

Learning Pathway: Critical Media Literacy

Media Literacy Connections by eBook Topics

Topic 1: The Philosophical Foundations of the United States Political System

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Democracy in Social Media Policies and Community Standards](#)
- [Standard 2: Media Literacy Connections: The Internet as a Public Utility](#)
- [Standard 3: Media Literacy Connections: 21st Century Female STEM Innovators](#)
- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: Media Coverage of the Royals](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Representations of Native Americans on Film and in Local History Publications](#)

Topic 2: The Development of the United States Government

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Promoting a Declaration of Independence on Social Media](#)
- [Standard 2: Media Literacy Connections: Marketing and Regulating Self-Driving Cars](#)
- [Standard 3: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing Media Stereotypes Toward Black Americans](#)

- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: Investigating Political Debates Through Songs from the musical *Hamilton*](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Tweeting the Bill of Rights](#)

Topic 3: Institutions of United States Government

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing Political Films About the Branches of Government](#)
- [Standard 2: Media Literacy Connections: Writing an Impeachment Press Release](#)
- [Standard 3: Media Literacy Connections: Exploring How Members of Congress Use Social Media](#)
- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: Understanding Public Opinion Polls](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Designing a Website for a New Political Party](#)

Topic 4: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Contextualizing Immigration](#)
- [Standard 2: Media Literacy Connections: Representing Immigration in TV and Films](#)
- [Standard 3.1: Media Literacy Connections: Evaluating Information About COVID-19](#)
- [Standard 3.2: Media Literacy Connections: Examining Media Portrayals of Gender and Leadership](#)
- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: Evaluating Online Messaging by Advocacy Organizations](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Playing Digital Games to Learn about Voting and Civic Participation](#)
- [Standard 6.1: Media Literacy Connections: Using Social Media in Political Campaigns](#)
- [Standard 6.2: Media Literacy Connections: Assessing Media](#)

Coverage of Political Debates

- [Standard 7: Media Literacy Connections: Contextualizing Political Roles for Celebrities](#)
- [Standard 8: Media Literacy Connections: Engaging in Political Activism through Social Media](#)
- [Standard 9.1: Media Literacy Connections: Recruiting Workers for Public Sector Jobs](#)
- [Standard 9.2: Media Literacy Connections: Creating Images of Teachers and Teaching](#)
- [Standard 10: Media Literacy Connections: Representing Trans Identities](#)
- [Standard 11: Media Literacy Connections: Framing the Events of January 6, 2021](#)
- [Standard 12: Media Literacy Connections: Music as Protest Art](#)
- [Standard 12: Media Literacy Connections: Investigating Online Political Advertising](#)

Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court Decisions

- [Standard 2.1: Media Literacy Connections: One Minute Marketing For and Against Prohibition](#)
- [Standard 2.2: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing the Equal Rights Amendment in the Media](#)
- [Standard 3.1: Media Literacy Connections: Representing the Civil War in Historical Publications](#)
- [Standard 3.2: Media Literacy Connections: Representing Gender and Race on Currency](#)
- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: For and Against the Equality Act](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Reading Dissents Aloud](#)
- [Standard 6: Media Literacy Connections: Cameras in the Courtroom](#)

Topic 6: The Structure of Massachusetts State and Local Government

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Evaluating Native American Mascots and Logos](#)
- [Standard 2: Media Literacy Connections: Writing a Constitution for the Internet](#)
- [Standard 3: Media Literacy Connections: Using the Media for Military Recruitment](#)
- [Standard 4: Media Literacy Connections: Evaluating Your Privacy on Social Media](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Informing the Public about Pandemic Policies](#)
- [Standard 6: Media Literacy Connections: Utilizing Gender-Inclusive Language in Schools, Conversations, and Media](#)
- [Standard 7: Media Literacy Connections: Designing Environmental Campaigns Using Social Media](#)
- [Standard 8: Media Literacy Connections: Campaigning for State Office on Social Media](#)
- [Standard 9: Media Literacy Connections: Advertising the Lottery](#)
- [Standard 10: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing Local Governments, Social Media, and Digital Democracy](#)

Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy

- [Standard 1: Media Literacy Connections: Contextualizing Press Freedom in the United States](#)
- [Standard 2.1: Media Literacy Connections: Examining Objectivity in the News](#)
- [Standard 2.2: Media Literacy Connections: Being an Investigative Journalist](#)
- [Standard 3.1: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing Newspaper Photographs](#)
- [Standard 3.2: Media Literacy Connections: Analyzing How](#)

[Reporters Report Events](#)

- [Standard 4.1: Media Literacy Connections: Understanding Recommendation Algorithms](#)
- [Standard 4.2: Media Literacy Connections: Detecting Fake News](#)
- [Standard 5: Media Literacy Connections: Doing Critical Visual Analysis](#)
- [Standard 6: Media Literacy Connections: Evaluating Memes and TikToks as Political Cartoons](#)

What is media literacy?

'**Media literacy**' is defined in a variety of ways. Most commonly it is used as an 'umbrella term' that encompasses analysis of mass-media and pop-culture, digital or technology analysis, and civic engagement and social justice action.

Sometimes the terms 'media literacy' and 'media education' are used interchangeably. Leading global scholar in children's media cultures [David Buckingham](#) sees them as two separate actions, related to each other. He defines:

Media literacy is "the knowledge, skills and competencies that are required in order to use and interpret media" (2003, p.36).

Media education as "the process of teaching and learning about the media" and media literacy as "the outcome - the knowledge and skills learners acquire" (2003, p.4).

1993, p. 2). The student of media literacy learns how to access, analyze, and produce a variety of media texts (Aufderheide, 1993).

Some scholars add the qualifier 'critical' to their use of media literacy. **Critical media literacy** encourages analysis of dominant ideology and interrogation of the means of production; it is rooted in social justice (Kellner & Share, 2007) and explores the "behind the scenes" of ownership, production, and distribution. Critical media literacy is an inquiry into power, especially the power of the media industries and how they determine the stories and messages to which we are audience.

There are (at least!) three ways to apply the term ‘critical’

Critical analysis: Approach a text from a distance and eliminate emotional response, while exploring *why* there is an emotional response. Critical analysis is a clinical approach (asking questions). As part of the interpretation/evaluation process, it involves self-reflection: What do I know/believe and how do I know it/why do I believe it?

Media literacy is critical: Six corporations control 90% of all mainstream media in America (Lutz, 2012; Phillips, 2018). Eight-to-eighteen-year-olds fill 10hr, 45min worth of media use into 7hr, 38min time frame (Kaiser Family Foundation 2010). 95% of US teenagers’ self-report smartphone ownership/access (Anderson & Jiang 2018). Based on quantity of time alone, young people deserve to have formal study of the media in order to better understand that which they are spending so much time.

Critical media literacy: Engages in process of continuous critical inquiry, diving deeply into questions of ownership, production, and distribution: What is known about the text? How is this known? What is the context for understanding the text?

Sometimes in media literacy work, the **question is more important than the answer**. The question is an invitation for students and teachers to work together, to share knowledge, and to build collaboration. Because so much of media analysis is about interpretation, there may not be one absolute answer. In many of the lessons, you will see discussion questions posed without corresponding answers or information; please use this as an opportunity to generate shared knowledge with students and, if further questions arise, to check for additional resources.

Concepts of Media Literacy

In 2003, and updated in 2007, David Buckingham codified the concepts of media literacy. The concepts are flexible and can be adapted to multiple media. The following are the basic outlines of each concept:

Production: Media texts are consciously manufactured. Addressing production asks questions about how the media are constructed and for what purpose. It is important to explore the ‘invisible’ commercialization of digital media and global role of advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.

Language: Visual and spoken languages communicate meaning; familiar codes and conventions make meaning clear. Digital literacy looks at digital rhetoric, especially website design and links.

Representation: Events are made into stories which invite audiences to see the world in one way and not in others. This concept explores authority, reliability, and bias; looks at whose stories are told and whose are ignored.

Audience: Who is engaging with what texts and how are people targeted? This concept looks at how users access sites, how they are guided through sites, and the role of users’ data gathering (2003, pp.53-67; 2007, pp.155-156).

[Apply the Concepts/Engaging Media Literacy: News and Information Evaluation](#)

References

- Anderson, M. and Jiang, J. (May 31, 2018). Teens, social media and technology 2018. Pew Research Center. Avail: pewinternet.org.

- Aufderheide, P (1993). *Media literacy: A report of the national leadership conference on media literacy*. Queenstown, MD: The Aspen Institute.
- Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. London: Polity Press.
- Kaiser Family Foundation (January 20, 2010). Daily media use among children and teens up dramatically from five years ago. Avail: kff.org.
- Kellner, D. and Share, J. (2007). Critical media literacy, democracy, and the reconstruction of education. In Macedo, D. and Steinberg, S. (Eds.), *Media literacy: A reader*, pp.3-23. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Phillips, P. (2018). *Giants: The global power elite*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.

Additional Resources

Popular press coverage on social media & fighting fake news:

- [Fighting Fake News](#)
- [Teaching kids news literacy could be a matter of life and death](#)
- [How Does "Fake" News Become News?](#)
- [Facebook 'danger to public health' warns report](#)
- [Critical Media Project](#)

Scholarly works that introduce and apply media literacy:

- Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. London, England: Polity Press.
- Buckingham, D. (2007). *Beyond technology: Children's learning in the age of digital culture*. London, England: Polity Press.
- Buckingham, D. (2019). *The media education manifesto*. London, England: Polity Press.

Scholarly work with news analysis component:

- Higdon, N. (2020). *The anatomy of fake news: A critical news literacy education*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Young adult work on how to make sense of fake news:

- Otis, C.L. (2020). *True or false: A C.I.A. analyst's guide to spotting fake news*. New York, NY: Feiwel and Friends.

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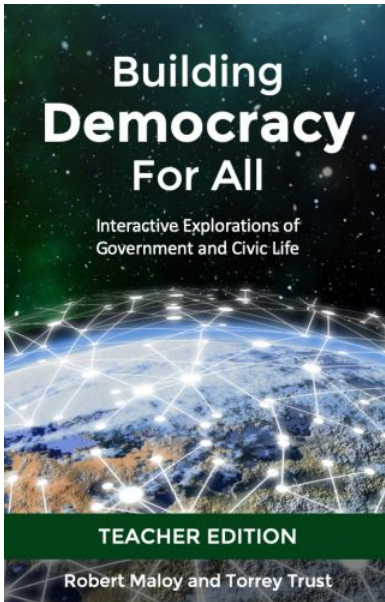
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