

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GROUP presents



# Citizen Journalism Media Literacy: STUDY GUIDE

Learning to Evaluate Media Consumption and Developing  
Critical Thought in Students

Prepared By:

ZOE LUDSKI

B.A.A, Radio and Television Arts, Minor in Multimedia Studies

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# Educational Objectives

This curriculum addresses the overall expectations of the Media-Literacy strand in the Ontario Ministry of Education Language Arts curriculum. This curriculum can be adapted for high-school students, but has been developed with grades 4-6 in mind.

Using this curriculum, students will develop an understanding of a variety of media texts. They will learn to identify media forms as well as conventions and techniques used to create meaning in different media forms. Students will have opportunity to reflect on and identify their strengths as consumers and creators of media.

Note: This curriculum guide also addresses cross-curriculum objectives in disciplines such as Reading, Writing, Oral Communication, History, Social Studies and Math.

## Message to the Educator

The Youth Learning Department at the Toronto International Film Festival Group aims to provide children, youth and students new academic opportunities and social experiences by introducing them to the language and power of the moving image. Developed in consultation with education experts, our study guides are designed to address contemporary social issues and provide a wealth of synergistic programming with the Ontario Ministry of Education. For more information please visit our online film-literacy resource for educators, **reellearning.ca**.

A primary skill to develop when studying Media Literacy is critical thought. While this skill is taught in all subject areas, it is particularly relevant when examining different forms of media. The goal of media literacy is for students to become thoughtful, educated consumers of the media they encounter.

There are five basic stages to becoming media literate.

1. identifying different types of media and their purposes
2. identifying what media are consumed
3. identifying the intended audience and effect on the audience(s)
4. identifying where and by whom the media was produced
5. learning how to create and participate in media

In this guide, teachers will find activities to help their students work through these stages. This guide also provides resources for teachers to learn more about this topic.

Teaching media literacy can be compared to teaching students about parts of a book: identifying the author and the publisher and considering why the text was created. When teaching about media, these same strategies apply and students should be taught to consider the same information about media to help them decide the value of what they are consuming.

## Website Resources:

Some of the resources provided in this curriculum are for the teacher to share with students while others are for the teacher to learn more about media literacy before leading the class in one of the proposed activities or discussions. Please review the sites before using them in your class to determine the appropriateness for your students, including reviewing all web links provided.

When looking at an internet site consider:

- The URL – Is it .com, .org, .edu? These can indicate the validity of information on this site
- The content – Can you verify this info elsewhere?
- Who authored or owns this site? Look for names of companies or individuals and run an internet search on those names to see who they are. Also find the author by using <http://easywhois.com/> .
- Look at the links – Who links their site to this one? Use <http://www.altavista.com/> to find this out. As an example, type “link:+www.google.com” in the search bar and it will list those sites that are connected to www.google.com.

Websites:

### [aml.ca](http://aml.ca)

“Welcome to the website for the Association for Media Literacy. The AML is a voluntary, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting media education as a means of understanding the influence of the media and the impact of rapidly evolving technology on our culture.” (taken from aml.ca December 2007)

### [mediasmart.org.uk](http://mediasmart.org.uk)

- “Media Smart® is a media-literacy programme, initially focused on advertising. Our objective is to provide children with the tools to help them understand and interpret advertising, so that they are able to make informed choices.
- Media Smart® is designed for primary school children aged six to eleven years old. It is the first United Kingdom media-literacy programme to run inside the classroom and the home using broadcast and written educational materials.” (taken from mediasmart.org.uk December 2007)

### [media-awareness.ca](http://media-awareness.ca)

“MNet is a Canadian non-profit organization that has been pioneering the development of media-literacy programs since its incorporation in 1996. We promote media and Internet education by producing online programmes and resources, working in partnership with Canadian and international organizations and speaking to audiences across Canada and around the world.” (taken from media-awareness.ca December 2007)

### [pbskids.org/dontbuyit/](http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit/)

“Don’t Buy It: Get Media Smart is a media-literacy Web site for young people that encourages users to think critically about media and become smart consumers. Activities on the site are designed to provide users with some of the skills and knowledge needed to question, analyze, interpret and evaluate media messages.” (taken from pbskids.org/dontbuyit December 2007)

### [medialiteracy.com/](http://medialiteracy.com/)

“Media are the most powerful cultural forces on the planet. Media products entertain us, inform us and help us connect to our community and the world. But public relations spin, violence packaged as entertainment, hyper-commercialization, news bias, digital photo manipulation and other issues provide the many reasons why both children and adults must become media literate.” (taken from medialiteracy.com December 2007)

### [www1.medialiteracy.com/international.jsp](http://www1.medialiteracy.com/international.jsp)

Links to international media-literacy Web sites

### [interactivenarratives.org](http://interactivenarratives.org)

- Interactive narratives are informational and storytelling experiences designed and produced for the web. They leverage great design, visual journalism and rich-media content.
- This site has interesting examples of unique uses of digital media.

### [poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=75953&sid=26](http://poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=75953&sid=26)

A timeline from 1969 of the progression of digital media

### [whatsnewmedia.org/](http://whatsnewmedia.org/)

This site is designed to be a valuable resource for students and faculty across a variety of new-media-themed courses and programmes emerging within colleges and universities. Entries highlight articles, papers, announcements, etc, regarding some aspect of new media. This site aggregates a number of interesting sources for new-media-themed content, links to them, etc.

# Activity 1 – Evaluating Your Media Diet

## Day 1

Students make a list of media they consume in a day.

**Objective:** Students learn the different types of media that surround them and how to identify media by purpose.

**Time:** 2 classes

- 40-minute discussion and preparation.
- Throughout the day with the class and one evening at home on their own.
- 40-minute discussion and debriefing. Assignment to take home.

### Resources:

- The Media Awareness Network list “Media Literacy Key Concepts” on their website. Visit this online resource at [media-awareness.ca](http://media-awareness.ca) for key concepts and topic ideas surrounding the media.
- Glossary (see Glossary Exercise included)
- Media Consumption Schedule (see 1A – worksheet document included)

### Discuss:

- What purpose do different types of media have?
- What media do you encounter throughout your day? (This may include television, podcasts, radio, newspapers, school announcements.)
- Look at the different purposes of media (for example, morning news provides traffic and weather reports)
- List what media students have encountered that morning and what the purpose was.
- As you move through the day together, you can address purpose with them again. For example, are textbooks media? Are the morning announcements media? What is their purpose?

**Action:** Throughout the day, the class fills in a timetable listing the type of media they come into contact with while at school.

**Homework:** Students should continue to fill in the schedule when they go home from school.

## Day 2

Students bring in their charts. Teachers assist in debriefing their media consumption. Students reflect on genres of media they consume. Students look at their media diet.

**Objectives:** Students identify and assess their media diet

**Time:** 40-minute class.

**Action:** Students should make a chart or graph that shows what types of media they consumed. (Examples include, television, book, movie, magazine, online content.)

**Math Component:** Students can put this information into a graph or chart to see how much of their day involved media. Look at the information gathered by the entire class and create a pie chart of the most popular genres of media that the class consumed.

**Discuss:** Have students work in groups and compare what styles of media they each consumed.

- What difference does the medium (style of media) make on how they consume it?
- Did they have to sit somewhere in particular to consume it?
- Did it make them want to do something before or after consuming it?

Ask the class to think of media as food for your brain. What food categories does the media you consume fall into?

**Create:** The food pyramid has changed over the years, and now it's time for the class to create the latest pyramid for the media diet! Students will need to look at the purpose of the media to decide what category it should be in. Do not assess the style of media (internet, TV, movie) but the content (for example, action movies, news web sites, TV show on whales). If this is too broad a concept for the students, look at just one genre of media (e.g., within TV, break down different types of shows)

**Homework:** Ask students to think about the following questions and create a journal entry by answering the following questions:

- Reflect on your media diet; are you nourishing your mind?
- Do you consume a particular type of media more than others?
- What is the effect of this consumption on your life? i.e., does it affect what you wear? What you listen too? How you speak? How you interact? What you like or dislike?
- Do you feel you can create a more balanced media diet for yourself?
- What choices could you make to balance your intake?

## Activity 2 – Learning about Target Audiences

**Objective:** Students learn to identify the components of different types of media.

**Time:** 2 classes

- 40-minute discussion, preparation and work time
- homework
- 40-minute discussion, reflection, debriefing

**Resources:**

- Components of Media Worksheet. (see 2A –Media Component Worksheet included)
- Individual pieces of media selected by students or one piece selected by teacher for the whole class to assess together
- Preparation for Teachers: Visit [buzzin.net](http://buzzin.net) and visit their English area (click on “Writing”) to review the “Point of View” lesson)

### Day 1

**Action:** Choose one piece of media students consumed from the previous activity. (You can use any piece of media students can access or have consumed themselves so they are familiar with it.)

- Students should consider what they like and dislike about the media they have chosen.
- What is the purpose of the media?
- Is it effective? Is the purpose achieved?

Students can then fill out the Components of Media worksheet to assess their piece of media.

**Discuss:** The concept of target audience and demographics can be approached in this class. In looking at the students’ likes and dislikes, discuss why students might like an ad or movie when their siblings, peers or adults might not like it.

**Homework:** Have students think about target audiences and how to prepare an ad for that specific audience. This may include an ad for a toy, game or type of clothing. Create an ad for the product that will appeal to the chosen target audience. (Students may want to write a radio ad or create a poster ad; both can work to address this concept.)

### Day 2

**Objective:** Students learn to identify the difference between fact and opinion as well as the concept of point of view.

**Action:** List different points of view that come across in media.

- Why is a particular style of media good at highlighting a particular point of view? (Certain channels, certain magazines, celebrity endorsements)

**Discuss:** Discuss the charts students filled out on their media consumption. Using one piece of media as an example, discuss the categories together.

- Did the media omit anything or anyone?
- What was fact in the media and what was opinion?
- What was the effect of this on the piece?
- Whose point of view is used?

**Create:**

Have the students complete the following assignment.

Part 1

You work for a marketing company and need to create an ad about a new breakfast cereal. The cereal is Sweetie Sweet's Coco Poofs which contains a lot of sugar but also cool toys and a box with games on it.

Part 2

Your ad was so successful, that children love Sweetie Sweet's Coco Poofs, and now they are all getting cavities. Now, re-write the ad from the perspective of someone from the Dentist's Association. The ad should educate people that the cereal is very bad for their teeth and health. How do you change the ad?

## Activity 3 – Learning to Be a Citizen Journalist

Students learn about user-generated content (UGC) and how to become a citizen journalist.

**Objective:** Students discover that media can be created by them. They can make an impact on the world around them through media. The concepts of UGC and citizen journalism are introduced.

**Time:** variable

- 40-minute class discussion
- An ongoing project that continues throughout the year
- Presentation for another day – can work in class or at home

**Resources:**

- [topthistv.com](http://topthistv.com)
- recording device – ipod, computer, microphone, tape deck

### Day 1

**Background:** Websites and activities that allow people to create and share their own work are exceptionally popular. Online website such as YouTube ([youtube.com](http://youtube.com)), Wikipedia ([wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)) and Flickr ([flickr.com](http://flickr.com)) are prime examples of online destinations to find user-generated content. UGC means someone has put media that they have created online for others to view, comment on and participate in. They may not be trained journalists or media producers and may not necessarily be paid by a company to post their comments or media.

**Discuss:**

- What does UGC mean?
- How does user-generated content differ from other mediums?
- Have you participated in UGC?
- Discuss with the class how media has changed now that UGC is becoming more popular.

Review the Heinz Ketchup Contest at [topthistv.com](http://topthistv.com). Discuss how this marketing ploy works and why:

- Why are people excited to do this?
- Why is the company asking others to make their ads?
- Why is the company asking other people to choose the winning ad?

**Action:** Create a radio ad for Heinz Ketchup. What will be different from the TV ad? Use sound effects, music and voices. Record your ads and play them for the class.

## Day 2

**Background:** Citizen journalists are a part of UGC. This concept refers to people who are not trained journalists, but were at the event and have “posted” their thoughts or images. For example, when a television station plays a video from an event that someone shot with their phone camera, we are watching citizen journalism. Wikipedia is another form of citizen journalism because anyone can add or edit an entry.

- Has anyone in the class participated in citizen journalism? How?
- What do you have to be wary of when consuming UGC or citizen journalism?
- What makes citizen journalism a unique perspective?

**Action:** Students can become journalists for their classroom or school. Remind them to keep in mind what they have learned about media so far when they make decisions about this assignment.

Option 1: The class can create a blog and use it to post notes on classes from the day. The teacher assigns a scribe for each class who takes notes and then posts them that night on the blog.

Option 2: A blog can be created to contain video and audio as well as text. Students can choose the format they would like to report in. Students take turns reporting news from the school or class community (for example, news on an upcoming school play, a story about a classroom event, a report on a local product for sale, an interview with school staff).

Option 3: Students select an upcoming community or class event and create an ad for the school announcements or newspaper.

Option 4: Students choose an issue of importance to them and select how they will use media to educate their school community. Students select the media they feel would be best suited to this goal, they decide who their audience is, they research the subject and they create a variety of media to support their message.

# Conclusion

Students have learned that media is more than just TV. They have learned to interrogate the media they consume and how to create media for different purposes. They should have an understanding of the concepts of point of view, target audience, UGC, brands and citizen journalism. The class will have several pieces of media that they have created or written about. These can be displayed on a class blog or website so it can be shared globally.

# 1A - Media Consumption Schedule

Time	Media	Style	Purpose
08:00:00	radio	morning drive programme listened to on the radio in home or car	inform listener about traffic and weather
08:30:00			
09:00:00			
10:00:00			
10:30:00			
11:30:00			
12:00:00			
12:30:00			
13:00:00			
13:30:00			
14:00:00			
14:30:00			
15:00:00			
15:30:00			
16:00:00			

Time	Media	Style	Purpose
16:30:00			
17:00:00			
17:30:00			
18:00:00			
18:30:00			
19:00:00			
19:30:00			
20:00:00			
20:30:00			
21:00:00			
21:30:00			
22:00:00			
22:30:00			
23:00:00			

# 2A - Media Component Worksheet

## Initial Observations

Think about the media you have selected. Before filling out the chart, assess what you *see*, *think*, *hear* and *feel* when you consume it.

Write two sentences for each of those preliminary thoughts here before proceeding to the chart.

For example:

A Reality Television Programme

*see* – Someone else life.

*think* – It's Entertaining

*feel* – Fun because I watch with my friends all together.

<b>Who is in my media?</b>	<i>Men</i> <i>Women</i> <i>Nationality</i> <i>Age</i> <i>Differently abled people</i>
<b>A/V in my media</b>	<i>Sounds</i> <i>Music</i> <i>Pictures</i> <i>Video</i> <i>Chatting</i> <i>Online</i> <i>Camera angles</i> <i>Animation</i>

<p><b>What type of medium?</b></p>	<p><i>TV: commercial</i>  <i>Film: trailer</i>  <i>Internet: Facebook site</i></p>
<p><b>Intention</b></p>	<p><i>Sell</i>  <i>Entertain</i>  <i>Inform</i>  <i>Communicate</i></p>
<p><b>How do I interact with it?</b></p>	<p><i>Watch</i>  <i>Play</i>  <i>Type</i>  <i>Create</i>  <i>Think</i></p>

<b>Opinion</b>	<i>I love watching this programme</i>
<b>Facts</b>	<i>Programme is in its third season</i>
<b>Target Audience</b>	<i>Females, ages 11 - 15</i>

# Media-Literacy Glossary Exercise

The following is a two-part exercise for teachers to help students think about terms used in media literacy.

**Part One:** This part of the exercise should be completed before starting the three media-literacy activities.

What do you think these words mean as they relate to media. Come up with definitions with your classmates. Students and teachers should print out a blank glossary page and fill in the definitions together. This will help the teacher assess how the students think about media at this time.

**Part Two:** This part of the exercise should be completed after the teacher has completed at least two of the media-literacy exercises.

After the teacher has completed some media-literacy activities, return to this glossary and have students fill on the definitions again. This time go through their answers using a dictionary to confirm their meaning. Has the students' understanding of the terms changed? This will help teachers confirm what students have learned from the media-literacy activities in this curriculum.

- Advertise
- Alternative media
- Bias
- Body language
- Brand
- Celebrity
- Censorship
- Community
- Consumer
- Decipher
- Deconstruct
- Demographics
- Entertainment
- Fame
- Feedback
- Guerilla marketing

- Ideology
- Imply
- Influence
- Marketing
- Mass media
- Media
- Medium
- Narrator
- News
- Opinion
- PSA
- Perspective
- Persuade
- Point of view
- Propaganda
- Representation
- Source
- Society
- Sponsor
- Stars
- Stereotype
- Target audience
- Truth

The Toronto International Film Festival Group (TIFFG) is a charitable, not-for-profit, cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world. Its vision is to lead the world in creative and cultural discovery through the moving image.  
For more information please visit [tiffg.ca](http://tiffg.ca).