

4.4: Women Political Leaders in the Media

In early 2021, the website *Insider* presented a list of the [Most Famous Female Politician from Every State](#). Some were nationally known figures like Speaker of House Nancy Pelosi from California or former presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton who was born in Illinois. Others were historical figures, such as Jeannette Rankin from Montana who was the first woman elected to Congress, or modern-day trailblazers, including Sarah McBride, Delaware's first openly transgender state senator, and Kristi Noem, South Dakota's first woman governor.



[Nancy Pelosi](#) by [US Department of Labor](#) | Public Domain

Media coverage of women in political roles can vary greatly. Some women are in the news all the time; others are hardly ever mentioned. Those who appear regularly are often presented differently depending on the political lean of different media outlets. [Social scientists have shown](#) that the media cover women and men political leaders differently. Stories about women in politics more often mention their appearance, clothing, family, and instances of combative behavior, all in line with traditional gender stereotypes. Such gender bias hinders women and helps male leaders politically.

Thinking about your own media experience...have you seen women represented in leadership positions (e.g., Mulan and Elsa from Disney; World leaders such as Angela Merkel and Jacinda Ardern; Individuals thrust into the spotlight such as Greta Thunberg, Emma Watson, Meghan Markle)? Do you think it is important for women to be represented in leadership roles in the media?



Watch on YouTube <https://edtechbooks.org/-vbx>

In these activities, you will examine how women political leaders are represented in the media, both in the United States and in different countries around the world.

Activity 1: Examine the Representation of Women Political Leaders in the Media

- Identify a female political leader from the United States. Here are some of the examples of female leaders:
 - Michelle Obama
 - Nancy Pelosi
 - Ruth Bader Ginsburg

- Amy Coney Barrett
- Hillary Clinton
- Kamala Harris
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
- Curate a digital collection of media content, including videos, news articles, blog posts, and social media tweets, about the individual you selected on a Wakelet, Padlet, or slide deck.
 - Make sure to include media [from all sides](#).
- Critically evaluate how various media outlets and media professionals portray and discuss the individual you selected.
 - Use the following prompts to guide your investigation:
 - What gender stereotypes are used? What might be the consequences of depicting female leaders in stereotypical ways?
 - How does the portrayal of the individual you selected compare to the portrayal of male political leaders?
 - How do different media outlets portray and/or discuss the individual you selected? Do they use different language and visuals? Do they focus on different topics/perspectives? Why do you think this is?
- **Write an article for your school or local newspaper** in which you share your findings and identify ways that media outlets can improve the presentation of women political leaders.

Activity 2: Evaluate the Media Portrayal of Women Leaders in Different Countries and Careers

- Evaluate the differences in media representation of women political leaders from the United States and women leaders in

other countries and/or other fields (see Forbes Magazine "[The World's Most Powerful Women](#)").

- Are women political leaders in the United States portrayed differently than women political leaders in other countries?
- Are women political leaders discussed differently than women leaders in other fields like business and science?
- **Create a social media campaign** to illuminate the differences in media portrayals of women leaders from different fields/countries.
 - The social media campaign should include at least 2 videos (e.g., YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok), 5 example posts, and 3 images (e.g., memes, graphics, infographics) designed by you.
 - Here is a [social media campaign example](#) created by Justin Lo, Daniel Mulno, and David Warde and here is a [Twitter campaign example](#) by Sara Shea.

Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example

[Evaluate the Media Portrayal of Women Leaders in Different Countries and Careers](#) by Chloe Mitchell

Additional Resources

- [Exploring the effect of media images on women's leadership self-perceptions and aspirations](#)
- [Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation](#)
- [Women politicians must still bend to gender stereotypes](#)

Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: Women's Political Participation Around the World](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
 - Distinguish among civic, political, and private life. (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) [8.T4.3]
- [ISTE Standards](#)
 - Digital Citizen
 - 2c: Students demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
 - Knowledge Constructor
 - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
 - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
 - 3c: Students curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.
 - Creative Communicator
 - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
 - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new

creations.

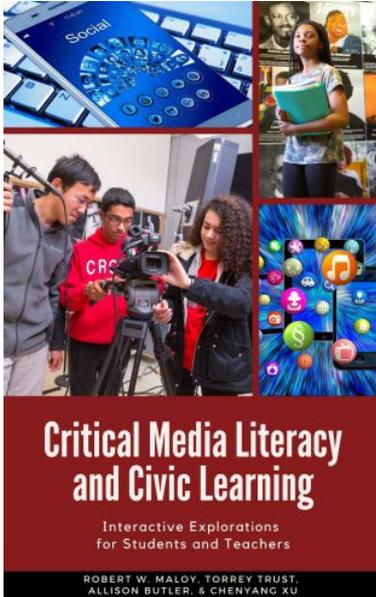
- 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.

- [DLCS Standards](#)

- Ethics and Laws (CAS.b)
- Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
- Digital Tools (DTC.a)
- Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
- Research (DTC.c)

- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8



Maloy, R. W., Trust, T., Butler, A. , & Xu, C. (2021). *Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning*. EdTech Books. <https://edtechbooks.org/mediaandciviclearning>