers find out about products that are for sale? How would we maintain our standard of living?

It is also a mistake to think of commercialism in media as a harmless thing. If people stopped buying products, what would happen to the economy of the country? If people continue to buy products, what will happen to the ecology of the planet?

We should be aware when we look at a media text that it was often made with one eye on the cash register. Films are not made, books do not get published unless there is a good chance that they will sell in large numbers. TV shows will not get on the air unless they are almost guaranteed to appeal to a large audience.

TV shows have been described as the material used by TV companies to deliver a large audience to advertisers. Music videos have been described as nonstop ads for the music industry. Some Saturday-morning TV cartoon shows have been called half-hour commercials for children's toys.

None of this is probably news to anybody. We are all aware that our society is filled with advertising. Break into groups for the following activities:

1. List three other places where you can find ads

- a. billboards along the highway
- b.
- c.
- d.



2. List three other ways that the names of products are brought to your attention other than through direct advertising.

- a. a radio announcer mentioning our product
- b.
- c.
- d.





Now let's look at some examples that are less obvious. Let's think more specifically about how newspapers (and all their elements) are related to Key Concept #4.

Look at the table of contents (or index) of the newspaper. Do you notice a trend in the order of its contents? Why are certain sections toward the front? Toward the back? Before or after other sections?

How does the day the newspaper was published affect what's included in the newspaper?

What does the placement of certain ads say about the importance of the ads and the target audience?

Why do newspapers have travel, car, fashion, food, business and entertainment sections?

Here is another set of topics for you to explore in relation to this key concept.

- What time of the day are you more likely to see more children's television shows? Why?
- List the "souvenir" items you possess that are linked to a movie, a sport, or a television show.

Use the same groups as before to explore the following issues:

- What is the meaning of the expression, "conflict of interests"?
- What happens when a show like *60 Minutes* wants to do a strong story about tobacco companies, and the same tobacco companies control a lot of other companies that advertise heavily on TV?
- If TV and radio are filled with material that appeals to the largest possible audience, where do people who have other tastes find their preferences in TV and radio?



Read *Battle of the Mind* by Dave Cravotta and David Ferman, and do an Internet search to find out all you can about an advertising practice called "product placement."

BATTLE OF THE MIND

By Dave Cravotta and David Ferman

A British advertising conglomerate, with the help of a Swiss ophthalmologist who specializes in laser surgery, is working on a controversial technique of laser burning tiny tattoo-like patterns into the clients' eyelids. The hope is that the recipients will see product ads every time they blink – 11000 times a day. This of course neglects what the subconscious will be subjected to each and every night... okay, okay... I made that one up. Here's what advertisers are really up to:

David Bentley of Sydney, Australia, rents his headspace (literally shaves the ad into his hair) to different merchants for a week at a time. As Bentley told the Boca Raton-based *Sun*, "I know for sure that at least 200 teenagers at my high school will read my head everyday to see what it says. I just wish I had a bigger head."

In October 1990 the McDonald's name and logo began appearing on the border of a sheet of Canadian stamps. The border called a "selvage," can be removed from the stamps, but the idea of corporate sponsorship had stuck. However, Big Mac wasn't the first to attack. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Petro-Canada also sponsored stamps, but didn't have their corporate logos displayed. For a fee of \$250,000 the golden arches were displayed on 15 million 39-cent stamps until April 1, 1991, and Canada Post wants corporations to sponsor special stamps 10 to 12 times a year.

The City of Los Angeles will soon sell advertising space on its buildings, vehicles, and even staff uniforms.

According to the Scout Association of the United Kingdom Boy Scouts, the young cubs cleared a cool \$500,000 since 1988 by selling corporate ad space on their merit badges.

Leonardo da Vinci once called the egg an example of perfection in engineering form and function. Marketing Magazine describes eggshells as "empty spaces just waiting to be exploited." Wait no longer-- a Sydney, Australia ad agency has devised a batch of colored ('non-toxic') dyes to squirt ad messages onto shells. A Down Under radio station cracked the market first when it dyed its logo on two million eggs. A health insurance firm followed with a twin egg message, and a print run of 150,000. Other advertisers pecking to get into the hen house include manufacturers of related food products and other radio stations selling their morning program.

IBM recently wrote out its logo by manipulating individual xenon atoms with a scanning tunneling microscope. High in the sky, a San Francisco-based company shoots computer-generated corporate logos onto cloud formations with lasers. "If there's a (sufficiently large) cloud in the sky, I pull on the joystick of my controller," said CTA Lasers president, Paul Rosenberg. The resulting images are visible from as far as ten miles away.



Write a definition of product placement to explain the practice to people who have never heard of it before. Use some of the materials you have found on the Internet to illustrate your explanation.

Brainstorm with a partner as many examples of product placement as you can think of. Try to find examples in newspapers and magazines so that you can make a bulletin board display in class.

With your partner, make up a zany project for a new kind of advertising like the ones in *Battle of the Mind*.

Another side of key concept #4 explores the ownership of the media.



You can find information describing the centralized ownership of North American media on the Internet at Who Owns What, <http://www.cjr.org/tools/owners/>.

Use the Who Owns What website to explore the following true scenario:

In 1996, a film called *Space Jammers* was released, starring Michael Jordan. *Time* magazine devoted a cover story to the movie. *Junior Sports Illustrated* filled an entire edition with material related to the movie.



Charting Key Concept #4: Media are about money.

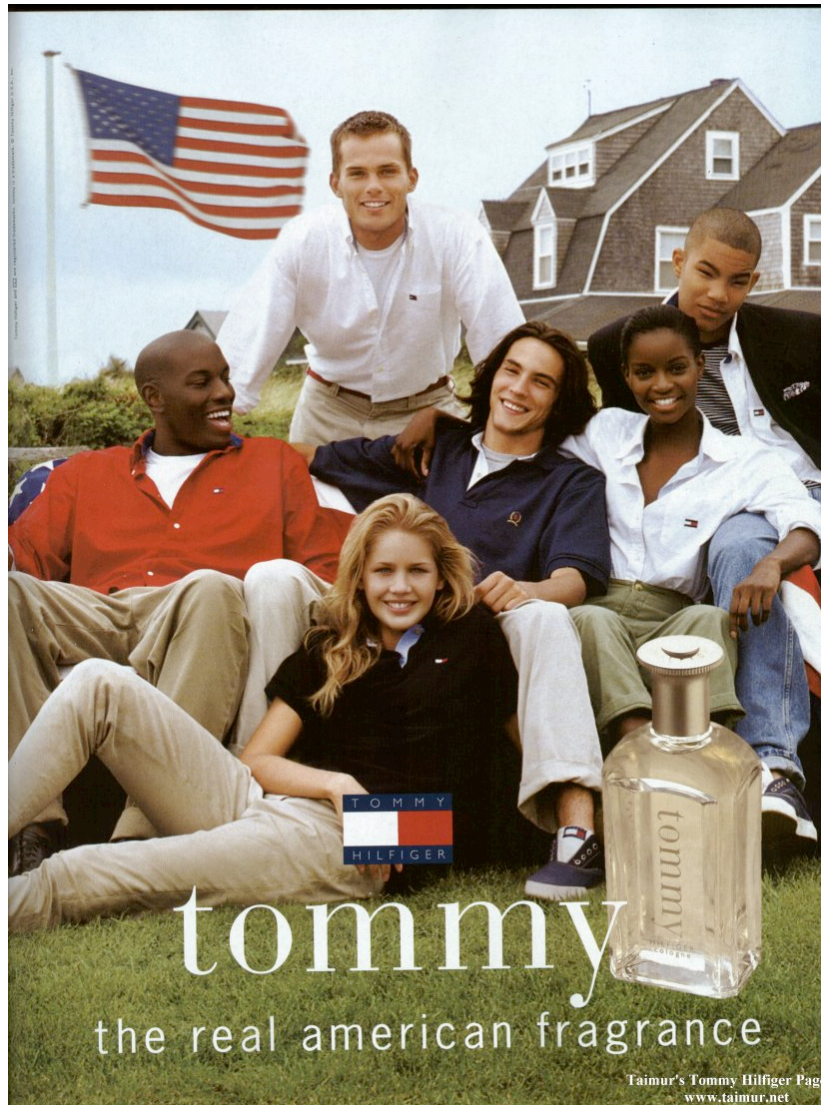
| TEXT | EXAMPLE FROM TEXT | EXPLANATION LINKING EXAMPLE TO KEY CONCEPT #4 |
|---|-------------------|---|
| <i>Battle of the Mind</i> | | |
| Product placement material from Internet | | |
| <i>Who Owns What</i> | | |
| Another text you have selected yourself | | |

Make out a new chart or write a note linking these same texts to key concepts 1, 2 & 3.

Key Concept #5: Media promote agenda.



Examine the text below. It is an ad for a unisex teen fragrance, called *tommy*.



Work in groups of three for this activity.

First, spend a minute or two preparing your personal response. Make a few written notes if you like. Refer to the first four key concepts in your personal response, if it helps you explain how you react to the text.



Next, take turns in your group to talk about your personal response. Remember, no one's personal response is ever wrong. It may not be to your liking, but that does not make it wrong - just different. Use questions that ask for more (rather than ones that attack an interpretation) like:

- Could you explain a bit more clearly?
- Did you consider . . . ?
- How did you decide that?
- What was it made you see that?

Instead of being tempted to argue with a classmate's personal response.

The fifth key concept of media education states that:

"Media contain ideological and value messages." (An ideology is a system of beliefs.) Put in plain language, that means that when you experience a media text, you can tell what it stands for, what it believes in, what view of the world it is trying to present to you.

Talk in your group about what you can see in this text that gives you clues about what it believes in or stands for. The questions below might help your investigation of the text.

- Who are these young people, what are they like, and what kinds of things do they believe in? How do you know?
- What are the clues and signs in the picture that help you decide what these people are like?

Be systematic in looking at the picture. **Nothing** is there by accident.

- What is in the background that helps you understand the values and ideology? (Why this kind of building? Why this kind of fence? Why the flag? Why the big expanse of sky?)
- What is in the middle ground - the group of young people - that tells you about ideology and values? (How are the people arranged? What are they wearing? What kind of feelings or attitudes do they seem to be expressing? What are they sitting on?) Try to sum up your impression of this group "photo" in a single word or phrase.
- What is in the foreground? (The commercial message and the Bottle.)



Analyze the words (there are only five words in the main message, plus the brand name on the bottle and the two words on the corporate emblem).

- Why do you think the entire message is printed without any capital letters?
- Which words are intended to connect strongly with visual clues in the text about values? What does the word **real** add to the message?
- Why does the ad use the word **fragrance** instead of **perfume** or **scent**?
- What is there about the shape and design of the bottle and its cap that supports the overall message of the ad? What period in history, what materials are you made to think of?

Talk next about how members of the group negotiated the meaning of this text (key concept # 3). What choices were there?

- You like what the text says and stands for and you think it is "good." (Would you buy the "fragrance?")
- You dislike what it says because your own values are in some way different from the ones in the text. (Perhaps you do not like the clothing or the hairstyles of the models - or more likely - you do not like what those clothes and hairstyles stand for in your interpretation.) Would you be inclined to buy the "fragrance?"
- You cannot make up your mind about the text. Perhaps you do not approve of the use of the flag to promote a commercial product, although you feel attracted to the values expressed in the text.

Appoint one member of your group to make a two-minute report to the class on the discussion your group had, and the decisions it made.



Let's try a few more examples. Examine the text below. It is a *Vogue* fashion magazine cover from 1941.



What can you see in this text that gives you clues about what the creator believes in or stands for? Be systematic in looking at the picture. As you learned, nothing is there by accident.

Practice your “taking a second look” skill by answering the questions below:

- What strikes you first when you look at the text?
- Which details do you notice?



- When you take a second look at the text, what new details do you find?

In groups of three, discuss how each person negotiated the meaning of this text (Key Concept #3).

- You like what the text stands for and you think it is good. (Would you volunteer to be a “woman in defense?”)
- You dislike what it says and stands for because in some way your own values are different from those presented in the text. (Perhaps you do not believe that women should work to support the war effort. Perhaps you do not support war efforts of any kind.)
- You are not sure of your opinion about the message of the text. (Perhaps you see a different message. Perhaps you suspect the message may be cynical, and the magazine is just profiting from the ad, or the ad is belittling the importance of the war effort by reducing it to a fashion statement.)

Also consider what would happen if you interpreted the text through

- feminist eyes
- paternalistic eyes
- economic eyes

The questions below may guide your investigation of the text relating to key concept #5:

- Which details can you connect together to help discover the intention of the text?
- What fashion message is *Vogue* stating with this picture?
- What psychological message does the text offer?
- What political/ideological (societal views) message can be taken from the text?

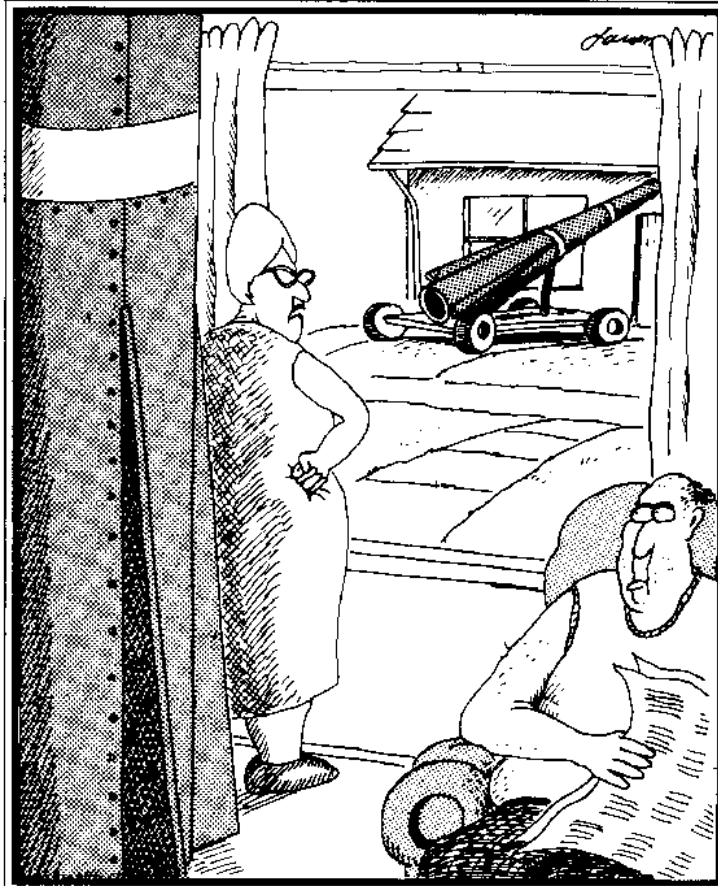
This next series of texts is about the way some media texts promote agenda that influence our viewpoints of social and political issues.

By *social* we mean aspects of society: what is considered important for groups of people who live together in a town, city, country, continent, or even the planet.

By *political*, we mean relating to or dealing with the structure or aspects of government or politics.



Look at the cartoon below.



"Wouldn't you know it! Now the Hendersons have the bomb."

Examine the different levels of meaning in this cartoon.

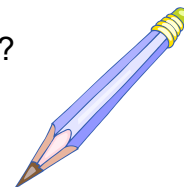
What is the *social* point the text is making?

What is the *political* point the text is making?



Before looking at the next media text, consider the following:

What do you think when you hear the word **children**?





Study the image of the two children walking in a country setting.





The text on the previous page offers us an image of the two children walking away from the camera (from a dark place) uphill to a place before them that is flooded with light. This text invites us to examine our reaction to stock images (characters we have no trouble recognizing, such as the sensible mother or the “fix-it” father) and our social expectations of children.

Next, examine the text to see what it tells you or elicits from you

- Is the picture optimistic or pessimistic? How do you know?
- Does it express confidence or fear? How do you know?
- Is it important that the path the children are taking is slightly uphill? Why or why not?
- What difference would it make if it were a picture of children walking toward the camera instead of away from it?
- What stereotypical ideas (for example, instances of stock images) can you detect in the text?

As a summary of your reactions to this text, complete the chart below to review what you have already learned:

Key Concept

Examples from the text that relate to the key concept



| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages.</p> | |
| <p>Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality.</p> | |
| <p>Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses.</p> | |

How do the first three key concepts support or build up to Key Concept #5: Media promote an agenda?



Charting Key Concept #5: Media promote agenda.

| TEXT | EXAMPLE FROM TEXT | EXPLANATION LINKING EXAMPLE TO KEY CONCEPT |
|---|-------------------|--|
| <i>Tommy: "the real american fragrance"</i> | | |
| Another text you have selected yourself | | |

Make out another chart or make a note linking these same texts to key concepts # 1,2, 3 & 4.

Personal Response to a Media Text



When you are asked to give a personal response to a media text, either spoken or written, you are explaining to an audience:

- exactly how you as an individual connected with the text
- exactly what it was in the text that caught your attention
- exactly what it was in you that reacted to the text
- what this connection between you and the text makes you think of

Sometimes, when they are asked for their personal response, people do not tell their response at all, but just re-tell the story of the text again, without telling about their own reaction to it. Or else they merely say that they like it or don't like it without any elaboration about why.

Sometimes people get all tangled up in talking about stars and personalities instead of focusing on their own reactions and responses. Or sometimes they spend all their energy telling about what kind of text they are discussing, (action film, rap video), and describing what it is like.

The thing to remember is that a personal response is supposed to focus on personal response and nothing else. References to the text are very important, but only to illustrate points of response.

Now let's look at some examples...



Sample Personal Response to the Film *Titanic*



| | | |
|--|---|--|
| EXPLAIN HOW YOU CONNECTED TO THE TEXT | <i>Titanic</i> was the most moving film I have ever seen. It made me feel a mixture of emotions from excitement to happiness, from humor to tears. | <i>The statement explains and names exactly what feelings and emotions (responses) the writer felt.</i> |
| EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS IN THE TEXT THAT CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION | Of course, the happiness and humor came from the scenes between Rose and Jack. For instance, the scene where they stood on the prow of the ship was tremendously happy - full of celebration. It made me feel happy for them. Another scene where the two of them have a spitting contest is a great example of humor, especially when they are "discovered." I couldn't help laughing, even though I knew that there was a disaster to come. All of the last part of the film is exciting, as we watch the great ship slowly sink. I was excited to see how Rose would survive, especially when she and Jack were trapped below decks as the sea flooded in to trap them. And of course, the tears come at the very end, both over Jack's death, and then when old Rose revisits the site of the wreck. The first tears are of sadness, but the second are different - more like relief or compassion. | <i>Each of the four examples of feelings (responses) is revisited by the author, and each is then illustrated by a direct example taken from the film.</i> |
| EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS IN YOU THAT REACTED TO THE TEXT | I don't suppose I'm any different from most other people. I get involved in the stories and characters in movies. The love story between Rose and Jack appealed to the romantic in me. Everyone likes to think they will meet the right partner by magic one day, and every time a movie tells us a story where this happens, we believe more strongly in the "love at first sight," or the "princess and the pauper" myths. I didn't go to see the film for the SFX the way some of my friends did. I went mostly for the romance and the story, and to see Leonardo. | <i>The author is introspective in explaining why s/he responds exactly in this way. S/he is very clear and honest about what the film offered and why it was attractive.</i> |
| WHAT THIS CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND THE | I don't think I've ever seen a film with such a combination of feelings packed into it. Everyone compares <i>Titanic</i> to <i>Gone With the Wind</i> , and though I hate to follow the crowd, I | <i>The author describes specifically how this text and this</i> |



| | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| TEXT MAKES YOU THINK OF | have to agree. Both are full of romance and adventure and both have a great disaster. But more than that, I keep thinking of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> because to me the real story is about the lovers and their doomed love affair. | <i>response connect to other thoughts and experiences.</i> |
|-------------------------|---|--|

Sample of a Poor Personal Response to the Film *Titanic*



| | | |
|--|--|--|
| EXPLAIN HOW YOU CONNECTED TO THE TEXT | I went to see <i>Titanic</i> . It was really neat. I liked it a lot. | <i>The statement only makes a very simple "like/dislike" statement. It does not tell "how" the author connected to the text.</i> |
| EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS IN THE TEXT THAT CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION | There's this guy who wins a ticket in a poker game and he ends up meeting with the girl who is going to be married to a boring idiot. They have some good times on the ship and then it sinks and he gets killed, but not her. | <i>Instead of explaining exactly how details in the film appealed, the author retells the story.</i> |
| EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS IN YOU THAT REACTED TO THE TEXT | There's a great scene where they are running away from this security guard guy. They get into the bottom part of the ship and have some giggles, but he is after them with a gun. They could have been killed. | <i>The author tells more plot detail instead of talking about personal reactions.</i> |
| WHAT THIS CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND THE TEXT MAKES YOU THINK OF | It's best at the end when the ship is going down and there are people sliding all over the place, falling into the sea. And all of them get drowned because of the cold water. | <i>The author tells another detail from the story instead of describing what the film elicits in memory or experience</i> |

Work with a partner to read over this sample personal response. It doesn't matter if you have seen the film *Titanic* or not. You are looking to see how the student has written a response, not to see if you agree with the student's opinion or not.

Work together to underline the parts of the response that refer to the descriptors in the column to the left. Notice also that:



- The student does not retell the story of the film
- The student does not focus exclusively on any of the stars in the film
- The student talks about disaster films in general only so much as is needed
- The student focuses all the time on the connections that the film made, and on explaining those connections

This is the focus that personal response calls for. A personal response is not right or wrong, it is either well stated, explained and supported, or not. Another student could have written a totally different response to the same film, and neither response would have been more "right" than the other.

Talk to your partner about media texts (TV programs, rock groups, fashion trends) that appeal to some people your age and not to others. The examples you think of are examples of personal responses that are different even when the text is the same.

When you are preparing your own personal responses, try to use the following questions as a guide to make sure you stay on track.

| CRITERION | SELF CHECK QUESTIONS |
|--|---|
| exactly how you as an individual connected with the text | How did the text make me feel? What were the exact emotions, feelings, reactions? |
| exactly what it was in the text that caught your attention | Which exact parts of the text were important to me? (Beware of just re-telling the story, or telling about the characters or the celebrities, or about the genre.) |
| exactly what it was in you that reacted to the text | Name the quality you have, or the experience the text connected with. Be precise. |
| what this connection between you and the text makes you think of | Explain exactly how the part of the text and your personal quality connected, and then go on to explain the consequence of the connection in terms of memories, recollections, hopes, fears, expectations or predictions. |

Practice Analyzing, Interpreting, and Evaluating Media Texts



When you are writing or preparing an oral analytical response to a media text, you will be looking for two kinds of evidence in the text:

- Evidence to link the text to one or more of the media purposes and the target audience
- Evidence to link the text to one or more of the five key concepts

When preparing an analytical response:

1. Examine the media text.
2. Take a second look at it (and a third and a fourth, if necessary).
3. Complete the Analytical Response Sheet (the last page of this workbook) by looking for evidence of the text's purpose, target audience, and connections to at least three concepts.
4. Use the evidence to make connections to the applicable key concepts.
5. Write an evaluative statement that addresses the following question:
6. How effective is this text in delivering the message to the target audience? Explain by using evidence from the text to support your evaluation.



Let's take a look at an example. First, look at the media text below. Then examine the two analytical responses to the media text on the following pages. On the sample analytical response sheets, the column, "Why this is a well-developed response," is there to explain why the students' response was complete or incomplete. You may use these examples as models for your own analytical response.



FESTIVAL BOOTHS
Enjoy delightful arts and crafts from local and Northwest artisans, plus product demonstrations, scrumptious foods - there's something for everybody!

TWO BIG STAGES, THREE BIG DAYS!
Enjoy nonstop music and dance for all ages and musical tastes-Latin, Caribbean, Dixieland Jazz, Big Band, Country Rock, Reggae, Mariachi and R&B. Entertainment sponsored in part by Washington Mutual Bank, K&L Beverage, Port of Seattle, and Windermere Real Estate.

STREET DANCE
This is the big one - our annual Street Dance this year featuring live acts, one of the area's most popular bands. Airplay cranks out a variety of foot-stomping tunes and styles, including the new rockabilly sound of Country plus rock n roll classics. Saturday, 9pm-Midnight.

FAMILY FUN
With countless opportunities for fun, there's never a dull moment for kids of all ages. Enjoy pony rides, the mobile train, the ball pond, laser tag, electric cars, Joust, a mini Ferris wheel, Galaxy 17 Flight Simulator and more. And don't forget your camera - kids with colorful mascots make great pictures.

FARMER'S MARKET (SUNDAY ONLY, 10-2)
The harvest is in! Pick from the state's freshest fruits and vegetables, plus fresh flowers, nursery stock, cider, honey, and fresh baked goods. Delicious.

MERCHANTS SIDEWALK SALE
This annual sale means great savings for bargain hunters. But you won't have to look far for a real deal - they're everywhere! Hours: Thursday through Saturday 10-8, Sunday 10-6.

Shake,
Rattle
& Roll!

FROM SUZZLING TO SWEET - FUN FOODS TO LAF

IF YOU LOVE ART TO BE HERE IS GREAT

FOR KID FUN - "YIPPEE!" IT'S THE PLACE TO BE

WITH SLICK ON STAGE DANCING IS THE BEAT

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP OR MISS 'EM JULY 10-6

West Seattle Street Festival

JULY 9-10-11

SEE YOU AT THE JUNCTION!
The festival is easy to find: From I-5, take Exit 163A, continue over the West Seattle Bridge and up the hill, where California Ave. meets Alaska St. Plenty of free parking. Festival Hours: Friday and Saturday 10-8, Sunday 10-6.

Festival presented by the West Seattle Junction Association. For more information, call 206/935-9966.

To see how students constructed their analytical responses for the media text above, see the following two examples.



Sample Analytical Response for Media Text

Identify the purpose of the text. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

The purpose of this text is to advertise and inform. It provides information on the festival and it makes people ask, "is this something for me?" It indirectly advertises what Seattle location the festival is located at.

Identify the target audience. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

The target audience is a wide variety of people because the ad shows that there's something for everyone. The young dancing couple targets the younger generation. The man and the child at the information booth could appeal to families and the sidebar advertises art shows and street markets.

Fill in the chart below for the three key concepts that most strongly relate to the media text. After completing the chart, prepare an evaluative statement.

| Key Concept | Evidence from the text | Connection or Interpretation | (Why this is a well-developed response) |
|---|--|---|--|
| Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages. | <p>This ad is laid out carefully using graphic elements that will direct the reader's eye to all parts of the ad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --large fonts --drawings --webpage look --"to be here is smart" --"It's the place to be" <p>There are also examples of upbeat language such as "festival" and "shake, rattle, and roll."</p> | <p>On the obvious level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The large fonts and central graphic draw the reader to the message. ▪ The smaller information explains the activities offered. ▪ The sidebar provides sound bites designed specifically for various audiences. <p>On the subtle level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Phrases such as "It's the place to be" and "To be here is smart" make a popular appeal on the embedded or subtle level. | <p>These observations show a clear understanding of Key Concept #1. The examples are very perceptive. The explanations go beyond Key Concept #1, addressing both the broad (the text as a whole has a "fun" feeling) and specific aspects (the large, slanted font) of Key Concept #1.</p> |
| Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality. | <p>There are representations of people dancing, people shopping, etc.</p> | <p>This is not an actual picture of West Seattle. This is not the event itself. This ad creates a version of reality in the reader's mind about what might happen, not what actually will happen.</p> | <p>These observations show an understanding of why these graphic representations were included – to create a new reality of West Seattle.</p> |



| Key Concept | Evidence from the text | Connection or Interpretation | (Why this is a well-developed response) |
|--|---|---|--|
| Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses. | <p>The ad focuses on a number of different audiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appeals to children (pony rides, mobile train, ball pond, laser tag, electric cars, a mini Ferris wheel) appeals to music lovers (Latin, Caribbean, Dixieland, jazz, etc.) appeals to wide audiences (food, music, dancing, shopping, rides, and games) | <p>When different people see this ad, they will observe different messages. It is important to attract a large audience to an event like this festival. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents might notice that the word “family” is used repeatedly (“family fun”) emphasizing that the event is suitable for families, but fail to focus on the music. Young people might focus on the music, but not notice the farmer’s market. The ad is diverse enough to allow for a variety of interpretation. | <p>The answer shows a clear understanding of the nature of the audience and also some of the imperatives of advertising. Clear examples are included and the argument for connecting them to Key Concept #3 is clearly made. It shows the connection between how different audiences would interpret the text.</p> |
| Key Concept #4: Media are about money. | <p>The ad mentions different activities, which probably have costs and fees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arts and crafts from local artists, Farmer’s Market, Merchant’s Sidewalk sale, food stands the kids’ activities | <p>This ad, although subtle, does have evidence of commercialism and advertising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The merchants and vendors have to pay a fee to exhibit their merchandise. This fee is used partly to pay for the ad in the newspaper. The activities for kids have expenses, which will probably be paid for through admission tickets. Merchants anticipate a profit at the sidewalk sale and farmer’s market. Merchants anticipate that this ad will create return buyers. | <p>This answer shows an understanding of the connection between the key concept and the subtle monetary motives beyond the ad.</p> |
| Key Concept #5: Media promote agenda. | <p>The ad invites people (probably not from the area) to join the event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “See you at the junction!”; “The festival is easy to find.” | <p>The producers of this ad hoped it would attract many people who may not go to West Seattle very often.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By giving “easy to find” directions, more people from outside the area might want to travel to West Seattle for the Festival. By encouraging people to come to the Festival, others might become interested in shopping and/or living in West Seattle. | <p>This answer shows a clear understanding of the connection between the different agendas that are considered when creating a media text.</p> |

Evaluative Statement: *This ad is effective in informing its target audience (which is a variety of ages) because it clearly states the different types of activities that will be available (games and rides for kids dancing and bands for adults and young adults, street-side markets and shopping for shoppers). The ad achieves its purposes of advertising because it directly advertises the festival and indirectly advertise West Seattle. Key concepts 2, 3, 4 and 5 support the ad’s effectiveness for its target audience and its purposes.*



The second student's example shows the student understands the text, but is not good at explaining his or her ideas. Frequently the explanation is only a restatement of the example or an expansion of it, instead of being a justification of how the evidence connects to the concept.

Sample Analytical Response for Media Text

Identify the purpose of the text. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

The purpose of this text is to advertise and inform. It informs because it tells people about an event. It advertises because it's an ad in a newspaper.

Identify the target audience. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

The target audience could be a lot of different people.

Fill in the chart below for the three key concepts that most strongly relate to the media text. After completing the chart, prepare an evaluative statement.

| Key Concept | Evidence from the text | Connection or Interpretation | (Why this is not a well-developed response) |
|--|--|---|--|
| Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages. | The pictures in the middle are wrapped by the other stuff in the ad. | This shows that all the information is carefully laid out on the page. | This is a good observation, but the rationale in the middle column is very weak. It is an incomplete and undeveloped answer. |
| Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality. | N/A | There's nothing in this ad relating to this key concept. | The text does relate to Key Concept 2. |
| Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses. | You either like it or you don't. Sometimes you can negotiate what it means | I really like it because it is so good and enjoyable, and I think it would be good to go there. | Again, there is little understanding of Key Concept #3. The response is more of an opinion than an analysis with support. |
| Key Concept #4: Media are about money. | There are things to do that will probably cost money. | Everything is about making a profit. | The response is more of an opinion than an analysis with support. There is little understanding of Key Concept #4. |
| Key Concept #5: Media promote agenda. | N/A | There is nothing in this ad relating to this key concept. | Although the information is more difficult to identify, a response dealing with the fact that the ad encourages potential consumers to visit West Seattle would have been appropriate. |

Evaluative Statement: This text is effective in its purpose and message to the target audience.



On the next page is a text for you to analyze. Begin by examining the text carefully, and then use the Analytical Response Sheet to help you complete your analytical response. Remember that you may not find evidence of all five key concepts. Some may be obvious, others may be hidden, and others may not be displayed. Try to choose the three key concepts that most strongly relate to the text.

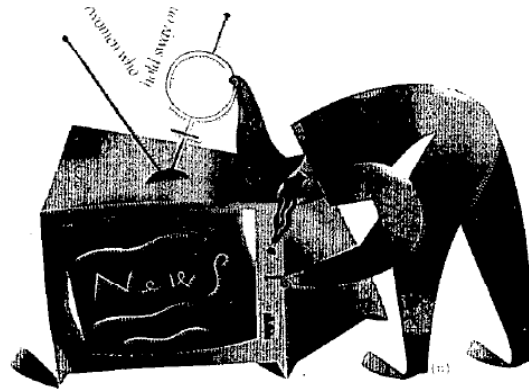
As a reminder...

When preparing an analytical response:

1. Examine the media text.
2. Take a second look at it (and third and fourth, if necessary).
3. Complete the chart on the Analytical Response Sheet by looking for evidence of the text's purpose, target audience, and connections to at least three key concepts.
4. Use the evidence to make connections to the applicable key concepts.
5. Write an evaluative statement that addresses the following question: How effective is this text in delivering the message to the target audience? Explain by using evidence from the text to support your evaluation.



most shows offer their perspective on the profession.



Tuning in to women

Once, a glass ceiling was their limit. Now, it's the sky.

The past three decades of local television news have been good to women – and vice versa. When females migrated from saucy weather girls to serious broadcast journalists in the 1960s, almost no one could have predicted how much they would dominate their field by the century's close.

Today, women applicants outnumber male job seekers in TV news by a ratio of 2 to 1. There's no significant market in the country without at least one female in its prime-time lineup. Women also work behind the scenes as assignment editors, producers, and photographers.

Men still dominate the general manager and news director levels. But male executives have to pay attention to audience preferences, which increasingly demand a female presence on the screen.

Small wonder: More television viewers are female than male. And in some markets, more females watch news than men – as in Seattle.

No place illustrates women's rise to the top better than Seattle. Three generations of main female anchors are on the air here: KCPG-TV's glamorous Gen-Xer Leslie Miller, KOMO-TV's boomer representative Kathi Goertzen and, of course KING-TV pioneer Jean Enersen, anchoring since 1972.

These women aren't just primetime; they're higher profile than their adept male co-anchors. To a TV critic, they also offer a singular opportunity to scan the evolution of females in news over a 30-year period.

Ken Lindner, one of the industry's top talent agents and author of "Broadcasting Realities," wrote, "Broadcast journalism is one of the few businesses in which women can fare as well and in many instances better than, men. To my mind, women are more effective communicators than men."



Analytical Response for Media Text

Identify the purpose of the text. Give evidence to support your answer.

Identify the target audience. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

Fill in the chart below for the three key concepts that most strongly relate to the media text. After completing the chart, prepare an evaluative statement.

| Key Concept | Examples from the text | Connection between key concept and example |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Key Concept #1: All media are carefully wrapped packages. | | |
| Key Concept #2: Media construct versions of reality. | | |
| Key Concept #3: Media are interpreted through individual lenses. | | |
| Key Concept #4: Media are about money. | | |
| Key Concept #5: Media promote an agenda. | | |

Evaluative Statement:

Examples of Analytical Response to a Media Text: *Shane*



Shane (Paramount, 1953), directed by George Stevens

To help with your analytical response, here are two more examples. The first is well developed, while the second is incomplete.



Well Developed Response

| Key Concept | Example from the text | Connection between key concept and example | Analysis of response |
|---|---|---|---|
| #1 All media are carefully wrapped packages. | The use of a high camera angle and of deep focus lets the audience see details in the extreme foreground (the horse team in bottom right) as well as in the extreme background (the mountain peaks) and between (the grave-side scene and the single-street town in the middle distance). | A lower camera angle or a different depth of field might have led the audience to focus on one element in the picture rather than on connecting the foreground to the middle distance and the background. | Clear example of construction, properly linked to details and examples from the text. |
| #2 Media construct versions of reality. | The picture uses costume, setting and period simulation to create a scene from the late nineteenth century western history. The funeral scene is very carefully constructed to focus the audience's attention. | The picture is a still from the movie <i>Shane</i> , made in 1953. The reality of the old west is recreated using cinema and dramatic devices. The funeral, in the foreground, is intended to be seen in connection with the town in the middle ground and the overbearing mountains in the background. The audience's eye is directed within the funeral scene to the grave itself by both the circle of bystanders and by the lines created by the two teams of horses in the bottom of the frame, each pointing directly to the grave. (Those who know the film well will realize that this is a publicity still, not a scene from the film. In the actual scene in the film, there is a third team of horses, located just left of center at the bottom of the frame. This team also points directly at the grave.) | The comments about creating a period in film through costume, etc., demonstrate a clear understanding of this key concept. The comment comparing the picture to the scene in the film is an outstanding detail, showing research. |
| #3 Media are interpreted through individual lenses. | The picture has a strong narrative that depends on knowledge of the film's plot. Not knowing the plot leaves the audience trying to negotiate the connections between the landscape, the funeral, and the town in the middle distance. | Questions that are raised in the audience's mind are: What are these people doing? Whose funeral is it? Why is there a covered wagon? Who is going on a journey from this scene, and why? Knowing the story of <i>Shane</i> helps the audience understand that the funeral is that of a murdered farmer, shot in the saloon of the town in the middle ground. The family in the covered wagon is abandoning its farm to escape violence from the cattle drivers. | This response shows a clear understanding of the key concept, by showing how different audiences bring different knowledge to this text, and so end up with different understandings. |



| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| #4 Media are about money. | Motion pictures are very expensive to make. Western films were very popular in the 1950s, and made good box office. | The expenses of this picture would include the building of the town, the renting of the costumes, wagons and horses. The star, Alan Ladd, would be a guarantee of box office success. | Good observations demonstrating clear comprehension of the key concept. |
| #5 Media promote agenda. | The grave scene is filled with emotion. The broad landscape is symbolic of western values, and the brooding mountains seem to lurk in the background, belittling all that is happening in front of them. | Some of the women at the funeral are seated - a sign of grief. All others, including the horses, seem to have their heads bowed, creating a solemn mood. The intensity of this moment and the puniness of the town are made almost insignificant by the eternity of the mountains. | The answer focuses appropriately on the emotional and symbolic aspects of the picture. Other things to mention might have been the underlining of family and religious values, as well as the value of cooperation. Connections to the Cold War era of the 1950s could also be made. |

| | | | |
|------------------|--|---|--|
| Media Purpose | The purpose of this picture is artistic narrative and entertainment. | If the picture were focused on pure entertainment, the western movie genre, or narrative, (the story of this particular funeral), the director might not have gone to such trouble to create a well-formed scene, with so many elements in the close, middle and far distance. Details have already been quoted to support this. | Reference to narrative or entertainment alone would be sufficient. The addition of the artistic comments makes this an outstanding answer. |
| Media Techniques | The photographer has used line to add strength to this picture. The picture also takes advantage of some recognized symbols of western cinema. | Diagonals are described by the two teams of horses at the bottom right and left of the frame. Those lines intersect at the gravesite, surrounded by a circle of bystanders. Horizontal line is used to define the base of the mountain range, with the single street of the town running parallel in the middle distance. The mountain peaks provide the verticals. The symbols are the mountains, the prairie, the covered wagon and the hill cemetery. The mountains stand for eternity and strength; the prairie for spaciousness and freedom; the wagon for pioneer spirit, and the cemetery for lost dreams and folly. | Although some of these examples have been mentioned before, they are reworked well to demonstrate understanding of this element. |

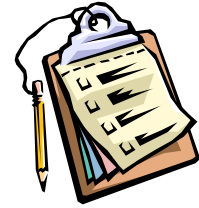


Incomplete Response

| Key Concept | Example from the text | Connection between key concept and example | Analysis of response |
|---|---|---|---|
| #1 Media are carefully wrapped packages. | You can't see the camera. | The people in the picture have their backs turned to the camera and they cannot see it. | This comes close to pointing out that actors pretend the camera is not present as part of the construction of narrative films. But the point is not made properly. |
| #2 Media construct versions of reality. | This couldn't happen now. | People don't use covered wagons and horses any more. | The student has got a good point to make, but does not explain it properly, by showing how the film makes us believe we are watching an event from another time as part of its creation of another reality. |
| #3 Media are interpreted through individual lenses. | The people are bowing their heads and thinking about the funeral. | They are standing around the grave, bowing their heads and thinking. | The student does not show any understanding of this key concept. |
| #4 Media are about money. | When you go to the movies you have to buy a ticket. | It costs \$8.00. | There is some understanding of movie economics in this short answer, but the writer needs to make a stronger link between the detail and the argument to explain how this illustrates the key concept. |
| #5 Media promote agenda. | The people at the funeral are upset. | They are upset because it is a funeral. | This comes close to understanding values in the picture, but the explanation does not refer to values—it just expands on the example. |



| | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Media Purpose | To make us feel sad. | Because it is a funeral. | The description of purpose is acceptable. It is a way of saying there is an appeal to emotion. The explanation does not address why that is the purpose, but only shows a reason for the sadness. |
| Media Techniques | Mountains | The mountains are there because it is the end of the prairie. | This is an acceptable, but unfinished answer. An explanation is needed to elaborate on the importance of landscape—especially prairie and mountains in western movies. |



Final Project

Overview

As a consumer, you are bombarded with media messages every day. Your project is to choose a media text that targets your age group. You will be asked to analyze, interpret, and evaluate a media text and give an oral and visual presentation. Your presentation should be clear and concise, showing how the text displays connections to the

- purpose(s) of the media text,
- target audience, and
- five key concepts.

Step 1: Research and Selection

- Explore a variety of media texts from different resources. Select one for analysis based on whether it is
 - a. appropriate for presentation to your class, and
 - b. clearly illustrates purpose, target audience, and at least three key concepts.
- HINT: Review the texts in *Media Literacy Through Critical Thinking* to give yourself ideas on selecting your own text.

Step 2: Gathering Information

- Collect information from the media text, filling out the **Analytical Response Sheet**.
- Check to make sure your analysis has met all the Scoring Criteria listed at the back of this workbook (for a more detailed approach to the criteria, see the Analytic Scoring Guide).
- Complete a skeletal plan for your presentation. Be sure you
 - a. describe the purpose of and the target audience for your presentation,
 - b. describe your media text,
 - c. explain how and why the media text is appropriate for your age group, and
 - d. describe the demographics and cultural issues of the targeted age group which influenced your choice of media text.



Step 3: Developing Your Presentation

- Create an oral presentation that clearly and concisely displays the connections between your media text, its target audience, purpose, and connections with at least three key concepts.
- Create a visual presentation of your media text that is visually appealing. Be sure that your visual presentation has
 - a. A layout that is attractive, effective, appropriate, and has good use of easy-on-the-eye white space.
 - b. Key ideas that stand out by using variations in font, style, and size.
 - c. Graphics (illustrations, charts, graphs), when needed, to help the reader interpret data and draw conclusions.
 - d. No errors and is carefully edited.
- Self review your analysis of your media text, checking for thoroughness of the connections made to the text.
- Self review your visual and oral presentation to ensure that it covers all aspects of a complete presentation (e.g., audience, organization, delivery).
- Rehearse your oral presentation on your own and implement any revisions necessary.

Step 4: Peer Review and Revision

- Schedule a peer-to-peer conference in which your peer offers feedback on your analysis of your media text and the thoroughness of the connections you made to the text.
- Rehearse your oral and visual presentation for your peers and implement any feedback and suggestions that your peer review provides.

Step 5: Delivering Your Presentation

- Give your presentation
- Receive teacher and peer evaluation of your presentation
- Self assess presentation and set goals for future presentations
- Listen and evaluate peer presentations



"Making" an argument

When you are trying to be convincing in an argument or a point of explanation or persuasion, each point has to be emphatically "made". There are three parts to a well "made" argument.

- The argument itself
- The example being used to illustrate the argument
- The "making" of the argument by pointing out how the illustration fits and proves the points raised in the argument.

One of the most common problems in exposition is that the presenter states the argument and offers an example, but leaves the audience to finish the job of "making" the argument. It is the presenter's job, not the audience's to provide the connections between the argument and the example. For instance:

An Argument that is not "made:"

Argument: *The Simpsons* is an entertaining show.

Example: Bart is always saying funny things that put his father down.

In this argument all that has been said are two things: the program is entertaining, and Bart talks to his father in a certain way. The presenter has not explained how the fact that Bart talks to his father that way makes the program entertaining.

The same argument, "made:"

Argument: *The Simpsons* is an entertaining show.

Example: Bart is always saying funny things that put his father down.

"Making" of the argument: People, especially young people, like to see programs where the young people get the upper hand over the adults. There is an example of this in *The Simpsons* when Bart talks to his father in a funny way that puts him down.

As you can see, in this second version, the presenter has gone on to explain why the example of Bart talking to his father is entertaining to young people. The argument is "made."



Self-Assessment and Goal Setting

How do I think the preparation for my presentation and the presentation itself went overall?



Preparing for My Presentation

- What part of my **preparation** caused me difficulty?
- Why did I have a difficult time with this particular part of my presentation?
- What do I feel needs improvement in the **preparation** of my presentation?

My Presentation

- What parts of my **presentation** do I think I did very well? Why?
- What parts of my **presentation** do I think were difficult? Why?
- What do I feel needs improvement in my **presentation**? Why?

Future Presentations

What is one goal I can set for future presentations?



Scoring Criteria for Content of Presentation

Text

- The text is suitable for analysis, targeting the appropriate audience.
- The text was selected as the best one for this presentation from a variety of possible texts.

Connections to key concepts and purposes

- The text clearly illustrates at least three key concepts.
- The text has at least one clear purpose.

Quality of Analysis

- Analysis has clear references to, or examples from, the media text.
- Analysis has adequate support.
- Analysis uses evidence from the text to explain how the key concepts were used to deliver the message to the targeted audience.
- Analysis uses adequate evidence to describe how effectively the text fulfilled its purpose and met the needs of its audience.



Scoring Criteria for Oral and Visual Presentation

Oral Presentation

- Insightful and intelligent connections are made between the presentation and the audience interests and needs.
- Tone, pitch, and pace of speech are used to enhance communication.
- Facial expression, body movement, and gestures are used to convey tone and mood.
- Language is interesting and appropriate to the topic and audience.
- Presentation is well developed and organized, using transitions to connect ideas.

Visual Presentation

- Use of the text in the visual presentation is creative and effective in displaying the analysis. (Without being “showy” or overly self-conscious.)
- Visual presentation provides a clear, perceptive, and insightful display of analysis.
- The visual presentation clearly illustrates at least three key concepts and one purpose.
- The layout is attractive and appropriate.
- All text is carefully edited and error free.



Analytic Scoring Guide for *Media Literacy through Critical Thinking*

| Content of Presentation | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--------|
| Suitable Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly suitable and lends itself clearly to analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only partly suitable; does not lend itself to analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate or unsuitable; it does not lend itself to analysis | Score: |
| Quality of Analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides clear, perceptive, and insightful analysis Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose Provides adequate support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides simple analysis Connection to one or two key concepts and a purpose Provides less than adequate support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis is unclear and ambiguous Attempts connection to key concepts and purpose Provides little or no support | Score: |
| Oral Presentation | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes insightful and intelligent connections between own purpose and audience interest and needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes general connections between own purposes and audience interest and needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes minimal or no connection between own purposes and audience interest and needs | Score: |
| Organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a fully detailed, well-developed presentation Effectively uses an interesting introduction, well-developed ideas, appropriate transitions, and strong conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a partially complete presentation with some supporting details Somewhat organized with a general sequencing of ideas and some transitions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates an incomplete presentation with minimal or no supporting details Unorganized presentation with minimal or no logic in the presentation of ideas | Score: |
| Delivery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriately varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech to enhance communication Consistently and skillfully uses facial expression, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somewhat varies tone, pitch, and pace of speech Uses some facial expressions, body movement, and gestures to convey tone and mood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no variety in tone, pitch, and pace of speech Minimal or no use of facial expressions, body movements, and gestures to convey tone and mood | Score: |
| Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently uses varied language that is interesting and appropriate to the topic and the audience Develops effective voice for the audience and purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasionally uses language that is interesting and well-suited to the topic and audience Occasionally uses effective voice for the audience and purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no use of language or voice that is interesting and suited to the topic or the audience | Score: |



| Visual Presentation of text | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
|--|---|---|---|---------------|
| Quality of Analysis of Text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid provides clear, perceptive, and insightful analysis • Connections to at least three key concepts and a purpose • Connections are accurate and clear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid provides simple analysis • Connections to one or two key concepts and a purpose • Connections are sometimes accurate and clear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid analysis is unclear and ambiguous • Attempts connections to key concepts and purpose • Connections are largely inappropriate; explanations may be irrelevant | Score: |
| Format, Layout, and Conventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid is eye-catching • Effectively employs layout, graphics, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing • Creatively and effectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid is ordinary and adequate • Occasionally employs effective layout, graphics, and visual devices to make the aid visually appealing • Adequately communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual aid is unoriginal • Has ineffective layout, graphs, and visual devices which may detract from the presentation • Ineffectively communicates messages through artistic, graphic, and/or multimedia presentation | Score: |

Total Score: _____