

**Literacy through Creativity for Social Empowerment:  
A Critical Media Literacy Unit Grounded in the Work of Paulo Friere**

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**Academic Setting**

Entering its ninth decade, Washington Middle School is Albuquerque's oldest mid-school. It is located just west of Downtown in the heart of a beautiful, quiet, tree-lined neighborhood. It is close to the Country Club area, however, few children from that neighborhood attend Washington, choosing instead private or magnet schools. Due to having large percentage of Washington's children qualify for free school meals, the entire school population will receive this program in the coming 2001-2002 school year. At the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year, Washington was designated by the state as a "School in Need of Improvement" because of its low test scores.

The vast majority of Washington's student population is Hispanic. Two of its feeder schools have Spanish dual-language programs, and a number of students come to Washington with the advantages of bi-literacy and a strong commitment to education. A large number of our students are first or second-generation immigrants from Mexico and are in various stages of acquiring English. Across all backgrounds, I believe we have many at-risk children - at risk of dropping out due to all the factors that often accompany low socioeconomic status.

This coming school year will be my second at Washington and in a mid-school setting. I will be a member of the dual-language program, also in its second year at Washington. With this program, we are attempting to build a bridge between the elementary dual-language programs and the bilingual program at Albuquerque High School. Upon completion of the AHS program, students are awarded a bilingual seal I on their graduation diplomas.

I will be part of a two-person, sixth-grade team providing the English as a Second Language component through the content areas of language arts, literature, and social studies. My teaching partner will provide the Spanish language delivery of math, science, and Spanish literature. For the coming year, we estimate having forty to fifty students in the program who will be divided into two groups. Each group will spend half-day blocks in our classrooms.

As primarily a language teacher, highest on my priority list is meaningful learning experiences that build literacy. Parallel to this, I am ever conscious of the fact that my students tend to be economically disadvantaged, and consequently at a disadvantage socially and politically. I am continually looking for ways to facilitate my students' empowerment, so helping them become discerning consumers of media imagery is one of my personal objectives for this unit. I believe I can achieve this by making one of the broad learning objectives for students an awareness of the various mass media that exist and to know them as constructions with purposes and effects. This understanding will help them see the powerful potential for media influence on their thoughts and behaviors, and provide them with the ability to consciously and selectively accept or resist these influences.

**Context and Background**

I have always found fashion magazine advertisements and their fashion and beauty layouts compelling. Perhaps it can be

viewed as the obligatory female socialization into our popular culture. I read and visually scoured my subscription to *Teen*, as a teen, and now in my thirties continue to financially support the fashion and beauty industry by frequently buying grown-up versions of these magazines and consequently many of the products they sell. From the beauty products, to the latest clothing trends, to the whole, "It's damn good to be young and sexy!" idea; I'm hooked.

It was within the last five years or so that I began to realize that my fascination with the visuals of these magazines may not just be due to allowing myself to be brainwashed by some Madison Avenue executives into this ongoing compulsion. Instead, perhaps I am drawn to the photographic images because they are beautiful forms of visual art. I suddenly saw the photographers of these images not as drones used by a selling industry, but legitimate artists whose artistic expressions are used by an industry to sell.

A few years after I had digested this idea, I was conducting an art activity with my students with the objective of understanding surrealism. I had students look in magazines for images that intrigued them, then cut these into interesting shapes, and finally connect them in a jigsaw puzzle fashion to create a collage of disparate images that then resembled surrealism. I was explaining to my students the thought process I was using when choosing and cutting my own images, one of which was from a cigarette ad. The pack of cigarettes was laying on lush, inviting grass beside a soccer ball. The topic of what the advertisers were trying to say with those images came up naturally, as did the idea that many people in advertising were formally trained as artists before entering the industry and were using the elements and principals of art to design images to sell products.

The thought that people who started out to create as self-expression and later used their knowledge of visual harmony for industry profit was very disappointing. But wasn't that artistic sophistication what drew me to the fashion mags? I could not quite reconcile these opposing feelings. These epiphanies about visual art in advertising planted a seed to create a media literacy unit that compared creating images for self-expression to the creation of images to sell a product or idea.

With the need for connections to the media literacy knowledge I was now acquiring, I began a deeper search for the underlying motivations for this long-desired unit. I kept coming back to one of the educational theorists whose work has most shaped my teaching and continues to sustain my desire to teach. Paulo Freire is at the heart of my belief in the social empowerment of students with the building of word and world literacy through creativity of thought. My eventual revisiting of Friere helped me in a number of ways. Perhaps most important was its refreshing effects on my commitment to this profession. I believe I could read Friere's works over and over and always find some new inspiration in his deeply acute wisdom (a number of times my vocal awes brake the silence of my reading). This revisiting was also important to my unit's full growth. It lead to media literacy theories that reaffirmed my practices in Friere due to a compliment of ideas, while introducing me to new definitions of the term "literacy" and in turn broadening the possibilities of my students' empowerment.

"Paulo Friere Is Not a Method"

Before his exile, Paulo Friere's educational work in his native Brazil culminated with the National Literacy Program using his "method" to empower millions of people with word and world literacy. His literacy "method" helped politicize the "popular class" by making them perceptive to their oppression while also making them literate. At the heart of his linguistic method was Friere's true insight into reading the word, and having the literacy learner read the world. Initial words that were to be decodified were in the learners' context. For example, *tijolo*, or brick, was understood in relation to the common situation of

many of the literacy learners: laboring at construction sites. The use of some form of visual representation (slides, posters, etc.) of this situation was presented along with its generative word. The original codifications were painted by one of the greatest contemporary Brazilian artists, Francisco Brenand, "perfectly integrating education and art." (Friere, 1998). The coordinator of a "cultural circle" (Friere's creation of a "new institution of popular culture") facilitated Friere's belief in dialogue, "in order to carry out education rather than domestication." (Friere, 1998). Together, group participants and coordinator explored all the possible philosophical implications of this existential situation. After decodifying the political situation of a laborer, and the semantic link of the written word to the situation was established, then the linguistic decodifying of the word was begun.

Friere speaks of his desire to help the participants eventually see the differences between education and propaganda. At a later time in the program, participants were shown filmstrips of advertising commercials. By discussing a cigarette advertisement featuring a beautiful woman in a bikini, they began to perceive its deception and were then in the process of preparing themselves to perceive the deceit in ideological and political propaganda (Friere, 1998).

This simplified explanation of Friere's "method" is only important in illustrating its true significance. As Ana Maria Araujo Friere and Donaldo Macedo write in the introduction of *The Paulo Friere Reader*, "...Paulo Friere's work is more than a method for literacy education; it is a broad and deep understanding of education that has its political nature at the core of its concerns." In the same section Linda Bimbi writes, "The originality of Freire's work does not reside in the efficacy of his literacy methods, but, above all, in the originality of its content designed to develop our consciousness."

### Critical Cultural Theory

A critical cultural point of view first came to the United States in the 1930's with Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Both were prominent media scholars from the University of Frankfurt and escaping Hitler's Germany. Their ideas were directed by neo-Marxism theory believing that ordinary people (referred to by Friere as the "popular class") are oppressed and made passive by those who control the construction of the culture, in this case mass media. The German scholars advocated serious art forms as alternatives to what we would now term popular culture in helping ordinary citizens to have better lives (Baran).

This view then gave way to an equally politically based standpoint now known as "Critical Cultural" theory. This theory contends that media authenticate and promote the status quo of existing unbalanced power relations in order to maintain dominant groups' favorable positions. Critical cultural theorists advocate social consciousness along with action to help alter the "superstructure" to create a true balance of power (Baran).

Professor of education and critical cultural theorist, Henry Giroux, reflects on the work of Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (one of Friere's many influences), in relation to media's potential for creating oppressive structures. Of course Gramsci could not have envisioned the kind of technological advances that have propelled media to its omnipresent status and its ensuing potential for power, but he did recognize popular culture's pedagogical role and in turn its political importance. To understand popular culture and take it seriously was a means to reconstruct power formations. Friere also believed if educators turned away from popular culture their discourse would "hardly be heard by anyone but themselves." (Friere, 1998). Like Friere, Gramsci saw the need for education, and the skills it imparted, to operate in the existing social context that educators and students were attempting to change. Gramsci called for an educational practice that created "organic intellectuals" who would be able to recognize the social interests behind power and challenge established perceptions of culture.

Giroux speaks of our current culture as more powerful than ever in its ability "to secure the authority and interests of dominant groups." So then in our present social context is the need for curriculum to address the formidable influence of popular culture on children. Giroux states, "it is crucial that educators expand curricula to include those elements of popular culture that play a powerful role in shaping the desires, needs, and identities of students." And educational philosopher, Douglas Kellner, appeals for a response to media's formation of culture and its capacity to further skew existing power relations by, "teaching the skills that will empower citizens and students to become sensitive to the politics of representations of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and other cultural differences."

Friere's prolific writings speak precisely to this critical cultural perspective. In perhaps his most important work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he speaks of "prescription" as one of the basic elements within the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. "Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness." Later he writes, "Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the "order" which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized."

Also in direct alignment with this critical cultural theory is Friere's fundamental belief in action as a response to social consciousness: "This perception is necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action." He speaks of oppression and the need to emerge from it, which "can only be done by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." Friere's definition of oppression was simple yet precise. He believed an act was oppressive if it prevented people from being more fully human.

While the influence of Marxism on Friere's ideas is undeniable, Friere's criticisms of the injustices within a capitalist society were strong but never bitter, and were spoken instead "with the goodness and peace characteristic of those engaged in the good combat." He called for a political discourse that was "hopeful, critically optimistic, and 'drenched' in ethics." Paulo Friere's political ideal was a true democratic system and he believed this democracy could only be "nourished by a critical spirit." (Friere, 1998).

### Culture Defines Our Reality

According to Baran, culture is "socially constructed and maintained through communication." Media theorist James W. Carey defines communication as "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed." (Baran). Acknowledging the bombardment of mass media messages we are faced with daily, it is easy to see how these cultural communications have such a strong influence over how we define our realities. Without critical analysis on our part, these communications then become what Friere terms "communiques." In *Education for Critical Consciousness*, he tells of his "method," or program, being created with an underlying conviction that the popular class could make their own realities: "The role of men and women was not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world-that through acts of creation and re-creation, we make cultural reality." In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere calls on teachers and students to be "co-intent on reality...not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of recreating that knowledge." Through reflection and action teachers and students can attain this knowledge of reality and "discover themselves as its permanent re-creators." In the same work, Friere outlines two of his educational theories that demonstrate how the educational process can serve to either perpetuate this construction of reality for students or have them realize their own.

"Education is suffering from narration sickness."

The "banking" concept of education contends that the teacher acts as narrator while his words fill the students, or receptacles. The more the teacher fills his receptacles, the better a teacher he is, and the more passively the students accept the teacher's narration, the better students they are. These narrated words, however, are constructed without consideration of the learner's background or experience and so are without meaning because they are detached from the student's reality. The teacher "cognizes a cognizable object" and later he "expounds to his students about that object." The student is relegated, at most, to collecting and cataloguing these communiques. In memorizing this teacher-narrated content, the students are denied the act of cognition, "since the object toward which the act should be directed is the property of the teacher rather than a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teacher and student." Connecting this structure of education with Friere's basic tenant that every educational act is a political one, this teacher-student relationship then mirrors and furthers an oppressive society.

A well-intentioned teacher who is unaware of the true role she plays in this political process dehumanizes her students with this depositor/depository model. The more she narrates the more passive her students become, and through these passive roles "the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them." Banking inhibits "creative power" and robs students of critical thinking, thus submerging their critical consciousness. This then serves the oppressors because they "care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed" as their "tranquility rests on how well people fit the world...and how little they question it." And so with banking, the oppressors are allowed to maintain their profitable situation over others by regulating the world for them.

Friere believed through experience students would eventually see these narrated deposits as containing contradictions to their own reality and as acting to prevent them from being fully human. They then might seek to liberate themselves. "But the humanist, revolutionary educator cannot wait for this possibility to materialize...her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization."

"Consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it."

Always a disciple of hope, Freire's answer to this lack of self and societal inquiry is the educational theory of "problem-posing." The "problem," or question, constitutes what human beings encounter in their relations with the world. This practice rejects the teacher constructing reality for students and instead has the teacher exist in the relationship as a fellow critical thinker who is learning and teaching with the students: "Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world." The cognizable object is not private property owned by the teacher, but is the relevant world inhabited by the teacher and students and so necessarily becomes the object of reflection by both.

The cognizable object of world reality is also not static or permanent, but in constant process and transformation: "Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*-as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality." So then education and cognitive acts are ongoing activities. In this educational relationship, "The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration," and then "constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflections of the students." Therefore, problem-posing consists of "acts of cognition" and not "transfers of information." The students are no longer meek and passive containers, but "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher." As students are increasingly presented with relevant challenges they will feel compelled to respond to those challenges, and their response "evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to

regard themselves as committed." Entrusting students with their own creative capacities facilitates their self-actualization and therefore full humanization. The desired end is the students' continued critical exploration with others in their world, which allows them to reconstruct it to their own self-profit, or liberation.

### Mass Media as Content

In *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere speaks about content choice: "And so, when all is said and done, there is nothing the progressive educator can do in the face of the question of content but join battle for good and all in favor of the democratization of society." And so we must choose the cognoscible object, the reading of the world, that best speaks to our students so they may reach the reading of the word. Friere considers it a simple question of political and educational ethics (not that the two can be dichotomized): "Educators have the right, even the duty, to teach what seems to them to be fundamental to the space-time in which they find themselves. That right and that duty fall to the educator by virtue of the intrinsic directivity of education."

The space and time I find myself in is one where mass media is just that: -mass - seeping into every crevice of my day's routine. Some messages are obvious, some obtuse, some constructed for information, some for entertainment, some for both or disguised as the other. And children are often exposed to an even wider variety of media than adults: "Our students are part of the youth media culture--like it or not--and ...spend more time engaging with mass media outside classrooms than they spend in schools" (Pailliotet). Our schools' print literacy, that at one time provided students with the "access to general social information and...basic skills they would need to gain access to nonlocal experience," has been replaced with many non-print media texts that now "weaken the informational power of the school and diminish the incentives to learn to read and write well." (Meyrowitz). Remembering that culture defines our reality and that public schools are losing ground to mass media as cultural teachers, I submit its topic as an extremely relevant reading of the world and so a powerful cognoscible object for reflection between teacher and students. To my mind, it is perhaps the most valuable reading of the world in order to read the word. Mass media is an historical and social context through which students can develop multiple literacies while awakening their consciousness, thus mobilizing their critical intervention, to structures that could act to define their realities in oppressive ways if not seen with a critical eye.

### Critical and Multiple Media Literacy

Educators must counter media's powerful and "perpetual pedagogy" (Kellner) not just with media literacy, but **critical** media literacy. Many people may already consider themselves fairly media literate, understanding the purposes of a variety of its forms and their potential effects. One of the most obvious media forms that illustrate this is advertising. We understand the purpose behind it and realize we may be influenced into buying a product because of it. We may not, however, be conscious of the use of stereotyping in some ads and how these can reinforce negative views of particular groups' identities. Even forms of entertainment, such as movies, act as our cultural storytellers, and over time contribute to shaping our beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors.

Some people may assume that because children interact with media more often than adults, and with an even wider variety of its forms, they too are naturally media literate. Although both adults and young people have what educators know as schemas - a set of learned expectations when interacting with the world - our media "literacy" is often unconscious or unreflective. And because new technologies are constantly creating new forms of media, new genres with new conventions are regularly

appearing - all reasons why Kellner believes critical media literacy should begin in childhood and continue into adulthood. He maintains that a true media pedagogy should draw on those learned abilities children already possess in interacting with media, and then cultivate "cognitive skills of analysis, interpretation, and critique" in order to make media understanding conscious and reflective. He also points out that those people who do gain critical media literacy "actually reach new levels of media enjoyment" because of their acquired skills "that disclose new dimensions, connections, and meanings." (Kellner).

A critical media literacy undoubtedly shies away from a "protectionist" approach that sees mass communication as irrelevant or even a threat to children, and attempts to "inoculate" them from media by substituting higher forms of culture, including strictly book literacy. Critical media pedagogy should avoid demonizing or deifying new technologies and instead use them to strengthen education and citizenship. It should also "criticize the limitations and false promises made on behalf of new technologies." (Kellner). Over the course of his life and work, Friere also comes to this conclusion. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere warned that, more and more, the oppressors were using science and technology "as unquestionably powerful instruments for their purpose." Twenty-five years later in *Pedagogy of Hope* Friere reflects on Neil Postman's, *Technopoly: the Surrender of Culture to Technology*, and asks that we exercise "control over technology" and "place it at the service of human beings...in defense of freedom itself," in order to secure the dream of democracy, as it is impossible "to dichotomize technology and politics!" Of course one idea that remains constant in Friere's work is the belief that those who attempt this type of dichotomy are naturally the oppressors.

Kellner defines critical media literacy as a combination of media literacy and media arts with the essential addition of critical action. The first component, media literacy, teaches students to decode media forms, similar to the decoding of print literacy, and analyzes media's social implications and their possible effects. Media arts teaches an appreciation for the aesthetics of media with students becoming familiar with their production techniques and using various media technologies for self-expression and creation. Building on these two approaches, critical media literacy then requires that those "media artifacts" understood and produced be used for social activism. Critical media literacy empowers students by teaching them to learn from media while also resisting its manipulation, thus it is "tied to the project of radical democracy and concerned with developing skills that will enhance democratization and participation." (Kellner).

According to Kellner, teaching critical media literacy should be a "participatory, collaborative project," calling for Friere's active reflection by both teacher and students. As students are often more knowledgeable of various forms of media, and in turn more savvy, it is important that teachers actively seek to understand their perspectives to enrich the learning process. Professor of communication, Joshua Meyrowitz, speaks of the "vast range of experiences that children now have through nonprint media...and more often give even young children experience with topics and issues unfamiliar to their teachers." (Meyrowitz). At the same time teachers must facilitate "critical discussion, debate, and analysis" (Kellner) to bring to light a critical perspective. It is important to remember that media is very often closely tied to kids' identities, so teachers must be careful that their challenges of media are not seen as criticism of their students, "yet an atmosphere of critical respect for difference and inquiry into the nature and effects of media culture should be encouraged." (Kellner).

When Kellner speaks of literacy he stresses it be achieved in multiple areas: "A postmodern pedagogy involves developing new literacies and critically analyzing, dissecting, and engaging a multiplicity of cultural forms and media." Our current culture is inundated by "cultural machines" that produce an array of messages of which we must try to make sense. In order for students to successfully meet the challenges of our high-tech society, now and in the future, educators have to rethink the

definition of literacy:

Such concerns are a part of a critical pedagogy that summons educators, students, and citizens to rethink established curricula and teaching strategies to meet the challenge of empowering individuals to participate democratically in our increasingly multicultural and technological society. (Kellner).

We must all understand new technologies in order to make use of them to transform our world. More privileged groups will naturally have greater access to new technologies, and this could further the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Dominant groups' "dominion over information" could make it very difficult for "those operating at the extremities of the circuit." (Friere, 1998). But "the same technologies that could threaten the end of participatory democracy...could also be used to help invigorate democratic debate and participation." (Kellner). Therefore, it is essential that students of all classes interact with new technologies and learn new literacies in order to level the playing field and strengthen education, individual expression, and social progress. Kellner believes that within this equal access to technology lies a great potential for a "more robust democracy." In addition, when used with the information critical literacy imparts, technology such as the Internet can actually provide a haven to many less fortunate children whose physical environments are dangerous or otherwise limited. Technology can offer them knowledge, entertainment, and connections. It is also important to remember that aside from helping students become media literate, using a variety of media as tools for supplementing instruction often helps to make subject matter more interesting and accessible: "Media can serve as significant adjuncts in any cognitive undertaking. Properly used, they are indeed extensions of the mind." (Gardner).

As implied above, Kellner focuses on computer technology within these multiple literacies, seeing the Internet as "cultural terrain" and a political zone into which students could enter by "producing new multimedia for cultural dissemination." Educators must help students move beyond passive consuming of the Internet, and begin to use it for "positive cultural and political projects." Along with this computer literacy comes an even greater need for strengthening students' print literacy, as computers call for more complex and sophisticated reading and writing abilities to process and scan large amounts of printed information and then synthesize and reorganize this information in meaningful ways. So print and other literacies are not a matter of either/or, but both. Adults and young people must:

...learn to interact in many dimension of social reality and to gain a multiplicity of forms of literacy and skills that will enable us to create identities, relationships, and communities that will nurture and develop our full spectrum of potentialities and satisfy a wide array of needs (Kellner).

Learning to decode elements within computer literacy easily transfers over to critical media literacy and visa versa, due to the growth of the overlap between media and computer culture "as audio and video material becomes part of the Internet," and "as CD-ROM and multimedia develop." Computer literacy then is a "synthesis of print and visual literacy, technical skills, and media literacies, brought together at a new and higher stage." (Kellner). This multiple literacy requires traversing through material that is multidimensional containing texts, graphics, and audio-visual information. Meaning is interrelated and cross-referenced within its particular forum and among other media and cultural contexts, so critical literacy must be based on intertextuality. The development of this intertextual reading is helped by a commonly agreed upon component of creative thinking, the "fluency factor" (Lowenfeld and Brittain). Ultimately, critical media literacy involves print, computer, multimedia, cultural, and social literacy.

Giroux also believes that in the information age it is not enough that we ask our students simply to be literate in the "print culture of the humanities." Instead, we need a critical media pedagogy in order to facilitate students' ability to read critically "the new technological and visual cultures that exercise a powerful pedagogical influence over their lives as well as their conception of what it means to be a social subject engaged in acts of responsible citizenship." (Giroux).

One diverse group of educators, Ann Watts Pailliotet among them, has devised their own instructional technique, "intermediality," as a response to critical media literacy. They define intermediality as the ability to "critically read and write with and across varied symbol systems." Reading then is not limited to print literacy, but an active and critical reading of all types of media texts, or "meaning-making devices," including, but not limited to, television commercials, news broadcasts, music videos, computer programs, Web sites, music, movies, toys, and art. Also included in this reading of "meaning-making devices" are "student clothing, possessions, and social affiliations." Life experiences, personal interactions, narratives, social and cultural events are read as well. Writing, in intermediality, is defined as creating a variety of texts "through multiple media forms" including "life actions." Friere persistently reminds us that acquiring literacy is not merely about "memorizing sentences, words, or syllables...but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context." (Friere, 1998).

Just as language teachers attempt to make students aware of the common elements and conventions in a variety of literature, intermediality helps students become cognizant of the shared structures across media texts: "By helping students identify, interpret, connect, and critique common textual elements, we develop competency in and across all modern literacies." (Pailliotet). Students are encouraged to notice sounds (e.g., music, singing, and speaking) and visual images (e.g., objects, icons, and symbols) across a variety of media texts. They are made aware that just as textbook layouts are designed to help guide the reader through the information, designers of other media texts choose particular sounds combined with selected images in order to have viewers think in particular ways.

Meyrowitz terms this consciousness of textual elements, "media grammar" literacy. This literacy requires the recognition of basic "grammar variables," or production techniques, within media texts along with an understanding of how they are used to influence thoughts and actions. For example, students would be made aware of the camera angle variable in movies, television and photography and that a high-angle shot, with a subject beneath the camera, could be used to suggest a person is inferior. Knowledge of the camera lens variable would lead to an awareness of how close or far a character is placed in a shot and what that might imply about their importance or social status. Ironically, the more effective these production techniques are, the harder they are to spot: however, Meyrowitz assures us that "once someone has been taught about grammar variables, they are hard to miss." (Meyrowitz).

Pailliotet and her colleagues believe this textual knowledge encourages students to "thoughtfully challenge the authority of all texts through astute analysis and by articulating informed opinions." (Pailliotet). Helping students be mindful of the number of elements in a media text makes them more conscious of the possibilities of its strong influence over them. By increasing students' scope of perception "they begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena." (Friere, 1998).

Once students are made aware of the elements within media texts and that these texts are indeed "constructed artifacts" (Pailliotet) that can have a potent influence on thoughts and behavior, they are ready to question the social impact of these influences. "That which had existed objectively but had not been perceived in its deeper implications (if indeed it was

perceived at all) begins to "stand out...These elements are now objects of their consideration, and, as such, objects of their action and cognition." (Friere, 1998). Intermediality makes students aware that personal background knowledge and life experience interact with these media texts and contribute to different constructions of meaning for everyone. Just as many interdependent processes are active when reading print literacy, individuals' interactions with media texts are not done in a linear fashion. These transactions involve a variety of senses, emotions and intellectual processes as "thought processes rely heavily on the effective functioning of our sensory modalities and on the role of nonlinguistic symbol systems." (Gardner). After students' critical perceptions of textual elements and social implications are developed, they use them to make their own variety of media texts.

Of course, as part of these activities, Pailliotet and her colleagues call for a commitment to transforming action, as "critical understanding" necessarily "leads to critical action." (Friere, 1998). These transformations can take many forms, including "personal growth" or "informed decision making," (Pailliotet), in other words, simply a change of beliefs, thoughts, or actions. Another result might be actively "working to rectify unjust social conditions through community service." This could be achieved through the creation of media texts used to teach others what has been learned, or Kellner's idea of students' posting multimedia on the Internet for "cultural dissemination." Pailliotet's group refer to David Sholle and Stan Denski's work, calling these transforming actions "self creative activity."

With intermediality, Pailliotet and her colleagues intend to contribute to a critical stance, with teachers and students experiencing "personal transformation and growth" in increased literacy, "as well as socially just, democratic, humane, and ethical actions in and out of the classroom." (Pailliotet).

"In order to follow me it is essential not to follow me!"

As educators desiring to best serve our students we sometimes look to readily adopt methodologies and pedagogies wholesale. Although critical and multiple media literacy theory can help guide our teaching of a media literacy curriculum, Kellner reminds us that critical media literacy is in its infancy, so there is no prescribed pedagogy with "firmly established principles, a canon of texts, and tried-and-true teaching procedures," and Meyrowitz writes, "there is no finite set of knowledge that will make someone media literate." This makes the development of media literacy curriculum more open to interpretation and experimentation which serves the naturally occurring diverse interests and concerns of teachers and students. Educators will "emphasize different subject matter and choose examples relevant to their own and their students' interests." (Kellner). Friere himself reminds us that it is ineffective to attempt a direct application of a methodology from one environmental context to another. In a dialogue with his colleague Donaldo Macedo, he states, "It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them." (Friere, 1998). In his "spoken" book with Antonio Faundez, *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*, "...the only way anyone has of applying in their situation any of the propositions I have made is precisely by redoing what I have done."

Friere's invitation to educators to re-create his and others' ideas based on their contexts and experiences demonstrate his own educational theories in action. His confidence in people's capacity for creativity bolstered my own and liberated the creation of my curriculum. Friere's work is the unifying thread, or motivating educational theory, in its basic fabric, reinforced with critical media literacy theory. Creative thought and "self creative activity" are the necessary actions in response to this critical consciousness. Dialogue, through problem-posing, will develop thought fully and multiple media literacy theory will guide the outlet for this creativity with an emphasis on print and visual literacy. Howard Gardner's "multiple intelligences" theory will

aid in the construction of the unit's activities.

My desire for this unit's curriculum was for it to be directed by educationally sound theoretical practices so I could achieve, even in part, what Paulo Friere hoped for when creating his literacy program -

an introduction of the democratization of culture...a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention" (Friere, 1998).

The above portion of the curriculum unit is supposed to answer the reader's question, "Why teach the unit?" I hope instead it answers the question, "Why teach the unit in this particular way?"

### **Implementation**

"Dialogue is not a kind of chaste event, dialogue makes love everyday."

As discussion is a vital component in all of the following activities, and because dialogue, as a pedagogical practice, is often a hard sell to educators, I think it is necessary that I explain the importance I place on it in my teaching. I believe many teachers see discussion as a loose activity with little educational merit - a thief of the school day's valuable time. If it does present itself, it is to be quickly dispensed with in order to "get back to work." Maybe some teachers resist dialogue not because they see it as a vacuous exercise, but because it is seen as a threat to their authority over knowledge. It may generate questions to which they have no pat or quick answers. Perhaps it is the answers that dialogue may give rise to that are frightening. Whatever the reasons for this resistance, Friere requests that educators come to know dialogue as the only means for true communication and thus authentic cognition. He states, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication."

He attempts to clarify the view of dialogue as a necessarily unstructured activity in *Pedagogy of Hope*: "There is no dialogue in spontaneism... But a dialogical relation does not, as is sometimes thought, rule out the possibility of the act of teaching." He believes what is needed to direct this dialogue is a cognoscible object, its presentation, and of course an awareness of the pitfalls of "banking." He sees as a valid process a "little introductory exposition" made on the subject and then an analysis of this topic by teacher and students. Otherwise dialogue might be "transformed into a noncommittal 'chewing the fat' to the random rhythms of whatever happens to be transpiring between teacher and educands."

Although teacher and student are teaching and learning together, Friere has always maintained a distinction between the two roles. And he stresses that a dialogical relationship does not act to "*level* them" or "*even* them out." Even though dialogue "does not place them on the same footing professionally" it does "mark the democratic position between them." Implicit in dialogue is a "sincere, fundamental respect on the part of the subjects engaged in it." The dialogue in this unit's activities will be initiated by my questions, or problems posed, to students.

### **General Lesson Outline**

All grades given for the following activities will be based on a one hundred-point grading scale except the Power Point creation of the commercial parody (I will elaborate on its grading scale in the next section). For all activities that require an essay, grades will be given in language arts. As all the lessons are an integration of language experiences and social studies,

points for the remaining assignments will be given in either subject depending on students' need for them at the time of grade entries. The standards met will be outlined in each activity and will be limited to those in the APS draft relating to media literacy.

All essays will be written using the Jane Schaffer method. Albuquerque High School requests that their ninth graders enter with knowledge of this writing style. It is based on multi-sentence paragraphs organized with particular elements, which eventually lead to multi-paragraph essays. Paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that contains fact plus opinion. Following this topic are one sentence of concrete detail and two sentences of commentary about the concrete detail or fact. This pattern of concrete detail and commentary is repeated again, and then the paragraph is finished with a concluding sentence that may be all commentary. This emphasis on commentary builds students' critical thinking and contributes to stronger writing. Students will receive grades for their essays based on the appropriate use of the elements in this method. Students' levels of English proficiency will be taken into consideration in this grading.

The last two activities of the unit will have a strong focus on the creation of visual art. I believe the subjects of language art and visual art have a complimentary relationship that works to inspire students' interest in human expression and communication. A number of my students have a natural strength in what Gardner refers to as "visual-spatial" intelligence, and the accompaniment of visual art in language activities helps them build a deeper understanding of various forms of communication. In other words, teaching students to "read" and "write" in the media text of visual art, helps them make connections to the similar symbolic processes involved in the media text of print. I now know this as intermediality.

Another reason for this art focus is based on Gardner's findings that the developmental stages of eleven, twelve, and thirteen-year-olds allow for a great ability to quickly acquire art skills and to enjoy doing so. Generally, this age group is not overly concerned with possible errors in their creative process and want to forge ahead with the experience of becoming better artists. Gardner finds students just a few years older than this sixth and seventh grade age range become very critical of their art, and if they perceive their work as less skilled as their peers', they become unmotivated and unwilling to create. He stresses the importance of children developing their artistic skills while in this eleven to thirteen-year-old age group so when they reach adolescence, the more critical analysis of their work will not result in a feeling of inadequacy and the end of creative production. My hope is to contribute to this development of artistic skills as well as to students' general creativity. I believe this will help foster their creativity throughout life, whether in art or other personal constructions: "Giving the child opportunities to create constantly with the knowledge he currently has is the best preparation for future creative action." (Lowenfeld and Brittain). And our creativity is a powerful alternative to media creating all our images, thoughts and experiences because "to live an authentically free life means...being creative." (Friere, 1998).

Every activity which results in the creation of an essay or other media artifact will always include an opportunity for students to present their work to the class in order to further active reflection.

With Kellner's conviction that computer literacy lends to social equality in mind, the first half of our critical media literacy unit will begin in the computer lab. This past school year my schedule for computer lab consisted of two, forty-five minute periods every other week conducted by me. It has been proposed that in the coming school year, sixth graders will receive a computer course with daily, forty-five minute class periods. Our computer technician has offered to direct these classes to reinforce or carry out classroom activities. Depending on the eventual lab schedule, I plan on a time period anywhere from six weeks to a semester in length to finish the technology portion of the unit. Whatever time remains will be sufficient for the

completion of the second half of the unit, which will be mostly conducted in the classroom.

### Curriculum Activities

Students will begin by completing selected activities in Step 1 of *And Now a Word from Our Sponsor: A WebQuest on Propaganda*, which can be accessed through the Web address, [www.aps.edu](http://www.aps.edu). On the home page begin with the *Educators* link, and then each of the following links: *Teacher Resources*, *Technology Integration*, *WebQuest Home Page*, *Examples*, *English/Language Arts*.

As advertisements are an integral part of our popular culture and have many categories and levels of textual elements, they seem a natural beginning for the understanding and systematic analysis of media as constructions. These preliminary activities are designed to introduce students to techniques used in advertising and are titled:

*Common Advertising Strategies*

*Rules for Advertising to Kids*

*You Gotta Have a Gimmick*

*Watching for Weasel Words*

*Buyer Beware Slide Show*

The first four titles are half a page to one page in length of student-friendly text that defines terms. I estimate that each of the first two titles will take one computer period to explore. The second and third titles are shorter and will be combined into one period. I will provide students with copies of each title's text after they experience it on the computer. Students will be required to keep a media folder for reference and these copies will be its first contents. Any other references or written products generated in this unit will also be placed in their folders.

The first title, *Common Advertising Strategies*, provides short descriptions of ten strategies used by advertisers to sell products. Some of these include "Heart Strings," or the creation of a warm emotional atmosphere that is associated with a product and "Star Power," the use of celebrities like sports heroes or teen heart throbs to sell products. Students will independently read the text, and then I will lead a step by step re-reading and discussion. In order to direct this dialogue, as we read each description I will ask students if they can provide examples of current commercials they recognize as employing these techniques. Another question I ask them is if they were already aware of such techniques, even if they had not known them by name. A reinforcement of this learning will be a classroom activity directly following our lab time. With this, students will move from a primarily verbal-linguistic activity and employ some of the other seven intelligences Howard Gardner believes we possess and should routinely exercise to strengthen our learning and understanding.

Students will be divided into five groups, and each group will be given two of the advertising strategies just learned. These groups will have forty-five minutes to develop a skit of a commercial selling any type of product and employing these two strategies. Groups will present their commercials and the rest of the class will guess the techniques used. Not all students will be comfortable being a player in a skit and instead can contribute to their group by offering ideas, creating props, writing narratives, etc. Students will receive a grade determined by the efficacy of their skit. Also taken into consideration when assigning points will be student-generated letter grades given to other group members based on participation and attitude.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic,

musical-rhythmical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#1 - Students will understand and use language arts as a learning tool.

#5 - Students will speak clearly and write effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Social Studies:

#6 - Students will know and understand how personal and group identities are shaped by culture, physical and media environment, individuals, groups and institutions.

The second title, *Rules for Advertising to Kids*, is in the same format as the first, with short descriptions of ten rules advertisers in Canada must abide by when selling products to children. For example, advertisers are not allowed to exaggerate and they may not suggest that using their product will make a kid better than other kids. Again, students will independently read the text, followed by a re-reading and discussion of each rule. With each rule read, my questions to students will be if they believe the rule exists in the United States, and if so, are there ways advertisers could get around it. During or after students' critical thinking about ways to skirt these rules, I will give them a brief introduction to our FTC as the "watch dogs" of deceptive practices in advertising. Back in the classroom, students will be asked to choose two of the rules they feel are most important and explain their reasoning in an essay.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#1 - Students will understand and use language arts for communication.

#6 - Students will speak and write clearly, effectively, and correctly.

Social Studies:

#3 - Students will know, understand and apply the language, tools, and skills of social studies.

#8 - Students will know and understand the responsibilities, rights and privileges of United States citizens.

The third and fourth titles, *You Gotta Have a Gimmick* and *Watching for Weasel Words*, contain a small amount of information about other advertising techniques and will be explored through reading and discussion in one class period.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal.

Standard met:

Language Arts:

#4 - Students will use a variety of listening and reading strategies appropriately.

The last title in Step 1, is an interactive slide show reviewing the advertising techniques in the previous titles while introducing a few more. I will lead the viewing and discussion of this slide show. As a closing to Step 1, students will be required to write an essay synthesizing what they have discovered about advertising. Possible topics for their essays are: "Do we need advertising?" "Is it fair/necessary that advertisers use these techniques to sell products?" "What techniques do you think are most effective in selling products?" "Do you think you are influenced by these techniques?" "Should advertisers have

to follow certain rules when selling products to children?"

Intelligences focus: verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#5 - Students will speak clearly and write effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes.

#7 - Students will respond personally, analytically, and critically to written and spoken language, and other media.

Social Studies:

#3 - Students will know, understand and apply the language, tools, and skills of social studies.

#8 - Students will know and understand the responsibilities, rights and privileges of United States citizens.

#10 - Students will know and understand the impact of economic systems and institutions on individuals, families, businesses, communities and governments.

The next portion of the unit will begin in Step 2 of *And Now a Word from Our Sponsor*: .... This will be an opportunity for students to recognize and analyze advertising techniques including textual elements, or "grammar variables," in the production of television commercials. I believe students can complete this segmented activity in approximately four lab periods. With their media folders as a reference, pairs of students will be given the task of selecting six commercials, each selling one of the following products: clothing, food, a soft drink, a car, a toy, a household cleaning item. Four links provide different search formats for commercial viewing (one site consists of recent Super Bowl commercials). Much of the viewing in these links can be done in slow motion which will be especially helpful in the understanding of grammar variables. Students will receive a hard copy of an ad analysis chart provided in Step 2 consisting of three columns titled:

*Product Audience Targeted Propaganda Techniques Used*

Each of the six commercials is to be analyzed using this chart. Once students have completed their charts we will move on to the second half of the activity.

I will conduct a classroom lesson on grammar variables, focusing on those found in television and film texts. My chosen variables will be: *visual fade in and out, cuts, dissolves, camera lens and angle, color balance, cropping, size and shape of images, audio fade up and out, backward audio, echo, speed changes*. I will provide students a list of these elements, informing them that these are names for production techniques advertisers and other television and film constructors use to influence our buying of their products and ideas. As we read each term, I will ask students to describe what they think it is, based on its name. Together we will form the variable's definition and students will write it down on their lists. With each established definition, my question to students will be what possible meaning someone could make from that production technique. Again we will form ideas together and students will write them down. Their completed lists will be added to their folders.

During the next computer lab, I will provide students with a two-columned chart with the headings:

Commercial

Textual Elements Used

Student pairs will view their previously chosen commercials again, and using their grammar variables list and one another as references, complete their charts. Students will receive a grade for each of the two charts completed in Step 2. Consideration

will also be given to student-generated letter grades within pairs, again based on participation and attitude.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, visual-spatial, musical-rhythmical, logical-mathematical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#3 - Students will listen and read for a variety of purposes.

#4 - Students will use a variety of listening and reading strategies appropriately.

#7 - Students will respond personally, analytically, and critically to written and spoken language, and other media.

#10 - Students will use state-of-the-art computer and other technology to gather, use and synthesize information, and to create and communicate knowledge.

Social Studies:

#1 - Students will use knowledge and cultural understanding to explain how the world's people cope with ever changing conditions, examine issues from multiple perspectives, and respond to individual and cultural diversity.

#11 - Students will know and understand the diverse, dynamic, and ever changing nature of culture.

#13 - Students will know and understand the impact of science and technology on societies.

#14 - Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations.

Step 3 of *And Now...* will be the last activity in the first half of the curriculum unit. Using a planning guide provided in Step 3, students are asked to create a commercial for a fictional product using Microsoft Power Point. I will ask instead that pairs of students put their acquired knowledge of advertising techniques and grammar variables into social transforming action by creating an advertising parody. Before students begin in the lab, I will provide selected examples of parodies from *Adbusters*, the quarterly-published magazine produced by The Media Foundation. My suggestion for the products in their parodies will be cigarettes or beer, but will leave the final decision in the capable, creative hands of the students. Other sixth grade classes will be invited to view these commercials. It would be a nice coincidence if parodies were ready for viewing around the time of November's, "Buy Nothing Day." Students' final slide must have a profile of their product, identifying its target audience and the techniques used to reach them. Step 3 provides teachers with a six-component rubric for evaluation of commercials. Final grades will be based on a three hundred-point scale as follows:

270 - 300 = A

239 - 269 = B

208 - 238 = C

177 - 207 = D

0 - 176 = F

A possible two hundred points can be earned with 33.3 points assigned to each step achieved on the rubric. The remaining possible one hundred points will be earned through student evaluation of their partner's participation and attitude.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, visual-spatial, musical-rhythmical, logical-mathematical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#10 - Students will use state-of-the-art computer and other technology to gather, use and synthesize information, and to create and communicate knowledge.

Social Studies:

#3 - Students will know, understand and apply the language, tools, and skills of social studies.

#9 - Students will understand, develop and employ the civic skills necessary for participatory citizenship.

#13 - Students will know and understand the impact of science and technology on societies.

#14 - Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations.

The second half of the unit will be conducted mostly in the classroom. The next activity will build on students' acquired knowledge of television and film as media constructions and make them aware of other media forms and their constructions, purposes and possible effects. First, students will brainstorm as many forms of mass media as possible as I write them on the board. Directed by Pailliotet and her colleagues' reading of other media texts or "meaning making devices," I will make students aware of other media (e.g., clothes, social affiliations, cultural events and personal interactions) and these will also be listed on the board. Students will then choose seven of these media forms and individually complete a chart I provide with columns labeled:

Media Form

Who constructs it?

For whom is it constructed?

Why is it constructed?

What type of text is it and what techniques are used in its production?

Who are its subjects and in what context are they presented?

What is its possible social/moral impact?

The remainder of the activity will be dialogical. Students will be asked to share one of their chosen media and their ideas in completing the chart. I will direct dialogue by asking others who have the same chosen media to share similarities and differences in filling out their charts. I will reflect with students, clarify ideas, and add to them. A question I have for students is directed again by Pailliotet's group., and their desire for students' to be aware that background knowledge and personal experience interact with media to make different meanings for different individuals. My question will be what personal meaning do they create from a particular media text. Other questions I have are how texts attempt to position them, and who are the people absent from certain texts. Students will be asked to make any changes to their charts they feel are necessary before turning them in. Students will receive a grade based on the completion of their charts and participation in the discussion.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical, interpersonal.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#2 - Students will understand and use language arts for communication.

#7 - Students will respond personally, analytically, and critically to written and spoken language, and other media.

### Social Studies:

Standard #2 - Students will use democratic understanding and civic values to work together with others, make informed judgments and decisions, and act in accordance with democratic processes and principles to protect individual rights, serve their interests and promote the common good in order to become effective United States citizens (and understand the role that governments have in demonstrating this understanding). This is exemplified by the United States Constitution.

#5 - Students will know and understand relationships and patterns in history in order to understand the past and present and to prepare for the future.

#6 - Students will know and understand how personal and group identities are shaped by culture, physical and media environment, individuals, groups and institutions.

#11 - Students will know and understand the diverse, dynamic, and ever changing nature of culture.

Once students have been made aware of other media forms they will be required to keep a media log for the purpose of transforming action, observed in this case by personal growth and informed decision making. Their logs will be kept in their media folders. For two weeks students will keep track of their time spent with media texts outside of school (e.g., television, video games, computer, movies, radio, music, reading, homework, cultural/social events, and personal interactions). To further their active reflection outside of school, I will encourage students to create dialogues with their families about their media interactions, in particular their television viewing. They could talk about their favorite shows or commercials, events in news broadcasts, etc... These ideas will also be recorded in their logs and they may share them in class for our reflection. After two weeks I will conference with each student and we will review their time spent with various media and identify patterns in their use. Students will set goals for future media interactions and write these in their logs. After an additional two weeks, I will meet with students again and we will review their progress. At this time students will be considered "independent" media viewers, making their own decisions concerning time spent with media forms. Students will receive a grade based on the thoroughness of time and family-discussion entries. Grades will not be effected by whether goals are reached.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, logical-mathematical.

### Standards met:

#### Language Arts:

#1 - Students will understand and use language arts for communication.

#3 - Students will listen and read for a variety of purposes.

#4 - Students will use a variety of listening and reading strategies appropriately.

#7 - Students will respond personally, analytically, and critically to written and spoken language, and other media.

### Social Studies:

Standard #2 - Students will use democratic understanding and civic values to work together with others, make informed judgments and decisions, and act in accordance with democratic processes and principles to protect individual rights, serve their interests and promote the common good in order to become effective United States citizens (and understand the role that governments have in demonstrating this understanding). This is exemplified by the United States Constitution.

#5 - Students will know and understand relationships and patterns in history in order to understand the past and present and to prepare for the future.

As a possible extension to the previous activity's selective consumption of media and as a form of social transforming action,

I will take a "temperature reading" of students interest in creating a school campaign for April's, "TV Turnoff Week." My pitch will be that through multimedia we would create fliers and hallway posters advocating a week without TV. Also part of this campaign would be cultural dissemination over the loud speaker. This would include students introducing the campaign, reading their ideas for alternatives to TV, and persuasive essays on the benefits of life with limited or no television viewing. Of course, students would have to wholeheartedly buy into the idea of a week without TV, as well as being leaders and role models in their school community, so my strong desire for this campaign may take a backseat to sixth graders' strong need to "fit in."

The next activity will have students act as the constructors of an image for the music industry through visual art. I have a number of objectives for this assignment. First, it will provide students with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of symbol systems. In their analysis and creation of television advertising, students will have begun to explore the idea of symbolism as a textual element, but "the arts are integrally and uniquely involved with symbol systems...all of which have the potential to refer, to exemplify, or to express some aspect of the world." (Gardner). Child development and art education theorists, Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain write about symbols: "It is the interaction between the symbols, the self, and the environment that provides the material for abstract intellectual processes." (Lowenfeld and Brittain). I also want students to begin to think critically about the proliferation of musical artists/groups constructed for them, as well as their own personal constructions of themselves. The activity's creation of art is crucial for this last and perhaps most important objective as "no art expression is possible without self-identification." (Lowenfeld and Brittain).

The activity will start out with dialogue about some of the students' favorite and least liked musical artists, and why they like or dislike them. I will ask students if they have seen the recent television shows on "the making of the band," in which a "boy band" and "girl band" are created and the process is shown over a number of episodes. After this discussion, students will be given the dual roles of the artist to be created and sold and the artist's producer who does this creating. Their eventual media artifact will be front and back covers of a CD case that will be placed in a real case. I hope fellow pack-rat teachers will have a collection of these they can use. As educators know, the use of simple props or "realia" like this has the power to secure students' commitment to a lesson.

Before students begin to brainstorm their creation on paper, I will attempt to lead them away from the idea of creating a musical artist per se, and begin to think of selling themselves just as a product. The first thing I will require them to determine for their personal constructions is who they want their target audience to be (e.g., family, friends, or particular groups of known or unknown people). I will direct a dialogue by asking if one target audience is better than another when creating one's self and why. Another question will be if we have only one target audience for our personal creation. If not, do we have different selves to sell to different audiences, and should we? Perhaps the most important question is if one's audience can be one's self. These questions are posed in the hope that construction of this media artifact will be a powerful "self creative activity" for students. Also these questions are developed with the desire to have students remain continually conscious of their personal constructions: "What is supremely important is whenever possible to link question and answer to actions which can be performed or repeated in the future." (Friere, 1998).

Once students have decided on their audience (in this case one or more) they will be asked to generate personal characteristics that would best sell to the targeted audience(s). We will discuss some of the concepts used by today's musical artists to capture their audiences. These may include *sexy*, *cool*, *rich*, *beautiful*, *tough*, *rebellious*, *innocent*, and *smart*. A question I

have for students is which of the concepts generated would they like to use in the sale of themselves. I will ask students to share other characteristics they could use in creating themselves, as well as adding my own ideas. Some of these may include *loving, independent, happy, confident, educated*, and as a referral to Friere's contention, *in progress*. I will also ask if ethnicity and culture can be characteristics in their personal creation. For example, can *Hispanic* or *Mexican-American* be incorporated into the production of one's self and if so, how? After this discussion, students will develop a basic outline for the desired creation of themselves. Just as we continue our personal growth throughout life, I will encourage students to allow for changes in their constructions as they are developed.

Lastly, I will give a lesson on some useful visual art elements and principles for creating their CD covers (e.g., color, shape, line, texture, space and balance, movement, pattern, and unity). I will also explore with students the concept of symbolism in art. Part of this introduction will be asking students if they see any connections between the elements, principles and symbols in visual art, and those textual elements they have experienced and used in the previous activities. Another concept I will introduce at this time is one I developed in a conceptual plan used for a visual art curriculum (I have included this plan as the last page in this unit). The concept is a content sample within the plan and states, "Some individuals have an inner drive to express themselves and their view of the world through creativity." These people can consider themselves artists.

Through a multi-media process using sketching and colored pencils, thin and thick lined black markers, and the technique of collage, students will design the front and back covers of their CD case. Their collage pieces will be cut from a variety of magazines and they may also use photographs of themselves or photographs of other personal subjects and objects. Music will be played as students create their art. I often play music during activities to address students musical-rhythmical and intrapersonal intelligences. Most activities require a strong verbal-linguistic focus, (so within these, music is strictly instrumental so as not to add another language dimension for students to process, defeating the purpose of music aiding in concentration). For this part of the activity, which relies mostly on visual-spatial intelligence, music will include lyrics.

Before I introduce my students to a new musical genre, I want to direct a dialogue about musical "artists," asking if students believe their favorite artists are indeed, true artists. I will refer them to the previously introduced concept of what, in my opinion, constitutes an artist - an inner drive to express one's self and view of the world through creativity. Instead of a producer of creativity, could their favorite musical artists themselves be the products of creation by a media constructor? Are they a combination of both? I will also ask students to think of musical artists from their background knowledge who created in an era without radio or television. My last question to students will be if they know of any musical artists who view the world as having unjust social systems and call for a change to these injustices with their creations. Reggae is one musical genre I know of that does this and will be the chosen music for our art activity. I believe if students hold any ideas about this musical form, they relate it to the promotion of marijuana use. I would like to introduce students to artists I know of who use reggae to promote social change.

Students' visual designs must reflect most of the characteristics they are attempting to sell. Their CD also requires a title, and perhaps students will want to include titles of songs on their back covers. Like the final slide in their Power Point commercial, the CD's inside back cover will contain their product profile. Any text may be done by hand or word processing. Students will place their CD cases on display for their morning or afternoon peers. Grades will be based on their final product.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, visual-spatial, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical, musical-rhythmical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#3 - Students will listen and read for a variety of purposes.

#6 - Students will speak and write clearly, effectively, and correctly.

Social Studies:

#4 - Students will know and understand the ways in which human beings view themselves and others over time.

#6 - Students will know and understand how personal and group identities are shaped by culture, physical and media environment, individuals, groups and institutions.

#14 - Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations.

The closing activity will result in the creation of visual art, an essay and hopefully students' most important transforming action or self creative activity. Students will be asked to create an image **solely** as an expression of self. This will be done on photo paper, which can be ordered through the APS Warehouse Catalogue. It is a type of film that, when laid in the sun, will transfer the images of shapes of objects that are placed on top of it. The result is a black and white photograph that somewhat resembles an x-ray. Students will prepare for its creation with the knowledge that this product has no target audience, except perhaps one's self. It is created in true artistic fashion with a desire to express one's self and view of the world. Images used will be shapes cut from paper or actual objects with interesting shapes and/or visually interesting textual elements, like a leaf or a comb. The images chosen will be influenced by students' acquired knowledge of symbolism as well as art elements and principles.

After their photos are developed, students will compare and contrast creation for purposes of profit and purposes of self-expression through dialogue. Gardner believes that learning "necessitates contrasts and comparisons. Where there is no change, no discrepancy, no gap, no perceived distinctions, we cannot learn.". A question posed to students will be if one form of creation is better than the other. Is it necessary that we have both forms? I will also ask students if it is better to create one's own image, or identity, or have media constructors create them. Is it inevitable that both happen? In other words, if artists necessarily express their view of the world, is it possible for their creations to be uninfluenced by media constructions? Once students have exercised their ideas through discussion, they will be provided with a graphic organizer to help them lay out these ideas before they create their essays based on them. A grade will only be given for their essays.

Intelligence focus: verbal-linguistic, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, naturalist, interpersonal, logical-mathematical.

Standards met:

Language Arts:

#2 - Students will understand and use language arts as a learning tool.

#5 - Students will speak clearly and write effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes.

Social Studies:

#4 - Students will know and understand the ways in which human beings view themselves and others over time.

#6 - Students will know and understand how personal and group identities are shaped by culture, physical and media environment, individuals, groups and institutions.

#14 - Students will know and understand the role of global connections and interdependence between and among individuals, groups, societies, and nations.

Creating this curriculum unit has undoubtedly contributed to my continued professional and personal growth. Having confidence in students' capacity to create, imagine, and dream, I am optimistic about its influence on their transformations as well. As Friere reminds us, our dreaming is not a way of fleeing the world, instead our dreams recreate it.

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## Creativity Conceptual Plan

This unit's final page is the conceptual plan mentioned in the CD cover activity. Again, it was developed for organizing a visual art curriculum, but all or part of it may be useful to others in the development of a media literacy curriculum. Perhaps it will provide the example for the creation of another conceptual plan for a number of content areas. Although conceptual planning incorporates many theoretical ideas, the work of Hilda Taba is its strongest influence. Her ideas, as well as those of John Jarolimek, would be helpful in creating this type of planning. The following is a basic outline of the elements in a conceptual plan.

Conceptual planning employs concepts to help organize curriculum and students' learning across a number of content areas.

Unlike theme planning, which uses a topic to direct student activities towards a subject area, conceptual planning uses activities to work students towards big ideas. Along with the skills educators want students to develop, conceptual planning provides the knowledge we want students to leave with.

The plan is laid out with the concept at the top. Humans rely on concepts to give meaning to the reality around them, and conceptual thought makes it possible for humans to intellectually manipulate that reality. Concepts are ideas that are heavily loaded with meaning and can be expressed in words or phrases such as *interdependence*, *communication*, *responsibility*, *culture*, *adaptation*, *democracy*, *conflict*, *freedom*, *change*, or *oppression*. The meaning of concepts are expansive and open-ended, developing over a period of years. To extend the meaning of concepts or learn new ones, it is critical to link them to prior experience and knowledge. Finally, a concept has the power to organize and synthesize a large number of specific facts.

Directly under the concepts are generalizations. These are expressed in the form of a declarative sentence and are broad conclusions or principles that are inferred or derived from particular instances. They provide a focus for interpreting selected facts, but they are widely applicable and can cut across several disciplines aiding in subject integration. A curriculum might include six to eight generalizations that span the course of a school year.

Next in the vertical layout are sub-generalizations that represent a special case of the generalization. They are durable forms of knowledge, meaning they are of lasting importance and permit development in depth and breadth. Students form these sub-generalizations as they synthesize information from the content samples directly beneath them in the plan.

Content samples are chosen to provide the means of illustrating, explaining, and developing the sub-generalizations and generalizations. One content sample can be substituted for another, and students will still arrive at the same sub-generalization.

Lastly, activities are plugged in beneath these content samples ensuring lessons are driven by bigger ideas. Within the plan, knowledge continually spirals upward through all levels to reach the concept, and because conceptual planning is convergent, learning is divergent.

# Creativity

Every individual is creative and needs to create.

Creativity is expressed in many ways.

A community of individuals is cultured by its art and all cultures have art in common.

Some individuals consciously create.

Some individuals are creating, but are unconscious of the process.

There are many types of art media for creating.

Creativity takes many forms including and beyond the five strands of fine art.

Art has existed since the early beginnings of man.

Communities are a reflection of their artists.

Artists' work is a reflection of their communities.

-Some individuals consider themselves artists.

-Some individuals make creating their lifework.

-Some individuals have an inner drive to express themselves and their view of the world through creativity.

-Artists are always inventing new ways to create.

-Some individuals create through ways outside of the five strands of fine art.

-Art media are hands on.

-Creativity exists in expected and unexpected ways.

-Early individuals used their environment to record their world.

-Every recorded culture has evidence of art forms.

-Much art has been inspired by spirituality.

-Artists shape their community by contributing their art to it.

-Members of a community are influenced by its art.

-Artists' environments are expressed through their art.

-Members of a community influence its art.

-A culture's art reflects it in a culture-specific way.

**Jessica C. Baca  
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