

Media Literacy Roadmap

Topic: Marketing of Food - Target Audience: Grades 5-9

Materials needed: Sticky notes; Chart paper & markers, highlighters; Packaging and empty containers from a wide variety of grocery store items/package foods; Printouts of “1” to “10”.

Introduction & Setup:

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

- Understanding the connection between food and advertising tactics and strategies used in both mass media and the physical world
- Learning how to analyze media using shot types & visual/audio/story analysis to understand messages and manipulative techniques
- Learning how to be critical and engaged in decisions made as part of a healthy diet

Warm-up Activity:

Have small groups of students use chart paper to brainstorm their favourite foods. After they've finished the brainstorm, have them circle those that are homemade, and put a rectangle around those that are manufactured food products. Then have students highlight those foods that would be considered “healthy.”

- Ask students to discuss what they like about the homemade and manufactured foods, as well as the healthy and unhealthy foods. What traits are there in common amongst these categories?

Activity #1:

Grocery store activity: Writing on chart paper, ask pairs of students to imagine their local grocery store, and to draw a map showing where food categories are located in the store (meats, dairy, cookies, chocolates, bakery, etc.). Ask students to be as detailed as possible, including the item areas they most often visit and want their families to purchase. Have students use two different coloured markers to draw their usual trip through the store using a line, putting dots where they stop to ask about adding something to the cart. Gallery walk to view the maps, then have discussions on the following topics:

- What commonalities do they see amongst all the maps? What are the differences?
- Why do you think that stores are organized in this way? Which areas take the least amount of time to move through, and which the most? What items do you find in each location? Where are they located based on height?

Share the grocery store map image with students, and discuss the reasons in more detail (<http://static.businessinsider.com/image/5069b6f969beddc72b000007/image.jpg>). *Ensure discussion covers impulse purchases in the checkout area, and the (paid) promotional spots at aisle ends.*

Activity #2:

Introduce the idea of “Food Styling” (preparing food for television commercials rather than for consumption) and screen the following: Food Ad Tricks (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xA14pAGW4UA>)

- Ask students to discuss their reaction to the clip in small groups? What other products can they imagine are used in styling? (e.g. motor oil as pancake syrup, acrylic “ice” in a cold beverage, vegetable shortening as ice cream)
- Why do advertisers and food stylists do this with food? (preservation during a long shoot, prevention of melting, etc.) Is it ethical?

Activity #3:

Place packaged grocery store items around the room, and ask students in partners to choose a product and analyze its packaging, answering the following:

- Where does your eye go to first on the package? Why? What visual elements on the package connect with you? (*Think about colour, scale, font, promotion/sale/bonus amount, contest, memory of a TV or other advertisement, “organic,” “healthy,” “gluten-free,” or other dietary specialty status, etc.*)
- Do you want to eat this product? Would you try it? Why or why not?

Using the iPads with their partners, ask students to find the nutritional information, serving size and ingredient listings, and after doing some research about the ingredients, ask them if they think the product is healthy. Have students create a small chart with several columns to chart their information, including:

- #1: Item
- #2: Chemical Ingredient - Students should choose one ingredient they don’t know and research it online.
- #3: Medical Impacts - What known medical impacts or side effects does this ingredient cause.
- #4: Nutritional rating - Ask the students to rank their products for nutritional value, placing them on a scale from 1 (pure junk food) to 10 (totally nutritious).
- #5: Honest marketing - Ask the students to rank their products for honest marketing, placing them on the scale from 1 (completely dishonest) to 10 (totally accurate).
- #6: Effective marketing - Ask the students to rank their products for effective marketing, placing them on the scale from 1 (completely ineffective) to 10 (totally effective).

Small (then full) group discussion: What techniques do the packages and marketing use to entice and even mislead consumers? How much are you impacted by these tactics? Are people of any age group more impacted than others?

Activity #4:

Share the images of different camera shots (<http://www.thewildclassroom.com/wildfilmschool/gettingstarted/images/Camera-Shots.jpg>) and discuss audio (dialogue, ambient, 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?

- Kraft Dinner - Geysers (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqt2aV8F_pY)
- Nature's Path - Pumpkin Flax Granola (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkmlnTpIMqI>)
- Got Milk - Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzfdgPx3YOo>)
- Doritos - Time Machine (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zovYhWU1KA>)

Activity #5:

Ask students to share their favourite sweets, and hold up fingers to show how many times a day they consume sweet drinks (including juice, sports drinks and chocolate milk), sweet candy and snacks, and anything sweetened with sugar (including breakfast cereal and granola bars).

Introduce the idea that sugar plays into our brain's reward centers, and screen the animated video, The Sugary Truth (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFInlGx0B5U>)

- Does this video effectively influence you to eat less sugar? Why or why not?
- Do you think that factual media and documentaries can counter all the advertising for sugar and sweets that make us crave and become addicted to sugar? Is it working for you? What could work?

Activity #6:

Introduce the question of obesity in connection with fast food and junk food advertising, and screen the Supersize Me summary video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2diPZOtty0>).

After the film, have students discuss the following:

- What are your thoughts about the video? What do you think the filmmaker, Morgan Spurlock, was trying to do, and is he effective?
- What do you think is the attraction to "super-sized" food? Do they actually make us eat more? What has your experience been?

Activity #7:

Small groups should decide if they agree or disagree with the following statement, specifically whether or not we live in a "toxic food environment," sharing their response with the rest of the class:

"In a 1998 article on the causes of obesity, American nutrition expert squarely blamed the fast food industry for using advertising and promotion to constantly pressure us to eat. The combination of unprecedented access to a poor diet - to high-calorie foods that are widely available, low in cost, heavily promoted, and good-tasting - and a culture that discourages people from being physically active, has led to the creation of a "toxic food environment" that's hazardous to our health." (Kelly Brownell, "The Pressure to Eat," in Nutrition Action, July/August 1998, sourced from Mediasmarts)

Activity #8:

Small group activity: Ask students to work in groups to think of their favourite fast food restaurants, and the commercials they remember from these restaurants. What advertising techniques were used that made them memorable? (*Ensure the ideas of movie figurines, toy giveaways, and cross-promotions with movies are discussed*)

Explain to students that some advertisers use more complex strategies to market their food products, often including deeper civic issues or addressing criticism within the ad itself.

- Screen ads and have the students analyze them, keeping in mind: Target Audience, Key Message, Advertising Techniques, and Storytelling Strategies (including what is said and what isn't said). Classes can start with the original four for practice, or can move on to the following more complex advertisements.
 - Oreo - Wonderfilled (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFsz6BO4LU0>)
 - Taco Bell - Routine Republic (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuap4wIGSLg>)
 - McDonalds - 100% Real Beef: a company or a fact? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPF5IB2LCqA>)
 - Chipotle - Scarecrow (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUtnas5ScSE>)

Session Conclusion:

Students should write a 3-2-1 chart about their learning for the sessions: 3 Things I Learned, Two Questions I Still Have/Things I Want to Learn More About, 1 New Opinion I Now Have.