

Why Does Media Literacy Matter?

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Why Does Media Literacy Matter? is a timely series that encourages readers to build the essential media literacy skills needed to become critical consumers of information, ideas, and news. The series examines core concepts including bias, who is represented and how, advertising and persuasion, and censorship. A media literacy toolkit highlights key strategies including methods for verifying sources and identifying media bias and tactics. Writing prompts, real-world examples, and question boxes support readers as they learn how to critically and meaningfully consume different forms of media.

Students in Grades 6-8 may feel that they are savvy media consumers, as evidenced by their proliferation of social media consumption. However, they still need guidance and parameters to consume the media around them. Equipped with engaging activities and real-world examples, the series gives an eye opening history and summary of our centuries long obsession with news, advertising, and marketing.

Using the lessons in the *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* Teacher's Guide, teachers can springboard into many rich class discussions and debates. Educators will be able to transfer student awareness into student engagement with prompts and lessons that meet media literacy objectives while integrating a variety of subjects' content. The messages contained in each lesson are relevant, inclusive, and engaging.

The lessons in this guide are inquiry-based and support student exploration. They are tailored for grade 6, but can easily be extended to cover expectations for older grades. The lessons can be taught as stand-alone lessons or in sequential order. The titles in *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* include:

Free Press and Censorship
Information Literacy and Fake News
Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising
Representation in Media

PACING CHART AND VOCABULARY

Lesson Plan Title	Pacing
Can You Get the Message?	3 class periods*
Can you Make the Message?	4 to 5 class periods
Investigating the "Fourth Estate" of a Country	4 to 6 class periods

* 1 class period = 40-60 minutes

Vocabulary		
<p>The following are vocabulary examples that, when defined and applied, can be used in the teaching strategies and student learning. They are drawn from across the series.</p>		
circular reporting	guerilla marketing	prior restraint
classical conditioning	impartial	propaganda
compelling	implied	reputable
conditioned response	inclusion riders	slogan
confirmation bias	libel chill	target market/audience
copyright	lingo	undermine
decode	misrepresentation	unsubstantiated
embellish	net neutrality	user generated content
encode	oppressive	validity
ethics	overt	
gatekeepers	partisan press	

ACCOMMODATION STRATEGIES

Accommodations provide equal access to learning and equal opportunity to demonstrate what is learned. Accommodations allow a student access to the subject or course without any changes to the knowledge and skills the student is expected to demonstrate.

Educators are encouraged to adapt the instructional approach, activities, and assessments included in this guide to best meet the diverse interests, needs, and abilities of their students.

Possible accommodations may include:

Instructional Strategies

- Break tasks into parts with accompanying time lines
- Provide extra time for processing of oral information
- Pair oral instructions with visual ones (writing or symbols)
- Pre-teach new vocabulary and regularly review previously taught vocabulary
- Provide model of completed work
- Frequently check with the student to get him/her started
- Provide oral and visual instructions and examples
- Provide a checklist or tasks for the student

Environmental Strategies

- Proximity to teacher
- Strategic seating
- Flexible or mixed-ability grouping
- Provide an alternative setting for learning that is free from visual and auditory distractions

Assessment Strategies

- Build in extra time to allow students to process questions asked and answers given
- Provide written instructions and rubrics for assignments
- Offer a choice of assessment activities so that the student can choose one suited to their strengths
- Space out or extend assignments to prevent student feeling overwhelmed
- Reduce the number of tasks used to assess skill or concept
- Allow students to use assistive devices or technology

LESSON 1

Can You Get the Message?

Curriculum Correlations

Ontario Language Arts

Grade 6 Media Literacy
1.2, 2.2

C3 Framework for Social Studies

D3.2.6-8.

Materials

- *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* series
- *Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising*
 - ▶ Pg. 13
 - ▶ Pg. 14 - Visual Codes, Pg. 22 - “Channels” of advertising choice
 - ▶ Pg. 23 - words to use, Pg. 31 and 32 - Brand Loyalty Strategies and Persuasion Alerts
- *Representation in Media* - Whitewashing and Greenwashing
- *Get the Message: Deconstructing Advertising Techniques Worksheet*
- *Get the Message Rubric*
- Access to technology for research

Objectives

Students will:

- Explain how the conventions and techniques of media are used to create meaning in a chosen advertisement

Setting the Stage

Discuss media key concepts with students in a classroom discussion, incorporating a meme or an image in a slideshow that illustrates the concept.

Media Key Concepts

1. The media construct reality.
2. The media construct versions of reality.
3. Audiences negotiate meaning.
4. Media messages have economic implications.
5. Media texts communicate value messages.
6. Media texts communicate political and social messages.
7. Form and content are closely related in each medium.
8. Each medium has a unique esthetic form.

Activity

Have students choose a print or digital advertisement to deconstruct. Working with a partner, complete the *Get the Message: Deconstructing Advertising Techniques Worksheet*.

Teacher may choose to provide students with advertisements, or give them newspapers/magazines/websites and invite them to choose an advertisement.

Each student needs to complete their own worksheet, as they will be assessed on their answers.

Extensions

- Working in a small group of 3 to 4 people, take a recent news story or viral event. Each group member will be assigned a perspective to adopt—it could be a perspective that reflects a political belief or a perspective of a person involved in, or excluded from, the story/event. They will write a paragraph recount about the story/event from their chosen perspective. Decide on the tone/mood of the piece. Some could be informative, humorous.

Wrap-Up

Bring students together after completion of the worksheet to discuss the advertisements they analyzed.

- What patterns or techniques—visual and written—are evident?
- Can students make connections between artistic choices used and target audience represented?
- Were there any products difficult to recognize or that weren't even featured in the advertisement? Why?

Assessment

Use *Get the Message Rubric* to assess student understanding of key concepts and their application of that knowledge.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Get the Message: Deconstructing Advertising Techniques

1. Target Audience: _____

2. Product being advertised: _____

3. What was the first appeal and emotional impact of the ad to you?
Consider: setting, mood, images of men/women/children, color, action, "emotive" words (highly charged emotion based words), social situation.

4. What is the "visual hook"? What catches the eye as someone flips through the magazine, images)?
Why is this an effective hook? Is it pleasing to the eye and creates happy thought, or expected to shock and upset you?

5. Does the product actually appear in the ad? Is so, where is it and why do you think advertisers chose to include it there, or not include it?

Part 2: Language of the Advertisement

6. What human needs, wants, fears are being appealed to in this ad?

Please highlight or check off examples below that appear in your ad.

In the space provided, write any needs, wants, or fears that are not provided.

- To be beautiful
- To have intimacy/closeness
- To have a new, improved product
- To be the best at your profession
- To have power and control
- To be the best parent
- To possess social status/popularity
- Fear of getting old
- To have friendship
- Fear of being left out, being alone

Fear of being unfashionable, uninformed, or un_____

7. What values does the ad promote?

Please highlight or check off examples below that appear in your ad.

In the space provided, write any values that are not provided.

- You are what you own, and if you have nothing, you're nobody
- Beauty can be bought and created, it's not just natural
- New products are better and make you happier than old ones
- Old age is not acceptable and is to be resisted so you can be young, happy, and healthy

8. Describe some pictures, color scheme, light, and space that the advertisers have used to create a positive idea or image about the product.

9. What is the setting or background colors? What feeling do they give?

10. Does the ad have a plot or sequence to follow? Describe.

11. What evidence of status or money is there in this ad?

Please highlight or check off examples below that appear in your ad.

In the space provided, write any evidence that are not provided.

Status symbols—jewelry, expensive items, sports cars

Rich people

Clothes and products that illustrate wealth or poverty

Setting reflects wealth—neighborhood with large houses, palm trees lining streets

12. Are there any stereotypes or stereotypical people or objects associated with the product in the ad? Describe.

13. Do you see yourself, your peers, or other people you know reflected in the ad?

Student name: _____

Date: _____

Get the Message: Deconstructing Advertising Techniques Rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Audience	Student has clearly defined the intended audience, student has given an insightful interpretation, and student has given effective text support.	Student has clearly identified the intended audience and has given text support.	Student has identified an intended audience, but has given no text support.	Student does not identify who the intended audience is, or identifies the wrong intended audience based on misconceptions about the ad.
Purpose	Student has clearly defined the author's purpose, student has given an insightful interpretation, and student has given effective text support.	Student has clearly identified the author's purpose and has given text support.	Student has identified the author's purpose, but has given no text support or identified it incorrectly.	Student does not identify what the author's purpose is, and has difficulty understanding the ad's purpose.
Main Idea / Message	Student has clearly defined the author's message, student has given an insightful interpretation, and student has given effective text support.	Student has clearly identified the main idea and has given text support.	Student has identified the main idea, but has given no text support.	Student does not identify what the main idea is, or identifies a main idea/ message that is not correct or supported by evidence.
Graphics / Visual Techniques	Student has analyzed the author's use of text, color, graphics, and layout and has brought some insight into my interpretation.	Student has analyzed the author's use of text, color, graphics, and layout, and understands the visual impact of the ad.	Student has analyzed some of the author's visual techniques, and understands some of the impact they create.	Student identifies few of the author's visual techniques, and has trouble understanding the visual impact of the ad.
Persuasive Techniques	Student has analyzed the author's use of persuasive techniques (generalities, logical fallacies, symbols) and has brought some insight into my interpretation.	Student has analyzed the author's use of persuasive techniques with supporting evidence from the text.	Student has analyzed some of the author's persuasive techniques with emerging evidence from the text.	Student analyzes few of the author's persuasive techniques, and has difficulty understanding the evidence that would support these.

Additional comments: _____

LESSON 2

Make the Message

Curriculum Correlations

Ontario Language Arts

Grade 6 Media Literacy

3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

C3 Framework for Social Studies

D3.1.6-8.

D3.2.6-8.

Materials

- *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* Series
- Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising
 - ▶ Pg. 13
 - ▶ Pg. 14 - Visual Codes
 - ▶ Pg. 22 - “Channels” of advertising choice
 - ▶ Pg. 23 - words to use
 - ▶ Pg. 31 and 32 - Brand Loyalty Strategies and Persuasion Alerts
- *Representation in Media* - Whitewashing and Greenwashing
- *Make the Message Choice Board*
- *Make the Message Checklist*

Objectives

Students will:

- Create a media text to support understanding of a topic and form of media.

Setting the Stage

Have students skim and scan *Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising* for ideas, information, and images that spark their interest.

Discuss the forms of advertising that have the most effect on their buying, and the types of advertising they see most often on social media platforms.

Activity

Students will create an advertisement for an existing product of their choice. Tell students that their advertisement must be directed at a target audience. It must be inclusive and represented accurately.

For example:

- Students may have seen advertisements that promote stereotypes or sexism, racism, etc. They should create an advertisement that changes the message. They can “tell the truth” to sell the product to the target audience.
 - ▶ Instead of deodorant ads for men showing muscular men surrounded by women, they could re-brand the deodorant as powerful and effective based on scientific evidence, not sexualizing the brand.

Review or introduce the concepts of representation, bias, and target audience. Teacher may also review the forms of advertising that may be less familiar, such as guerilla advertising, found on page 24 of *Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising*.

Hand students the *Make the Message Choice Board*. Students can use the choice board to choose the format for their advertisement. They may also choose their own format.

Review criteria with students. Share the assessment checklist with them, and provide them with the following prompts to help them meet the criteria:

- How will you reach your audience?
- What magic words and interesting images will you use to send your message?
- What kind of lifestyle will you sell?
- How will you make your ad memorable?
- How does your ad challenge any bias and prejudice?
- Use the strategies you have learned in this series so far to create your ad.

Extensions

- Investigate strategies that embed advertising in apps, video games, etc. How effective and profitable are these strategies?
- Investigate visual strategies used in tabloid or gossip style media. How might tabloid headlines be used to send a message about an issue that matters? See campaign by Canadian nonprofit that uses tabloid style to draw attention to real issues:

<https://www.giftstogive.org/woodgreen/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEVCpB1vEml>

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/01/20/woodgreen-poor-celebrities-photos-video_n_4633222.html

- Lessons to discuss media literacy techniques:

<http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/find-lesson>

Wrap-Up

Have a media summit where students share their advertisements with their class.

On a gallery walk, students can leave Post-it notes with comments about the advertising and media techniques observed in student advertisements.

* The techniques can be found on the pages of *Power and Persuasion in Media and Advertising* specified in the materials list.

Assessment

Use *Make the Message Checklist* to assess students' work.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Make the Message Choice Board

You will create an advertisement for an existing product of your choice.

Your goal is to make the advertisement inclusive to your target audience.

You may choose to alter an existing advertisement for the product, or create a new advertisement.

Choose an option below as your format for the assignment.

Be sure to consider the special format-related questions below each option.

You may also come up with your own idea for an advertisement format—but you must run your idea by the teacher.

Public service announcement (PSA) from the perspective of the target audience

When and where will your announcement be broadcast?

Billboard for product that speaks to target audience in a new way

Where will you place your billboard?

Series of memes to reflect a product's appeal

How will you get your target audience to view your memes?

Social media video advertisement for a product

On which social media platforms will you run your video?

Social media page or webpage for a product

How will you direct traffic to your page?

Movie/Netflix poster or trailer for a movie or TV show that is representative of diversity

*Where will your poster be placed?
How will you get your target audience to view the trailer?*

Guerilla advertisement that is an attention-grabbing display of a product

Where is the most eye-catching or attention-grabbing location you can display your guerilla advertisement?

Influencer advertisement that shows a product to a target audience

What kind of influencer would you use for your ad? What should the influencer say? When should they post their message, and on what platform?

Print advertisement that engages the target audience

What format will you use for your print advertisement?

Student name: _____

Date: _____

Make the Message Checklist

Criteria	Met?	Notes
Student included visual codes such as logos, colors, photography, and body language to send a message.		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Purpose of the advertisement is clear.		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Advertisement has a clear target audience.		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Advertisement has a main idea or message that is obvious to consumers		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Advertisement uses persuasive vocabulary that works to send a message.		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

LESSON 3

Investigating the “Fourth Estate” of a Country

Curriculum Correlations

Ontario Language Arts

Grade 6 Media Literacy
1.5, 1.6

C3 Framework for Social Studies

D3.1.6-8.
D3.2.6-8.
D3.3.6-8.

Materials

- *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* Texts
- *Information Literacy and Fake News*
 - ▶ Page 23, Fake News checklist
 - ▶ Pg. 31, Fake News Vs. Bias
 - ▶ Pg. 34
- *Free Press and Censorship*
 - ▶ Free Press - Pg. 18 and 19
 - ▶ Role of Media - Pg. 21
- *Representation in Media*
 - ▶ Pg 13 - Who owns our media?
 - ▶ Pg. 14 - Who makes news?
- Access to technology or books on variety of countries
- Notebooks or online tools to gather research
- *Investigating the “Fourth Estate” of a Country Checklist*

Objectives

Students will:

- Explore and research a country’s media outlets and ways their news is disseminated to the public to compare with a democratic “free press” state

Setting the Stage

Highlight the key points from the pages indicated in the *Why Does Media Literacy Matter?* series. Discuss the challenges of the news in Canada and the United States.

Some examples include:

- Ownership of networks
- Competition among networks and outlets
- Single voice versus many voices—who is being included and excluded?
- Voice of the newscasters—are they politically motivated? (center, right wing conservative, left wing liberal)
- Fake news—what do credible and non-credible outlets “feed” the news cycle?
- Sensationalism of lead stories
- Decline of local news stations and perspectives—are local voices being heard?
- Representation and misrepresentation—who is in the news? Who is missing from the news? Are people being portrayed in a certain way?

Activity

Students will choose a country and research the media there and the challenges it faces. They will conduct research and present their findings. Student's presentations should be 5 to 10 minutes in length. It must include answers to the following questions:

- What does media look like in your chosen country? Embed some examples of print, digital, broadcast, etc. media in your presentation.
- Who owns or controls the media sources in your chosen country.
 - ▶ (Can you find the businesses, corporations, or political party that the outlet reports to)?
- Give an example of a major news story from another country and how it was covered by media outlets (is there a bias?)
- Censorship, free press, protests in that country - give any examples of recent issues.
 - ▶ If the media in your chosen country is chosen by one source, how do we hear about these issues?
 - ▶ Who and what is included? Who and what is excluded?
 - ▶ Are there any laws that stop or make it more difficult for media from sharing news?
- Using the websites Cpj.org (Committee to Protect Journalists), and Rsf.org (Reporters without Borders), investigate your country's treatment of journalists and reporters.
 - ▶ What is the level of freedom for workers that report the news in your chosen country?
 - ▶ Who writes the stories? (Are they politically left or right of center?)
- Can everyone in the country make media? Are there any restrictions/stereotypes present overtly or implied about who can contribute to print, digital, broadcast, etc. media? (age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.)

Students will choose their own media form to present the information to the class. Ways to share their research include:

- Blog
- School paper
- TED Talk
- Social Media
- Website
- Pamphlet
- Podcast
- Poetry
- Song
- Presentation at conference, town/city hall, school board meeting
- Newsletter
- Prezi
- Letter
- Email
- Documentary
- Screen Play
- Video
- Event

Extensions

- Keep the dialogue going and encourage students to act on the cpj.org, rsf.org, Pen Canada (<https://pencanada.ca/>) and Amnesty International Canada (<https://www.amnesty.ca/>).
 - ▶ Discuss the injustices against those in other countries by sharing information with families about how to become more aware of media representation and misrepresentation, and journalistic rights in other countries.
- Give students time to explore websites related to the themes discussed:
 - ▶ Exploring bias and stereotyping:
<http://mediasmarts.ca/diversity-and-media-toolbox-portal-page>
 - ▶ Diversity in video games
<https://www.medialiteracyweek.ca/resources/>
 - ▶ View and play some of the media literacy games that help students acquire terminology about media.
<http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games>

Wrap-Up

Share your work with another person. Have a discussion about what media looks like in both countries. Compare and contrast the two countries.

Bring students back and have a popcorn chart paper response with the most interesting things they learned about other countries' media.

- The popcorn strategy involves students calling out ("popcorning") a word or phrase to be recorded. Teacher records the popcorn words/phrases on a piece of chart paper to capture the patterns or learning.

Assessment

Use *Investigating the "Fourth Estate" of a Country Checklist* to assess students' presentations.

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Investigating the Fourth Estate of a Country Checklist

Criteria	Met	Somewhat Met	Not Met
Student describes what media looks like in their chosen country. They include examples of print, digital, broadcast media.			
Student describes who owns or controls the media sources in their chosen country.			
Student gives example of a major news story from another country and how it was covered by media outlets. Student identifies whether bias was present in this coverage.			
Student gives examples of recent issues in censorship, free press, protests in that country. Student describes the source from which media comes and whether any laws make it more difficult to share media.			
Student gives examples of the country's treatment of journalists and reporters.			
Student describes restrictions or stereotypes that are overt or implied in country's media. They describe who can contribute to media.			

Additional comments: _____
