

Media Literacy Roadmap

Topic: Violence on Screen - Target Audience: Grades 2-4

Materials needed: Sticky notes; Chart paper & markers; Printouts of “1” to “10”; Magazines for anti-violence cutouts, 11x17 sheets for the collage.

Introduction & Setup:

Introduce the main topics to be explored over several sessions:

- Defining different types of violence;
- Identifying the different types of media violence;
- Learning how to recognize shot types & visual/audio/story elements of media;
- Identifying the consequences of media violence, in contrast with real-world violence;
- Identifying the impacts of media violence on children and on greater society.

Warm-up Activity:

In partners, students should work together to try to describe “violence.” Working together, aim to create a definition for violence. *(Ensure that the definition includes the idea of a force designed to inflict emotional or physical damage.)*

Activity #1:

Have small groups of students divide chart paper into three categories, using each to brainstorm their favourite video/computer games, TV shows and movies. After they’ve finished the brainstorm, have them circle those that contain violence.

- Ask students to discuss what kinds of violence (e.g. yelling, kicking, punching, shooting, exploding, etc.) happen in the video games they play? Who commits the violence, and who is a victim of the violence?
- What kinds of violence happen in the movies and TV shows they watch? Who commits the violence, and who is a victim of the violence?

Activity #2:

Ask students to share the kinds of violence they discussed, and as a class categorize the violence into 4 areas: “Cartoon,” “Emotional,” “Physical,” and “Real life.” *(N.B. Young students may not watch many shows, like news, with real life violence, but this should be discussed briefly and added to the list prior to the next step.)*

As the teacher reads out examples of the kinds of violence in each of the categories, students should move their bodies along the spectrum from “1” (least impactful) to “10” (most impactful). After each decision, students should turn to a person next to them to discuss their rating.

Full group discussion: what kinds of violence have the greatest impact and why?

Activity #3:

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 that all elements work together to tell a story or communicate a key message.

- Screen samples of ads with violent media content and have the students analyze them, keeping in mind both story and technical elements: in small groups, have students pay attention to one of image, sound and key messages, sharing their observations about how each element was present in the clip. What shots, sounds and effects were used to “enhance” or magnify the violence?
 - Power Rangers - Super Megaforce (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZQF2Jh9bpM>)
 - Star Wars Clone Wars - Battle of Geonosis (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du8zO3wD-JQ>)
 - Looney Tunes - Super Rabbit (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QCw0KRWXML>)
 - Transformers - Optimus Prime Battles Bonecrusher (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QYQS9SYa6A>)

Activity #4:

Discuss the different media messages that come from violent story lines as in the previous activity, and ask students in small groups to think of examples of each one:

- Reward for violence (in games or in storylines, as when the violence makes a character a strong hero who “saves the day”);
- Reality of violence (the more realistic, the “better”);
- Violent role models (people we’re supposed to look up to and imitate);
- Justified violence (violence is the right, or only answer);
- Violent connections (we’re supposed to identify with the violent character/choice);
- Excessive violence (normal emotional responses can be blunted and can lead to real-life aggression - ask students if they ever wanted to mimic something they saw in games or on-screen).

Students share one new thing they learned by writing their most memorable learning from the session on a sticky note, posting it on chart paper as a ticket out the door.

Activity #5:

Remind students of our main topics and the discussion results from the last session. Ask students to turn and talk, sharing if they had any new observations while watching or playing media since the last session. Engage in a brief full-group discussion with the class on this topic. Ask students to re-watch two different clips from the last week, pausing at each shift in the storyline. Students should use pen and paper to chart how they feel while watching, choosing an emotion or adjective at each pause point, as well as after the clip, discussing it with a partner afterwards.

- Transformers - Optimus Prime Battles Bonecrusher (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QYQS9SYa6A>)
- Star Wars Clone Wars - Battle of Geonosis (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=du8zO3wD-JQ>)
- Ask students: What did it physically feel like to be excited? Scared? Amused? Did that make you enjoy the story more or less? Why? Based on the emotional journey you went on with each clip, what do you think might be the possible effects of watching a lot of violent media for you? What about for other, younger children? Would you recommend that they watch violent media? Why or why not?

Activity #6:

Share different media effects, and ask students to turn and talk after each one, sharing their own experience (if they had one) with each impact:

- Desensitizing players to other violence, including real-world violence;
- Increased aggression and the feeling of wanting to act out what was seen;
- George Gerbner's "Mean World Syndrome" and his research stating that watching violent television can lead to a feeling that the world is more dangerous than it actually is;
- Feeling that violence is a reasonable and natural response to real-world situations.

Ask students to explore the last point in a bit of detail by chatting with - when is violence seen as funny and natural in situations where another solution to the issue or problem might be present? What would happen in real life if violence was the only solution?

Activity #7:

Review 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 that all elements work together to tell a story or communicate a key message.

- Screen samples of ads with violent media content and have the students try to identify the messages hiding underneath the story.
 - Xbox 360 - Standoff (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0VOM7e5Hug>)
 - Rainforest Alliance - Follow the Frog (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ilkOi3srLo>)

Activity #8:

Collage activity: Using magazines, markers and paper, students should find different words and images to express their thoughts and feelings about media violence.

Session Conclusion:

Students should share their collages in a gallery walk, and discuss the process of learning about violence? What new things did they learn or understand? What will they think about while watching or engaging in violent media after the activities done together?