

## Media Literacy

The media play a prominent role in creating meaning, shaping our values and defining who we are. These values are powerful because we internalize them and take them for granted, because they seem natural and the way things should be and because they can shape the way we see and understand the people, objects, practices and institutions in our lives.

If our identities are socially constructed, then they are not neutral. Our gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and class can play a significant role in determining whether we have social, political and economic power, how we get that power and how we use it. Our identity can fundamentally shape our life experience, how we're treated, whom we meet and become friends with, what kind of education and jobs we get, where we live, what opportunities we're afforded and what kind of inequities we may face.

The media play a key role in conveying ideas and giving them weight. We tend to see the same images and representations over and over again. Media rely heavily on genres, conventions and stereotypes. As certain images and representations are repeated, they become familiar and natural. But are these representations really "natural"?

*Media literacy* encourages students to think critically about media messages. Students who are media literate will be able to recognize the following core concepts. With each core concept I've included a key question that you might ask as you analyze a piece of media. It is learning, practicing and mastering these questions over time that leads to an understanding of how media are created and what their purposes are, and an informed ability to accept or reject both explicit and implicit messages in those media.

Keyword	Core Concepts	Key Questions
Authorship	All media messages are "constructed."	Who created this message?
Format	Media messages are constructed using creative language with its own rules.	What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
Audience	Different people experience the same media message differently.	How might different people understand this message differently from me?
Content	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in; or omitted from, this message?
Purpose	Most media are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why is this message being sent?

*Center for Media Literacy*

*Common Sense Media*

*National Association of Media Literacy Education*

*The Gendered Advertising Remixer*

*The Critical Media Project*

*FAIR*