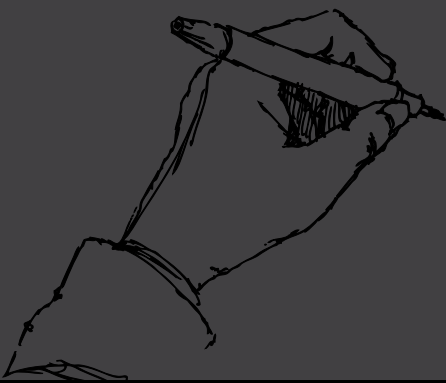


STOPMO

Studio

Stop-Motion Animation Workshop



LESSON
1

MEDIA LITERACY



Introduction

This teachers' guide provides insight into the proliferation of mass media in our society and culture. Mass media permeates all facets of our daily lives and influences us in numerous ways, some of which we may not be aware.

In this lesson you will view examples of advertising and discuss the types of messages conveyed. The term “media literacy” will be defined and considered from an educational perspective to illustrate the increasing need for us to become better informed about mass media. You will examine the “Key Concepts of Media Literacy” as described in the “What Is Media Literacy” section of the Association for Media Literacy website, aml.ca, and then use these key concepts to critically analyze an animated film.

The Key Concepts of Media Literacy and NFB Films

You will discover that the AML's Key Concepts of Media Literacy are designed for the critical analysis of the mass media and, in many respects, commercial media. You will also discover, by examining the films in this learning

module and films on NFB.ca, that films made by the National Film Board of Canada or in collaboration with the National Film Board of Canada are often non-commercial in nature. So how do the Key Concepts of Media Literacy apply to non-commercial works?

It is important to note that media literacy is concerned not only with the deconstruction of media texts, but also with enhancing one's enjoyment and appreciation of media texts through an understanding of the language, codes and conventions adopted by various media. It is also important to note that the deconstruction of a media text need not always take into account the commercial or non-commercial nature of the work. Non-commercial films such as the auteur animation films on NFB.ca present interesting opportunities for analysis, specifically in relation to filmmaker intent, audience, technique, point of view, soundtrack and the overall effectiveness of all of these elements in communicating a story.

Modifying the Key Concepts of Media Literacy to examine non-commercial works will prove to be an enriching experience for you and your students. Understanding and appreciating media rather than focusing on its negative aspects will also encourage your students to seek out alternatives to mainstream media for their personal enjoyment.



MEDIA LITERACY

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this teachers' guide you will be able to:

- Examine the role and influence of visual images in our daily lives, in relation to mass media and popular culture;
- Examine the types of messages found in advertising;
- Define media literacy;
- Identify and discuss critical principles behind media literacy education, as per the Key Concepts of Media Literacy;
- Critically analyze an animated film using these key concepts;
- Investigate and analyze how meaning is embedded in works of art.

Mass Media

Our technology-based society exposes us to more forms of mass media than any previous generation. The influence of the media is everywhere. Our exposure to it plays a significant role in determining how we think about a variety of important issues, through the messages that are relayed and our interpretation of them. Mass media shapes our society by selecting and portraying a particular set of beliefs, values and traditions which help to construct the reality in which we live. Media messages can be obvious, subtle or hidden, affecting us on a subliminal or subconscious level. A media type may also provide more than one message.

Advertising is perhaps one of the most insidious forms of mass media. Consider where advertising can be found today. (It might be an easier and less time-consuming task to consider where you don't find it!)

Class Learning Activity: View Examples of Advertising

- Challenge your students to find a print advertisement that they find particularly appealing or influential.
- Challenge your students to find a television or web advertisement that they find particularly appealing or influential.

Then, ask students to analyze these works using the **Key Concepts of Media Literacy**

As an alternative, explore the specific examples below of online and magazine advertisements to get started. These are examples of the types of messages to which we are exposed on a daily basis and which attempt to influence us on many different levels. Consider the types of overt and subtle messages contained in these media. Can you identify the hidden messages?

iPad commercial:

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Audi 2010 Green Car Super Bowl commercial:

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

National Anti-Drug Strategy - "Mirror":

nationalantidrugstrategy.gc.ca/prevention/youth-jeunes/tv/02.html

Old Spice: The Man You Could Smell Like:

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Best Nike Commercial of All Time [HD]:

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Now, have a quick look at the following magazines to see the types of messages they convey.

Teen Vogue

teenvogue.com

Sports Illustrated

sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/cover/home/index.htm

Seventeen

seventeen.com

VIBE Magazine

vibe.com

Class Discussion: Advertising and Its Influence

Offer examples of some of your favourite advertisements, magazines or other media types. Consider and discuss why they appeal to you. How do you think mass media influences your lifestyle as a student? How susceptible do you think your age group is to these messages? How do you think the promotion of famous people in the media affects the messages you receive? Do you think that you can influence the media in any way?

Media Literacy

Media literacy is concerned with the process of understanding and using mass media. Media education aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of media works. The purpose of media literacy education is to encourage individuals to critically analyze a variety of media types, to make their own judgments instead of passively accepting someone else's perspective or opinion at face value, and to create and share their own media works.

The Association for Media Literacy defines media literacy as:

An educational initiative that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce *meaning*, how they are organized, and how the media construct reality. AML is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by media industries, and the impact of these techniques. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create their own media products.

The **Media Awareness Network** website identifies alternate definitions of media literacy by various media literacy experts whose work you may wish to review.

Key Concepts of Media Literacy

Please review the section "What Is Media Literacy?" on the **Association for Media Literacy** website, and in particular note the Key Concepts of Media Literacy.

Class Discussion: The Key Concepts of Media Literacy

What is the Association for Media Literacy? Discuss the critical premises behind media education in relation to the Key Concepts of Media Literacy. Do you think all media can be critiqued in this way?

Critical Analysis of Media

Now you will critically analyze an animated film.

Individual Study Activity: Analyze an Animated Film

Select and explore one of the following popular recent NFB animated films. Critically analyze the film from a media literacy perspective, using as a guide the **Media Literacy Question Sheet** derived from the Key Concepts of Media Literacy.



MEDIA LITERACY

Popular and Recent Animated Films

1. *Ryan* by Chris Landreth (2004, 13 min 57 s)

nfb.ca/film/Ryan

Synopsis: Based on the life of Ryan Larkin, a Canadian animator who produced some of the most influential animated films of his time, this film depicts Larkin's downward spiral and his life as an addict. (Recommended for grades 11–12.)

2. *Madame Tutli-Putli* by Chris Lavis & Maciek Szczerbowski (2007, 17 min 15 s)

nfb.ca/film/madame_tutli_putli_en

Synopsis: This film takes viewers on an exhilarating trek into the fully imagined, tactile world of Madame Tutli-Putli. She confronts her demons while travelling alone on a night train, with all her possessions and the ghosts of her past. (Recommended for grades 11–12.)

Note: While this film effectively shows the elaborate nature of puppet armatures, certain scenes contain mature content. It is recommended that educators view this film and select scenes of interest before screening it for their students.

3. *Black Soul* by Martine Chartrand (2000, 9 min 47 s)

nfb.ca/film/black_soul

Synopsis: This film dives into the heart of black culture with an exhilarating trip through history. A young boy traces his roots through the stories that his grandmother shares with him about the events that shaped their cultural history. (Recommended for grades 9–12.)

4. *Moon Man* by Paul Morstad (2004, 3 min 33 s)

nfb.ca/film/Moon_Man

Synopsis: Inspired by the song “Moon Man Newfie,” composed and sung by Canadian music legend Stompin’ Tom Connors, this film tells the story of folk hero Codfish Dan, who made Newfoundland history after a lucky fishing trip on the Milky Way. (Recommended for grades 7–12.)

5. *Runaway* by Cordell Barker (2009, 9 min 10 s)

nfb.ca/film/runaway

Synopsis: A possible introduction to discussions about energy consumption, *Runaway* takes viewers on an allegorical journey that is both funny and disastrous. (Recommended for grades 6–10.)

6. *Pimp ma botte* by Alexandre Bilodeau & Marc Daigle; (2005, 5 min 12 s)

onf.ca/film/pimp_ma_botte

Synopsis: In this hilarious parody of the popular television show *Pimp My Ride*, host Bubs and his gang renovate and modify a boat that belongs to Albény, an old fisherman. *Pimp ma botte* depicts a true clash of cultures—the collision between Acadian tradition and global pop culture. (Recommended for grades 7–12.)

7. *The Necktie* by Jean-François Lévesque (2008, 12 min 17 s)

nfb.ca/film/necktie

Synopsis: A mixture of puppet and hand-drawn animation, this is the story of Valentin and his quest to find meaning in his life. In a dead-end job, he has forgotten all the things that used to bring him joy, but on his 40th birthday he finds his accordion in the depths of his closet and regains a lust for life. (Recommended for grades 7–12.)

8. *Jeu* by Georges Schwizgebel (2006, 3 min 54 s)

nfb.ca/film/jeu_en

Synopsis: In the world of *Jeu*, the landscape is constantly morphing—a helter-skelter universe that evokes the chaos of modern life. (Recommended for grades 7–12.)

9. *The Girl Who Hated Books* by Jo Meuris (2006, 7 min 21 s)

nfb.ca/film/girl_who_hated_books

Synopsis: The story of Meenam, a young girl who hates books even though her parents love to read, may inspire students to approach literature with a more open mind. (Recommended for grades 1–4.)

KEY CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY

The following Key Concepts of Media Literacy have been developed by the Association for Media Literacy (AML), one of the most influential media education groups in North America.

This description of media literacy key concepts and their application has been excerpted from the following page of the AML's website: <aml.ca/whatis/>. Additional resources for educators can be found at <aml.ca/resources/>.

To define the critical premises behind media education, the following key concepts have been developed. In every province in Canada, media literacy is now part of the Language Arts programs from K–12. The key concepts provide a theoretical base for all media literacy programs and give teachers a common language and framework for discussion.

1. All media are constructions.

Media present carefully crafted constructions that reflect many decisions and result from many determining factors. Much of our view of reality is based on media messages that have been pre-constructed and have attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built in. The media, to a great extent, present us with versions of reality. When analyzing a media text, consider the following questions: How is this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?

2. Each person interprets messages differently.

People who watch the same TV show or visit the same website often do not have the same experience or come away with the same impression. Each person can interpret or negotiate a message differently based on age, culture, life experience, values and beliefs. When analyzing a media text, consider: How might others understand this message differently?

3. The media have commercial interests.

Most media are created for profit. Advertising is generally the biggest source of revenue. Commercials are the most obvious means of generating revenue, although advertising messages take many forms, including product placement (paying to have a product prominently displayed in programs or movies), sponsorships, prizes, pop-up ads and surveys on the Internet, celebrity endorsements or naming a stadium or theatre. When analyzing a media text, consider: Who created this and why? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?



KEY CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY

4. The media contain ideological and value messages.

Producers of media messages have their own beliefs, values, opinions and biases. These can influence what gets told and how it is told. Producers must choose what will and will not be included in media texts, so there are no neutral or value-free media messages. As these messages are often viewed by great numbers of viewers, they can have great social and political influence. When analyzing a media text, consider the following question: What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message? We need to decode media messages about such issues as the nature of the “good life,” the virtue of consumerism, the role of women, the acceptance of authority, and unquestioning patriotism.

5. Each medium has its own language, style, techniques, codes, conventions, and aesthetics.

Each medium creates meaning differently using certain vocabulary, techniques and styles, or codes and conventions. In a movie or TV show, when the picture dissolves, it indicates a passage of time. Hot links and navigation buttons indicate you can find what is needed on a website. A novelist must use certain words to create setting and characters, while other media use images, text and sound. Over time, we understand what each technique means. We become fluent in the “languages” of different media and can appreciate their aesthetic qualities. When analyzing a media text, consider: What techniques are used and why? Developing media literacy skills enables us not only to decode and understand media texts, but also to enjoy the unique aesthetic form of each. Our enjoyment of media is enhanced by an awareness of how pleasing forms or effects are created.

6. The media have commercial implications.

Media literacy includes an awareness of the economic basis of mass media production. Networks look for audiences to be delivered to sponsors. Knowledge of this allows students to understand how program content makes them targets for advertisers and organizes viewers into marketable groups. The issue of ownership and control is of vital importance at a time when there are more choices but fewer voices. (Ninety percent of the world’s newspapers, magazines, television stations, films, and computer software companies are owned by seven corporate conglomerates.)

7. The media have social and political implications.

An important dimension of media literacy is an awareness of the broad range of social and political effects stemming from the media. The changing nature of family life, the use of leisure time and the results of televised political debates are three such examples. The mass media serve to legitimize societal values and attitudes. The media also have a major role in mediating global events and issues from civil rights to terrorism.

8. Form and content are closely related in the media.

Making the form/content connection relates to the thesis of Marshall McLuhan that “the medium is the message.” That is, each medium has its own special grammar and technological bias and codifies reality in unique ways. Thus, different media might report the same event but create different impressions and different messages.

Source: *The Association for Media Literacy, 2006, aml.ca/whatis/*

MEDIA LITERACY QUESTION SHEET

Critically analyze the animated film you selected using as a guide the questions below, developed from the eight Key Concepts of Media Literacy found in the “What Is Media Literacy?” section of the Association for Media Literacy website aml.ca. You may choose the questions you feel are most relevant to the film you selected.

Consider the following questions:

1. What “message” or messages can be found in the film?

2. How is this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?

3. How might others understand this message differently?

4. Who created this message and why? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?

5. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?

6. What aesthetic techniques are used in the film and why?

7. Does this film have commercial implications?

8. Does this film have social and political implications?

9. Overall, do you think the film you reviewed is a valuable contribution to society? If so, why? If not, explain.
