

# media: between the lines



## about this lesson

**Media: Between the Lines** is part of **InCtrl**, an engaging collection of hands-on lessons covering seven key **digital citizenship** topics. These free lessons, for grades 4-8, empower students to be smart, safe and effective participants in a digital world. Get **InCtrl** at [www.ciconline.org/InCtrl](http://www.ciconline.org/InCtrl).

## LESSON SUMMARY

It's a media-rich world. Some may equate the term "media" with news agencies – but in fact, media in its broader sense includes any communication content with which we interact. Everywhere we turn, from the moment we awake until the moment we go to sleep, we interact with, interpret, and create media.

All media is a representation of reality, yet rarely do we pause to question where it comes from and who constructed it – and to evaluate its point of view, even when it's our own. *(continued on page 2)*



### TEACHER TIP!

This lesson is designed to work for 4th-8th grade students and be adaptable to varying abilities. Activities build upon one another and increase in depth and complexity as the lesson progresses.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Identify various types of media
- Gain awareness for how they themselves interact with media
- Evaluate and "deconstruct" media
- Create and construct media demonstrating critical media and digital literacy skills

## BACKGROUND

Show the student videos to your class during the lesson (in introduction and activity 1 on page 3).

**Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 1, "5 Facts about Advertising"**  
[1.75 minutes]

Ads have power. Advertisers use images, words and music to persuade you to feel a certain way or perform a specific action. This video explains five key facts about how ads are constructed to help you understand how to critically evaluate advertisements.

**Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 2, "Photos or Faux-tos?"**  
[3 minutes]

It's easy – and common – to alter photos. Some edits enhance, repair or correct the image. While others may change the meaning or interpretation of what the viewer will see. This video takes a behind the scenes look at some common ways photos are altered to help you have a more discerning eye.

### • LESSON LINKS • • •

Check out the following lessons to explore these digital citizenship topics in-depth:

**Living in a Digital World**  
(Digital Citizenship)

**Incredibly Informed**  
(Information Literacy)

**Stand Up... Be InCtrl!**  
(Cyberbullying)

## TOPIC: MEDIA LITERACY

### TIME REQUIRED

Two 2-1.75-3 minute videos,  
Three 30-40-minute sessions\*,  
15-minute reflection  
\*Projects in Activity 2 will vary in length

### SUPPLIES\*

- Process Journals
- Computers/Tablets
- Internet Access
- Projector/Interactive whiteboard
- Magazines or newspapers (with images)
- 10 images†

\*Lesson activities can be adapted for use without supplies

†Images should be extraordinary, with approximately half altered in some way

### PREPARATION

- **Watch:**  
Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 1, "5 Facts about Advertising"  
(for the class)  
  
Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 2, "Photos or Faux-tos?"  
(for the class)
- Photocopy the student handout  
(1 per student)

### STUDENT HANDOUT

- De + Re-Construct Media Literacy

### STANDARDS\*

- **Common Core English Language Arts**
- **American Association of School Librarians**
- **National Education Technology Standards (NETS), ISTE**
- **Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)**

\*See page 8 for a complete list of standards strands met.

## KEY MEDIA LITERACY QUESTIONS\*:

1. Who created this message? How do you know? Is he/she, are they credible?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? How did they use colors, images, motion, text, design, lighting, or sound to create a mood or feeling?
3. How might different people understand this message differently? Who is the target audience? How would someone else interpret it? (For example, a child versus an adult; a native versus an immigrant.)
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or left out from, this message? What kind of people and points of view are included or left out? Is this biased towards one side or another?
5. Why is this message being sent; what is its purpose? Was this created to inform, persuade, or entertain? How can you tell?

## CORE MEDIA LITERACY CONCEPTS:

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values, opinions, and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

\*For use as both consumer and producer of media. Source: Adapted from [Center for Media Literacy \(CML\)](#)

(continued from page 1)

Explorations in this lesson include media that is both consumed and created. Media students consume from outside sources includes such content as video games, music, news updates, mobile apps, print materials, and more. Media created by users like your students – and which grows more prevalent with each new social product that comes on the market – includes **Facebook** posts, photo uploading, tweets, blog entries, videos posted to **YouTube**, and more.

This lesson will give students an opportunity to exercise and develop critical thinking relating to media, use problem solving skills to deconstruct media production, then collaborate to create a media communication piece.

### ● WORDS TO KNOW ● ● ●

**Media:** Any means of communication that reaches or influences people. For example; television, radio, social media, the Internet, video, newspapers, magazines, advertising. Media is a representation of reality – it is constructed. The word media, comes from “medium,” meaning something intermediate, or in the middle.

**Literacy:** The ability to read, understand, or have the knowledge of a subject or field.

**Deconstruction:** To take something apart, give a thorough examination of something (an idea, an object, a piece of text), and study of all its constituent parts.

## introduction [40 minutes]

**A Media-Rich World.** Media that we consume – and create – surrounds us. We check our phones, read and answer texts, monitor and post on **Facebook**, tweet our thoughts, capture our days on **Instagr.am**, download and listen to music and videos, play games, watch or read the news, spend our days consuming and creating more media, buy products... yet, very rarely do we pause to think about or question where media comes from. That’s why it’s never been more critical for your students to develop an awareness of their own media habits, and learn how to critically evaluate media for themselves with a dose of healthy skepticism.

Whether it’s media that reaches your students for consumption or whether they are creating it themselves, all media is constructed. That means that someone had to create it – a process that required many choices along the way that impact the meaning and message of the final product.

Ask: **What is media?** Give students a few minutes to list as many things they can think of in their process journals that fall into the “media” category. Invite them to share and list their answers on the board.

Ask: **What kinds of media do you use the most and why? What kinds of media do you create?**

**Watch.** Play **Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 1, "5 Facts about Advertising"**, which will give your students an introduction to the media construction by looking at the techniques of advertising.

**Media Share.** Next, give students 5 minutes online\* to find 1 "newsworthy" or a memorable piece of media to share with the class. Explain that it can be any form of media (from news to advertising to entertainment), and can be relevant to their own lives, their friends, community, country or the world. Ask: **How did you find it? What grabbed your attention?** Prompt your students to dig and think a bit deeper by asking: **Was it the design, wording, format, visuals? Or was it the topic itself that drew you in? Who is this media intended for? What is the message?**

**\*Note:** If getting your students online is not possible, provide newspapers and magazines for them to look through.

**Break It Down.** Display and go over the **Key Media Literacy Questions and Core Media Literacy Concepts** (see sidebar on page 2). Does evaluating the purpose and message behind the media change how students interpret their "newsworthy" choice?

## activity 1 [30 minutes]

**The Power Of An Image.** Even if glimpsed for just a few seconds, an image can stay with us forever. A single image can capture a moment, memory, time, share unique views (of nature, perspectives, ideas), events, and communicate emotion, opinions.

**Homework.** Before beginning the following activity, give students a day to find 1-5 images that:

- Have an impact on them (in either a positive or negative way)
- Sum up their lives, who they are, or what is important to them

Students can choose images they find online, saw on TV, an old or new photo, or images of friends and family. Have students note the source of each image (photographer, publisher, or where they found it) in their process journals.

**Share.** Have students bring in and share the images they found. Ask each student: **How did this impact you? Why did it grab your attention? What do you like (or dislike) about it? How do they represent your life or who you are?**

Next, ask: **What is it about an image that can have such an impact?** Discuss different uses and applications for images (i.e. journalism, news, travel, memories, official documentation).

### Game On: Photos or Faux-tos?

Discuss the various ways a "photo" can be turned into a "faux-to." Ask:

- How can an image be edited?**
- How can edits enhance or make an image better?**
- How can edits change an image?**
- How can edits transform the meaning and impact of an image?**



#### TEACHER TIP!

- For this activity, you may use images from resources we've listed, or find (even create!) your own. Collect a variety of extraordinary images from the web, nature, current events, entertainment media, or history.
- To give it more of a "game show" feel, give each team 2 "judging" cards, labeled "Photo" and "Faux-to," that they can hold up as they play.
- Put a twist on this activity by pulling headlines and images from news sources or current events. Separate and mix up the captions from the images, then have students interpret and evaluate what caption goes with what image. Start a discussion on how text can alter or enhance an image's meaning, interpretation, or power.

**Watch.** Show **Media: Between the Lines/Student Video 2, "Photos or Faux-tos?"** which will take a behind the scenes look at common ways photos can be altered.

It's time to put your students' visual and media literacy skills to the test in a fun collaborative game. Choose 8 to 10 images from the list we have provided, equally divided between photos (un-altered) and faux-tos (altered or edited).

**Play.** Divide the class into teams of 4 to 5 students. The objective of the game is for teams to evaluate if an image is real or "faux"). Start the game by projecting the first image for the whole class to see. Give each team 2 to 3 minutes to study the image, discuss their reasoning, before they decide and give their answer. Once all teams have shared their answers and explanation, reveal the truth – is it a photo or faux-to? Play through all images.

**Analyze & Discuss.** Go back through all the images and discuss them one by one. Ask: *Were there any surprises as to what was real and what photo had been altered?*

## activity 2 [40 minutes for planning. Project time will vary.]



### TEACHER TIP!

Before starting the following activity, provide each student with the handout

**De + Re-Construct Media Literacy** and review the Key Media Literacy Questions and Core Media Literacy Concepts. It's important that students understand that constructing media involves:

- Understanding one's role as an author
- Being aware of different creative techniques (see [Colors Matter and Camera, Lights, Action!](#) in the sidebar on page 5 for more)
- Knowing who you're speaking to (your audience)
- Establishing a point of view
- Responsibility that comes with the message one is sending

Source: [Center for Media Literacy, CONNECTIONS/MediaLit Moments, July 2012](#)

## De + Re-Construct Media Literacy.

Now that students have become more familiar with the variety of media that exists, and are more aware of how they participate in the consumption and production of media, it's time to dig deeper. Students will work in teams of 3 to 4 to

choose the medium of their choice to de-construct ... and then collaborate to re-construct and create an original media communication piece. Let teams first choose one of the following media categories to focus upon:

1. TV Commercial
2. News Report
3. Printed Advertisement
4. Video Game
5. Short Film/Music Video/Animation (10 minutes or less)

**Step One: Research** Teams should find an existing media example within their chosen category. Encourage them to choose one that grabs their attention -- in either a positive or negative way.

**Step Two: De-Construct** Using the student handout, **De + Re-Construct Media Literacy** teams will de-construct their media example. They should write their responses to each question and explain themselves fully. They can use their process journals to elaborate.

## IMAGE ALTERATION

In the age of camera phones, [Instag.gram](#), [Pixlr.com](#), Photoshop, iPhoto, [Skitch](#), and other camera and photo editing apps and software, everyone becomes a photographer, as well as a photo editor or retoucher. It is important for everyone to consider how edits can change an image, for better or worse. Some edits enhance, repair, or correct the image. While other edits can change the meaning or interpretation of what the viewer will see. Ask your students to consider ways to positively alter an image, then think of ways that image edits can have negative implications.

Some common image editing actions: Crop, color, blur, retouch, erase, red-eye reduction, clip, contrast, paint, airbrush

## PHOTOS

Photos that haven't been altered, but are too extraordinary to believe they're real:

- [Photos List 1](#)
- [Photos List 2](#)
- [Photos List 3](#)

## FAUX-TOS

Powerful examples of photo tampering throughout history and in recent years:

- [Faux-tos List 1](#)
- [Faux-tos List 2](#)
- [Faux-tos List 3](#)
- [Faux-tos List 4](#)



### TEACHER TIP!

If your students want to create a short game or animation, give [Scratch](#) – free software developed by MIT programmers – a try!



### TEACHER TIP!

Check in with your students before they move on to Step Three to consult with them before they decide what and how to re-construct and create their own media piece.

**Step Three: Re-Construct** It's time to begin re-construction! Students first need to write an outline drafting up a plan for their media piece. It should be based on the media example they chose for step one, but now they need to put their own "spin" on it. Ask: *What is your message? Was there a message you didn't agree with? What would you like to say instead? Who are you talking to?* Once again, they should consult the questions on the student handout to help them identify their message, audience, and evaluate their purpose and perspective.

**Step Four: Produce** Depending on the resources you have available, students can either create their media project using digital tools (e.g., camera, video, **iMovie**, **Photoshop**), or they can storyboard their ideas in detail. Encourage them to think like creators and producers at this stage. Remind them to think about design. Ask: *How can color, layout, shapes, graphics, camera angles help emphasize your message or perspective?*

**Step Five: Present** Teams will present their completed and re-constructed media projects to the class and lead a discussion on what each piece evokes. At the conclusion of each presentation, have audience members share "Kudos" and "Considerations" – feedback on what they found successful, and what they believe could be improved.

**(Optional) Step Six: Publish** Your students can share their projects with a larger audience, by publishing them online – on your class blog, wiki, website, **YouTube**, **Vimeo**, or on other social media.

### COLOR MATTERS

Designers and artists aren't the only ones who take their color choices seriously. Various other creators of media do too, especially advertisers. Ever notice that logos, particularly those of sports teams, are often made up of complementary colors (opposites on the color wheel)? Studies show that color can increase brand recognition by 80%! Research also shows that colors have a psychological and emotional impact on the human body. Health care tends to focus on blues, greens and pastels in their interior décor to their websites, for a calming effect. Food companies tend to favor reds, yellows, and oranges, which increase blood pressure, and inspire appetite.

For more information on how color matters in branding and media, visit [Color Matters](#).

### CAMERA, LIGHTS, ACTION

A 30-second commercial takes a team of dozens to be produced! Whether you're doing a photo shoot that features a celebrity or a bowl of broccoli, producers, sound engineers, directors, camera operators, set designers, food stylists, film editors are all needed. In addition to color choices mattering, so do the angle of the camera, the intensity and direction of lighting, the acting, and any editing that occurs afterwards. Encourage students to watch films or commercials closely to recognize how camera angles and lighting impact the mood and message of the piece.



Source: www.Fotolia.com

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**De + Re-Construct Media Literacy.** You will be working together with your team mates to *deconstruct* then *re-construct* to create an original media communication piece.

**Step One: Research** Choose a media example from one of the following categories that grabs your attention – in either a positive or negative way.

1. TV Commercial
2. News Report
3. Printed Advertisement
4. Video Game
5. Short Film/Music Video/Animation (10 minutes or less)

**Step Two: De-Construct** Using the **Media (De) Construction Tips!** table to deconstruct, evaluate, and analyze your media example. Discuss your ideas within your team then elaborate on your thoughts in your process journals.

MEDIA (DE) CONSTRUCTION TIPS!*	
<p><b>Key Questions about Media</b> When interpreting media and evaluating media, always ask yourself the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who created this message? How do you know? Is he/she, are they credible?</li> <li>2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? How did they use colors, images, motion, text, design, lighting, or sound to create a mood or feeling?</li> <li>3. How might different people understand this message differently? Who is the target audience? How would someone else interpret it? (For example, a child versus an adult; a native versus an immigrant.)</li> <li>4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or left out from, this message? What kind of people and points of view are included or left out? Is this biased towards one side or another?</li> <li>5. Why is this message being sent; what is its purpose? Was this created to inform, persuade, or entertain? How can you tell?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Core Concepts about Media</b> When creating your own media, whether it's a short film, collage, flyer, song, or Facebook post, think about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All media messages are constructed.</li> <li>2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.</li> <li>3. Different people experience the same media message differently.</li> <li>4. Media have embedded values, opinions, and points of view.</li> <li>5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.</li> </ol>
*Source: Adapted from <a href="#">Center for Media Literacy (CML)</a>	

**Step Three: Create** It's time to re-construct! Put your own "spin" on the media example you de-constructed. First ask yourselves: **Was there a message in the media example you didn't agree with? What would you like to say instead?** Write an outline for your planned media construction. Ask yourselves: **What is your new message? Who are you talking to?** Once again, use the **Media (De) Construction Tips!** table to guide you. Elaborate in your process journals.

**Step Four: Produce** Now that you've completed your outline, think about how you'd like to deliver the message. You can use any digital tool you have access to (e.g., camera, video, iMovie, Photoshop). Or you can create a visual storyboard mapping out your ideas in detail. Think like creators and producers! Design is an important component. Consider what colors, layout, shapes, graphics, sounds, and camera angles to use that will help emphasize your message and perspective.

**Step Five: Present** Present your projects to the rest of your class. Lead a discussion on how you've changed the meaning or message of your media piece. Explain what techniques you used to influence your audience. Then, get feedback from your team to find out if your choices were successful.

**(Optional) Step Six: Publish** If you want to share your projects with a larger audience, you can publish them online – on your class blog, wiki, website, **YouTube**, **Vimeo**, or on other social media.

### **Common Core ELA Standards**

**Reading:** Key Ideas and Details; Craft and Structure; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**Writing:** Production and Distribution of Writing; Research to Build and Present Knowledge

**Speaking and Listening:** Comprehension and Collaboration; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

**Language:** Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

### **American Association of School Librarians**

**Standard 1:** 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 1.1.7, 1.1.9, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.4.2, 1.4.3

**Standard 2:** 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.4.1, 2.4.3, 2.4.4

**Standard 3:** 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.5, 3.3.6, 3.3.7, 3.4.1, 3.4.2

**Standard 4:** 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.7, 4.1.8, 4.2.3, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.4

### **National Education Technology Standards (NETS), ISTE**

1. **Creativity and Innovation:** a, b, c, d

2. **Communication and Collaboration:** a, b, d

3. **Research and Information Fluency:** a, b, c

4. **Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making:** a, b, c, d

5. **Digital Citizenship:** a, b, c, d

6. **Technology Operations and Concepts:** a, b, d

### **Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)**

**Learning and Innovation Skills:**

1. Creativity and Innovation
2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
3. Communication and Collaboration

**Information, Media and Technology Skills:**

1. Information Literacy
2. Media Literacy
3. ICT Literacy

**Life and Career Skills:**

1. Flexibility and Adaptability
2. Initiative and Self-Direction
3. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
4. Productivity and Accountability
5. Leadership and Responsibility