

# **Empowering Adolescents to be Smart Consumers of Information: Advertisements and News**

*Claudia Allen*

## **Academic Setting**

Garfield Middle School celebrated its 50th anniversary in April 2001. It is one of the smaller middle schools in Albuquerque with about 630 students during the 2000-2001 school year. It is located in the North Valley in a small neighborhood adjacent to Garfield Park. It is very much a community school meaning many students' parents and grandparents also attended Garfield.

Nearly 85% of the students are Hispanic. With three fourths of the school receiving free or reduced priced lunches, Garfield is classified as a Title 1 school. Garfield is also a bilingual school with 65% of the population identified as bilingual. This unit was designed to be taught in my gifted language art classes which combine seventh and eight graders. These classes reflect a school make up of 53% Hispanic, 42% Anglo and 5% Native American.

The educational goals of gifted education include self-understanding, interpersonal skills, thinking skills, creativity, increased interest areas, and communication skills. Media literacy easily flows into all of these arenas.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this unit is to help students learn to recognize, understand and use information in an ethical and responsible way. The purpose is to empower students to access, analyze, evaluate, produce and appreciate media. Mass media includes sound, print, visual and other forms require need individualized perusal and assessment.

With an emphasis on language arts, this unit could be used in numerous content areas due to its multiple approaches. Commercial art, focusing on the advertisements, and social studies, focusing on the First Amendment are two wherein areas this unit might be used. All six strands of the *Albuquerque Public Schools Language Arts Content Standards and Benchmarks* are addressed in this unit, as well as the media literacy standards, benchmarks and concepts designed by the state of New Mexico. The APS standard is in parentheses after each assignment.

Strand I: Reading process

Standard: The student employs appropriate reading strategies to read and interpret increasingly complex texts for a variety of purposes.

Benchmark: The student demonstrates competence with reading processes to comprehend, analyze, interpret, and evaluate a wide variety of informational text across content areas.

#### Strand II: Reading analysis

Standard: The student responds to, examines, and critiques historically or culturally significant issues and events portrayed in literature that both illustrate and affect individuals and societies.

Benchmark: The student examines literature from a variety of authors, cultures, and genre and makes connections among literary works.

#### Strand III: Expressive Language: Writing

Standard: The student writes effectively for different audiences and different purposes, using appropriate writing strategies and conventions.

Benchmark: The student develops and demonstrates proficiency and competence in writing strategies and conventions across content areas to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze critically for a variety of purposes and audiences.

#### Strand IV: Expressive Language: Speaking

Standard: The student speaks effectively for different audiences and purposes using appropriate speaking strategies and conventions.

Benchmark: The student develops and demonstrates proficiency and competence in speaking strategies and in appropriate speaking conventions to describe, narrate, express, explain, persuade, and analyze for a variety of purposes and audiences.

#### Strand V: Receptive Language: Listening and Viewing

Standard: The student demonstrates, analyzes, evaluates, and reflects upon the skills and processes used to communicate by listening to and viewing a variety of auditory and visual works.

Benchmark: The student comprehends, analyzes, and interprets formal and informal auditory and visual works, including multimedia presentations.

#### Strand VI: Research

Standard: The student conducts and compiles research data, synthesize findings, and develops an original conclusion to increase personal and community depth of knowledge.

Benchmark: The student gathers and uses research information to analyze issues across content areas.

#### Historical Overview:

- students will create a time line or outline of the development of mass

media

(Strands V, III)

- students will write a persuasive essay on an historical perspective of media: One of the most important developments in mass media/communications is..? (Strands VI,V, I, II, III)

*Ethics and the First Amendment:*

- students will discuss what the First Amendment means to them ( are there exceptions) (Strands V, IV)

- students will informally debate freedom of speech vs. censorship (does the government have a right to keep information from the people?)

(Strands VI, IV, V)

- students will explore books on The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-1999 and respond to why they think the books are being challenged; they will research what has been challenged and then discuss whether they agree or disagree with the recommendations (Strands I, II, III,VI)

- students will create a survey and question the student body about their beliefs regarding censorship and ethical practices in the media (Strands VI, V, IV, III,II,I)

- students will write an position paper supporting their belief for or against censorship (Strands III, VI)

*Vocabulary:*

- students will use specialized vocabulary, introduced throughout this unit, appropriately in class discussions and written assignments (see documentation section) (Strands III, IV)

- students will create "definition poetry" using words from the vocabulary list/ or may choose to create a song/ rap using this same list (Strands III,VI)

*Advertisements:*

- students will find and identify marketing strategies in a variety of ads (magazines, newspapers, television, billboards) (Strand V, IV)

- students will create three advertisements, using one product but targeting three different groups (a current product on the market today) (Strands I, II, III, IV, V, VI)

-students will create a commercial or advertisement for an item of the future (Strands I, II, III, IV, V, VI)

*Editorials:*

- students will read a variety of editorials and letters to the editor and assess the authors, audiences and the authors intent (Strands I, II, III, IV, V)

- students will write a letter to the editor (Strands I, II, III)

#### *Television:*

- students will assess stereotypes in sitcoms (Strands V, IV)
- students will watch news programs on local and national level and compare/contrast the issues and discuss the issues of saliency/ agenda-setting (Strands V, IV)

#### *Music/ Lyrics:*

- students will assess the lyrics of three of their favorite songs looking for the message of the song, the language used, and the value to their life (Strands V, I, II, III, VI)
- students will listen to and compare/ contrast songs of different genres and eras (Strands V, IV, III)

#### *School to Work:*

- students will interview people who work in various media and discuss with them the education required and the degree of job satisfaction (Strands III, IV, V)
- students will spend time at a media- related work site and share their experiences with their classmates (Strand IV)

#### Rationale

The educational goals of gifted education include self-understanding, interpersonal skills, thinking skills, creativity, increased interest areas, and communication skills. The study of Media Literacy qualifies and fulfills each of these aspects of gifted education. To intrigue the students and hold their interest, the unit includes whole class, cooperative and individual projects, and activities. Allowing students choices in their activities and final products is a strong need of gifted students who frequently go "underground" in middle school years when these needs aren't being met. Being autonomous learners is the ultimate goal in gifted education. While encouraging individual student strengths and building on their weaknesses, I hope the students will realize the relevance of this topic in their daily lives and truly put forth the effort to learn and use the information in a practical and realistic way. It won't just be a topic where they ask, "Why do I have to learn this?"

Even 75 years ago Henry Luce and Briton Haden, founders of *TIME* magazine, felt people were being bombarded with information, and at the same time were woefully under informed. They created a magazine intent on sorting through and synthesizing what was important, in their opinion. Our whole world is made up of multiple forms of media. From the movies they view at the theater and the

videos they rent to newspapers, magazines, television and radio, and even the billboards our students see on the way to school, all are a part of the world of media.

The media dominates our world in the 21st century. Students need to understand the impact of media and their related technologies on their daily lives. Matt Drudge, in his *Drudge Report*, boasts his information is "80% accurate." With this kind of attitude regarding reporting, our students need to question everything they see and hear. By the time our students graduate from high school they will have spent 50% more time in front of a television set than in front of a teacher. Children between two and 11 watch 28 to 30 hours of television a week, viewing 300 to 1600 advertisements a day. Young adolescents (12 to 14 years old) watch television an estimated 26 hours a week. Later in adolescence, teens do shift away from television viewing to become heavy consumers of music, making up 25% of all CD and cassette sales. The public schools in the United States are behind other English-speaking countries when it comes to including media literacy in the general curriculum. The compelling factor in the development of media education in these other countries is the huge importation of U. S. film and television, according to Professor Robert Kubey. The U. S. imports only a small fraction of the media products that are consumed here. Americans are basically only exposed to American media, which creates an obstacle for widespread support for media literacy in the United States.

Australian theorist Peter Greenaway has said, "To understand a culture you've got to get outside it. Americans never go outside their own culture. That's why media education barely exists there."

In Australia media education has been in place in the public schools since the 1970s. A number of research studies have shown the effectiveness of media literacy intervention in school or home-based environments. Knowledge of media production does appear to increase awareness of the constructed nature of media and the ability of the adolescents exposed to media literacy education to identify the author's motives, purposes and point of view.

Media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, produce and appreciate the information found in media. Media educators generally concur with the following tenets of media literacy:

Access: using the full range of media and related technologies for sending and receiving information through broadcast, cable, interactive and other media forms.

**Analysis:** the ability to understand and interpret elements of the media messages and media systems; to understand their forms and functions, ownership and management structures, economic and policy implications, message, content, intent and effects; and decoding and reconstruct their meaning in another context.

**Evaluation:** ability to make judgments about the media, assess and apply ethics expounded for the different media, critique esthetic elements, compare and contrast values in media messages and systems to those of other individual and community value systems.

**Production:** creating messages in a variety of media, including text, video, computer, with a view toward sharing the results of this production with the larger community.

These skills allow us to read, view, and hear everything with a discerning eye, which is the ultimate goal as described for this unit.

### Historical background for teachers

Historically we have always been storytellers. With the coming of literacy, the ability to comprehend and use written symbols to communicate, societies began to change. There evolved a wider definition of the meaning of community, expanding to include others with whom they could now communicate. A culture's history and myths could now be recorded. Homer wrote down many generations of oral history and stories, two of which we know as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The status of the storytellers decreased as the status of the scribes increased. Power now belonged to those who could read and write. Johannes Gutenberg's invention of movable metal type brought the next major event in the development of communication. The metal type was durable enough to do mass copying, as well as allowing the letters to be moved around so that a new page of information could be printed. His main purpose was to

make books for profit, but in his respect for the *Bible* which he first printed, he used quality paper and ink, therefore printing fewer than he would have otherwise. This first printing was in 1456. Within 44 years, 12 European countries had printing facilities and there were 20 million books comprising 35,000 titles.

The ability to read became more a necessity than a luxury. Literacy and education became more common. As more people began to read and write, more ideas were shared and spread and greater communication occurred in a wider, more easily accessible world. The royal families and the Church had less power. The lower and middle classes became more educated and began to have more power.

The printing press had a major impact on the Industrial Revolution, that period of time in the 1700s and 1800s, when machines were developed to do much of the work that had previously been done by hand. Print made much of the exchange of ideas and information to design and create the machines more readily available. With this revolution of production methods, people began to change their lifestyles from a rural to an urban culture. More leisure time was available and there was more money available for entertainment. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the printing press was even more fully developed and newspapers and magazines began to flourish. Motion pictures and radio were also being experimented with.

Literacy grew among the lower and middle classes, and foreign-speaking immigrants could be informed and entertained by movies and radio with fewer reading skills needed. For the first time in history an entire population was able to participate in cultural communication:

Mass market newspapers and magazines, motion pictures, and radio helped unify a rapidly expanding, pluralistic, multi-ethnic country; created and nourished the U.S. middle class; established, supported, and solidified the roots of the U.S. consumer economy. (Baran).

In 1945 there were only about 10,000 television sets in homes, and these almost exclusively in urban areas. Even at this early period in television there was concern about the power of this medium. People's fears were influenced by the successful propaganda campaigns Hitler used against the Jews. There were concerns regarding minority groups' lack of access to the media, and about antidemocratic subversive activity through the media. Advertising and its effects on children were also questioned at this time. The Hutchins Commission in 1947 was commissioned and funded by Luce, CEO of *TIME*, to study what was now accurately termed "mass media" and its power. By 1959 there were 54 million households with television. America was further pulled away from its rural roots by the industrialization connected to World War II. People were working shorter hours, and had more leisure time and more money to spend. Manufacturers reconfigured their facilities from the war effort to produce consumer products: cars, golf clubs, sportswear, etc... that filled the free time people were discovering. With new products came increased advertising.

Television became a true mass medium in 1960. Now 90% of all homes had televisions. Characterized by social and racial turmoil, the United States was transformed by what people were able to witness through live television. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream"

speech, the vivid scenes from Vietnam, the assassination of President Kennedy and his ensuing funeral, and man walking on the moon were all witnessed by millions in America and around the world. Lives have been molded and changed from an age of innocence to a global awareness due to mass media.

Now entering into the second millennium, the computer, especially the Internet is influencing our youth. Gameboys, video games, music videos, MTV - the list goes on. We need to give our students the tools they need to understand what they see and hear. They need to understand the techniques used to target them, especially in advertising. We need to encourage good choices of entertainment and emulation. Ethics of the different medium need to be questioned. Through deconstructing advertisements they will attain skills to understand how they are being targeted. By studying newspapers and magazines and writing articles for both they will practice objective and subjective writing. Editorials will be read and responded to. Through studying and creating media we can empower our students to become better consumers of advertising and news. Media are to be interacted with, not passively spoon fed to us without any thought on our parts. We need to share this with our students - a skill that will help them throughout their lives.

### **Implementation:**

To allow students to truly get involved and have time to explore the media and analyze, compare, produce and demonstrate an understanding of the media this unit is designed for about nine weeks. Depending on the number of guest speakers and field trips available, it might be somewhat shorter or even extended depending on individual teacher preferences or needs. Before beginning the unit I would send a letter to the parents explaining the purpose and overview of the unit. Because of the possible controversial issues that may come up and the need to show clips of television, movies, news items, etc. as examples of bias, stereotyping, and persuasion. I am requesting a parent signature for permission one time rather than for each individual item I show. (See documentation section for samples.)

In an attempt to measure growth in the students' awareness of the media I am going to administer a short pre and posttest. (Documentation) This will be only one method of evaluation, others being the essays, advertisements, poetry, and letters to the editor the students produce, as well as the involvement in class discussions and debate. The assessments will include traditional tests, including a vocabulary test at the end of the unit, but the accuracy of the students use of terms through their writing and examples of the use of the

strategies and vocabulary in their dialogue and projects will be more telling of the students' comprehension of this material.

To gain immediate attention and involvement in this project I will stage an argument, fight, or emergency situation in the classroom at the beginning of the first day. I will ask the students to write an "eyewitness account" of what they saw, and I will model this by sitting quietly and writing as well. Afterwards, I will explain that this was "set up" for the purpose of getting different viewpoints of the same incident. From this we will move into a discussion about viewpoint. The next three days will involve activities related to point of view, bias, persuasion, influence, and subjective and objective writing. They will receive specific instructions on paragraph writing and the development of an essay.

A vocabulary list that will be utilized through out the unit will be given on the fifth day of the unit with discussion about what they already know from the previous activities of the week. One of the assignments, directly working from the vocabulary, will be to write three poems that explain or define the words. Students will hear and see a poem they will then model. Their poems will show some degree of understanding of the concepts represented by the words (this actual assignment will not be until late in the unit so the students become more familiar with the terms and have a greater understanding of them).

The second week will include brainstorming about students' current knowledge of media and what media literacy is, and what they would like to learn about it. They will take notes on one of the few "lectures" within this unit and create an outline or time line on the development of communication and its related technologies. Styles of outlines and timelines will be discussed. The First Amendment and ethics of the different genre of media will be topics for this week, with an informal debate on freedom of speech versus the need for censorship, after some time for research. (*Introduction to Mass Communication* by Baran is an excellent source for the principles and ethics each medium espouses.)

The third week will see the actual debate and a discussion as to whether or how any of their views may have changed as a result of this activity. The creation of a survey by the students to study the student population and their attitudes toward the media will be the next focus. They will select a book from "The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-1999" to assess as previously described.

The fourth week advertising will be introduced using a CD or video of

commercials and using questioning. Deconstructing the ads, we'll discuss strategies and techniques used to target different audiences. Students will be collecting videos of commercials and ads in print to share and discuss in class. They will choose a product to create ads and commercials for different target audiences. These will be assessed using the "Principles of Advertising" as well as for creativity and artistic flair.

The fifth week will continue work on advertising, continuing analysis of these in various media. Students will create a product we will need in the future and design a series of ads and commercials to promote it. The target audience/s will be identified, as well as the manifest message and possible latent messages discussed.

The sixth week students will read and evaluate editorials. They will write a letter to the editor in response to an editorial or to another letter to the editor. Components to letter writing will be reviewed. The concepts of stereotypes and generalizing will be discussed with illustrations from television and movies clips. The students will be required to analyze specific situation comedies (sitcoms) at home and share their insights and evaluations.

The seventh week will continue discussions regarding sitcoms and using clips of shows from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, and current shows, discuss trends over the decades. What do they see/ hear? How are they different? Are they better, worse, or just different? Agenda setting will be introduced and news shows (local and national), newspapers, and news magazines will be analyzed for their "news worthiness." Yellow journalism and sensationalism will be discussed. Review previous discussions about subjective and objective writing.

The eighth week different genres of music from different eras will be listened to and the lyrics will be discussed. Are they telling a story? Making a statement on society? Or is it simply a love song? Do the words in songs influence our thoughts? Is there a message the artist is trying to send?

The ninth week the poem assignment, to assess their understanding of the vocabulary, will be made and a traditional vocabulary test will be administered. The classes will review all concepts, strategies, ideas etc. and the posttest will be given to assess any new understanding they have developed through this unit.

Interspersed throughout these weeks will be field trips and guest speakers (see documentation section for suggestions).

## **The First Five Lesson Plans**

## **Lesson #1 Are You Being Subjective or Objective?**

Goal: Students will gain a better understanding of what the terms subjective and objective mean. Students will write a subjective paragraph and then rewrite it to be more objective.

Anticipatory Set: I will stage an argument, fight or emergency to take place in the classroom. I will ask the students to write an "eyewitness" account of what they just saw and heard. I will model sitting quietly and writing my own account of the events.

Instruction: I will collect the paragraphs and read several out loud, discussing the subjective qualities of the paragraphs, looking for bias or emotional words being used. I will then explain that the situation was a set up and discuss how to make their paragraphs less subjective - "just the facts". They will be asked to write a more objective version of their paragraph.

Guided Practice: I will again collect their paragraphs and read through a few pointing out the more objective phrases and information.

Independent Practice: The students will spend 15-20 minutes observing a situation or location during the day or after school. They will write both a subjective and an objective paragraph about the same observation, due tomorrow to share with the class.

Evaluation: These will be critiqued by the emotional, bias, and persuasive words used or the lack thereof. Did they accurately complete the assignment, writing both a subjective paragraph and an objective paragraph?

## **Lesson Plan # 2 Point of View**

Goal: Students will become more aware of different points of view and how they can all be "right" It's a matter of perspective. Students will discuss points of view related specifically to the stories presented and then relate them to the "eyewitness reports" from the previous day's activity.

Anticipatory Set: I will have the book *Jack and the Beanstalk* in my hand as the students enter and flip it to the other side presenting the book *Giants Have Feelings Too*. Being a fairy tale, I think it will get their attention: "Why is she going to read that?"

Instruction: Before reading *Jack and the Beanstalk* direct the students to listen for words or phrases to indicate who's point of view the story is written from and to listen for any emotional words or words of persuasion or bias. After reading the story, discuss what point of view

the book is written from. How do we know? What words influence us or evoke any particular feelings in us? Then remind the students what they are listening for and read *Giants Have Feelings Too*, the same story from the giant's point of view. Repeat the discussion. Relate this to the previous day's writing activity and how they all experienced the same classroom incident but saw and heard different things.

Guided Practice: I will lead this questioning session and the comparisons between the two days of activities and their relationships to each other.

Independent Practice: I will then ask for incidents in their lives the students feel they can see two sides of, due to point of view. Examples they may share: they fight with a sibling and they tell different stories to their parents; maybe they witnessed a crime and told what they saw and another witness saw, something else; they were in a car accident and one person said one thing happened, and someone else saw something different.

### **Lesson Plan # 3 Point of View in Fairy Tales**

Goal: Students will have continued practice with understanding point of view.

Anticipatory Set: On the overhead projector I will have a picture in which you can see two different pictures, depending how you look at it. (I have three of these, and I'm sure you've seen them. One picture is either an old woman or a young woman depending on how you look at the picture; one is a skull or a woman looking in a mirror; and one is either a princess or an old hag. I'm sure there are many others out there, maybe in an art book showing illusion.)

Instruction: The students will act out the fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel," as they remember the story. Two or three different groups may act this out. Discuss the differences in their plays and why they occurred (many different versions and endings), then question them: Was it possible that Hansel and Gretel were really wicked children who victimized a poor old woman? How do we know the woman was a witch? Why might people think she was a witch? We only have Hansel and Gretel's word about what happened.

Guided Practice: Again I will guide questions for this specific story.

Independent Practice: The students will select a fairy tale and write the story in their own words from what they remember. They will identify from whose point of view the story is written, and then rewrite the story from another character's point of view. These will be shared and discussed tomorrow.

## Lesson Plan # 4 Definition Poetry

Goal: The students will write several poems using words from the vocabulary list, showing they truly understand the concepts/ meaning of these words in the context in which we are using them in this unit.

Anticipatory Set: On the overhead projector is a poem I wrote when I was 14:

Knowledge is What?  
Knowledge is what?  
It is so readily changing.  
It is now- the past is not.  
Birth is the start.  
Your life day to day  
All that is done now,  
In politics, science, or personal  
say.  
Knowledge is happening now.  
To others a generation later  
It is history, recovered some  
way.  
Possibly turned to life by an  
animator.  
But history is past, knowledge is  
today.

Instruction: Read the poem aloud and discuss how knowledge is defined for this poet. (I usually don't tell them I wrote it. I want them to feel free to say, "I don't get it.") Elements of a free style poem will be presented, the irregular rhyme and rhythm pointed out.

Guided Practice: The class will select a word from the vocabulary list and as a class we will write a poem, starting with the question, "\_\_\_\_\_ is What?"

The students will make suggestions for each line until we have a poem. It must include one thing the concept is not, as the poem illustrates. The poem must have nine lines or more.

Independent Practice: The students will write three poems defining words of their choice from the vocabulary list.

Evaluation: Do the poems show evidence of free style poetry? Is there rhythm or rhyme? Do they show an understanding of the words they chose to define through poetry? (The students will have a traditional vocabulary test at the end of this unit.)

## **Lesson Plan # 5 Lyrics from Multiple Genre and Eras**

Goal: The students will become more aware of the lyrics they listen to and of how lyrics have become more explicit and more violent over the years. The students will assess lyrics for their value to society.

Anticipatory Set: Music will be playing as they enter the classroom. Have country and western music playing or something from the 40's or 50's. Have some songs with a message as well as some ballads and love songs. Some good examples are "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," "I am Woman," "Don't Laugh at Me," "Grown Men Don't Cry," "Barbie Girl," "Age of Aquarius," "Guys Do It All The Time," "Moon River".)

Instruction: Listen to different songs, stopping as needed to discuss what is being said about the society of the time. Are stereotypes perpetuated? Is it a positive influence on you? How does it make you feel? Do you want to react? How?

Guided practice: This is really the same as instruction, but be very specific about what questions you want the students to listen for and answer using a song you find meaningful. Model what you want them to do with the lyrics.

Independent: The students will select two songs they currently listen to. They will copy the lyrics and analyze them according the questions you have decided are pertinent to your purpose.

Evaluation: Did the students follow your directions and answer the question about the lyrics they selected?

### **General Outline for Lessons- Day by Day**

Pre-test given prior to any discussion of media

Day 1- 3 see lesson plans provided

Day 4- Share fairy tale paragraphs and discuss words of persuasion/emotion.

Day 5- Hand out vocabulary list and review words already discussed.

Assign essay due in five days: "No human being can be objective."

--- agree or disagree.

Day 6- Brainstorm current knowledge of media, categorize and organize for unit plan.

Use vocabulary list and discuss definitions as the terms arise. \*One page, due tomorrow: "What is Your Personal View of the Media?" Include television, magazines, radio, Internet, etc... We will look at these at the end of the unit.

Day 7- In lecture format, with overhead transparencies, give overview/ historical time-line of the development of media starting with the Gutenberg Press. Students will practice their note taking skills and create an outline or time line of this historical overview.

Day 8- Read and discuss the First Amendment Exceptions? Censorship? Continue to utilize vocabulary list and understanding of terms.

Day 9- Resume previous day's discussion and look at "ethic's and principles Statements" of the different media (Baron back of book).

Day 10- Brief discussion essays on being objective  
Students will divide into two groups: "pro freedom of speech" and "need for censorship." They will gather information and research these ideas and have an informal debate in 5-7 days.

Day 11-12- library time/ computer lab/ Internet.

Day 13-14- The students in each group will create a questionnaire to survey student peers regarding their beliefs about censorship and ethical practices of the media.

Day 15- Informal debate on First Amendment rights vs. censorship. Carry over to next day if effective and students are involved.

Day 16- Conclude debate- any one have a change of view? Students will select a book from the top "100 Most Frequently Challenged Books" to read. First they will write a paper on why they think it was a source of controversy and support this with excerpts from the book, then they will research the reality of the censor and compare and contrast what they believe with the information they learned. Due at end of unit, they may turn it in sooner.

Day 17-18- Compile the results of their surveys and discuss.

Day 19- Using a CD or video of commercials, deconstruct each target audience, manifest message, latent message, appropriate/inappropriate for what groups, etc...

Day 20- Discuss and share examples of strategies/ techniques used in advertising \*Due tomorrow: Find three different strategies on TV, in newspapers or magazines, write them up or bring them into class for discussion.

Day 21- Share ads/ commercials students bring in; discuss strategy, target audience, when it aired (what TV show?), etc...

Day 22- Students will select a real product

and create three ads or commercials for that product, targeting three different audiences. They may work alone or with a partner, due in five days.

Day 23-26- Work on ads/ commercials,

Day 27-28- Share work- discuss techniques vs. target audience.

Day 29- Working with a partner, students will decide on a product of the future and design a series of ads/ commercials, designating target audiences, manifest message, and possible latent messages. Due in three days.

Day 30-31 Work on ads.

Day 32-33- Share ads, critique from students (model a proper form of critique).

Day 34-35- Read editorials from local newspapers/ news magazines, assess author audiences and intent. After reading several, the students will write a response to an editorial, or if there is an issue a student would like to address s/he may write a letter to the editor. Review components of letter writing.

Day 36- Introduce concepts of stereotypes/ generalization- relate to TV and movies; view excerpts if available. Students will watch three situation comedies and analyze for these elements.

Day 37- Tape some excerpts of shows from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, (Nickelodeon

is a good source!). Discuss trends they see: good, bad or just different?

Day 38-39- Discuss concept of agenda setting and saliency. Have available several days worth of newspapers, preferably some from several different cities. Have several weekly issues of *Newsweek* and *TIME* and *US and World Report*. Compare lead stories and topics including editorials. List number of times a topic is discussed, type of news story, points of view, etc... Assign different students to watch different news shows and keep a record of what is reported.

Day 40- Discuss results of TV new shows. Compare with written news articles. Again discuss agenda setting and saliency and if they see either.

Day 41-(Lesson Plan # 5) Listen to lyrics and identify themes, social messages, whimsy, etc... Invite them to bring in lyrics of their

favorite songs (monitor closely!) If possible listen to them, otherwise discuss their value related to previous examples. May include a discussion of the First Amendment again.

Day 42- (Lesson Plan # 4) Assign definition poetry. Use today's class time and it becomes homework, due tomorrow.

Day 43- Share poetry.

Day 44- Review concepts taught, discuss issues students may still have questions about, vocabulary, etc...

Day 45- Vocabulary test and post test.

Any or all of these assignments may be shortened or lengthened, depending on your students and your preferences. Field trips and guest speakers will also affect the order of your days and activities. This is presented only as a suggestion and possible sequencing of the unit.

### **Documentation:**

Sample letter to Parents:

Dear Parents,

Over the next few weeks we will be examining different mediums that make up our world of mass media. We will be looking at portions of movies, music videos, and television (shows and advertisements) identifying the target audience, looking for stereotypes, looking for explicit and implicit messages. We will look at newspapers and magazines for the same purpose. We will examine editorials and write letters to the editor. We will listen to some lyrics from different genres and eras of music. We will be discussing and writing about issues that may have some controversy involved, including what they understand the First Amendment to mean. Hopefully these exchanges will be beneficial in that the students will develop a better understanding of themselves and how their reality and values are formed. I want them to know what they believe in and what they are willing to support.

I don't intend to show full length shows or movies or spend even major portions on any given day looking at videos, but only clips, examples of elements I want to bring to the students attention. My intention is not to glamorize or glorify negative elements to only help the students be more aware of some of the deceptive elements of advertising and some of the harmful effects of hearing or seeing something repeatedly.

I may request that they watch a particular newscast or television

station, or even possibly tape a segment if they have the capacity to do so, to share what shows are aired opposite each other or the commercials at a specific time of day, etc...

Rather than having to send multiple letters, one each time I show a clip, I am asking that you sign permission for your child's participation in this unit. I will be glad to show you any and all materials I plan to use and appreciate any assistance you might care to offer. Thank you for your help.

Thank you,

----- Please sign and return to school -----

---

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, my child may participate in the media unit, viewing the media samples.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, my child can't see any samples without specific notification from the teacher about each one.

---

\_\_\_\_\_

student name parent name date

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Pre/ Post Test**

#### **Media Literacy**

1. How would you define media literacy?
2. List as many forms of media as you can.
3. What is a target audience?
4. List three specific stereotypes.
5. There is a licensing and regulation bureau for all forms of media.  
True/ False
6. The First Amendment limits freedom of speech and freedom of the press. True/ False
7. Mass media (newspapers, television, radio) control what we see, read, and hear about from around the world. True/ False
8. Advertising supports television shows, newspapers, and magazines.  
True/ False

9. Journalists have a conspiracy to keep certain information from the public. True/ False

10. Newspapers and magazines write only well researched, objective articles. True/ False

How many televisions are in your home? \_\_\_\_ Do you have one in your room? \_\_\_\_\_

How many VCR's are in your home? \_\_\_\_ Do you have one in your room? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you allowed to tape shows, movies, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have play stations, Nintendos, video games, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_ Which? \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours outside of school, including weekends, do you watch TV or movies, or play the games/ play stations etc. per week? \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **Field Trip and Guest Speaker Suggestions**

- Tours of local newspaper or magazine plants.
- Discussions with editors, journalists, photographers of the newspapers or magazines (either at the time of the tour or as guest speakers).
- Attend a "make-over meeting"- where the early edition of a paper is reviewed by the department editors to discuss any changes needed before the next (later) edition goes to print.
- Visit local radio or television studios to watch the process of taping a news show or other programs available for an audience.
- In Albuquerque, NM there is an excellent source for an overview of communication at The Center for the Book. The Center is housed in the first public library in Albuquerque on Central and Edith. The 90-minute program is geared toward 4th and 5th graders, but they are working on up scaling, at least for mid school. I have taken 6th, 7th, and 8th graders together for the presentation and for the most it part was well-received by the students.
- Have a juvenile judge/ lawyer/ police officer into class to discuss what they see regarding the influence of media on adolescents.
- With the permission of administration, have someone from the ACLU come visit with the students.

- Ask some advertisers to come share their ideas regarding marketing.
- Have a journalism instructor from your school, another school, or your local college come in to speak with your students.

Any time you ask a speaker to come in, be sure they know the focus you would like them to share. Have the students be prepared with questions and informational background material so there can be an exchange of value and quality.

## **Bibliography**

### **Teacher Resources**

#### **Books:**

Bagdikian, Ben H. *The Media Monopoly*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1983.

Baird, Robert M., William E. Loges, and Stuart E. Rosenbaum, eds. *The Media and Morality*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1999.

Baran, Stanley J. *Introduction to Mass Communication : Media Literacy and Culture (2001 Update)*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing, 2001.

Bernards, Neal, and Thomas Modl, eds. *The Mass Media: Opposing View Points Series*. St.Paul, Minnesota: Greenhaven Press, 1988.

Betts, George T. Professor- University of Northern Colorado-author of *Autonomous Learner Model*. Professional Development Workshop, Albuquerque, New Mexico: November 2000, Montgomery Complex:

"Emotional and Social Development of the Gifted and Talented."  
Cohen, Daniel. *Yellow Journalism*. Brookfield, Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books, 2000.

Dearing, James W. and Everett M Rogers. *Agenda-Setting*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1996.

Goffman, Erving. *Gender Advertisements*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Massey, Kimberly B. *Readings in Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1999.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. New York, New York: Viking, 1984.

Smith, Duane E., Michael J. Conroy, and Theresa Richard, eds. *We The People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. Calabasas, California: Center for Civic Education, 1995/ 1999.

Unnikrishnan, Namita and Shailaja Bajpai. *The Impact of Television Advertising on Children*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 1996.

Winn, Marie. *The Plug - In Drug Revised Edition*. New York, New York: Viking, 1977/ 1985.

### **Internet:**

Hobbs, Renee. "The Acquisition of Media Literacy Skills Among Australian Adolescents" Media Literacy On -Line Project. College of Education, University of Oregon. June 5, 2001.

"Media Literacy." Blowing Smoke Project. June 7, 2000. University of Arizona. June 7, 2001

[http://www.blowingsmoke.arizona.edu/Blowing\\_Smoke\\_Info/medialiteracy.htm](http://www.blowingsmoke.arizona.edu/Blowing_Smoke_Info/medialiteracy.htm)

"General Tools of Media Analysis." The New Mexico Media Literacy Project. June 6, 2001. [www.nmmlp.org](http://www.nmmlp.org).

"Headlines Extra - Media Literacy." March 18, 1999. Benton Foundation. June 10, 2001. <http://www.benton.org/Updates/ml031899.html>

"The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-1999." December 4, 2000. American Library Association. May 5, 2001 <http://www.ala.org/bbooks/top100bannedbooks.html>.

### **Periodicals:**

Carton, Paul. "Mass Media and Young People." *Neiman Reports* Winter 1991, 24-30.

Isaacson, Walter. "Luce's Values- Then and Now." *TIME* March 9, 1998, 195-196

Quitter, Joshua. "The Thrill of Drudge Work." *TIME* June 16, 1997: p. 67.

Megee Mary. "Students Need Media Literacy: The New Basic." *Education Digest*, Sept 97, Vol. 63 Issue 1: p 31.

**Books for Student Reading** (Though most gifted students would be

able to follow the books listed as teacher reference, these books are written for students or are, at least a little more student friendly for research. )

Bernards, Neal. *Advertising: Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion*. San Diego, California: Greenhaven Press, 1991.

Gourley, Catherine. *Media Wizards*. Brookfield, Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books: 1999.

O'Sullivan, Carol. *Television: Identifying Propaganda Techniques*. San Diego, California: Greenhaven Press, 1990.

Steck-Vaughn *Point of View* series of fairy tales

Steffens, Bradley. *Free Speech: Identifying Propaganda Techniques*. San Diego, California: Greenhaven Press, 1992.

### **Literature for Students**

Avi. *Nothing but the Truth*. Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1991.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1951/1993.

Books from "The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-1999" list.