

SPARKed

SPARK in Education

MEDIA LITERACY is defined as the ability to critically consume and create media. As media becomes an increasingly important part of students' lives, it is essential to provide them with an understanding of this vital skill. Students need to be able to analyze, evaluate, criticize, deconstruct, and produce media. By increasing students' awareness of the intersections between media and culture we give them tools to make empowered choices and help them ask informed questions. This guide contains information about media literacy that can be used in the classroom in conjunction with SPARK programs to enhance student learning.

EXPLORING MEDIA LITERACY

Media influences our thoughts and actions in many ways. Some influences are subtle, and others more obvious. The first step in media literacy is becoming aware of media influences in our daily lives.

MEDIA JOURNALS

One way to foster an awareness of media is to invite your students to create media journals. The purpose of a media journal is to help students become aware of the pervasiveness of media in their lives. Ask the students to record all media that they use, view or create during a three-day time period.

Create a class graph depicting the different kinds of media students used and the amount of time they spent on each kind of media. Invite other classes to view the graph.

Explain the concept of the "language of persuasion" to your class, which is defined as the ways that the media depicts a message in order to exert influence over a person's choices. This can include techniques such as flattery, humor, fear, or sarcasm. Ask your students to brainstorm a list of examples of the "language of persuasion" based on their media journals and life experiences.

EXAMINING VIEWPOINTS, TEXTS & SUBTEXTS, AND VALUES IN SPARK VIDEOS

Every example of media has a unique point of view, contains texts and subtexts, and conveys values. After students view a SPARK video, ask them to think about how media are used to tell a story.

- Ask your students to determine the point of view of the creator of a SPARK film. Encourage discussion and diverse opinions, and ask your students to support their opinions with

The average 8 to 18-year-old in the United States spends almost 6 1/2 hours consuming media in a typical day. Considering that they often use more than one medium at a time, youth of that age actually consume an average of 8 1/2 hours of media a day. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005)

83% of 8 to 18-year-olds have a video game player in their home (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005)

In 1950, only 9% of U.S. households owned a television. By 1965 at least one TV was in 92.6% of U.S. households. Today, at least one TV is in 98.2% of American households. (Television Bureau of Advertising, 2001)

examples from the SPARK episode. If you view several SPARK films, ask students to compare the point of view of each filmmaker.

- Have your students look at the text of a media message in a SPARK film, that is, the actual words, images, photographs, and audio. The subtext is the meaning the message is attempting to convey.
- Ask your students to discuss the values or messages the filmmaker is attempting to convey.

MEDIA RESPONSE GROUPS

It is critically important to help students ask questions about what they watch, see, listen to and read as they respond to media around them. A media response group is a variation of a literature response group, where students have opportunities to share and discuss their ideas and viewpoints. Students will discuss questions about the motivation of featured SPARK artists, their goals, their methods, and their work. The goal of the media response group is to help students clarify their responses to media, and make connections between what they see and their own life experiences.

After the students have viewed a SPARK video, divide them into small discussion groups. Initially you can model how the students will engage in discussion. As they grow more comfortable, your role should be minimal. Examples of questions and prompts in a media response discussion may include the following:

- How did the artist share his or her ideas?
- How did the artist's work make you feel?
- Have you had experiences similar to those of this artist?
- How did this SPARK episode further your understanding of the arts?
- What images did the filmmaker use? How did you react to them?

ANALYZING AND CREATING MEDIA

Creating their own media message is a powerful discovery tool that can help students learn about media. Have your students create a website, video, blog, podcast, or a public service announcement in response to a SPARK video. This helps students apply what they are learning about media in their own work. For detailed information about how media is created, view the "Media Matters" tool on the Spark Web site.

INVESTIGATING MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

To help your students learn more about media literacy, have them engage in further research. Divide the class into small groups, and ask them to investigate the following resources:

Center for Media and Democracy
<http://www.prwatch.org/>

The Center for Media and Public Affairs
<http://www.cmpa.com/index.htm>

Freedom Forum
<http://www.cmpa.com/index.htm>

Media Awareness Network
<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/>

Have each small group share what it has learned with the entire class.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDIA

As a class, view the *Smoke Free* website at <http://www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu/>. This website focuses on cigarette smoking and movies. As you browse through the different sections of this site, invite your students to respond to the information. Use the following questions to guide your class discussion:

- What message is this website trying to convey?
- What tools do the authors use to convey their message?
- What questions are the authors asking?
- How does their website design complement or distract from the message?
- What motives might the authors of this site have?
- What values do you think the authors of this site have?
- What are the most powerful images?
- What are the most compelling ideas?

Divide the class into small groups and ask your students to choose a website to critique. Have each group present its site and critique to the entire class.

MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

Edutopia
<http://www.edutopia.org/collaborating-create-media-savvy-young-people>

Just Think
www.justthink.org

PBS Parents
<http://www.pbs.org/parents/childrenandmedia/>

MIT
<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2007/resnick-scratch.html>

Alliance for a Media Literate America
<http://www.amlainfo.org/>

KQED Media Literacy Educator Guides
<http://uw.kqed.org/edresources/results.php?subtopic = 13>

Project Look Sharp
<http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/>

SOURCES

New Mexico Media Literacy Project
http://www.nmmlp.org/media_literacy/ML_concepts.html

Just Think
www.justthink.org

PBS Teachers
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/>

Alliance for a Media Literate America
<http://www.amlainfo.org/>