

# Literacy For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## *An Overview & Orientation Guide To Media Literacy Education*

### **Critical Thinking / Creative Communication**

.....

Core Concepts    •    Key Questions    •    Inquiry Process  
Definitions    •    Skills    •    Empowerment



# Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## *An Overview & Orientation Guide To Media Literacy Education*

Part I: Theory

***CML MediaLit Kit™***

A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age

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Center for Media Literacy

[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)

## **En Español!**

The original version of this document  
is available in Spanish  
under the title:  
***MediaLit Kit™ Orientation Guide***

<http://medialit.org/medialitkit.html>

*Additional translations will be posted  
as they become available.*

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***“The convergence of media and technology in a global culture  
is changing the way we learn about the world  
and challenging the very foundations of education.  
No longer is it enough to be able to read the printed word;  
children, youth, and adults, too, need the ability  
to both critically interpret the powerful images of a multimedia culture  
and express themselves in multiple media forms.***

***Media literacy education provides  
a framework and a pedagogy for the new literacy  
needed for living, working and citizenship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.  
Moreover it paves the way  
to mastering the skills required for lifelong learning  
in a constantly changing world.”***

Elizabeth Thoman and Tessa Jolls  
*Media Literacy: A National Priority for a Changing World*

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## Section I

# Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

*The Challenge of Teaching  
In a Global Media Culture*

***“The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those  
who cannot read and write,  
but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”***

Alvin Toffler

# Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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***“We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds.”***

UNESCO, 1982

**S**ince the beginning of recorded history, the concept of “literacy” meant having the skill to interpret “squiggles” on a piece of paper as letters which, when put together, formed words that conveyed meaning. Teaching the young to put the words together to understand (and, in turn, express) ever more complex ideas became the goal of education as it evolved over the centuries.

Today information about the world around us comes to us not only by words on a piece of paper but more and more through the powerful images and sounds of our multi-media culture. Although mediated messages appear to be self-evident, in truth, they use a complex audio/visual “language” which has its own rules (grammar) and which can be used to express many-layered concepts and ideas about the world. Not everything may be obvious at first; and images go by so fast! If our children are to be able to navigate their lives through this multi-media culture, they need to be fluent in “reading” and “writing” the language of images and sounds just as we have always taught them to “read” and “write” the language of printed communications.

In the last 40 years, the field of media literacy education has emerged to organize and promote the importance of teaching this expanded notion of “literacy.” At its core are the basic higher-order *critical* and *creative thinking skills*-- e.g. knowing how to identify key concepts, how to make connections between multiple ideas, how to ask pertinent questions, formulate a response, identify fallacies-- that form the very foundation of both intellectual freedom and the exercising of full citizenship in a democratic society.

Indeed in a time when candidates are elected by 30-second commercials and wars are fought real-time on television, a unique role of media literacy is to prepare citizens to *engage in* and *contribute to* the public debate.

It also expands the concept of “text” to include not just written texts but *any* message form -- verbal, aural or visual (or all three together!)-- that is used to create and then pass ideas back and forth between human beings.

## **New ways of learning**

This explosion in information has presented a major challenge to the world of formal education. For centuries, schooling has been designed to make sure students learned facts about the world-- which they proved they knew by correctly answering questions on tests. But such a system is no longer relevant when the most up-to-date facts are available at the touch of a button. What students need today is to learn how to find what they need to know when they need to know it-- and to have the higher order thinking skills to analyze and evaluate whether the information they find is useful for what they want to know.



How will schools do this? First, schools and classrooms must be transformed from being storehouses of knowledge to being more like portable tents providing a shelter and a gathering place for students as they go out to explore, to question, to experiment, *to discover!*

Secondly, to use a phrase from the great Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, teaching must be distinguished from “banking.” No longer is it necessary for teachers to deposit information in students’ heads. Retaking the principles of democratic pedagogy dating back to Socrates, wise teachers realize they do not have to be a “sage on the stage.” Instead their role is to be a “guide on the side:” encouraging . . . guiding . . . mentoring . . . supporting the learning process. Creative classrooms today are ones where *everyone* is learning, including the teacher!

Thirdly, curriculum, classes and activities must be designed that will *engage* students in problem solving and discovery. And today’s multi-media culture, which includes print but is not limited to it, provides a nearly limitless resource for real world learning -- from how to identify “point of view” by exploring how camera angles influence our perception of the subject being photographed to how to determine whether information on an Internet site is bogus or legitimate.

The transformation of our culture from an Industrial Age to an Information Age is why a new kind of literacy, coupled with a new way of learning, is critical in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This new kind of literacy is outlined in the *CMLMediaLit Kit™ / A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age*.

***“Most of what we have called formal education  
has been intended to imprint on the human mind  
all of the information  
that we might need for a lifetime.***

***Education is geared toward information storage.***

***Today that is neither possible nor necessary.  
Rather, humankind needs to be taught  
how to process information  
that is stored through technology.***

***Education needs to be geared toward the handling of data  
rather than the accumulation of data.”***

David Berlo  
*Communication and Behavior*  
1975

# What a Difference a Century Makes!

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The following chart provides a quick comparison of how traditional education has been organized in the past and how it needs to change in order to prepare students for living all their lives in a 21<sup>st</sup> century media culture. Media literacy education, with inquiry as its core, provides the engaging bridge over which students can pass to learn the critical process skills they'll need to not just survive but to thrive as adults in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Learning

- Limited access to knowledge and information (i.e. 'content') primarily through print
- Emphasis on learning content knowledge that may or may not be used in life
- Goal is to master content knowledge (literature, history, science, etc)
- Facts and information are "spoon-fed" by teachers to students
- Print-based information analysis
- Pencil / pen and paper or word processing for expression
- Classroom-limited learning and dissemination
- Textbook learning from one source, primarily print
- Conceptual learning on individual basis
- "Lock-step" age-based exposure to content knowledge
- Mastery demonstrated through papers and tests
- Teacher selecting and lecturing
- Teacher evaluates and assesses work and assigns grade
- Teaching with state-adopted textbooks for subject area with little accountability for teaching

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

- Infinite access to knowledge and information ('content') increasingly through the Internet
- Emphasis on process skills for lifelong learning
- Goal is to learn skills (access, analyze, evaluate, create) to solve problems
- Teachers use discovery, inquiry-based approach
- Multi-media information analysis
- Powerful multi-media technology tools for expression
- World-wide learning and dissemination
- Real-world, real-time learning from multiple sources, mostly visual and electronic
- Project-based learning on team basis
- Flexible individualized exposure to content knowledge
- Mastery demonstrated through multi-media
- Teacher framing and guiding
- Students learn to set criteria and to evaluate own work
- Teaching to state education standards with testing for accountability

# Why Media Literacy is Important

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## **1. The influence of media in our central democratic processes.**

In a global media culture, people need two skills in order to be engaged citizens of a democracy: *critical thinking* and *self-expression*. Media literacy instills both of these core skills, enabling future citizens to sort through political packaging, understand and contribute to public discourse, and, ultimately, make informed decisions in the voting booth.

## **2. The high rate of media consumption and the saturation of society by media.**

When one considers videogames, television, pop music, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, the internet – even T-shirts! – we are exposed to more mediated messages in one day than our great-grandparents were exposed to in a year. Media literacy teaches the skills we need to navigate safely through this sea of images and messages -- for all our lives.

## **3. The media's influence on shaping perceptions, beliefs and attitudes.**

While research disagrees on the extent and type of influence, it is unquestionable that media experiences exert a significant impact on the way we understand, interpret and act on our world. By helping us understand those influences, media education can help us separate from our dependencies on them.

## **4. The increasing importance of visual communication and information.**

While schools continue to be dominated by print, our lives are increasingly influenced by visual images -- from corporate logos to building-sized billboards to Internet websites. Learning how to “read” the multiple layers of image-based communication is a necessary adjunct to traditional print literacy. We live in a *multi-media* world.

## **5. The importance of information in society and the need for lifelong learning.**

Information processing and information services are at the core of our nation's productivity but the growth of global media industries is also challenging independent voices and diverse views. Media education can help both teachers and students understand where information comes from, whose interests may be being served and how to find alternative views.

--With thanks to Len Masterman, *Teaching the Media*

***“From the clock radio  
that wakes us up in the morning  
until we fall asleep watching the late night talk show,  
we are exposed to hundreds  
-- even thousands --  
of images and ideas  
not only from television  
but now also from newspaper headlines, magazine covers,  
movies, websites, video games and billboards.***

***Media no longer just shape our culture. . .  
they ARE our culture.”***

*Media&Values #57*

# Questioning the Media

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***“At the heart of media literacy is the principle of inquiry.”***

Elizabeth Thoman  
Founder / Center for Media Literacy

**T**o be a functioning adult in a mediated society, one needs to be able to distinguish between different media forms and know how to ask basic questions about everything we watch, read or hear.

Although most adults learned through literature classes to distinguish a poem from an essay, it’s amazing how many people do not understand the difference between a daily newspaper and a supermarket tabloid, what makes one website legitimate and another one a hoax, or how advertisers package products to entice us to buy.

Simple questions about the media can start even at the toddler stage, planting important seeds for cultivating a lifetime of interrogating the world around us. Parents, grandparents, even babysitters can make a game of “spot the commercial” to help children learn to distinguish between entertainment programs and the commercial messages that support them. Even children’s picture books can help little ones grasp the storytelling power of images-- *“And what do you think will happen next?”*

As children grow and are able to distinguish the world of fantasy from the real world they live in, they can explore how media are put together by turning the sound off during a cartoon and noting the difference it makes, or even create their own superhero story using a home video camera and easy to use editing software on the family computer. When students begin to use the internet to research school projects, they can compare different websites and contrast different versions of the same information in order to detect bias or political “spin.”

Usually the questioning process is applied to a specific media “text”-- that is, an identifiable production or publication, or a part of one: an episode of *Power Puff Girls*, an ad for Pepsi, an issue of *People* magazine, a billboard for Budweiser beer, photos and articles about a bank robbery on the front page of a newspaper, the SuperBowl telecast, a hot new videogame.

Sometimes a media “text” can involve multiple formats. A new animated Disney film, for example, involves not only a blockbuster movie released in thousands of theatres but also a whole campaign of advertising and merchandising-- character dolls and toys, clothes, lunchboxes, etc.-- as well as a website, storybooks, games and perhaps eventually, a ride at one of the Disney theme parks.

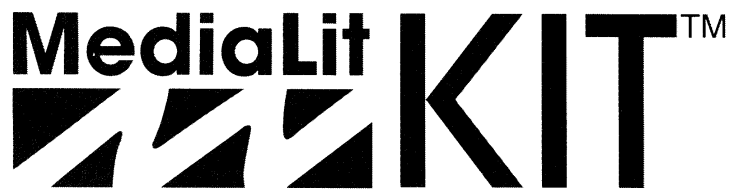
Uncovering the many levels of meaning in a media message and the multiple answers to even basic questions is what makes media education so engaging for kids and so enlightening for adults.

## Essential Questions for Teachers

1. Am I trying to tell the students what the message is? Or am I giving students the skills to determine what they think the message(s) might be?
2. Have I let students know that I am open to accepting their interpretation, as long as it is well substantiated, or have I conveyed the message that my interpretation is the only correct view?
3. At the end of the lesson, are students likely to be more analytical? Or more cynical?

--with thanks to Faith Rogow, PhD

## Section II



A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age

***“ . . . A marvelous piece of work – clear, concise,  
the distillation of the most available research and practice.  
. . . As a framework for taking teachers through all  
of the necessary stages, components, ideas and assumptions about  
media literacy, it could scarcely be bettered.  
I hope it reaches every school and college in the land.”***

Len Masterman / Author: *Teaching the Media*

# Media Literacy:

## *Theory to Practice to Implementation*

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Like a map for a journey, the *CMLMediaLit Kit™* provides both a vision and an evolving guide for navigating today's global media culture.

As a vision of media literacy, the *MediaLit Kit* title is simply a metaphor for a collection of the core ideas that are fundamental to media literacy's inquiry-based pedagogy. As an evolving guide, the *CML MediaLit Kit™* expands our educational philosophy of *Empowerment through Education* through a series of documents and Internet resources articulating the *theory, practice and implementation* of media literacy in the US educational system.

Resting on a foundation of CML's 25 years of experience in the field plus the thinking of leading practitioners around the world, the *MediaLit Kit™* was created to help establish a common ground upon which to build curriculum programs, teaching materials and training services for teaching in an increasingly mediated world.

We believe that the *CML MediaLit Kit™* provides, for the first time, *an accessible, integrated outline of the established foundational concepts and implementation models needed to organize and structure teaching activities using a media literacy lens.*

### **How this project came to be**

For over 25 years the Center for Media Literacy has built a reputation for clear and concise interpretation and articulation of the theory and issues in media education – first through *Media&Values* magazine (1977 – 1993) and later in a series of *Media Literacy Workshop Kits*, the first generation of teaching tools for US-based media literacy.

In 1994, CML founder Elizabeth Thoman made her foundational article “Skills and Strategies for Media Education” copyright free. Reprinted widely for workshops and training, it helped to create a common language and understanding for media literacy nationally.

The time has come for a new articulation that reflects evolutionary developments in both education and society, including the impact of the Internet and new multi-media technology on learning – and on life. This new articulation is now the *CML MediaLit Kit™* and includes the *theory / practice / implementation* documents and resources listed on the following page.

As articulated in this *Overview and Orientation Guide*, the *CML MediaLit Kit™* now serves as the basis for *all* CML's work in curriculum development and training. We invite others, whether individual teachers, staff development trainers, researchers or publishers to adopt it as well.

### **Terms of Use**

Elements of the *CML MediaLit Kit™*, including handouts and charts, may be used by individual teachers in their classrooms without charge but without alteration to the text or credits. Schools and districts, publishers, curriculum developers, training agencies and others who incorporate elements of the *MediaLit Kit™* framework for profit or for wide dissemination should license it from CML. Much as software is developed by users, CML encourages additional adaptations and specialized applications as well as research relating media literacy pedagogy to learning objectives across the curriculum.

We welcome your comments and suggestions as our common language and understanding continues to evolve. On page 48 you will find a reflection and feedback form to facilitate sharing your experience with the *CML MediaLit Kit™*



A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age

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## **Part I: Theory**

### ***Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

#### **An Overview and Orientation Guide to Media Literacy Education**

A plain language introduction to the basic elements of media literacy education. An invaluable reference for teachers, media librarians, curriculum developers, researchers and all who want to understand what media literacy is all about. Contains charts, handouts and explanation for each of the elements in the framework plus tips and recommendations for how to introduce media literacy in your school, district or state.

Available online at: [www.medialit.org/orientationguide.html](http://www.medialit.org/orientationguide.html)

\* Single or quantity printed copies: #1533

## **Part II: Practice**

### ***Five Key Questions That Can Change the World***

#### **Classroom Activities for Media Literacy**

A collection of 25 cornerstone lesson plans to help you introduce students to the *Five Key Questions of Media Literacy* and master them through practice. Activities emphasize not just analysis but also creative production. Useful for all grade levels and across the curriculum: language arts, social studies, health, math, and the arts.

Available online at: [www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions.html](http://www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions.html)

\* Single or quantity printed copies: #1534

## **Part III: Implementation**

### ***Media Literacy Works!***

#### **Project SMARTart: A Case Study in Elementary Media Literacy and Arts Education**

An inside look at a federally funded demonstration project at Leo Politi Elementary School in Los Angeles where teachers developed innovative strategies to link media literacy to state standards for the arts as well as for language arts and English language development. Includes lesson plans, student animation and findings on how the *Five Key Questions* make media literacy implementable across the curriculum and what it takes for a media literacy program to be replicated in a school or district and sustained over time.

Available online at: [www.projectsart.org](http://www.projectsart.org)

## **Part IV: Resources**

**1. \* Poster Sets:** (#1447) Colorful laminated posters designed for classroom or library illustrate the core elements of media literacy including the *Five Core Concepts* and the *Five Key Questions*.

**2. \* Video: *Mind Over Media*.** (#1351) A 60-minute video introduction to media literacy education for administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders. Four 15-minute segments make it ideal for in-service workshops.

\* For complete description or to order, go to [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog) and put order number in the keyword search box.

# How this Book is Organized

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The first section of this *Overview & Orientation Guide* provided a rationale for media literacy *as literacy* for a 21<sup>st</sup> century media culture. Now we will explore in depth each of the core elements in the *MediaLit Kit*'s Basic Framework, providing rationale, context, and relevant background.

The Basic Framework consists of six elements outlined below. Gain a quick understanding of these elements in the charts on the following three pages. The page reference below each slide will take you to the page in later sections where the element is explained more fully.

The cornerstone of the *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup> pedagogy is the *Five Key Questions of Media Literacy*, an innovative recasting of the *Five Core Concepts* which the early media literacy field adapted from the traditional rhetorical analysis of primarily print literature.

In our work with teachers over the years, we realized that concepts are difficult to teach but questions are powerful. Learning to ask a series of *Key Questions* about today's media culture provides an internal checklist against which to analyze and evaluate any media message from any source. That's empowerment! You will see these concepts and questions in a variety of formats in the pages that follow.

## Basic Framework:

1. The 'Inquiry' Process: "Free Your Mind" / "Express Your View"
2. A Media Literacy Definition
3. Five Core Concepts
4. Five Key Questions
5. Media Literacy Process Skills: Access / Analyze / Evaluate / Create
  - How to Conduct a 'Close Analysis' of a Media 'Text'
6. The Empowerment Spiral: Awareness / Analysis / Reflection / Action
  - How to Organize Media Literacy Learning

## Alternate Questions for Different Ages and Abilities

1. Key Questions to Guide Young Children
2. Expanded Questions / for more sophisticated inquiry

A few ideas for exploring the concepts in the classroom are included but for a comprehensive collection of lesson plans we refer you to Part II of the *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup>: *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*. And for implementation models, see the collection of *Media Literacy Works!* case studies on the CML website.

## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the generous contribution of leaders and colleagues in the field who have graciously allowed us to incorporate their reflections, experience and wisdom in order to share them with you

## Handouts and PowerPoint Slides

The charts on pages 15-17 are also available on the CML website as 8 ½ x 11 handouts (in color or black/white) or as a PowerPoint presentation. In order to support the evolution of a common language and framework for U.S. media literacy, we request that these resources be used *without alteration* and with appropriate credit. To access all web resources related to the *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup>, go to:

**[www.medialit.org/medialitkit.html](http://www.medialit.org/medialitkit.html)**



For more detail on each idea, go to the page indicated.  
PowerPoint slides and handouts may be downloaded at [www.medialit.org/medialitkit](http://www.medialit.org/medialitkit)

## The Inquiry Process

**'Free Your Mind' /  
'Express Your View'**

- **Analysis** / Production
- **Deconstruction** / Construction
- **'Reading'** / 'Writing'
- **Viewing** / Re-presenting

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## Five Key Questions

1. Who created this message?
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently from me?
4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why was this message sent?

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## What is Media Literacy?

Media Literacy is a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education. . .

. . . provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms.

. . . builds an understanding of the role of media in society, as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

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## Media Literacy Process Skills

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## Five Core Concepts

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

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## Empowerment Spiral

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# Alternate Questions for Different Ages and Abilities

## Questions to Guide Young Children

1. What is this? How is this put together?
2. What do I see and hear? Smell? Touch or taste? What do I like or dislike about this?
3. What do I think and feel about this? What might other people think and feel about this?
4. What does this tell me about how other people live and behave? Is anything or anyone left out?
5. Is this trying to sell me something? Is this trying to tell me something?



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## Expanded Questions Messages & Values

1. What makes this message seem realistic or unrealistic?
2. How does this message fit with your lived experience of the world?
3. What social or ideological messages are a part of the message's subtext?
4. What kinds of behaviors and what kinds of consequences are depicted?
5. What is omitted from this message?
6. Whose point of view is presented?



## Expanded Questions

- Messages and Values
- Codes and Conventions
- Producers and Consumers



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## Expanded Questions Codes & Conventions

1. What is the message genre?
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. What conventions of storytelling or symbolism are used in this message?
4. What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message?
5. How is this message similar and different from others with similar content?



## Expanded Questions Producers & Consumers

1. Who created this message? And why?
2. Who is the target audience?
3. How have economic decisions influenced the construction of this message?
4. What reasons might an individual have for being interested in this message?
5. How might different individuals interpret this message differently?



# Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions

Media Literacy		
	Core Concepts	Key Questions
1	All media messages are "constructed."	Who created this message?
2	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3	Different people experience the same media message differently.	How might different people understand this message differently from me?
4	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
5	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why was this message sent?

**Core Concept/  
Key Question #3**

Different people experience the same media message differently.

How might different people understand this message differently from me?

*Keyword:* Audience

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**Core Concept/  
Key Question #1**

All media messages are constructed.

Who created this message?

*Keyword:* 'Constructedness'

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**Core Concept/  
Key Question #4**

Media have embedded values and points of view.

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

*Keyword:* Content

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**Core Concept/  
Key Question #2**

Media messages are constructed using a media language with its own rules.

What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

*Keyword:* Format

page 24

**Core Concept/  
Key Question #5**

Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Why is this message being sent?

*Keyword:* Purpose

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## **Five Key Questions of Media Literacy**

1. Who created this message?
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently from me?.
4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why was this message sent?

## **Five Core Concepts**

1. All media messages are 'constructed.'
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

## Section III

# **Pedagogy in Plain Language**

*The Framework Explained*

***“The MediaLit Kit™ is an outstanding map  
for anyone embarking on the critical and rewarding journey  
that is teaching media literacy. . .  
An incredibly valuable piece of work that will, no doubt,  
contribute significantly to the development and form of  
media literacy education in the U.S. and beyond.”***

Faith Rogow, Ph.D.  
*Founding National President*  
Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA)

# 1. The 'Inquiry' Process

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The teaching approach that best suits the media literacy classroom is called the “inquiry process” and includes both analytical (deconstruction) skills as well as creative communications (construction / production) skills. When analysis is combined with creative production, theory unites with application, thereby allowing students to discover and express their learning in an interconnected and natural process. Each enriches the other.

Since media messages are transmitted through so many different mental processes, the combination of analysis with production also incorporates multiple intelligences in the learning process (linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal). While both activities can happen independently there is much to gain by meshing the two into one cohesive activity of analysis and production-- that is: *Free Your Mind!* and *Express Your View!*

## ***Free Your Mind!***

### **Analysis / Deconstruction / Decoding “Reading”**

To free one’s mind, students need the skills and abilities to “read” their multi-media world and understand its many layers of messages. The process of taking apart messages, whether print or electronic, is referred to in many ways: analysis, deconstruction, decoding or “reading” in the traditional terminology of reading/writing literacy. Media analysis develops *critical thinking skills* and involves all the competencies of Bloom’s Taxonomy (*knowledge, analysis, comprehension, application, synthesis and evaluation*) and is an important part of media literacy education because:

- It strengthens observation and interpretation.
- It deepens understanding and appreciation.
- It challenges stereotyping – both misrepresentations and/or under-representations.
- It illuminates bias and point of view.
- It uncovers motivations.
- It exposes implicit messages that are less obvious.
- It gives perspective and meaning to the media creators.
- It enlightens society about the effects and implications of a message.

## ***Express Your View!***

### **Production / Construction / Creating “Writing”**

In today’s multi-media culture “writing” is far more complex than putting pen to paper. Today students may “write” a PowerPoint report for science class, “create” a persuasive poster about teen smoking for their health project or, in American History, express the Native American’s point of view about Christopher Columbus by drawing an original political cartoon. All of these projects require the same *creative thinking* abilities as writing words on paper: *organize* your ideas, *draft* and *redraft* your words, images and/or sounds, *edit, polish* and *present* the final product. Student production is an important component of media literacy education for many reasons:

- It involves the application of multiple intelligences.
- It requires active hands-on learning.
- It increases motivation and the enjoyment of learning.
- It generates new avenues for alternative representations.
- It creates outlets to communicate beyond the classroom.
- It reinforces self-esteem and self-expression.
- It offers “real world” practical application of theoretical concepts.

## 2. Media Literacy: A Definition

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The definition most often cited in the US is a succinct sentence hammered out by participants at the 1992 Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute:

**... the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.**

Definitions, however, evolve over time and a more robust definition is now needed to situate media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21<sup>st</sup> century media culture. CML's *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup> uses this expanded definition:

**Media Literacy is a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education.**

**It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms – from print to video to the Internet.**

**Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.**

What is important to understand is that media literacy is not about “protecting” kids from unwanted messages. Although some groups urge families to just turn the TV off, the fact is, media are so ingrained in our cultural milieu that even if you turn off the set, you still cannot escape today’s media culture. Media no longer just influence our culture. They *are* our culture.

Media literacy, therefore, is about helping students become competent, critical and *literate* in all media forms so that they control the interpretation of what they see or hear rather than letting the interpretation control them. To become media literate is not to memorize facts or statistics about the media, but rather *to learn to raise the right questions* about what you are watching, reading or listening to. Len Masterman, the acclaimed author of *Teaching the Media*, calls it “critical autonomy” or the ability *to think for oneself*.

Without this fundamental ability, an individual cannot have full dignity as a human person or exercise citizenship in a democratic society where to be a citizen is to both *understand* and *contribute* to the debates of the time.

### What Media Literacy Is NOT

- Media ‘bashing’ is NOT media literacy, however media literacy often involves criticizing the media.
- Merely producing media is NOT media literacy, although media literacy should include media production activities and projects.
- Just bringing videos or CD-ROMs or other mediated content into the classroom is NOT media literacy; one must also explore the nature and influence of media and media messages in our culture.
- Simply looking for political agendas, stereotypes or misrepresentations is NOT media literacy; there should also be an exploration of the systems making them appear “normal.”
- Looking at a media message or experience from just one perspective is NOT media literacy because media should be examined from multiple positions.
- Media literacy does NOT mean “don’t watch;” it means “watch carefully, think critically.”

– With thanks to Renee Hobbs, Chris Worsnop, Neil Andersen, Jeff Share and Scott Sullivan.

## 3. Five Core Concepts

## 4. Five Key Questions

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At CML, we believe that success will have been achieved when *all students* graduate with the ability and proficiency to apply Media Literacy’s *Five Key Questions* routinely and regularly to their media experiences – whether they are watching live news coverage of a world event, flipping through ads in a magazine, surfing the Internet or sharing a movie with a friend.

In the *CML MediaLit Kit™*, the *Five Key Questions* flow directly from *Five Core Concepts* that media literacy practitioners around the world have evolved to explore five analytical aspects of a media message. These Keywords create a brief outline of the analytical construct behind the concepts and questions:

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Author ('constructedness')            | 3. Audience             |
| 2. Format (and techniques of production) | 4. Content (or message) |
|  | 5. Motive (or purpose)  |

On the following pages, you will see how each *Key Question* flows from and is related to its *Core Concept*. The Keywords plus a set of *Guiding Questions* lays the path that builds mastery of each Question. On later pages, you’ll find *Alternate Questions* for very young students – and *Enhanced Questions* for older or more advanced students. Throughout this document, we provide a variety of handouts and presentation materials to help you, your colleagues and your students to understand and compare the questions and the concepts.

### Teaching Future Citizens

In the classroom, however, the goal is not to so much to teach the *Core Concepts*, especially with younger students, but, rather, to focus on the *Five Key Questions* in order to help students *build the habit* of routinely subjecting media messages to a checklist of questions appropriate to their age and ability. As explained in the “Words of Wisdom” handout however (page 47) teachers need to be thoroughly acquainted with the *Five Core Concepts* in order to structure classroom activities and curriculum connections that provide students with opportunities to learn and practice the asking of questions about media in their lives.

Together the *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions* serve as “Big Ideas” or the “enduring understanding” that students will need in order to navigate their way through life as citizens in a global media culture. Together, they are a unique contribution to 21<sup>st</sup> Century education and a powerful set of tools for preparing future citizens to understand, share in and contribute to the public debate.

**NOTE:** More complete descriptions and applications of the *Five Key Questions* and *Five Core Concepts* can be found in *MediaLit Kit™* / Book II: *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*.

***“It is the learning, practicing and mastering  
of the Five Key Questions – over time –  
that leads to a deep understanding  
of how media are created and what their purposes are  
along with an informed ability to accept or reject  
both explicit and implicit messages.  
If democracy is to flourish in a global media culture,  
future citizens must have these fundamental skills.”***

– Tessa Jolls, CML President



**Key Question #1:**

**Who created this message?**

**Core Concept #1:**

**All media messages are ‘constructed.’**

We should not think of media texts (newspaper articles, TV shows, comic books to name just a few) as “natural” things. Media texts are built just as surely as buildings and highways are built. The building materials involved vary from one kind of text to another. In a magazine, for example, there are words in different sizes and typefaces, photographs, colors, layout and page location. TV and movies have hundreds of building blocks-- from camera angles and lighting to music and sound effects.

What this means is that whether we are watching the nightly news or passing a billboard on the street, the media message we experience was written by someone (or probably several people), pictures were taken and a creative designer put it all together. But this is more than a physical process. What happens is that whatever is “constructed” by just a few people then becomes “normalized” for the rest of us; like the air we breathe, it gets taken for granted and usually goes unquestioned. But as the audience, we don't get to see or hear the words, pictures or arrangements that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted!

The success of media texts depends upon their apparent naturalness; we turn off a production that looks “fake.” But the truth is, it's all fake – even the news! That doesn't mean we can't still enjoy a movie, watch TV or listen to music. The goal of this question is not to make us cynical but simply to expose the complexities of media's “constructedness” and thus create the critical distance we need to be able to ask other important questions.

**Keyword:**

Author / ‘Constructedness’

**Guiding Questions:**

- What kind of “text” is it?
- What are the various elements (building blocks) that make up the whole?
- How similar or different is it to others of the same genre?
- Which technologies are used in its creation?
- How would it be different in a different medium?
- What choices were made that might have been made differently?
- How many people did it take to create this message? What are their various jobs?

**Key Question #2:**

**What creative techniques are used  
to attract my attention?**

**Core Concept #2:**

**Media messages are constructed using  
a creative language with its own rules.**

Each form of communication-- whether newspapers, TV game shows or horror movies-- has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media language, especially the language of sounds and visuals which can reach beyond the rational to our deepest emotional core, increases our appreciation and enjoyment of media experiences as well as helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

One of the best ways to understand how media are put together is to do just that-- make a video, create a website, develop an ad campaign about a community issue. The more real world the project is, the better. Digital cameras and computer authoring programs provide easy ways to integrate creative production projects in any subject area. In addition the four major arts disciplines-- music, dance, theatre and the visual arts-- can also provide a context through which one gains skills of analysis, interpretation and appreciation along with opportunities for self-expression and producing a message for an audience.

**Keyword:**

Format

**Guiding Questions:**

- *What do you notice. . .* (about the way the message is constructed?)
  - Colors and shapes?
  - Sound effects? Music? Silence? Dialogue or Narration?
  - Props, sets, clothing?
  - Movement? Composition
  - Lighting?
- Where is the camera? What is the viewpoint?
- How is the story told? What are people doing?
- Are there any visual symbols or metaphors?
- What's the emotional appeal? Persuasive devices?
- What makes it seem "real"?

**Key Question #3:**

**How might different people understand  
this message differently from me?**

**Core Concept #3:**

**Different people experience  
the same media message differently.**

Audiences play a role in interpreting media texts because each audience member brings to the media text a unique set of life experiences (age, gender, education, cultural upbringing, etc.) which, when applied to the text-- or combined *with* the text-- create unique interpretations. A World War II veteran, for example, brings a different set of experiences to a movie like *Saving Private Ryan* than any other audience member--resulting in a different reaction to the film as well as, perhaps, greater insight. Even parents and children watching TV together do not “see” the same program.

This concept turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers as just passive “couch potatoes.” We may not be conscious of it but each of us, even toddlers, are constantly trying to “make sense” of what we see, hear or read. The more questions we can ask about what we are experiencing around us, the more alert we can be about accepting or rejecting messages. Research indicates that, over time, children of all ages can learn age-appropriate skills that give them a new set of glasses with which they can “read” and interpret their media culture.

**Keyword:**

Audience

**Guiding Questions:**

- Have you ever experienced anything like this?
- How close does it come to what you experienced in real life?
- What did you learn from this media text? What did you learn *about yourself* from experiencing the media text?
- What did you learn from other people’s response—and their experience?
- How many other interpretations could there be? How could we hear about them?
- How can you explain the different responses?
- Are other viewpoints just as valid as mine?

**Key Question #4:**

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

**Core Concept #4:**

**Media have embedded values  
and points of view.**

**M**edia, because they are constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important -- at least to the person or persons creating the construction. Media are also storytellers (even commercials tell a quick and simple story) and stories require characters and settings and a plot that has a beginning, a middle and an end. The choice of a character's age, gender or race mixed in with the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors that are portrayed, the selection of a setting (urban? rural? affluent? poor?), and the actions and re-actions in the plot are just some of the ways that values become "embedded" in a TV show, a movie or an ad.

It is important to learn how to "read" all kinds of media messages in order to discover the points of view that are embedded in them and how to assess them as part of the text rather than merely accepting them as "natural." Only then can we judge whether to accept or reject a message. Being able to recognize and name *missing* perspectives is also a critical skill as we negotiate our way each day through our mediated environment.

**Keyword:**

Message / Content

**Guiding Questions:**

- How is the human person characterized? What kinds of behaviors / consequences are depicted?
- What type of person is the reader / watcher / listener invited to identify with?
- What questions come to mind as you watch / read / listen?
- What ideas or values are being "sold" in this message?
- What political or economic ideas are communicated in the message?
- What judgments or statements are made about how we treat other people?
- What is the overall worldview?
- Are any ideas or perspectives left out? How would you find what's missing?

**Key Question #5:**

**Why is this message being sent?**

**Core Concept #5:**

**Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.**

**M**uch of the world's media were developed as money-making enterprises and continue to operate today as commercial businesses. Newspapers and magazines lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, commercials are part and parcel of most TV watching. What many people do not know is that what's really being sold through commercial media is not just the advertised products to the audience -- but also the audience to the advertisers!

The *real* purpose of the programs on television, or the articles in a magazine, is to create an audience (and put them in a receptive mood) so that the network or publisher can sell *time* or *space* to sponsors to advertise products-- usually in a way that entices us to want what we really don't need! Sponsors pay for the time based on the number of people the producers predict will be watching. And they get a refund if the number of actual viewers or readers turns out to be lower than promised.

But the issue of message motivation has changed dramatically since the Internet became an international platform through which groups and organizations-- even individuals-- can attempt to persuade others to a particular point of view. The Internet provides numerous reasons for users of all ages to be able to interpret rhetorical devices, verify sources and distinguish legitimate online sources from bogus, hate or 'hoax' websites. And with democracy at stake almost everywhere around the world, citizens in every country need to be equipped with the ability to determine both economic and ideological "spin."

**Keyword:**

Purpose

**Guiding Questions:**

- Who's in control of the creation and transmission of this message?
- Why are they sending it? How do you know?
- Who are they sending it to? How do you know?
- Who is served by, profits or benefits from the message? The public? Private interests? Individuals? Institutions?
- Who wins? Who loses? Who decides?
- What economic decisions may have influenced the construction or transmission of the message?

## 5. Process Skills: Success for Life

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In its report, *Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, a public-private organization of leaders and educators in business and education, outlined what it will take to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century work and living environment:

“People need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills – by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, making decisions.. (They) need to become lifelong learners, updating their knowledge and skills continually and independently.”

Using the *CML MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup> as a framework, students not only gain knowledge about the *content* of contemporary media but perhaps more importantly, they learn and practice the *skills* needed to navigate one’s way in a global media culture. These skills include the ability to:

### Access . . .

When people *access* messages, they are able to collect relevant and useful information and comprehend its meaning effectively. They can:

- Recognize and understand a rich vocabulary of words, symbols and techniques of communication.
- Develop strategies for locating information from a wide variety of sources.
- Select an assortment of types of information relevant to the purpose of a task.

### Analyze . . .

When people *analyze* messages, they are able to examine the design of the message’s form, structure and sequence. They can make use of artistic, literary, social, political and economic concepts to understand the context in which the message occurs. For example,

- Use prior knowledge and experiences to predict outcomes.
- Interpret a message using concepts such as purpose, audience, point of view, format, genre, character, plot, theme, mood, setting, context.
- Use strategies including compare/contrast, fact/opinion, cause/effect, listing and sequencing.

For a sample exercise in analyzing a media message, see the following pages on “How to Conduct a ‘Close Analysis’ of a Media Text.”

### Evaluate . . .

When people *evaluate* messages, they are able to relate messages to their own experience and make judgments about the veracity, quality and relevance of messages. This includes being able to:

- Appreciate and take pleasure in interpreting messages in different genres and forms.
- Evaluate the quality of a message based on its content and form.
- Judge the value of a message based on one’s ethical, religious or democratic principles.
- Respond orally, in print, or electronically to messages of varying complexity and content.

### Create . . .

When people *create* (or communicate) messages, they are able to “write” their ideas, using words, sounds and/or images effectively for a variety of purposes, and they are able to make use of various technologies of communication to create, edit and disseminate their message.

- Make use of brainstorming, planning, composing and revising processes.
- Use writing and oral language effectively with mastery of rules of language usage.
- Create and select images effectively to achieve various goals.
- Use technologies of communication in the construction of messages.

– With thanks to Renee Hobbs, Ed.D.

# How to Conduct a ‘Close Analysis’ of a Media ‘Text’

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While getting “caught up” in a storytelling experience has been the essence of entertainment since our ancestors told tales around the fire, the relentless pace of entertainment media today requires that at least once in awhile, we should stop and look, really look, at how a media message is put together and the many interpretations that can derive from it. The method for this is called “close analysis.” To learn to conduct this basic media literacy exercise, try it first yourself; then introduce it to a group or class using tips at the end of this article.

Any media message can be used for a close analysis but commercials are often good choices because they are short and tightly packed with powerful words and images, music and sounds. Find a commercial to analyze by recording, not the programs but *just the commercials*, during an hour or two of TV watching. Play the tape and look for a commercial that seems to have a lot of layers-- interesting visuals and sound track, memorable words or taglines, multiple messages that call out for exploration. Replay your selection several times as you go through the following steps:

## 1. Visuals.

After the first viewing, write down everything you can remember about the visuals-- lighting, camera angles, how the pictures are edited together. Describe any people-- what do they look like? what are they doing? wearing? What scenes or images do you remember clearly? Focus only on what is actually on the screen, not your interpretation of what you saw on the screen. (See the following sample exercise, *What Do You Notice?* ) If necessary, play it again but with the sound off. Keep adding to your list of visuals.

## 2. Sounds.

Replay again with the picture off. Listen to the sound track. Write down all the words that are spoken. Who says them? What kind of music is used? Does it change in the course of the commercial? How? Are there other sounds? What is their purpose? Who is being spoken to-- directly or indirectly? (That is, *who* is the audience addressed by the commercial?)

## 3. Apply Key Questions.

With the third viewing, begin to apply the *Five Key Questions* and the *Guiding Questions* that lead to them. Identify the author(s) and how the specific “construction” techniques you identified in steps 1 and 2 influence what the commercial is “saying”-- values expressed and unexpressed; lifestyles endorsed or rejected; points of view proposed or assumed. Explore what's left out of the message and how different people might react differently to it. What is the message “selling”? Is it the same as the product being advertised? Continue to show the text over and over; it's like peeling back the layers of an onion.

## 4. Review Your Insights.

Summarize how the text is constructed and how various elements of the construction trigger our own unique response-- which may be very different than how others interpret the text. Try this exercise with other kinds of messages-- a story from a newscast, a key scene from a movie, a print advertisement, a website. Are different questions important for different kinds of messages?

Doing a close analysis with a class or group can be exhilarating, with insights coming fast and furiously. After the first showing, start the group exercise with the simple question: “*What did you notice?*” Different people will remember different things so accept all answers and keep asking, “*What else did you notice?*”

If the group is having a hard time, show the clip again and invite them to look for something that stands out for them. Continue the brainstorming until you have at least 15 or 20 answers to the question: “*What did you notice?*” Challenge any attempt to assign interpretation too early. Keep the group focused on identifying only

what was actually on screen or heard on the soundtrack. The key to success with this exercise is for the teacher/leader to *keep asking questions*. Refrain from contributing too many answers yourself.

While no one has the time to subject every media message to this kind of analysis, it takes only two or three experiences with close analysis to give us the insight to “see” through other media messages as we encounter them. It's like having a new set of glasses that brings the whole media world into focus.

### **Teaching Tip:**

When you find a text that is useful for a close analysis, put it on a videotape six or eight times with 5 seconds of black between. This makes it easier to show it several times without having to stop and rewind.

## **What did you notice?**

*A sample inquiry into visual language.*

**Media Text:** A :60 commercial showing an attractive middle-aged woman driving on a dark, lonely road when her car breaks down. She tries in vain to restart the car. . . a truck passes going the other way but does not stop. (Turns out to be a commercial for a cell phone.)

**Teacher/Leader:** What did you notice about this text? First, what did you actually see on the screen?

**Group Responses:** driving on a lonely road. . . it's night / dark . . . woman alone . . . car breaks down . . . she's afraid. . .

**T/L:** Oh?, you saw fear?! How did you see fear? Fear is an abstract concept . . . what did you *actually* see (that led you *to conclude* : fear)?

(You might want to chart the following typical responses in two columns which can later clarify: denotation / connotation)

**GR:** Closeup of woman turning key in ignition with sound of car grinding but not starting . . . close-up of foot on gas pedal. . . close-up of engine light. . . close-up of her fingers drumming on the steering wheel. . . closeup of her looking out the window to see if anyone around. . . no . . . on the sound track, the music is in a minor key, kind of eerie.

**T/L:** Okay! After the establishing shot which put her on a dark country road, there were four quick cuts showing her trying to start the car. Put those together with the eerie music and we viewers *jump to the conclusion* that she's afraid-- or that she *should* be afraid. . .

Further exploration reveals that each shot of the commercial, plus the editing which goes faster and faster like a racing heartbeat, is carefully constructed to build the case that the woman is in danger and afraid. If we, as viewers, buy into it and begin to identify with a feeling of fear, we've been “hooked” by the commercial's premise, whether we ever buy a cell phone or not. This is the power of visual language and why we need to help our students learn to “read” it.



## 6. The Empowerment Spiral

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***“Successful media education results not so much from what is taught as how it is taught.”***

Chris Worsnop  
*Screening Images: Ideas for Media Education*

The final aspect of the basic *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup> framework is the *Empowerment Spiral* which outlines a way to organize media literacy learning, especially in a class or group setting. Also called “Action Learning” the model has proven to be an excellent process for uncorking a spiral of inquiry that leads to increased comprehension, greater critical thinking and ability to make informed judgments.

Often when dealing with media issues or topics, we can sometimes be intimidated by the complex technological and institutional structures that dominate our media culture. We can feel powerless against the psychological sophistication of advertising messages and pop culture icons.

The *Empowerment Spiral*, based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, outlines how to break complex topics or concepts into four short term learning steps that stimulate different aspects of the brain and enhance our ability to evolve new knowledge from past experience.

Teachers or leaders who use these four steps to design lesson plans or organize group activities will find the *Empowerment Spiral* is a powerful matrix that transforms both learning *and* teaching.

### **Awareness**

In the *Awareness* step, students participate in an activity that leads to observations and personal connections for potential insight: “Oh! I never thought of that before.” For example youngsters might compare whether their action toys perform like the ones in commercials; teens might time the length of stories on the nightly news to uncover how much is really news; a class might keep a media journal just one day (from waking up to falling asleep) to become aware of how many different media they experience in their lives. Awareness activities provide the “ah-ha” moments that unlock a spiral of critical inquiry and exploration that is the foundation of media literacy pedagogy.

### **Analysis**

The next step, *Analysis*, provides time for students to figure out “how” an issue came to be. Applying the *Five Key Questions* and conducting a close analysis (page 29) are two techniques that can be used to better understand the complexity of the selected issue. Creative production experiences could also help the group understand “how” and “what” happens in the exchange between a media producer and the audience.

It’s important that analysis go deeper than just trying to identify some “meaning” in an ad, a song or an episode of a sitcom. Indeed, try to avoid “why” questions; they too often lead to speculation, personal interpretation and circular debate which can stop the critical process of inquiry, exploration and discovery.

Instead ask “what” and “how”:

- ♦ *How* does the camera angle make us feel about the product being advertised?
- ♦ *What* difference would it make if the car in the ad were blue instead of red?
- ♦ *What* do we know about a character from her dress, make-up and jewelry?
- ♦ *How* does the music contribute to the mood of the story being told?

The power of media literacy lies in figuring out how the *construction* of any media product influences and contributes to the meaning we make of it.

## Reflection

In the *Reflection* step, the group looks deeper to ask “So what?” or “What *ought* we to do or think?” Depending on the group, they may want to also consider philosophical or religious traditions, ethical values, social justice or democratic principles that are accepted as guides for individual and collective decision-making.

- Is it right for news programs to only interview government experts?
- Does the First Amendment protect advertising?
- How about the advertising of dangerous products, like cigarettes?
- What are other ways an action hero could have solved the problem?

## Action

Finally the *Action* step gives participants an opportunity to formulate constructive action ideas, to “learn by doing.” It’s important to remember that, in this context, action doesn’t necessarily imply *activism* nor does it have to be life-changing or earth-shattering. Indeed the most long-lasting actions are often simple activities that symbolize or ritualize increased internal awareness.

1. After discovering and reflecting on the amount of violence they saw in one week of children’s cartoons, one second grade class wrote a “Declaration of Independence” from violence on TV. Each child signed his/her name just like the Founding Fathers and they posted their declaration on the bulletin board in the school lobby for all to read.
2. A group of teens in a church youth group created their own website to share their exploration, insights and reflection on popular music and movies.
3. While studying the health effects of tobacco, a fifth grade class wrote and performed a play for other students about the techniques of persuasion that tobacco companies use to sell their products.
4. High school students concerned about school board budget cuts interviewed their parents and neighbors on video tape and produced short video about various perspectives on what the cuts might mean. It was shown every night for a week on the district’s closed circuit cable channel.

## Organizing Media Literacy Learning

Teachers interested in media literacy primarily need to be skilled in organizing and facilitating student-centered learning. They do not necessarily require extensive knowledge of media theories or even professional competency in journalism, video production or film-making.

More than anything else, media education is a “quest for meaning,” says Chris Worsnop, one of Canada’s media literacy leaders. It is an exploration for both students and teachers. The best preparation is simply an inquiring mind and a willingness to answer a student’s question with “I don’t know. How could we find out?”

***“Uncovering the many levels of meaning  
in a media message  
and the multiple answers to even basic questions  
is what makes media education  
so engaging for kids  
and so enlightening for adults.”***

Chris Worsnop, *Screening Images*

## Section IV:

# Alternate Questions for Different Ages and Abilities

*“Ambitious and forward thinking. . .comprehensive and  
well-organized. . . addresses education reform  
with creativity and relevance.*

*The MediaLit Kit™ is a beacon of hope for what  
learning and teaching can and should be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”*

Duane Neil, Art Chair,  
The Chapin School, New York

# Adapting the Questions for Different Ages and Abilities

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The *Five Core Concepts* are the foundation of the *MediaLit Kit™* and the *Five Key Questions* are the inquiry tools for exploring these theoretical concepts. But in actuality they are only starting points. The questions must be simplified for younger children as well as for those with limited vocabulary or language ability. And they can be expanded for more sophisticated inquiry by teens, college students and adults.

The *MediaLit Kit™* includes two sets of alternate questions that reflect these needs. In the *Questions to Guide Young Children*, (page 37) each *Core Concept/Key Question* is broken into two simpler questions to help teachers and parents “scale down” critical inquiry to a child’s level.

When children reach their teen years, and/or become more skilled in media literacy, more complex analysis is possible. In the *Expanded Questions for More Sophisticated Inquiry*, (page 38) the questions are reordered and developed to explore the connections and interconnections between the *content, form, purpose* and *effects* of a media message. This approach to media inquiry is used by the British Film Institute but the numbers at the end of each question on the handout indicate which of the *CMLMediaLit Kit™*’s *Key Questions* it expands.

To adapt media literacy to various age groups, it is helpful to know how children and young people of different ages process the world, and how each state of development influences how they process and learn about the media world in which they are growing up. Developmental psychologists generally break childhood into five different developmental stages, although, of course, children grow and develop at their own unique pace, regardless of what the “experts” project.

## **Age 0-2 : The Senses Awaken**

Symbolic thought begins during the first two years of life and parents need to provide a safe and stimulating environment for healthy development. Infant children need lots of experiential activities to interact with their physical environment through touching, smelling, tasting, listening and observing. While *occasional* media experiences (simple video stories or listening to recorded music) do not do harm to an infant child, extensive or even daily media exposure is not recommended. Children under two gain more, developmentally, by interacting with a caring human being-- by being sung to, talked to or danced with. The most important thing that parents can do at this age is to model healthy media use themselves thus establishing media routines in the home that will serve their children well as they get older.

## **Age 2-5: Language Builds Curiosity**

Once children’s language and problem solving skills start developing they are fertile ground for planting the seeds of critical inquiry. Plus their growing curiosity about the physical world makes them receptive to learning how everything works -- and why!

Although some might question the appropriateness of introducing media literacy to preschoolers, this is precisely the age in which it ought to begin. Just like we recognize that learning the alphabet at age four is an important building block to being able to read a novel at 16, media literacy has building blocks that provide a foundation on which more complex skills are built.

It is important, for example, to encourage the habit of asking questions about media, to learn media vocabulary and to practice talking about what they see and hear and how it makes them feel. Children’s videos (or TV series) by quality producers that incorporate developmental skills can be rich sources for segments that can be used to help children grasp the essence of each Key Question. (See next page.)

### **Age 6-8: Learning to Read**

The one major developmental task of these years is to learn to read and preparation for reading requires several skills that can be enhanced by media literacy education. Understanding cause and effect, narrative storytelling and sequencing (beginning / middle / end) can be easily grasped (especially by reluctant readers) by analyzing mediated stories, especially favorite movies and TV series that kids love.

Children also need a rich vocabulary to be ready to read and the kinds of media they are exposed to can either enhance or impede vocabulary development. Some researchers indicate that a rich well-designed educational program can add thousands more words to a child's vocabulary than a formulaic Saturday morning cartoon.

In addition, the more young children can be exposed to different interpretations of reality, the more open they will become to accepting different ways of thinking, exploring different solutions and valuing cultural differences. Excellent tools can be picture books, videos or audio programs that tell similar stories from different perspectives thereby creating opportunities to ask questions such as #3: "What do I think and feel about this?" or #4: "Is anyone left out?"

Despite the common accusation that kids of this age shouldn't use media at all, media educators would suggest that just as kids need to be read to everyday and exposed to print-rich environments in order to become print literate, they also benefit from exposure to and exploration of media in order to become media literate. Whether print or electronic media, you can't make someone literate by keeping them away from it.

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## **Using Children's TV to Teach the Key Questions**

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### **KQ #1: "Constructedness"**

- Use "the making of" segments on children's DVDs especially those that go behind the scenes to show the many jobs it takes to create a media production.
- The popular *Arthur* series on PBS often cuts away to show author / illustrator Marc Brown drawing the show's lovable characters.

### **KQ #2: How Message is Constructed**

- *Sagwa* creates the world through the point of view of the cats by picturing things from Sagwa's eye level (camera angle).
- The music in *Theodore Tugboat* is used to convey different moods.

### **KQ #3: Audience brings experience, too.**

- Many shows are designed to appeal to both kids and adults but they don't see the same show! Watching *Between the Lions*, the six-year old who learns to sound out words with "Dr. Ruth Wordheimer" and her mother who laughs at a sex doctor parodying herself are both interpreting the scene "right."

### **KQ #4: Embedded Values**

- Fred Rogers was a master at developing segments that not only conveyed content about a particular topic but also embedded values about how to be a strong man or woman, how to treat children, and, always, how to be a good neighbor!

### **KQ #5: What is this telling/selling?**

- Understanding off-screen motive is not easy for young children but helping kids learn what kinds of media to trust is an important first step. Learning to recognize educationally-sound programs from commercial cartoons is a useful skill not only for TV but movies, video games and the Internet.

-- With thanks to Faith Rogow, PhD

### **Age 9 - 11: Think Logically but not Abstractly**

By elementary school, most children can think logically but are just beginning to be able to think abstractly or hypothetically. It is important for students to manipulate concrete objects and media production activities can address this need well. Children at this stage are less egocentric and activities like role-playing and taking pictures can be good ways to experience other people's point of view.

Children can also classify objects according to attributes, create surveys and process the information visually in Venn Diagrams and graphs. Some children at this stage could benefit from the *Questions to Guide Young Children* while others are ready for the *Five Key Questions*. The choice of questions can also depend on the student's vocabulary development since even older students learning English as a second language might benefit more from a simpler vocabulary.

### **Age 12+: Learning to Handle Complexity**

As young people begin to be able to think abstractly, solve problems of probability, and generalize, media literacy offers great depth for both analysis and production. The *Five Key Questions* as well as the *Expanded Questions* can stimulate sophisticated inquiry. One's level of awareness should be to uncover both explicit and implicit messages in the content of a message as well as the medium that carries it. Analysis can move beyond quantitative research to examine the qualitative influences of a particular medium on a specific audience. Production can involve multi-step projects using powerful multi-media tools that demand not just envisioning but planning, organizing, executing and learning from others's feedback.

Most of the activities in the *MediaLit Kit™* Part II: *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* are quite suitable for young people in both Middle and High School. As they prepare to leave high school, students should also be encouraged to reflect on their own moral, ethical and spiritual concerns related to media representations and to perfect their communications skills in order to take their place as citizens of a democracy and empowered members of a global media culture.

### **Each Child Unique**

As everyone who has worked with children knows, each child is unique and grows at his or her own developmental schedule. Children of the same chronological age can be dramatically different – emotionally, intellectually, even physically. These differences, in turn, affect the young person's ability to learn and master the skills of media literacy inquiry.

What is important is that parents, teachers and caregivers be flexible and adapt the process to the child. Although the *CML MediaLit Kit™* provides a variety of tools for questioning the media, we welcome and encourage additional adaptations and specialized applications as well as research relating child development to the teaching of media literacy.

## **Questions to Guide Young Children**

**KQ #1: What is this?**

**How is this put together?**

**KQ #2: What do I see or hear? Smell? Touch or taste?**

**What do I like or dislike about this?**

**KQ #3: What do I think and feel about this?**

**What might other people think and feel about this?**

**KQ #4: What does this tell me about how other people live and believe?**

**Is anything or anyone left out?**

**KQ #5: Is this trying to *tell* me something?**

**Is this trying to *sell* me something?**

	<b>Core Concepts</b>	<b>Key Questions</b>	<b>Questions to Guide Children</b>
<b>1</b>	All media messages are "constructed."	Who created this message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is this?</li> <li>▪ How is this put together?</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	What techniques are used to attract my attention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do I see or hear? Smell? Touch or taste?</li> <li>▪ What do I like or dislike about this?</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Different people experience the same media message differently	How might different people understand this message differently from me?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do I think and feel about this?</li> <li>▪ What might other people think and feel about this?</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Media have embedded values and points of view.	What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What does this tell me about how other people live and believe?</li> <li>▪ Is anything or anyone left out?</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Why was this message sent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is this trying to <i>tell</i> me something?</li> <li>▪ Is this trying to <i>sell</i> me something?</li> </ul>

## **Expanded Questions** for more sophisticated inquiry

As students become more skilled in media literacy, more complex analysis is possible. The following outline is only a sample of the kinds of *Expanded Questions* that can be asked in order to fully grasp the overall *content, form, purpose* and *effects* of any media message. The numbers at the end of each question indicate which *Key Question* it expands.

### **1. Messages and Values— exploring the *content* of a media message.**

These questions help us understand how the symbol system of a message influences its interpretation by different people; how the symbols that are selected for a message tap into our existing attitudes, knowledge and understanding of the world.

- 1 What makes this message seem realistic or unrealistic? (#2)
- 2 How does this message fit with your lived experience of the world? (#3)
- 3 How are various social groups represented? (#4)
- 4 What social or ideological messages are a part of the message's subtext? (#4)
- 5 What kinds of behaviors and what kinds of consequences are depicted? (#4)
- 6 What type of person is the reader invited to identify with? (#4)
- 7 What is omitted from the message? (#4)
- 8 Whose point of view is presented? (#4)

### **2. Codes and Conventions— exploring the *form* of the message.**

The following kinds of questions help us appreciate the “constructedness” of messages, how ideas and concepts are created, expressed and “packaged” for specific audiences.

- 1 What is the message genre? (#1)
- 2 What techniques are used to attract my attention? (#2)
- 3 What conventions of storytelling are used in this message? (#2)
- 4 What types of visual and/or verbal symbolism are used to construct the message? (#2)
- 5 What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message? (#2)
- 6 What technologies were used to construct this message? (#1)
- 7 How is this message similar and different from others with similar content? (#1)

### **3. Producers and Consumers— exploring the *purpose* and *effects*.**

These questions help us see the multiple decisions that are made from beginning to end as the message is created and distributed plus the multiple interpretations that are created in the audience as they watch, see or listen:

- 1 Who created this message? (#1)
- 2 What is the producer's purpose? (#5)
- 3 Who is the target audience? (#5)
- 4 How have economic decisions influenced the construction of this message? (#5)
- 5 What reasons might an individual have for being interested in this message? (#3)
- 6 How do different individuals respond emotionally to this message? (#3)
- 7 How might different individuals interpret this message differently? (#3)

– With thanks to Cary Bazalgette and Renee Hobbs.



## Section V

# Getting Started: *Strategies and Tools*

*“ . . . These trainings have had a lasting effect on me  
and the way that I teach...the presenters are very passionate and  
extremely articulate; they do everything they can to help you  
understand the material and feel successful.  
. . . The Core Concepts and Key Questions  
add a very solid layer to what I do with kids in the classroom  
. . . CML has hit it right on the spot!”*

Alvaro Asturias, visual artist  
Education Division / Music Center of Los Angeles County

# 10 Benefits of Media Literacy Education

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***“We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge.”***

—John Naisbitt, *Megatrends*

- 1. Meets the needs of students to be wise consumers of media**, managers of information and responsible producers of their ideas using the powerful multimedia tools of a global media culture.
- 2. Engages students.** . . . bringing the world of media into the classroom connects learning with “real life” and validates their media culture as a rich environment for learning.
- 3. Gives students and teachers alike a common approach to critical thinking** that, when internalized, becomes second nature for life.
- 4. Provides an opportunity for integrating all subject areas** and creating a common vocabulary that applies across all disciplines.
- 5. Helps meet state standards** while, at the same time using fresh contemporary media content which students love.
- 6. Increases the ability and proficiency of students** to communicate (express) and disseminate their thoughts and ideas in a wide (and growing) range of print and electronic media forms – and even international venues.
- 7. Media literacy’s “inquiry process” transforms teaching** and frees the teacher to learn along with students -- becoming a “guide on the side” rather than a “sage on the stage.”
- 8. By focusing on process skills rather than content knowledge**, students gain the ability to analyze *any* message in *any* media and thus are empowered for living all their lives in a media-saturated culture.
- 9. By using a replicable model for implementation**, such as CML’s *MediaLit Kit*<sup>™</sup> with its *Five Key Questions*, media literacy avoids becoming a “fad” and, instead, becomes sustainable over time because students are able to build a platform with a consistent framework that goes with them from school to school, grade to grade, teacher to teacher and class to class. With repetition and reinforcement over time, students are able to internalize a checklist of skills for effectively negotiating the global media culture in which they will live all of their lives.
- 10. Not only benefits individual students but benefits society** by providing tools and methods that encourage respectful discourse that leads to mutual understanding and builds the citizenship skills needed to participate in and contribute to the public debate.

# Ideas for Introducing Media Literacy in your School or District

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*Compiled from questions to CML and what we've learned over many years!*

## 1. Start with your best, most enthused teachers.

- A single teacher working alone can often feel isolated and become frustrated; working as a team or group provides support and builds motivation.
- Middle school is good place to start as collaborative learning and interdisciplinary units are already quite common at middle school level. But any collaborative teaching team in a department or a grade can experiment with introducing media literacy concepts across the curriculum.
- Expand the core group with a media librarian and/or curriculum specialist whose job it is to assist teachers in finding resources to accomplish planned learning objectives.
- Get help (if needed) from technical experts – computer technology specialists, video production, journalism or photography teachers. Production or *constructing messages* is essential in media literacy; students deserve access to top quality technology resources if they are going to master the skills of communicating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Don't forget to involve administrators. Without active support from the principal or superintendent, as well as other "stakeholders" including parents and community leaders, media literacy may become just another educational "fad."
- Build toward having several teachers, library media specialists or staff development leaders gain the experience and expertise in the field needed to become in-house or in-district "consultants" or "coaches." Self-reflection by teams of teachers *over time* with a knowledgeable coach / consultant is the most effective way to stimulate the integration of media literacy throughout your school or district.

## 2. Explore your state or local standards to see how teaching media literacy skills can support what you're already mandated to teach.

- Media literacy is not a new subject to teach but a new way to teach all subjects!
- Media literacy is a logical extension of traditional language arts: reading/writing and listening/speaking; today we must add *viewing* (reading) and creating/producing (writing) using all *media* forms
- More and more, states are defining standards for "literacy" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that link directly to inquiry-based media literacy skills. For a state-by-state list of media literacy standards across the curriculum, go to <http://medialit.med.sc.edu/statelit.htm>
- "Creating/producing" opens up a multitude of connections to self-expression and practice in sequencing, summarizing, interpreting, etc. Although video or film may seem to be the ultimate production project, consider a range of activities from still photography to PowerPoint presentations, from a notebook journal to a wall mural.
- Health standards contain many important linkages to media literacy, including classroom units on tobacco prevention, nutrition education, sexuality and sexual behavior, alcohol and drug abuse as well as beauty and body image
- Social studies is a field ripe with media literacy connections. It also connects to areas such as LifeSkills, English as a Second Language (ESL) or Character Education. In parochial schools, media literacy may be incorporated in religion or philosophy classes.

### **3. Acknowledge our “love/hate” relationship with media and popular culture.**

- Encourage an attitude of inquiry and exploration of media and popular culture rather than disparagement or dismissal. Remember, everyone tries to “make meaning” out of their media experiences. Acknowledge that many points of view and interpretations are possible and no single view is always “right” or “wrong.”
- Stimulate open conversation about new TV series, popular movies, trends in advertising, whatever students are watching and talking about. Become familiar with youth culture and you’ll find many points of connection to what you’re already teaching.
- Check into your students’ world by asking:
  - “So it’s the weekend. Got any suggestions for a video I should rent?”
  - “If I have time for a little TV tonight, is there anything good on?”
  - “I’d like to go to a movie on Saturday – what’s playing at the mall?”
  - Do a 5-minute brainstorm: What’s going on in your world right now that’s cool/uncool, fascinating, unfair, outrageous or worrisome? Once you’ve got a list, keep your eyes and ears peeled for examples from their world that you can use to illustrate concepts in the classroom.
- Create a media literacy bulletin board in the teacher’s lounge and invite faculty to post short reviews of books, reflections on a new movie, analysis of an ad campaign, insightful work done by students.

### **4. Create a reference resource center (or at least a shelf in the library) with background materials as well as teaching resources.**

- Help build success for teachers by providing a budget for teaching resources. And build in time for teachers to dig into and review teaching materials that look promising. The goal is to integrate media literacy activities into curricular goals in language arts, social studies, health and other mandated subjects. Integration takes *time*
- Be sure to include copies of Part II of the *MediaLit Kit™ : Five Key Questions That Can Change the World* that contains 25 model classroom activities for K-12 media literacy.
- Study CML’s online catalog of teaching materials for the quality resources most suited to your educational goals: [www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog). There is no one perfect package or program for all grades and all subjects but quality off-the-shelf resources can be useful to jumpstart your curriculum.
- Be sure to include books of theory and research to deepen your grounding in media literacy pedagogy and best practices. Promote reflection on media literacy pedagogy by reading the literature, exploring top media literacy sites on the Internet, critiquing and coaching each other

### **5. Network, network, network -- nationally / regionally / locally.**

- Don’t reinvent the wheel; connect with others who may also be looking for connections!
- Join AMLA, the Alliance for a Media Literate America ([www.AMLAinfo.org](http://www.AMLAinfo.org)), the new professional membership organization for teachers and practitioners of inquiry-based media literacy education. Help build a strong professional association that can serve the field with a national voice. Send two (or more) teachers to AMLA’s every-two-year National Media Education Conference held in various cities.
- Subscribe to e-letters, list-servs and publications that cover or serve the media literacy field. You’ll soon discover what issues are under discussion, how others are thinking about them and where you can find out more. But don’t just lurk, join the conversation!
- Media literacy panels, workshops and presentations are increasingly offered at state or national professional conferences for teachers of English or Social Studies, school librarians, curriculum and technology coordinators, even public health. Check the program offerings carefully – you may have the opportunity to participate in a lively, informative session.

# A Word about Copyright

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Issues of copyright enter the media literacy classroom in a variety of ways. Materials produced specifically for educational use and/or purchased from legitimate educational sources are not usually an issue.

But what about showing clips from movies rented at the video store? Or students using music from their favorite CD artist as the sound track of a video production? Or copying pictures from the Internet to put into a class PowerPoint presentation? Or on their own website?

Relevant media “texts,” both print and electronic, are necessary for teaching critical analysis in a 21<sup>st</sup> century media culture. And the ability to analyze and think critically is the very foundation of both intellectual freedom and the exercising of full citizenship in a democracy. Production projects are integral to learning by experience how media are constructed as well as demonstrating mastery of various media formats and gaining competency in creative self-expression.

The “Fair Use” provision of the 1976 Copyright Law, as amended, states precisely that the use of copyrighted materials is allowed for “*criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship or research.*”

However, applying the “Fair Use” standard in specific situations is seldom crystal clear. And as recent headlines about music piracy indicates, new technologies keep shifting the ground for both public discourse and legal interpretation.

The following are some organizations/websites to check for the latest guidelines on issues of copyright in educational settings:

- Library of Congress Copyright Office / [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov)
- American Association of School Librarians / [www.ala.org/aasl](http://www.ala.org/aasl)
- Free Expression Policy Project / [www.fepproject.org](http://www.fepproject.org)

Be sure to check the policy report summarizing recent issues in copyright and intellectual property: “*The Progress of Science and Useful Arts*”: *Why Copyright Today Threatens Intellectual Freedom.*

## The Media Literate Person

- **Uses media wisely and effectively.**
  - **Engages in critical thinking when evaluating media messages.**
  - **Evaluates the credibility of information from different sources..**
- **Understands the power of visual images and knows how to “read” them.**
- **Is aware of a diverse cultural universe and appreciates multiple perspectives.**
- **Expresses him/herself clearly and creatively using different forms of media.**
  - **Recognizes media's influence on beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors and the democratic process.**

With thanks to Project Look Sharp / Ithaca, NY  
and Pauline Center for Media Studies / Los Angeles

# How CML Can Help

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## ***“To translate media literacy research and theory into practical information, training and educational tools...”***

Mission Statement / Center for Media Literacy

This *MediaLit Kit™ Orientation Guide* outlines and describes the basic *theoretical* framework for media literacy – but concepts and theories are not enough. Teachers, administrators, even parents and community leaders must learn how to *apply* the concepts and implement the process of media literacy in each local situation. The Center for Media Literacy can provide support for implementing media literacy in several important ways:

### **1. Documents and Tools**

- **CML’s Educational Philosophy:** *Empowerment through Education* provides a starting point for individuals or groups to reflect on their own attitudes about both media culture and about educational priorities. Use the handout on page 46 to stimulate conversation and to adapt or adopt as you prefer.
- **Five Key Questions That Can Change the World** -- this unique collection of 25 lesson plans, five for each of the *Five Key Questions*, makes media literacy “do-able” in the classroom by connecting media literacy concepts to educational standards in language arts, social studies, health and the arts. Download this valuable resource (see next page.)
- **Media Literacy Works! Case Studies in Media Literacy** -- located on the CML website, this growing library of case studies provide real world models for implementing media literacy in specific K-12 arenas. Many incorporate streaming video, lesson plans, in-service outlines and other materials to help you get the details right while at the same time understanding the “big picture.”

### **2. Training and Professional Development Services**

Implementing media literacy takes experiments and experience, commitment and practice over time. Even as media literacy leaders, including CML, are exploring ways to impact schools of education at colleges and universities, important work has been done by CML to create training programs that will inspire, stimulate and motivate teachers. Through hands-on and interactive learning, CML models (and teachers practice) the teaching skills that teachers can replicate in their own classroom *the next day*.

Now with the *MediaLit Kit™* articulating a comprehensive framework for *theory, practice and implementation*, CML can provide system wide consultation and/or contracted staff development and coaching for schools and school districts as well as in conjunction with curriculum priorities such as nutrition education, violence prevention, information literacy (“ITC literacy”) or integrating the arts.

- To discuss CML’s professional development and training services, contact Tessa Jolls: < [tjolls@medialit.org](mailto:tjolls@medialit.org) > or 310-581-0250 x 2#.
- Idea! Build a professional reference shelf for your teachers in your faculty room or library. **CML’s online resource catalog** has an excellent collection of resources for professional development as well as recommended books, videos and teaching manuals to jumpstart your media literacy program.

### **3. Internet Resources**

CML’s acclaimed website: [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org) is a “virtual encyclopedia” of media literacy and one of the leading media literacy sites on the Internet. Many of the charts and handouts in the *MediaLit Kit™* are downloadable in black/white or color as well as in PowerPoint slides. The following page will guide you to important sections of the site

# www.medialit.org

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*Important sections of CML's media literacy website.  
Please feel free to link to any of these pages to your own school or district website.*

## **CML MediaLit Kit™**

[www.medialit.org/medialitkit.html](http://www.medialit.org/medialitkit.html)

This section explains the terms of use and contains the complete collection of handouts, PowerPoint slides, jpegs and other tools for teaching with the *CML MediaLit Kit™*

## **CML MediaLit Kit™: Overview and Orientation Guide**

[www.medialit.org/orientation.html](http://www.medialit.org/orientation.html)

A plain-language summary describing the core concepts, key questions and basic principles of inquiry-based media education as a new vision of literacy for the 21st century.

## **CML MediaLit Kit™: Five Key Questions That Can Change the World**

[www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions.html](http://www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions.html)

A collection of cornerstone 25 lesson plans, five for each of the *Five Key Questions*. Also contains charts and handouts for teachers.

## **Project SmartArt: A Road to Follow: Methods, Structure and Tools for Replication**

[www.projectsartart.org](http://www.projectsartart.org)

This introduction to the Project SmartArt case study lays out the path and summarizes the approach methods, structure and tools for introducing media literacy in a school and supporting it for growth.

## **Challenge of Professional Development in Media Literacy**

[http://www.medialit.org/pd\\_challenge.html](http://www.medialit.org/pd_challenge.html)

Reflections and suggestions on teacher training issues and CML's experiences and services in professional development.

## **CML Online Resource Catalog**

[www.medialit.org/catalog](http://www.medialit.org/catalog)

The largest collection of media literacy books, videos, CD/DVDs and curriculum resources from around the world, identified and screened by CML. Build your professional library Order 24/7 using a secure shopping cart.

## **Media&Values Archive**

[www.medialit.org/media\\_values.html](http://www.medialit.org/media_values.html)

Over 350 articles, essays and teaching ideas from 63 issues of the acclaimed *Media&Values* magazine (1977-1993) containing the seeds of today's US media literacy movement. Articles are cross-referenced, searchable and related to relevant teaching resources.

## **CML Reading Room**

[www.medialit.org/reading\\_room.html](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room.html)

CML's online reference center for background articles and reports as well as an historical archive documenting the development of media literacy in the United States.

## **How to Teach Media Literacy**

[www.medialit.org/focus/tea\\_home.html](http://www.medialit.org/focus/tea_home.html)

Selected articles with practical advice for teaching plus recommended books, videos and resources for professional development and faculty in-service.

## **CML CONNECT e-Newsletter**

<http://www.medialit.org/newsletter.html>

Sign up today for this FREE periodic bulletin. See archives for issues since 2000.

CML Educational Philosophy***Empowerment through Education***

The Center for Media Literacy advocates a philosophy of *empowerment through education*.  
This philosophy incorporates three intertwining concepts:

***1. Media literacy is education for life in a global media world.***

For 500 years, since the invention of moveable type, we have valued the ability to read and write as the primary means of communicating and understanding history, cultural traditions, political and social philosophy and the news of the day.

In more recent times, traditional literacy skills ensured that individuals could participate fully as engaged citizens and functioning adults in society.

Today families, schools and all community institutions share the responsibility for preparing young people for living and learning in a global culture that is increasingly connected through multi-media and influenced by powerful images, words and sounds.

***2. The heart of media literacy is informed inquiry.***

Through a four-step ‘inquiry’ process of  
*Awareness . . . Analysis . . . Reflection . . . Action,*  
media literacy helps young people acquire an empowering set of “navigational” skills which include the ability to:

- *Access* information from a variety of sources.
- *Analyze* and *explore* how messages are “constructed” whether print, verbal, visual or multi-media.
- *Evaluate* media’s explicit and implicit messages against one’s own ethical, moral and/or democratic principles.
- *Express* or *create* their own messages using a variety of media tools.

***3. Media literacy is an alternative to censoring, boycotting or blaming ‘the media.’***

Deeply committed to freedom of expression, media literacy does not promote partisan agendas or political points of view. The power of media literacy is its ability to inspire independent thinking and foster critical analysis. The ultimate goal of media education is to make wise choices possible.

***Embracing this philosophy,  
the Center for Media Literacy is committed to media education  
as an essential and empowering life-skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.***



## **Words of Wisdom**

### **About Teaching CML's *Five Key Questions***

The following reflections come from over two decades of CML's work and experience in the field of media literacy education. We share them both as an inspiration and a challenge as you explore yourself and then introduce your students to the *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World!*

- ◆ **To teach, one must first understand.** Teachers interested in media literacy need to explore and internalize for themselves the *Five Core Concepts* of media literacy. This foundation, in turn, provides the ability to convey and illuminate the *Five Key Questions* for students. Applying the *Five Key Questions* then gives students the tools with which to negotiate meaning for themselves.
- ◆ **Developing a common vocabulary** around media literacy within classes, and within overall teaching and learning communities, is essential. Once there is a common understanding of the *Five Core Concepts* and *Five Key Questions*, progress in applying media literacy is rapid.
- **Media literacy is a skill and teaching it is different** than teaching factual knowledge. Media literacy provides a process for learning – the process of inquiry – which can be applied to *any* content or subject area. The *Five Key Questions* are a starting point but it takes repeated practice of *applying* the questions to different media and in a variety of activities to really master the process. It's like learning to tie your shoes or ride a bike – you usually don't "get it" the first time. Becoming media literate takes practice, practice, practice!
- ◆ **When you hear the classic definition:** "media literacy involves learning to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms," it seems overwhelming. Where do you start? But if the focus of media literacy instruction becomes introducing and reinforcing the use of the *Five Key Questions*, teachers have an immediate entry point. Plus it's a handy way to make connections to the curricula you are already working with in other subject areas.
- ◆ **The *Five Key Questions* are the focal point** of learning the media literacy process for students. Why? Because learning to apply *Five Key Questions* is doable and engaging. Students like to 'pull back the covers' and see what's behind media messages -- and they enjoy expressing their own point of view.
- ◆ **After a while, familiarity with the *Five Key Questions* becomes like shorthand.** Students point out, 'That's #1!' or 'That's # 4!' It's fun for them to quickly discern how messages are created, the impact they have and how they are received, and to share their insights with others.
- ◆ **Some teachers immediately make the connections** between media literacy and other subject areas. Others need more time to work with the *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions*. Generally, it takes about a year for teachers to feel confident about teaching media literacy – and by then, their teaching is transformed forever.
- ◆ **Citizens of all ages would benefit** from knowing the *Five Core Concepts* and *Five Key Questions* of Media Literacy. They are a fundamental skillset for participants in a democratic society.

-- from *Five Key Questions That Can Change the World*  
[www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions](http://www.medialit.org/fivekeyquestions)

**Please share with us your experiences of using the MediaLit Kit™ framework or the materials in this document:**

## ***I'd Like to Say. . .***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade / Subject \_\_\_\_\_

School/Org. \_\_\_\_\_ City / State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*You may contact me for more information or to follow-up.*

**Center for Media Literacy**

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