

Media Literacy Roadmap

Topic: Consumerism - Target Audience: Grades 3-7

Materials needed: Printout of numbers “1” to “10” for rating system; Sticky notes; Chart paper & markers, iPads (enough for groups of 2 students)

Introduction & Setup:

Introduce the main topics, to be explored over several sessions:

- Understanding how our favourite media (movies, TV shows, video games, music videos, websites, social media and merchandise) can influence values and beliefs
- Understanding consumerism and branding/brand identity in mass media
- Learning how to analyze media using shot types & visual/audio/story analysis
- Learning how to be a critical, engaged citizen rather than just a consumer

Warm-up Activity:

With the printouts of numbers 1 (never) - 10 (always) placed in a spectrum across one side of the room, ask students to rank themselves by moving towards each number. After each statement, turn and talk and explain to the person next to them how they ranked themselves.

- I love media (movies, TV shows, video games, music videos, websites, advertisements) and I consume or play with them every day.
- The media I watch and play make me feel happy.
- I am inspired by my favourite characters in the media I consume, and want to be more like them in some way.
- Being like the characters and stories in the media I consume makes me feel happy.
- I have bought or asked my loved ones to buy products (games, movies, merchandise, etc.) connected to the media I consume and play.
- The products connected to the media I consume make me feel happy.

Small (then full) group discussion: What did you notice as the self-assessment proceeded? What observations did you have about how your class reacted in general? How you reacted?

Activity #1:

Partners activity: Writing on chart paper, ask pairs of students to think of a favourite media example, and to brainstorm all the products they could buy in connection with that franchise. Using iPads, ask students to spend a few minutes to continue researching the franchise, to try to find as much merchandise as they can, no matter how obscure. Gallery walk to view the best, then in small groups of two pairs, have discussions on the following topics:

- How many of these products have they seen? Do some of them surprise them? Why or why not?
- Why does branding these products matter? Is it better to have branded products than non-branded products? Why or why not? If not, why might someone think so?
- How do companies promote branded products? How are we convinced to buy them?
- Do branded products actually make you feel happier than non-branded products? Why or why not?

Activity #2:

Share the images of different camera shots (<http://www.thewildclassroom.com/wildfilmschool/gettingstarted/images/Camera-Shots.jpg>) and discuss audio (dialogue, ambience, narration, sound effects, music), explaining how all elements work together to tell a story or communicate a key message.

- Screen ads and have the students analyze them, keeping in mind both story and technical elements. Consider primarily, what elements did you see, what did you hear, and together, what message did they communicate? What did they say, and what was not said because it didn't fit in with their message? How were these companies trying to brand themselves, and what adjectives would you use to describe their brands (or what they want you to think about their brands)? Were these ads trying to connect with your heart, your mind, or both? Which did you feel?
 - Dick's Sporting Goods - Focus and Explode (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NerOJ4qL184>)
 - Coca Cola - Make It Happy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibgvkXm9Qkc>)
 - Xbox 360 - Standoff (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0VOM7e5Hug>)
 - Rainforest Alliance - Follow the Frog (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ilkOi3srLo>)

Students should end this activity by using sticky notes to write the most effective advertising strategy they observed, and how to spot it, posting these on chart

Activity #3:

Introduce the key upcoming goals: Understanding the ways that consumer culture convinces us that consumerism leads to happiness and satisfaction.

Review the advertising strategy brainstorm sheet and the most effective ways we're convinced to buy things we don't need.

Partner activity: Ask students to divide a piece of chart paper into three columns: Need, Want, and "Debatable". Thinking about their homes, and categorize the things they own into one of the three categories.

- After discussing student ideas, encourage students to dig a bit deeper into items in the Need category. For example, clothing is a need, but are all our clothing purchases necessary? The same is true of food. Which purchases are necessary and which aren't?
- Have students re-assess their items, specifying and moving into different categories.

Small (then full) group discussion: How much of your home is filled with necessary purchases? How does this make you feel? Which strategies from the effective advertising strategy brainstorm (reviewed) worked on you? Why do you think they worked?

Activity #4:

Screening and small group discussion for each clip: How do these advertisements make you feel? What emotional strategy are the advertisers and companies using to try to convince you (in a specific way) that their product will make you happy (or happier)? *(Ensure that conversations about creating insecurities and then promising to relieve them is a part of the discussion).*

- Make Up Forever - HD Generation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXv3f-HqfnI>)
- Yoplait (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdRLYqP7ZoM>)
- Axe Body Spray - Even the Angels Fall (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EKLR894oMs>)

Small (then full) group discussion: Do you think these issues play out in your own life? If yes, how do you experience anxiety created by consumerist advertising strategies? What does it mean to you?

Activity #5:

Small (then full) group discussion: What are ways we can help to remedy the issues of consumerism and reduce their impact. Writing on sticky notes, students brainstorm and share ways that they can work to both reduce commercialism in their lives and amongst their friends and communities. (*Ensure that conversations about finding other ways to make meaning in life, and other non-media activities are included in the discussion*).

Session Conclusion:

Students share their key learning on the topic of consumerism by taking time to write a short, private journal entry about their own experiences and reflections.