**An Urban Middle School Communication Arts Unit Learning Plan**

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| Critical Media Literacy | **Reading the World** |

**Reading the World**

**Critical Media Literacy**

An Urban Middle School Communication Arts Unit Learning Plan



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All the world’s a stage,” noted Shakespeare. But, the men and women are not merely players. They are the directors, designers and producers as well. In this two-week, techno-connected communication arts unit, seventh grade urban learners plug into core concepts of media literacy and expand their understanding of popular media texts. They consider their multiple roles in the media world as both consumers and producers. Learners link to a strategy for critically approaching any type of media text. Through a focus on reflection and reflective thinking, students also develop awareness of a dynamic that makes popular media seem to sometimes shape and influence our world, and sometimes simply **“hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature**.**”**

**In this unit, learners will**:

* Examine and explore a five-component strategy for reading media texts;
* Interpret their thoughts about text in various forms of mass media;
* Discuss and define critical media literacy;
* Create a personal web splash page and descriptive blog essay;
* Reflect on the nature of reflection.

Although **Reading the World** constitutes a discrete two-week unit,it is conceived as the first part of a two-part literacy exploration. This critical media literacy learning unit is designed to build background and skills, and then launch learners into a critical cultural literacy unit – a week-long writer’s workshop based on the “Reading Without Words” lesson concept in Linda Christensen’s *Teaching for Joy and Justice*.

**Instructional Strategies**: The central strategy of this learning plan uses information and ideas found online at the *Center for Media Literacy* (CML). The mix of mirror exercises are based on various Viola Spolin improvisation games.

**Duration:** ten, 50-minute sessions

**Learners**: A group of 21 mixed ability students from widely diverse cultural backgrounds, mainly Hmong, Black, White and Mexican American. (The group has theoretically had previous instruction on webware and experience with websites.)

**Reading the World**
Core Learning Strategy Map



**Standard:** 7. 9. 7. Critically analyze information found in electronic, print, and mass media and use a variety of these sources.

Core Objective: **I can evaluate media with regard to bias, stereotype and message.**

**Learning Target:** I can identify and describe five core concepts of critical media literacy.

**Learning Assessment:** media literacy reviews, pair-share handout

**Learning Target:** I can identify critical reflection and other types of reflective thinking.

**Learning Assessment:** discussion, quick-writes

**Learning Target:** I can reflect on cultural stereotyping and social bias in the media.

**Learning Assessment:** discussion**,** critical reading exercises, media analysis games

Core Assessment: **Media Literacy Quiz** - **50%;**

**Standard:** 7. 9. 8. Communicate using traditional or digital multimedia formats and digital writing and publishing for a specific purpose.

Core Objective: **I can publish my work on the web and share it with the world.**

**Learning Target:** I can reflect my ideas through web texts.

**Learning Assessment:** essay and splash page composition process

Core Assessment: **Published Bio Blog pages presentation** - **50%**

Assessment Description: Learners will construct a personal web page design and publish a biographical blog essay decoding the design choices.

**ISTE NETS** (National Educational Technology Standards) addressed:

Standard 1 - Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology

Standard 5 - Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology

**Success Opportunity for Urban Learners** – **SOUL Focus**:

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Production and Distribution of Writing

**Reading the World**
Unit Learning Plan Overview



**Big Idea**: Critical Reflection (analyzing, reconsidering and questioning experiences within a broad context of cultural issues)

Essential Questions**:**

* How does reading and literacy relate to TV, movies and other mass media?
* How is my culture and community reflected in the media?
* How does the media influence our view of society?
* What are social benefits and drawbacks to pop media?
* What is meant by critical reading and critical literacy?
* What is reflective thinking?
* When and why do we reflect?
* How do I feel about mass media?
* How does the media influence my reading of myself?
* Does mass media manipulate and make our society – or simply mirror it?

**Daily Lesson Plan**

* Lesson 1 – Critical Reading
	+ Intro to critical media literacy / paintings as text
* Lesson 2 – Reflective Reading
	+ Mirrors and the nature of reflection / vintage ads as text
* Lesson 3 – Five Key Questions
	+ reflect on personality traits / 5 Key Qs – magazines as text
* Lesson 4 – Me, Myself and Media
	+ Branding and Identity / start Bio Splash Page / 5 Key Qs
* Lesson 5 – Same Show, Different Audience
	+ Silent Film game (perspective) / 5 Qs review / finish Splash Page
* Lesson 6 – Reflective Writing
	+ Mirror exercise and reflection review / write body of Bio Blog essay
* Lesson 7 – Movie Previews
	+ write Bio Blog intro / movies as text
* Lesson 8 – Post-Game Sports Re-Cap Report
	+ write Bio Blog conclusion / quiz review / “Sports as text?”
* Lesson 9 – You’re On!
	+ Unit Quiz (5 Qs – reflection types) / publish final blog pages
* Lesson 10 – Reflecting the World
	+ Social mirrors / “Is school a text?” / Cyber-Gallery Crawl

**Differentiated Instruction**: Learners will need time adjustments for the blog essay. Online access outside of class can be arranged. The delight and obvious danger of this unit plan is its multi-focus and multiple activities. Some flattening and simplifying of the schedule may be needed if organization becomes an issue. Culturally, it may be best to stay with the vintage commercials and movies for as long as possible. The distance, I’m thinking, will free up discussion about ethnicity, gender and culture.

**Special Resource Requirements**: safe hand mirrors, *Glogster* and *Blogger* accounts

**Materials – Unit Plan Forms:** splash page, blog, Media Literacy Core Concepts chart, Five Key Questions, Expanded Questions, Media Literacy Quiz, teacher’s choice of media samples – paintings, vintage ads, magazine covers, CD covers, movie previews, TV commercials, sports post-game segment – preselected samples available online through my blog at:

[http://critical-linking.blogspot.com/]

**Resources/Websites:** examples of print and video advertisements

[www.creativity-online.com]

Center for Media Literacy

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

Viola Spolin exercises

[http://www.spolin.com/games.html]

*Teaching for Joy and Justice* by Linda Christensen at Rethinking Schools [www.rethinkingschools.org]

[http://www.glogster.com/]

[http://www.blogger.com/]

CBS Sports Postgame Show

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX8laeIMjv4]

[http://www.classicartpaintings.com/]

[http://tstbob.blogspot.com/2009/05/retro-goodness-vintage-sexist-adverts.html]

[http://pzrservices.typepad.com/vintageadvertising/vintage\_racist\_advertising]

[http://rockpopgallery.com/]

The Center for Media Literacy's educational framework is an inquiry-based model designed "to help students build an internal checklist of questions to ask about any message in any media - television, movies, the Internet, radio, advertising, newspapers and magazines, even maps and money."

1. **Constructedness**

Key Question: Who created this message?

Core Concept: All media messages are constructed.

2. **Format**

Key Question: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept: Media messages are constructed using a media language with its own rules.

3. **Audience**

Key Question: How might different people understand this message differently from me?

Core Concept: Different people experience the same media message differently.

4. **Content**

Key Question: What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

Core Concept: Media have embedded values and points of view.

5. **Purpose**

Key Question: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept: Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

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**"No two persons ever read the same book."** – Edmund Wilson

**Lesson Plan 1**
Critical Reading

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 1 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Introduce unit on critical media literacy

Targets:

* I can recognize media as text messages

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Admit Ticket –“Which do you like the best: television, books, radio, websites, movies? Why?” (Daily quick-writes will be filed in folders which learners retrieve from a box at the top of class and return at finish.)

10 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Explain that learners are starting a media literacy unit that will help them learn to be better readers of TV shows, movies, magazine ads and other media texts. Use the following guiding questions to generate a discussion: What is the mass media? How does the media make you feel? Has information you received from the media ever made you feel angry – or feel really good? Do you feel represented in the media (i.e., gender, ethnicity, culture, age, talents, strengths, weaknesses)? Who is visible and who is invisible within the media? Are there certain issues or groups of people represented more often than others in the media? Why do you think this is the case? Do you think the media stereotypes certain people? Who? How?

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|  20 | **Vocabulary Development:** Identify this as critical questioning and analysis. Define a *critical reading* of media as bringing a multicultural and multiperspective social awareness to the viewing or listening of media texts – as opposed to an unquestioning assumption about social norms and universal interpretations. Post a definition of a text as, not just print media using words, but – “any vehicle of communication using any of the codes and conventions of society.” Explain *literacy* as a basic ability to decode the symbols of a text and understand its meaning ‘on the surface’ – and *critical literacy* as an ability to read between the lines and “decode the hidden social messages in a text. “ |
|  30 | **Literacy Activity:** Have learners view 1 - 3 sample classic paintings as text (from the classical art website). With each sample, invite learners to try and read the messages being sent through use of shape, color, images or symbols. End activity. |

40 | **Reflection Activity:** Post unit targets. Share that learners will be working with different types of media, including making web pages! Exit Slip -- “What’s your favorite color? Why?” (Secure folders.)

**Materials:** select 3 samples from http://www.classicartpaintings.com/

**Lesson Plan 2**
Reflective Reading

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 2 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012 

Objectives:

* Ponder the reflective process

Targets:

* I can define reflection types

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Post “reflection” Ask for definitions of the word, reflection.

05 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Provide each learner with an (unbreakable) hand mirror. Students will use mirrors to consider the reflective process. Have students look at themselves in the mirror. As learners gaze at their own reflections, asked this question: "What can you think about while looking in the mirror at your own reflection?" As they answer, categorize and post each response. (i.e., “I look at my haircut” – **observing/ examining**; “I'm thinking about when I broke my nose” – **remembering**; “I pretend I'm a super model” – **pretending / imagining**; “Everything on my face looks sad today” - **expressing emotion**; “What will I look like when I am old?” – **questioning/ evaluating**; “My shirt is a brighter color than I thought.” – **describing**; “I think I'm having a bad hair day” – **forming opinions**; “I think I look better than I did this morning” – **comparing**;.) Talk with learners about these different categories of reflection. Invite them to give personal examples of each. Discuss two basic categories of examination (to observe, contemplate) and evaluation (to question, judge). End activity. Collect mirrors.

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|  25 | **Vocabulary Development:** Have learners define *text* and *critical reading*. |
|  30 | **Literacy Activity:** Post and have learners view 2 - 4 vintage ads as text. With each ad, invite learners to judge the feeling of the design – but to also try and read the social messages being sent through gender, ethnic or cultural stereotypes. End activity. |

45 | **Reflection Activity:** Direct attention to the Media Literacy Core Concepts chart (in folder) and navigate to CML website. Display the page. Assign students to independently read and examine the information (through either medium) for the following session. Exit Slip – “What is your best personality trait or personal characteristic?”

**Independent Study:** Examine the Media Literacy Core Concepts chart (handout or web)

**Materials:** hand mirrors,Core Concepts chart, select 3 vintage ads from http://tstbob.blogspot.com/2009/05/retro-goodness-vintage-sexist-adverts.html http://pzrservices.typepad.com/vintageadvertising/vintage\_racist\_advertising/

**Lesson Plan 3**
Five Key Questions

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 3 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012 

Objectives:

* Examine critical media literacy questions

Targets:

* I can be critical and reflective

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Play Viola Spolin’s Mirror Partners game. Discuss gameplay using the two reflective process categories of examining (observing) and evaluating (judging).

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|  10 | **Vocabulary Development:** Have learners open folders to locate the Core Concepts handout. Using notebooks (in folders) title a new page, “Media Literacy Key Questions.” Working with a partner, number and list the 5 questions leaving space after each. Ask learners to circle any new or unfamiliar words. Read and discuss each question. Have learners take notes. Offer that the CML’s inquiry model is an approach to reading media text reflectively and critically. Review the cultural questioning aspect of *critical media literacy*. End activity. |
|  25 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post any selected Seventeen Magazine cover. Use the 5 Key Questions to model approaching the text and to generate discussion. Post any selected popular music CD cover and model examining it using the Key Questions. Think out loud. Critically analyze the text together with students. End activity. |

40 | **Reflection Activity:** Assign students to study and memorize the 5 Key Questions. Exit Slip – Personality Traits List: “Make a list of 10 - 15 of your distinguishing personality traits (funny, kind, etc.) or best personal characteristics (tall, cute ears, etc.).”

**Independent Study:** Memorize the 5 Key Questions from the Media Literacy chart

**Materials:** Core Concepts chart, preselected CD cover art and magazine cover from

http://rockpopgallery.com/ and http:// www.creativity-online.com

**Lesson Plan 4**
Me, Myself and Media

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 4 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Start creating a web page design

Targets:

* I can reflect my ideas through web texts

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Ask learners to reflect on “what makes you, you?” Have learners use the personality traits list (in folder) to choose a final list of their top 3 distinguishing personality traits or personal characteristics.

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|  10 | **Vocabulary Development:** During the class discussion, introduce the idea of a brand – a style that reflects culture and identity. WordSplash the concept “branding.” |
|  20 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post your Glogster home page. Model using the Glogster webware to design your personal intro or “splash page.” Think out loud as you connect your 3 personality traits to the shapes, colors, images or symbols in the design. |
|  30 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to move to computers, log in and navigate to their Glogster home page. They have 15 minutes to think on and begin creating a design that includes (A) full name and (B) reflects all 3 chosen personal characteristics. After 10 minutes, advise learners they will have more computer time at the next session and that they are to begin logging off. End activity. |
|  | **Post Literacy Activity**:  |

45 | **Reflection Activity:** Review the 5 Key Questions. Check for memorization. Discuss alternate ways of wording those same questions.

**Independent Study:** Memorize the 5 Key Questions

**Materials:**

**Lesson Plan 5**
Same Show, Different Audience

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 5 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Examine multiple perspectives

Targets:

* I know key ideas in critical media literacy

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Play Spolin’s Mirror game – Two-Way variation. Discuss.

10 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** In pairs, complete the 5 Key Questions handout. End activity.

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|  20 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Learners will view silently a short movie clip -- scene from Frank Capra’s *Arsenic and Old Lace* in which Cary Grant’s character discovers a dead body – to contemplate the idea that while movie audience members may see the same images, that doesn’t mean they all see or “read” the same film. It’s the audience that makes the movie, not the director or the producer. (Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?) Begin by asking learners questions about their favorite films. Let learners know that not everybody sees the same thing when they watch a movie. Play the silent clip for students two or three times so that they get a good chance at guessing the meaning of the action on screen. As you discuss the different interpretations that learners have of the clip, draw their attention to the distinction between what they actually observed and what they interpreted. Have students vote on what they think is the most likely explanation/interpretation for what they saw. Play the clip again – with the sound on – so that learners can discover what actually happened in the scene. In a final discussion, draw from students’ experiences to help them understand that different people will see the same movie differently. End activity. |
|  35 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to move to computers, log in and navigate to their Glogster account. They have 15 minutes to finish creating a splash page. End activity. Invite learners to independently log on and work on pages. Dismiss class. |

**Independent Study:** Splash page editing

**Materials:** 5 Key Questions handout, movie clip from

http://www.youtube.com/ and http:// www.creativity-online.com

**Lesson Plan 6**
Reflective Writing

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 6 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Begin draft of blog essay

Targets:

* I know qualities and types of reflection

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Provide each learner with a mirror. Have them look at themselves in the mirror. Ask: "What do people think about while looking in the mirror at their own reflection?" Post and talk with learners about the (previously mapped) categories and levels of reflection (Commenting, Comparing and Contemplating). Invite them to give personal examples. End activity. Collect mirrors.

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|  10 | **Vocabulary Development:** Discuss new vocabulary. Define text, reflection, critical reading – and focus on critical literacy and concepts of media texts as social messaging. |
|  25 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post your Glogster splash page. Relate the design to your three traits. Navigate to your BlogSpot page. Model using the page to draft a Bio Blog reflection explaining your splash page design choices. Think out loud as you write one paragraph to explain depicting one trait. (i.e., “My sense of humor is reflected by my choice of a bright orange background color.”) Share finished draft with three short paragraphs addressing your three characteristics.  |
|  30 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to move to computers, log in and navigate to their BlogSpot home page. They have about 15 minutes to write a three-paragraph rough draft reflecting on how each of three characteristics is represented in their splash page design. Each paragraph must have at least two sentences – a topic sentence and a supporting or clincher sentence. After 10 minutes, advise learners they will have more computer time at the next session and that they are to begin wrapping up. Save draft. |
|  45 | **Post Literacy Activity**: Pair and share blogs. End activity. |

**Independent Study:** Explain the meaning of “critical reflection” in a few brief, but complete sentences.

**Materials:** handmirrors

**Lesson Plan 7**
Movie Previews

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 7 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Examine critical media literacy questions
* Write essay intro

Targets:

* I can be critical and reflective

05 | **Preflection Activity:** Watch any selected movie preview. Watch another preview.

10 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Ask: “What are the purposes of a movie preview?” (A preview informs audiences by presenting a movie’s basic premise and broad themes. It also serves to intrigue audiences and pique their interest in the picture.) Note that, although a film’s preview is seen by moviegoers before the film is released, it is actually constructed by filmmakers after the movie has been made.

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|  15 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post your Bio Blog page. Model composing an intro that previews and piques interest in your main essay topics. Think out loud as you write your intro. |
|  20 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to move to computers, log in and navigate to their BlogSpot home page. Learners take 15 minutes to create an introduction that previews and promotes interest in essay topics (and/or continue writing main paragraphs.) Intro must have at least two sentences – a topic sentence and a supporting or clincher sentence. After about 10 minutes, advise learners they will have computer time at the next session and that they have just a few more minutes to save their draft. End activity. |
|  35 | **Post Literacy Activity**: Have learners view a selected TV commercial or short movie preview and examine it using the 5 Key Questions. Watch it again and critically analyze the text together. End. |

**Independent Study:** Prepare for upcoming quiz bystudying the Media Literacy Quiz Review handout

**Materials:** two movie previews and one commercial preselected from http://www.youtube.com/ and http:// www.creativity-online.com

**Lesson Plan 8**
Post-Game Sports Re-Cap Report

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 8 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Write essay conclusion

Targets:

* I can reflect my ideas through web texts

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Play Spolin’s Mirror game.

10 | **Prior Knowledge Activity:** Watch selected post-game wrap up segment of a sports news broadcast. Discuss the dual purpose of a sports re-cap show as a time to (1) recapture the highlights of a game (think back on) and (2) reconsider the strengths and weaknesses of the teams as the season moves forward (re-think).

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|  20 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post your Bio Blog page. Model composing a concluding paragraph that restates and/or reframes the major points in your Bio Blog. Think out loud as you write your closing paragraph. |
|  25 | **Literacy Activity:** Invite learners to move to computers, log in and navigate to their BlogSpot account. They have 15 minutes to write a conclusion to their blog essay (and/or finish editing main paragraphs.) After 10 minutes or so, warn students to begin saving the draft and logging out of computers. End activity. |
|  40 | **Post Literacy Activity**:  |

40 | **Reflection Activity:** Review the 5 Media Literacy Core Concepts and associated Key Questions. Review other unit concepts and material in preparation for quiz. Have learners contemplate the idea of sports literacy and “reading a football game.”

**Independent Study:** Study the Media Literacy Quiz Review handout

**Materials:** Sports wrap-up segment clip preselected from http://www.youtube.com/

or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX8laeIMjv4

**Lesson Plan 9**
You’re On!

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 9 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Unit Quiz
* Publish Blogs

Targets:

* I can identify and describe core concepts of critical media literacy
* I can publish my work

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Play Spolin’s Mirror game – Two-Way variation.

10 | **Unit Quiz:** Have learners complete the brief unit exam.

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|  25 | **Skill Lesson - Instruct/Model:** Post your Glogster splash page and tab-navigate to your 5-paragraph Bio Blog draft. Demonstrate adding a hypertext link between the two. Model title field option. (Zest and Zip!) Model keyword option. Then, publish blog to the web. |
|  30 | **Literacy Activity:** Students move to computers, log in and navigate to their accounts. Have learners add at least one link to their splash page (make title and keyword options) – then publish blog. Based on feedback, learners will pair and share their pages – or finish editing. Warn students a few minutes ahead of quitting time to publish (or save draft) and begin logging out of computers. End. |
|  | **Post Literacy Activity**:  |

**Independent Study:**

**Materials:** unit quiz

**Lesson Plan 10**
Reflecting the World

Language Arts / Grade 7  **Creator:** Vance Holmes

Lesson Plan 10 of 10 **Create Date:** March, 2012



Objectives:

* Reflect on media and culture
* Share final projects

Targets:

* I can reflect on stereotyping and social bias in media
* I can publish my work and share it with the world

00 | **Preflection Activity:** Play Spolin’s Mirror game – Switch Leader variation. Discuss the “following by leading and leading by following” aspect. Ask for comments and thoughts. Play the game again, trading leaders so often it is not clear who is leading and who is mirroring. End activity.

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|  10 | **Literacy Activity:** Begin a discussion by having learners brainstorm while you post all the various types of media texts. Offer a definition of text as “any vehicle of communication using any of the codes and conventions of society.” Focus on conventions – the behaviors, beliefs, manners, mores, unwritten rules and expectations of society. Question adding sports to the list of media texts. Ask learners in what way fashion can be read as a text. Ask: “Is school a text?” Together, use the 5 Key Questions to critically reflect on school as a text. |
|  | **Post Literacy Activity**:  |

30 | **Reflection Activity:** Have treats and play some dance instrumental background music. Present a cyber-gallery show on the main monitor, navigating through all the final splash pages. Invite students to experience and examine themselves in the form of digital text. Start Cyber-Gallery Crawl. Instruct one half of the group to load their pages onto the room monitors. After everyone briefly visits each terminal, the second half of the class should display their pages. Encourage learners to evaluate themselves as media creators and media creations.

**Materials:** popcorn, bottled water and napkins

**Reading the World**
Media Literacy Core Concepts Chart



The Center for Media Literacy (CML) provides a framework “to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet” through **five central concepts/questions**.

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| **1. Constructedness** |
| **Key Question** | *Who created this message?* |
| **Core Concept** | All media messages are constructed. |
| **2. Format** |
| **Key Question** | *What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?* |
| **Core Concept** | Media messages are constructed using a media language with its own rules. |
| **3. Audience** |
| **Key Question** | *How might different people understand this message differently from me?* |
| **Core Concept** | Different people experience the same media message differently. |
| **4. Content** |
| **Key Question** | *What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?* |
| **Core Concept** | Media have embedded values and points of view. |
| **5. Purpose** |
| **Key Question** | *Why is this message being sent?* |
| **Core Concept** | Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. |

**Reading the World**
Expanded Questions for Inquiry



The following outline is only a sample of the kinds of expanded questions that can be asked in order to fully grasp the overall content, form, purpose and effects of any media message. The numbers at the end of each question indicate which **Key Question** it expands.

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

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

of the world.

1 What makes this message seem realistic or unrealistic? (#2)

2 How does this message fit with your lived experience of the world? (#3)

3 How are various social groups represented? (#4)

4 What social or ideological messages are a part of the message’s subtext? (#4)

5 What kinds of behaviors and what kinds of consequences are depicted? (#4)

6 What type of person is the reader invited to identify with? (#4)

7 What is omitted from the message? (#4)

8 Whose point of view is presented? (#4)

**2. Codes and Conventions** -- exploring the form of the message.

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

1 What is the message genre? ( #1)

2 What techniques are used to attract my attention? (#2)

3 What conventions of storytelling are used in this message? (#2)

4 What types of visual and/or verbal symbolism are used to construct the message? (#2)

5 What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message? (#2)

6 What technologies were used to construct this message? (#1)

7 How is this message similar and different from others with similar content? (#1)

**3. Producers and Consumers** -- exploring the purpose and effects.

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

1 Who created this message? (#1)

2 What is the producer’s purpose? (#5)

3 Who is the target audience? (#5)

4 How have economic decisions influenced the construction of this message? (#5)

5 What reasons might an individual have for being interested in this message? (#3)

6 How do different individuals respond emotionally to this message? (#3)

7 How might different individuals interpret this message differently? (#3)

**Reading the World**
Five Key Questions



**Key Question #1:**

**Who created this message?**

**Core Concept #1:**

**All media messages are ‘constructed.’**

We should not think of media texts (newspaper articles, TV shows, comic books to name just a few)as “natural” things. Media texts are built just as surely as buildings and highways are built. The building materials involved vary from one kind of text to another. In a magazine, for example, there are words in different sizes and type fonts, photographs, colors, layout and page location. TV and movies have hundreds of building blocks-- from camera angles and lighting to music and sound effects.

What this means is that whether we are watching the nightly news or passing a billboard on the street, the media message we experience was written by someone (or probably several people), pictures were taken and a creative designer put it all together. But this is more than a physical process. What happens is that whatever is “constructed” by just a few people then becomes “normalized” for the rest of us; like the air we breathe, it gets taken for granted and usually goes unquestioned. But as the

audience, we don't get to see or hear the words, pictures or arrangements that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted!

The success of media texts depends upon their apparent naturalness; we turn off a production that looks “fake.” But the truth is, it’s all fake – even the news! That doesn’t mean we can’t still enjoy a movie, watch TV or listen to music. The goal of this question is not to make us cynical but simply to expose the complexities of media’s “constructedness” and thus create the critical distance we need to be able to ask other important questions.

**Key Question #2:**

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

**Core Concept #2:**

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

Each form of communication-- whether newspapers, TV game shows or horror movies -- has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media language, especially the language of sounds and visuals which can reach beyond the rational to our deepest emotional core, increases our appreciation and enjoyment of media experiences as well as helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

One of the best ways to understand how media are put together is to do just that-- make a video, create a website, develop an ad campaign about a community issue. The more real world the project is, the better. Digital cameras and computer authoring programs provide easy ways to integrate creative production projects in any subject area. In addition the four major arts disciplines-- music, dance, theatre and the visual arts-- can also provide a context through which one gains skills of analysis, interpretation and appreciation along with opportunities for self-expression and producing a message for an audience.

**Key Question #3:**

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

**Core Concept #3:**

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

Audiences play a role in interpreting media texts because each audience member brings to the media text a unique set of life experiences (age, gender, education, cultural upbringing, etc.) which, when applied to the text-- or combined with the text-- create unique interpretations. A World War II veteran, for example, brings a different set of experiences to a movie like Saving Private Ryan than any other audience member--resulting in a different reaction to the film as well as, perhaps, greater insight.

Even parents and children watching TV together do not “see” the same program.

This concept turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers as just passive “couch potatoes.” We may not be conscious of it but each of us, even toddlers, are constantly trying to “make sense” of what we see, hear or read. The more questions we can ask about what we are experiencing around us, the more alert we can be about accepting or rejecting messages. Research indicates that, over time, children of all ages can learn age-appropriate skills that give them a new set of glasses with which they can “read” and interpret their media culture.

**Key Question #4:**

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

**Core Concept #4:**

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

Media, because they are constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important -- at least to the person or persons creating the construction. Media are also storytellers (even commercials tell a quick and simple story) and stories require characters and settings and a plot that has a beginning, a middle and an end. The choice of a character's age, gender or race mixed in with the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors that are portrayed, the selection of a setting (urban? rural? affluent? poor?), and the actions and re-actions in the plot are just some of the ways that values become “embedded” in a TV show, a movie or an ad.

It is important to learn how to “read” all kinds of media messages in order to discover the points of view that are embedded in them and how to assess them as part of the text rather than merely accepting them as “natural.” Only then can we judge whether to accept or reject a message. Being able to recognize and name missing perspectives is also a critical skill as we negotiate our way each day through our mediated environment.

**Key Question #5:**

**Why is this message being sent?**

**Core Concept #5:**

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

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

The real purpose of the programs on television, or the articles in a magazine, is to create an audience (and put them in a receptive mood) so that the network or publisher can sell time or space to sponsors to advertise products-- usually in a way that entices us to want what we really don’t need! Sponsors pay for the time based on the number of people the producers predict will be watching. And they get a refund if the number of actual viewers or readers turns out to be lower than promised. But the issue of message motivation has changed dramatically since the Internet became an international platform through which groups and organizations -- even individuals-- can attempt to persuade others to a particular point of view. The Internet provides numerous reasons for users of all ages to be able to interpret rhetorical devices, verify sources and distinguish legitimate online sources from bogus, hate or ‘hoax’ websites. And with democracy at stake almost everywhere around the world, citizens in every country need to be equipped with the ability to determine both economic and ideological “spin.”

**Reading the World**
Media Literacy Sample Quiz (Quiz Review information)



List the critical media literacy 5 Key Questions

1.

2.

3.

4.

5

Define text

Name the two basic categories of reflection.

Describe the three levels of reflective thinking:

Comment

Compare

Contemplate

In your own words, define critical reflection.

Is school a text? Why or why not?

**Bio Splash & Blog Presentation Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Qualities* | ✔*Check this column* *if presentation**quality reflects a***SUPER JOB** | ✔*Check this column* *if presentation**quality reflects a***GOOD JOB** | ✔*Check this column* *if presentation quality* **COULD BE BETTER** |
| **Splash Design**(expressive, creative) |  |  |  |
| **Branding**(description matches design) |  |  |  |
| **Introduction**(clear and convincing) |  |  |  |
| **Main Paragraphs**(clear and convincing) |  |  |  |
| **Conclusion**(clear and convincing) |  |  |  |

**Reading the World**

Vocabulary Notes



**Vocabulary Quiz Bowl Items**

* text - “any vehicle through which individuals communicate with one another using the codes and conventions of society.”
* Three Levels of Reflective Thinking:

Reacting - commenting on feelings towards the learning experience, such as reacting with a personal concern about an event.

Elaborating - comparing reactions with other experiences, such as referring to a general principle, a theory, or a moral or philosophical position.

Contemplating - focusing on constructive personal insights or on problems or difficulties, such as focusing on education issues, training methods, future goals, attitudes, ethical matters, or moral concerns.
* Critical Reflection - analyzing, reconsidering and questioning experiences within a broad context of cultural issues
* Reflective skepticism – an approach that challenges our beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures
* Splash Page
* Re-Cap

