

- Media literacy empowers students to gain insight, explore issues, and to express their own opinions. Have students explore groups and organizations designed to teach media literacy. The following groups are known as "youth media initiatives" and are excellent sources for beginning investigators.

- [www.justthink.org/](http://www.justthink.org/)
- [www.kqed.org/topics/education/medialiteracy/youthmedia/index.jsp](http://www.kqed.org/topics/education/medialiteracy/youthmedia/index.jsp)

### Suggested Internet Sources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.medialit.org/](http://www.medialit.org/)  
The Center for Media Literacy provides teacher resources and information.
- [www.mediachannel.org/classroom/toolkit](http://www.mediachannel.org/classroom/toolkit)  
The Media Literacy Teachers' Toolkit offers links to lesson plans and other educational materials.
- [www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm)  
Created by the Media Awareness Network, this site can be searched by grade level and subject for lesson plans that can include supplemental handouts and background information.

### Suggested Print Sources

- Gifford, Clive. *Eyewitness: Media and Communications*. DK Publishing, Inc, New York, NY; 2000.
- Horn, Geoffrey M. *Political Parties, Interest Groups and the Media*. World Almanac Library, Milwaukee, WI; 2004.
- Mierau, Christina B. *Accept No Substitutes: The History of American Advertising*. Lerner Publishing Group, Minneapolis, MN; 2000.

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#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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#### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

- AVOIDING PLAGIARISM
- EVALUATING SOURCES
  - MEDIA LITERACY
- ORGANIZING RESEARCH
- PRESENTING & COMMUNICATING RESEARCH
- SEARCHING THE INTERNET

Teacher's Guides Included  
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## Media Literacy

### Grades 7–12

Through the Internet and print sources, students now have access to billions of pieces of information. The ability to select and use the best of this information to answer a question or to support a choice is an essential life skill. This series guides students to use a variety of search techniques, evaluation strategies and organizational plans to produce high quality research products. Each episode addresses the recursive cycle of the research process as supported by the American Library Association's standards for "information literacy":

- Identify the question or focus
- Search and access a variety of sources
- Select, analyze and evaluate resources
- Analyze and synthesize information
- Communicate and present information
- Evaluate the product and the process



## Program Summary

Media bombards us everyday with hidden messages that influence how we think, how we feel and what we buy. The ability to understand these messages in media is an essential life skill as is the process of media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms. Media can be analyzed by addressing some of the following questions:

- Who is creating the message and why?
- What kind of values, lifestyles and points of view are being emphasized?
- What kind of stereotypes does this message speak to?

Being media literate should allow students to analyze and evaluate the following most commonly found types of media.

**Entertainment** is a business that encompasses movies, music and TV. Effects such as sounds, lighting and images are used to convey subliminal messages.

**Advertising** uses powerful media language to create a psychological need that makes a consumer want a product. Underlying messages are conveyed using symbols, metaphors, characters, words or special effects.

**Politics and government** send messages to gain public support by using spin and propaganda. Political ads often use clothing, setting, music and slogans to target a specific audience with a specific message.

**News media** is a competitive business that constructs the news to attract an audience. It decides which stories get “front page” placement and exactly what parts of the story are and are not reported.

The media images that bombard us everyday are not selected at random. Each image is carefully crafted to convey an underlying message. It is important to be media literate in order to interpret those messages.

## Vocabulary

**advertisement** — A medium and persuasive form of communication designed to create a psychological need in an individual so that he/she purchases and uses a product. Advertisers rely on the following techniques to develop this psychological need:

- Promise of a lifestyle — The customer will be beautiful, strong or smart after using this product.
- Slice of life — Focused on the use of ordinary people to convince the customer to purchase the product.
- Testimonials — The customer is influenced by a celebrity’s likeability or attractiveness.
- Appeals to fear — The customer is influenced by the fear of what will happen if he/she doesn’t buy the product.
- Appeals to feel good — Some ads are designed to make the customer feel good or safe.
- Influence of repetition — Ideas appear to be true the more often a customer hears them.

**media** (plural of *medium*) — The vehicles used to communicate to mass audiences. Examples include newspaper, magazines, movies, computers, TVs, radios and music videos. Every medium uses its own “language” of codes and conventions to convey messages.

**media literacy** — The ability to understand the role of media in society.

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**propaganda** — Information spread with the intent of promoting a particular cause.

**spin** — A biased statement which gives an appearance of truth but actually obscures the underlying meaning or reality.

**subliminal persuasion** — Underlying, subconscious messages.

**subtext** — An underlying message implied through the use of symbol, metaphor, characters, words and special effects used in advertising.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to be media literate?
2. Explain the process of media literacy. Discuss questions you should ask at each step of the process.
3. How does the entertainment industry convey subliminal messages?
4. Define propaganda and spin. How are these techniques used in political and government advertising?
5. How does the news media decide which stories get mentioned first? Give examples of news stories found in current events and discuss their subliminal messages.

## Follow-Up Activities

- Open students' eyes to the barrage of media that saturates our lives. Have students keep a log of media that they encounter in a one-day period and discuss. To extend the activity, have students compare and discuss the amount and type of media experienced on a weekday to that encountered on a weekend.
- Check out spin and bias found in news reports. Ask students to find a current event that has been reported in two or more different media. Have students compare the different reports of the same event. How alike and different were the reports? How has the inclusion or exclusion of information affected their subliminal messages?
- Students might be surprised to discover that propaganda and spin have been found throughout history, even etched in stone by ancient civilizations. Have students explore media from throughout the ages through electronic and print sources. The following sites offer historical advertising and media for evaluation.
  - [memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam1.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwpcam/cwcam1.html)  
Examine a Civil War photographer's staged photo shoot at Gettysburg.
  - [www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/powers\\_of\\_persuasion\\_home.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_home.html)  
Posters from World War II demonstrate the powers of persuasion.
  - [scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/](http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/adaccess/)  
Ad<sup>®</sup>Access provides ads from 1911 to present.
  - [memory.loc.gov/ammem/ccmhtml/colahome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ccmhtml/colahome.html)  
“Fifty Years of Coca-Cola Television Advertisements” is on this Library of Congress site.
  - [cagle.slate.msn.com/](http://cagle.slate.msn.com/)  
This site offers a collection of political cartoons.

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