ANIMATION STUDIO Kit

Stop-Motion Animation Workshop

MEDIA LITERACY

HamiltonBuhl

Introduction

This teachers' guide provides insight into the proliferation of mass media in our society and culture. Mass media permeates all facets of our daily lives and influences us in numerous ways, some of which we may not be aware.

In this lesson you will view examples of advertising and discuss the types of messages conveyed. The term "media literacy" will be defined and considered from an educational perspective to illustrate the increasing need for us to become better informed about mass media. You will examine the "Key Concepts of Media Literacy" as described in the "What Is Media Literacy" section of the National Association for Media Literacy website, https://namle.net, and then use these key concepts to critically analyze an animated film.

The Key Concepts of Media Literacy

You will discover that the Core Principals of Media Literacy in Education are designed to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world.

It is important to note that media literacy is concerned not only with the deconstruction of media texts, but also with enhancing one's enjoyment and appreciation of media texts through an understanding of the language, codes and conventions adopted by various media. It is also important to note that the deconstruction of a media text need not always take into account the commercial or non-commercial nature of the work. Non-commercial films such as the auteur animation films present interesting opportunities for analysis, specifically in relation to filmmaker intent, audience, technique, point of view, soundtrack and the overall effectiveness of all of these elements in communicating a story.

Modifying the Core Principals of Media Literacy in Education to examine non-commercial works will prove to be an enriching experience for you and your students. Understanding and appreciating media rather than focusing on its negative aspects will also encourage your students to seek out alternatives to mainstream media for their personal enjoyment.

Stop-Motion Animation Workshop

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this teachers' guide you will be able to:

- Examine the role and influence of visual images in our daily lives, in relation to mass media and popular culture;

- Examine the types of messages found in advertising;

- Define media literacy;

- Identify and discuss critical principles behind media literacy education, as per the Core Principals of Media Literacy;

- Critically analyze an animated film using these key concepts;

- Investigate and analyze how meaning is embedded in works of art.

Mass Media

Our technology-based society exposes us to more forms of mass media than any previous generation. The influence of the media is everywhere. Our exposure to it plays a significant role in determining how we think about a variety of important issues, through the messages that are relayed and our interpretation of them. Mass media shapes our society by selecting and portraying a particular set of beliefs, values and traditions which help to construct the reality in which we live. Media messages can be obvious, subtle or hidden, affecting us on a subliminal or subconscious level. A media type may also provide more than one message.

Advertising is perhaps one of the most insidious forms of mass media. Consider where advertising can be found today. (It might be an easier and less time-consuming task to consider where you don't find it!)

Class Learning Activity:
View Examples of Advertising

- Challenge your students to find a print advertisement that they find particularly appealing or influential.

- Challenge your students to find a television or web advertisement that they find particularly appealing or influential.

Then, ask students to analyze these works using the Core Principals of Media Literacy

As an alternative, explore the specific examples below of online and magazine advertisements to get started. These are examples of the types of messages to which we are exposed to on a daily basis and which attempt to influence us on many different levels. Consider the types of overt and subtle messages contained in these media. Can you identify the hidden messages?

iPad commercial:
youtube.com

Audi 2010 Green Car Super Bowl commercial:
youtube.com

National Anti-Drug Strategy - "Mirror":
youtube.com

Old Spice: The Man You Could Smell Like:
youtube.com

Best Nike Commercial of All Time [HD]:
youtube.com

Now, have a quick look at the following magazines to see the types of messages they convey.

Teen Vogue
teenvogue.com

Sports Illustrated
sportsillustrated.com

Seventeen
seventeen.com

VIBE Magazine
vibe.com

Class Discussion: Advertising and Its Influence

Offer examples of some of your favorite advertisements, magazines or other media types. Consider and discuss why they appeal to you. How do you think mass media influences your lifestyle as a student? How susceptible do you think your age group is to these messages? How do you think the promotion of famous people in the media af-fects the messages you receive? Do you think that you can influence the media in any way?

Media Literacy

Media literacy is concerned with the process of under-standing and using mass media. Media education aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of media works. The purpose of media literacy education is to en-courage individuals to critically analyze a variety of media types, to make their own judgments instead of passively accepting someone else's perspective or opinion at face value, and to create and share their own media works.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education defines media literacy as:

Media literacy is the ability to ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE, CREATE, and ACT using all forms of communication. Media literacy represents a necessary, inevitable, and realistic response to the complex, ever-changing electronic environment and communication cornucopia that surround us.

To become a successful student, responsible citizen, productive worker, or competent and conscientious consumer, individuals need to develop expertise with the increasingly sophisticated information and entertainment media that address us on a multi-sensory level, affecting the way we think, feel, and behave.

The Center for Media Literacy website identifies an alternate definition of media literacy you may wish to review.

Core Principles of Media Literacy

Please review the section "What Is Media Literacy?" on https://namle.net and in particular note the Core Principles of Media Literacy.

Class Discussion: The Core Principles of Media Literacy

What is the National Association for Media Literacy for Education? Discuss the critical premises behind media education in relation to the Core Principles. Do you think all media can be critiqued in this way?

Critical Analysis of Media

Now you will critically analyze an animated film.

Individual Study Activity: Analyze an Animated Film

Select and explore a popular recent animated films. Critically analyze the film from a media literacy perspective, using as a guide the Media Literacy Question Sheet derived from the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education.

Popular and Recent Animated Films

1. *Ryan* by Chris Landreth
(2004, 13 min 57 s)

youtu.be/nbkBjZKBLHQ?t=12s

Synopsis: Based on the life of Ryan Larkin, a Canadian animator who produced some of the most influential animated films of his time, this film depicts Larkin's downward spiral and his life as an addict. (Recommended for grades 11–12.)

2. *Madame Tutli-Putli* by Chris Lavis & Maciek Szczerbowski (2007, 17 min 15 s)

youtu.be/GGyLP6R4HTE?t=11s

Synopsis: This film takes viewers on an exhilarating trek into the fully imagined, tactile world of Madame Tutli-Putli. She confronts her demons while travelling alone on a night train, with all her possessions and the ghosts of her past. (Recommended for grades 11 –12.)

Note: While this film effectively shows the elaborate nature of puppet armatures, certain scenes contain mature content. It is recommended that educators view this film and select scenes of interest before screening it for their students.

3. *Black Soul* by Martine Chartrand
(2000, 9 min 47 s)

youtu.be/SFzoasx_w5A?t=21s

Synopsis: This film dives into the heart of black culture with an exhilarating trip through history. A young boy traces his roots through the stories that his grandmother shares with him about the events that shaped their cultural history. (Recommended for grades 9 –12.)

4. *Moon Man* by Paul Morstad
(2004, 3 min 33 s)

youtu.be/uon8ebgIU8g?t=10s

Synopsis: Inspired by the song "Moon Man New-fie," this film tells the story of folk hero Codfish Dan, who made Newfoundland history after a lucky fishing trip on the Milky Way. (Recom-mended for grades 7–12.)

5. *Runaway* by Cordell Barker
(2009, 9 min 10 s)

youtu.be/qUGHv2VAESE?t=19s

Synopsis: A possible introduction to discussions about energy consumption, *Runaway* takes viewers on an allegorical journey that is both funny and disastrous. (Recommended for grades 6–10.)

7. *Man With Issues* by Tom Reilly
(2004, 12 min 17 s)

youtu.be/ay-_wZq3CM0

Synopsis: A short claymation about an old guy with some serious problems and a disturbing secret. A quirky classic by Tom Reilly (Recommended for grades 9–12.)

8. *Time Chicken* by Nick Black (2006, 5 min 50s)

www.shortoftheweek.com/2017/04/17/time-chicken/

Synopsis: Employing a playful Claymation aesthetic to tackle a famous philosophical question that dates back thousands of years to Ancient Greece, Time Chicken looks to finally answer the creation conundrum: What came first, the Chicken or the Egg?(Recommended for grades 7–12.)

9. *The Girl Who Hated Books* by Jo Meuris
(2006, 7 min 21 s)

youtu.be/1Efrg23Sqe8?t=19s

Synopsis: The story of Meenam, a young girl who hates books even though her parents love to read, may inspire students to approach literature with a more open mind. (Recommended for grades 1–4.)

KEY CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY

The following Core Priciples of Media Literacy have been developed by the National Association For Media Literacy Education.

This description of media literacy core principles and their application has been excerpted from Namle.net.

To define the critical premises behind media education, the following key concepts have been developed. Media literacy supports many of the most challenging goals of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Language Arts programs from K–12. The core principals provide a theoretical base for all media literacy programs and give teachers a common language and framework for discussion.

1. All media are constructions.

Media present carefully crafted constructions that reflect many decisions and result from many determining factors. Much of our view of reality is based on media messages that have been per-constructed and have attitudes, inter-pretations and conclusions already built in. The media, to a great extent, present us with versions of reality. When analyzing a media text, consider the following questions: How is this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?

2. Each person interprets messages differently.

People who watch the same TV show or visit the same website often do not have the same experience or come away with the same impression. Each person can interpret or negotiate a message differently based on age, culture, life experience, values and beliefs. When analyzing a media text, consider: How might others understand this message differently?

3. The media have commercial interests.

Most media are created for profit. Advertising is generally the biggest source of revenue. Commercials are the most obvious means of generating revenue, although advertising messages take many forms, including product placement (paying to have a product prominently displayed in programs or movies), sponsorships, prizes, pop-up ads and surveys on the Internet, celebrity endorsements or naming a stadium or theatre. When analyzing a media text, consider: Who created this and why? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?

4. The media contain ideological and value messages.

Producers of media messages have their own beliefs, values, opinions and biases. These can influence what gets told and how it is told. Producers must choose what will and will not be included in media texts, so there are no neutral or value-free media messages. As these messages are often viewed by great numbers of viewers, they can have great social and political influence. When analyzing a media text, consider the following question: What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message? We need to decode media messages about such issues as the nature of the "good life," the virtue of consumerism, the role of women, the acceptance of authority, and unquestioning patriotism.

5. Each medium has its own language, style, techniques, codes, conventions, and aesthetics.

Each medium creates meaning differently using certain vocabulary, techniques and styles, or codes and conventions. In a movie or TV show, when the picture dissolves, it indicates a passage of time. Hot links and navigation buttons indicate you can find what is needed on a website. A novelist must use certain words to create setting and characters, while other media use images, text and sound. Over time, we understand what each technique means. We become fluent in the "languages" of different media and can appreciate their aesthetic qualities. When analyzing a media text, consider: What techniques are used and why? Developing media literacy skills enables us not only to de-code and understand media texts, but also to enjoy the unique aesthetic form of each. Our enjoyment of media is enhanced by an awareness of how pleasing forms or effects are created.

6. The media have commercial implications.

Media literacy includes an awareness of the economic basis of mass media production. Networks look for audiences to be delivered to sponsors. Knowledge of this allows students to understand how program content makes them targets for advertisers and organizes viewers into marketable groups. The issue of ownership and control is of vital importance at a time when there are more choices but fewer voices. (Ninety percent of the world's newspapers, magazines, television stations, films, and computer software companies are owned by seven corporate conglomerates.)

7. The media have social and political implications.

An important dimension of media literacy is an awareness of the broad range of social and political effects stemming from the media. The changing nature of family life, the use of leisure time and the results of televised political debates are three such examples. The mass media serve to legitimize societal values and attitudes. The media also have a major role in mediating global events and issues from civil rights to terrorism.

8. Form and content are closely related in the media.

Making the form/content connection relates to the thesis of Marshall McLuhan that "the medium is the message." That is, each medium has its own special grammar and technological bias and codifies reality in unique ways. Thus, different media might report the same event but create different impressions and different messages.

MEDIA LITERACY QUESTION SHEET

Critically analyze the animated film you selected using as a guide the questions below, developed from the Core Principlas of Media Literacy Education. You may choose the questions you feel are most relevant to the film you selected.

Consider the following questions:

1. What "message" or messages can be found in the film?

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2. How is this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?

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3. How might others understand this message differently?

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4. Who created this message and why? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?

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_____

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

_____

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6. What aesthetic techniques are used in the film and why?

_____

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7. Does this film have commercial implications?

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8. Does this film have social and political implications?

_____

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9. Overall, do you think the film you reviewed is a valuable contribution to society? If so, why? If not, explain.

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