MediaLit KIT™

LITERACY
Edition 2 **for the 21ˢᵗ Century**

An Overview & Orientation Guide To
Media Literacy Education

Part I: Theory **CML MediaLit Kit™**
A Framework for Learning and Teaching in a Media Age

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CML
Mission: Media Literacy

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Section III.   Pedagogy in Plain Language :

The Basic Framework Explained

"The MediaLit Kit™ is an outstanding map for anyone embarking on the critical and rewarding journey that is teaching media literacy…An incredibly valuable piece of work that will, no doubt, contribute significantly to the development and form of media literacy education in the U.S. and beyond."

Faith Rogow, Ph.D. Founding National President /
Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA)

1. The 'Inquiry' Process

The teaching approach that best suits the media literacy classroom is called the "inquiry process" and includes both analytical (deconstruction) skills as well as creative communications (construction / production) skills. When analysis is combined with creative production, theory unites with application, thereby allowing students to discover and express their learning in an interconnected and natural process. Each enriches the other, and allows for interaction that furthers knowledge and encourages participation. These intermixing of skills are particularly important in using today's communication technologies, since very quick processing is required between consuming and producing messages that are unique to the individual.

Since media messages are transmitted through so many different mental processes, the combination of analysis with production also incorporates multiple intelligences in the learning process (linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal). While both activities can happen independently there is much to gain by meshing the two into one cohesive activity of analysis and production—that is: *Activate Your Mind! Express Your View! Participate in Your World!*

Activate Your Mind! Analysis / Deconstruction / Decoding "Reading"	**Express Your View!** **Production / Construction / Creating** **"Writing"**
To activate one's mind, students need the skills and abilities to "read" their multi-media world and understand its many layers of messages. The process of taking apart messages, whether print or electronic, is referred to in many ways: analysis, deconstruction, decoding or "reading" in the traditional terminology of reading/writing literacy. Media analysis develops critical thinking skills and involves all the competencies of Bloom's Taxonomy (*knowledge, analysis, comprehension, application, synthesis and evaluation*) and is an important part of media literacy education because: • It strengthens observation and interpretation. • It deepens understanding and appreciation. • It challenges stereotyping—both misrepresentations and/or under-representations. • It illuminates bias and point of view. • It uncovers motivations. • It exposes implicit messages that are less obvious. • It gives perspective and meaning to the media creators. • It enlightens society about the effects and implications of a message.	In today's multi-media culture "writing" is far more complex than putting pen to paper. Today students may "write" a PowerPoint report for science class, "create" a persuasive poster about teen smoking for their health project or, in American History, express the Native American's point of view about Christopher Columbus by drawing an original political cartoon. All of these projects require the same *creative thinking abilities* as writing words on paper: *organize* your ideas, *draft* and *redraft* your words, images and/or sounds, *edit, polish* and *present* the final product. Student production is an important component of media literacy education for many reasons: • It involves the application of multiple intelligences. • It requires active hands-on learning. • It increases motivation and the enjoyment of learning. • It generates new avenues for alternative representations. • It creates outlets to communicate beyond the classroom and interact with others. • It reinforces self-esteem and self-expression. • It offers "real world" practical application of theoretical concepts.

Participate in Your World! Awareness / Analysis / Reflection / Action	
Technology tools provide powerful ways to work individually and collectively, so that sometimes, the distinction between being a consumer or producer of media is lost in the quick interaction involved in circulating and collaborating on media messages. Being part of an online community, problem-solving with teams, interacting on social networking sites, commenting on YouTube videos whether at work or at play, participating in the media world takes skill, judgment and the negotiation of various communities, media channels and technologies. These skills build on the basic skills of deconstruction and construction, and allow participants to pool knowledge, and to build on knowledge so that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. Participation is vital because: • It calls for collaboration, working in teams to solve problems or learn. • It introduces new forms of media using new technology tools, such as blogging, video-sharing, podcasting. • It encourages community-building and affiliation, allowing people from far-flung locations to connect and enhance their understandings on topics of their choice.	• It levels the playing field, allowing access to resources and information never available before, globally. • It demands a deeper understanding of personal identity, since private, social and public versions of "self" are possible and prevalent. • It revisits traditional ethics, since everyone is not only a consumer but a producer and participant in the media world. • It calls for transparency, since increased online storage capacity allows for greater opportunities to provide information in-depth.

2. Media Literacy: A Definition

The definition most often cited in the US is a succinct sentence hammered out by participants at the 1992 Aspen Media Literacy Leadership Institute:

…the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.

Definitions, however, evolve over time and a more robust definition is now needed to situate media literacy in the context of its importance for the education of students in a 21st century global media culture. CML's **MediaLit Kit™** uses this expanded definition:

Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education.
It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate using messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

What is important to understand is that media literacy is not about "protecting" kids from unwanted messages. Although some groups urge families to just turn the cell phone or TV off, the fact is, media are so ingrained in our cultural milieu that even if you turn off the technology, you still cannot escape today's media culture. Media no longer just influence our culture. They *are* our culture.

Media literacy, therefore, is about helping students become competent, critical and *literate* in all media forms so that they control the interpretation of what they see, hear or interact with rather than letting the interpretation control them. To become media literate is not to memorize facts or statistics about the media, but *rather to learn to raise the right questions* about what you are watching, reading, listening or contributing to. Len Masterman, the acclaimed author of *Teaching the Media*, calls it "critical autono-my" or the ability *to think for oneself.*

Without this fundamental ability, an individual cannot have full dignity as a human person or exercise citizenship in a democratic society, where to be a citizen is to both understand and contribute to the debates of the time.

What Media Literacy Is NOT

- Media 'bashing' is NOT media literacy, however media literacy often involves criticizing the media.
- Merely producing media is NOT media literacy, although media literacy should include media production and interactive activities and projects.
- Just bringing videos, the internet or other mediated content into the classroom is NOT media literacy; one must also explore the nature and influence of media and media messages in our culture.
- Simply looking for political agendas, stereotypes or misrepresentations is NOT media literacy; there should also be an exploration of the systems making them appear "normal."
- Looking at a media message or experience from just one perspective is NOT media literacy because media should be examined from multiple positions.
- Media literacy does NOT mean "don't watch;" it means "watch carefully, think critically; participate actively."

—With thanks to Renee Hobbs, Chris Worsnop, Neil Andersen, Jeff Share and Scott Sullivan.

3. Five Core Concepts/Five Key Questions: Key Words and Explanations

To participate in today's global society, citizens need the skills to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with media information 24/7. The goal is not so much to be able to store information, but to *process* information efficiently and effectively, so that we understand and are able to conduct our lifelong relationship with media by being:

- *Efficient information managers.* We need to access information quickly and be able to store information effectively so that we can access it again.
- *Wise consumers.* We need to understand the messages that come our way and make wise individual decisions, using the information we have.
- *Responsible producers.* Today, everyone can be a producer, and in producing, it is important for all of us to consider the audience and the society we live in, to provide an enlightened approach to media production. Producing often involves interaction and collaboration, as well.
- *Active participants.* In using media, in deciding to buy products or to cast a ballot, we are sending messages and voting and participating in society. We not only buy a product or a service, but we buy an organization's advertising and communications, and we buy the worldview that the organization's communication represents. Our votes and our money count, and so does our own expression. Where would a company or a university or a nonprofit or an entertainer or an executive or a politician be without us, the audience?

Processing information requires process skills. Sometimes we are the receivers of messages; other times we are the producers of messages, whether we interact with others or not. But in either case, the *Five Core Concepts* of Media Literacy apply. Understanding how to apply *Five Core Concepts*: that's a big part of what it takes to be an enlightened, active citizen living in the 21st Century.

But the *Five Core Concepts* aren't enough. The *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions* work together to provide a methodology for critical thinking, media analysis, media production and interaction using media. Why? Because analysis requires inquiry, and in learning and applying a process of inquiry, it takes questioning media as it comes our way, or questioning as we seek out information. It takes questioning as we make or construct our own messages that we send to others or use to engage with others.

In the **CML MediaLit Kit™**, the *Five Key Questions* flow directly from *Five Core Concepts*

that media literacy practitioners around the world have evolved to explore five analytical aspects of a media message. These Keywords create a brief outline of the analytical construct behind the concepts and questions:

1. Authorship (constructedness)
2. Format (and techniques of production)
3. Audience
4. Content (or message)
5. Purpose (or motive)

CML's *Five Key Questions* of Media Literacy apply to both deconstruction, or analysis and consumption of media messages, as well as construction, or production of media messages.

When we "consume" or analyze media messages, we have no control over the content of the message. Instead, we only control the meaning that we make from the message and how we might want to respond to that meaning in our thought processing or making decisions or taking action. We can accept or reject it, but unless we "remix" and "rehash" the message, we cannot change it until we enter into an active production process.

But when we "produce" or construct media messages, we *do* control the content of the message to the extent that we have autonomy or self-awareness. Yet we always bring ourselves to the message, with all of our experiences and knowledge that inevitably affect the content of our messages, because by definition, human beings have imperfect understanding, and each human being is unique. In constructing a message, we have many more decisions to make. We are not just deciding how to make meaning from our own message, but through our construction techniques, we are also influencing how others might make meaning from it. We have both personal and social power, and therefore personal and social responsibility toward our audience. Where there is communication, there is audience, even if it is an audience of one!

The *Five Core Concepts* apply in both the case of consumption and production of media; however, the *Five Key Questions* that stem from each of the *Five Core Concepts* are slightly altered because consumers have a different point of view from producers, and this point of view affects the "voice" of the questions, from the passive voice for consumers to the active voice of producers.

The process of analysis encouraged by the *Five Key Questions* and the *Five Core Concepts* informs the decision-making or actions that we may take—actions which define our participation in a media-driven culture. This decision-making/action

process is represented through CML's Empowerment Spiral (see page 65), starting with awareness of an issue or message, analysis through the *Five Key Questions*, reflection through processing our learning and the *Five Key Questions*, and action, whether we decide to take action or not.

Media literacy is about understanding our relationship with media, about how we make meaning from a media product and about understanding the greater role of media in society. Though being media literate implies a broader skill set than simply evaluating a media product, evaluating a media product always involves the skills of media literacy.

The following chart shows CML's Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS) for both analysis (deconstruction) of media messages as well as production (construction). The left column shows "Key Words" that apply to each of the respective *Core Concepts* or *Key Questions.* CML's *Five Key Questions* for Deconstruction, designed for use by media consumers, appear next, to the left of the *Five Core Concepts*.

The *Five Core Concepts*, which are central to both the deconstruction and construction of media messages, appear in the center column. CML's *Five Key Questions* for Construction, designed for use by media producers, appear on the right column.

The following section provides detailed explanations of this chart and its components.

CML's Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)
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#	Key Words	Deconstruction: CML's 5 Key Questions (Consumer)	CML's 5 Core Concepts	Construction: CML's 5 Key Questions (Producer)
1	Authorship	Who created this message?	All media messages are constructed.	What am I **authoring**?
2	Format	What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	Does my message reflect understanding in **format**, creativity and technology?
3	Audience	How might different people understand this message differently?	Different people experience the same media message differently.	Is my message engaging and compelling for my target **audience**?
4	Content	What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?	Media have embedded values and points of view.	Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my **content**?
5	Purpose	Why is this message being sent?	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.	Have I communicated my **purpose** effectively?

4. Five Core Concepts/Five Key Questions: Consumers and Producers

At CML, we believe that success will have been achieved when *all students* graduate with the ability and proficiency to apply Media Literacy's *Five Key Questions* routinely and regularly to their media experiences—whether they are watching live news coverage of a world event, flipping through ads in a magazine, surfing the Internet or sharing a movie with a friend.

On the following pages, you will see how each *Key Question* flows from and is related to its *Core Concept.* The Keywords plus a set of *Guiding Questions* lay the path that builds mastery of each Question. On later pages, you'll find *Alternate Questions* for very young students—and *Enhanced Questions* for older or more advanced students. Throughout this document, we provide a variety of handouts and presentation materials to help you, your colleagues and your students to understand and compare the questions and the concepts.

As we review each of the *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions,* we will be looking at the Key Questions from the point of view of either the Consumer or the Producer of media messages. This point of view or "voice" is passive from the standpoint of the Consumer who is deconstructing a media message (although the critical thinking process is very active); the Producer's point of view or "voice" is active, since the Producer is constructing the message. Regardless, the critical thinking process necessary for participating in today's media culture is represented in the use of these *Key Questions,* which "kick off" the inquiry from a strong basis rooted in media studies. Other questions will undoubtedly spring from these basic *Key Questions* as the process of inquiry deepens. The goal is to take the process as deeply as necessary for informed decision-making.

Teaching Future Citizens
In the classroom, however, the goal is not so much to teach the Core Concepts, especially with younger students, but, rather, to focus on the *Five Key Questions* in order to help students build the habit of routinely subjecting media messages to a checklist of questions appropriate to their age and ability. As explained in the "Words of Wisdom" handout (page 86) teachers need to be thoroughly acquainted with the *Five Core Concepts* in order to structure classroom activities and curriculum connections that provide students with opportunities to learn and practice the asking of questions about media in their lives.

Together the *Core Concepts* and *Key Questions* serve as "Big Ideas" or the "enduring understanding" that students will need in order to navigate their way through life as citizens in a global media culture. Together, they are a unique contribution to 21st Century education and a powerful set of tools for preparing future citizens to understand, share in and contribute to the public debate.

NOTE: More complete descriptions and applications of the *Five Key Questions* and *Five Core Concepts* for media deconstruction can be found in **MediaLit Kit™ / Book II: Five Key Questions That Can Change the World.**

"It is the learning, practicing and mastering of the Five Key Questions—over time—that leads to a deep understanding of how media are created and what their purposes are along with an informed ability to accept or reject both explicit and implicit messages. If democracy is to flourish in a global media culture, future citizens must have these fundamental skills of participation and self-representation."

Tessa Jolls, CML President and CEO

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Consumers: Media Deconstruction Framework

Key Question #1:	Who created this message?
Core Concept #1:	All media messages are constructed.

We should not think of media texts (newspaper articles, TV shows, video games, comic books to name just a few) as "natural" things. Media texts are built just as surely as buildings and highways are built. The building materials involved vary from one kind of text to another. In a magazine, for example, there are words in different sizes and typefonts, photographs, colors, layout and page location. TV and movies have hundreds of building blocks—from camera angles and lighting to music and sound effects.

What this means is that whether we are watching the nightly news or passing a billboard on the street, the media message we experience was written by someone (or probably several people), pictures were taken and a creative designer put it all together. But this is more than a physical process. What happens is that whatever is "constructed" by just a few people then becomes "normalized" for the rest of us; like the air we breathe, it gets taken for granted and usually goes unquestioned. But as the audience, we don't get to see or hear the words, pictures or arrangements that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted!

The success of media texts depends upon their apparent naturalness; we turn off a production that looks "fake." But the truth is, it's all fake—even the news! That doesn't mean we can't still enjoy a movie, watch TV or listen to music. The goal of this question is not to make us cynical but simply to expose the complexities of media's "constructedness" and thus create the critical distance we need to be able to ask other important questions.

Keyword:	Authorship
Guiding Questions:	• What kind of "text" is it? • What are the various elements (building blocks) that make up the whole? • How similar or different is it to others of the same genre? • Which technologies are used in its creation? • How would it be different in a different medium? • What choices were made that might have been made differently? • How many people did it take to create this message? What are their various jobs?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Consumers: Media Deconstruction Framework

Key Question #2:	What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
Core Concept #2:	Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

Each form of communication—whether newspapers, TV game shows or horror movies—has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor system of media language, especially the language of sounds and visuals which can reach beyond the rational to our deepest emotional core, increases our appreciation and enjoyment of media experiences as well as helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

One of the best ways to understand how media are put together is to do just that—make a video, create a website, develop an ad campaign about a community issue. The more real world the project is, the better. Digital cameras and computer authoring programs provide easy ways to integrate creative production projects in any subject area. In addition the four major arts disciplines—music, dance, theatre and the visual arts—can also provide a context through which one gains skills of analysis, interpretation and appreciation along with opportunities for self-expression and producing a message for an audience.

Keyword:	Format

Guiding Questions:	• *What do you notice…*(about the way the message is constructed?)
	  » Colors and shapes?
	  » Sound effects? Music? Silence? Dialogue or Narration?
	  » Props, sets, clothing?
	  » Movement? Composition?
	  » Lighting?
	• Where is the camera? What is the viewpoint?
	• How is the story told? What are people doing?
	• Are there any visual symbols or metaphors?
	• What's the emotional appeal? Persuasive devices?
	• What makes it seem "real"?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Consumers: Media Deconstruction Framework

Key Question #3:	How might different people understand this message differently?
Core Concept #3:	Different people experience the same media message differently.

Audiences play a role in interpreting media texts because each audience member brings to the media text a unique set of life experiences (age, gender, education, cultural upbringing, etc.) which, when applied to the text—or combined *with* the text—create unique interpretations. A veteran, for example, brings a different set of experiences to a war movie than any other audience member—resulting in a different reaction to the film as well as, perhaps, greater insight. Even parents and children watching TV together do not "see" the same program.

This concept turns the tables on the idea of TV viewers or internet users as just passive "couch potatoes." We may not be conscious of it but each of us, even toddlers, are constantly trying to "make sense" of what we see, hear or read. The more questions we can ask about what we are experiencing around us, the more alert we can be about accepting or rejecting messages. Research indicates that, over time, children of all ages can learn age-appropriate skills that give them a new set of glasses with which they can "read" and interpret their media culture.

Keyword:	Audience
Guiding Questions:	- Have you ever experienced anything like this? - How close does it come to what you experienced in real life? - What did you learn from this media text? What did you learn *about yourself* from experiencing the media text? - What did you learn from other people's responses—and their experiences? - How many other interpretations could there be? How could we hear about them? - How can you explain the different responses? - Are other viewpoints just as valid as mine?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Consumers: Media Deconstruction Framework

Key Question #4:	What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
Core Concept #4:	Media have embedded values and points of view.

Media, because they are constructed, carry a subtext of who and what is important—at least to the person or persons creating the construction. Media are also storytellers (even commercials tell a quick and simple story) and stories require characters and settings and a plot that has a beginning, a middle and an end. The choice of a character's age, gender or race mixed in with the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviors that are portrayed, the selection of a setting (urban? rural? affluent? poor?), and the actions and re-actions in the plot are just some of the ways that values become "embedded" in a TV show, a movie or an ad.

It is important to learn how to "read" all kinds of media messages in order to discover the points of view that are embedded in them and how to assess them as part of the text rather than merely accepting them as "natural." Only then can we judge whether to accept or reject a message. Being able to recognize and name *missing* perspectives is also a critical skill as we negotiate our way each day through our mediated environment.

Keyword:	Content
Guiding Questions:	• How is the human person characterized? What kinds of behaviors / consequences are depicted? • What type of person is the reader / watcher / listener invited to identify with? • What questions come to mind as you watch / read / listen? • What ideas or values are being "sold" in this message? • What political or economic ideas are communicated in the message? • What judgments or statements are made about how we treat other people? • What is the overall worldview? • Are any ideas or perspectives left out? How would you find what's missing?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Consumers: Media Deconstruction Framework

Key Question #5:	Why is this message being sent?
Core Concept #5:	Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Much of the world's media were developed as money-making enterprises and continue to operate today as commercial businesses. Newspapers and magazines lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, commercials are part and parcel of most TV watching. What many people do not know is that what's really being sold through commercial media is not just the advertised products to the audience—but also the audience to the advertisers!

The *real* purpose of the programs on television, or the articles in a magazine, is to create an audience (and put them in a receptive mood) so that the network or publisher can sell *time* or *space* to sponsors to advertise products—usually in a way that entices us to want what we really don't need! Sponsors pay for the time based on the number of people the producers predict will be watching. And they get a refund if the number of actual viewers or readers turns out to be lower than promised.

But the issue of message motivation has changed dramatically since the Internet became an international platform through which groups and organizations—even individuals—can attempt to persuade others to a particular point of view. The Internet provides numerous reasons for users of all ages to be able to interpret rhetorical devices, verify sources and distinguish legitimate online sources from bogus, hate or 'hoax' websites. And with democracy at stake almost everywhere around the world, citizens in every country need to be equipped with the ability to determine both economic and ideological "spin."

Keyword:	Purpose
Guiding Questions:	• Who's in control of the creation and transmission of this message? • Why are they sending it? How do you know? • Who are they sending it to? How do you know? • Who is served by, profits or benefits from the message? The public? Private interests? Individuals? Institutions? • Who wins? Who loses? Who decides? • What economic decisions may have influenced the construction or transmission of the message?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Producers: Media Construction Framework

Key Question #1:	What am I authoring?
Core Concept #1:	**All media messages are constructed.**

Certain buildings look certain ways for certain reasons. A church looks differently than a house; an office building looks differently than a retail store. Whether someone tells us what type of building it is or not, we recognize the building for what it is due to the way that it's built or put together; the elements that make up the construction of the building cue us as to how the building is used. And someone, or a team of people, decided what those construction elements were going to be and then actually put the building together, piece by piece.

The same is true of media. When we decide to "manufacture" media, we as authors decide what type of building we will make and what construction elements to use so that the building's purpose is recognizable to others. Whether it's an advertisement or a logo, a billboard or a webpage, a video game or a novel, all media constructions exemplify certain characteristics that must be present for the construction to be recognized. Then, these elements are carefully put together to meet the author's specifications, whatever they may be.

Authors, designers, developers and producers—however they are labeled—all create their own media environments, just as builders create physical environments. When we enter or create a media world, we leave the real world behind.

Keyword:	Authorship
Guiding Questions:	• What kind of "text" genre am I creating? • What various elements (building blocks) make up the whole? • How similar or different is it to others of the same genre? • Which technologies am I using to create? What will my medium be? • How would my construction be different in a different medium? • What are my choices? What choices might I make differently? • Have others contributed to this construction? How should they be credited? • Have I respected copyright, trademarks or other intellectual property that I may have used?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Producers: Media Construction Framework

Key Question #2:	**Does my message reflect understanding in format, creativity and technology?**
Core Concept #2:	**Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.**

Marshall McLuhan famously said the "media is the message." Often, the media determines a great deal about the message. If I am using a cell phone, my message had better be short and compact! If I want my message to resonate with powerful emotions or with compelling facts, I had better be the master of crafting a particular form of message, whether it's entertaining, informing, persuading or participating.

Having a deep knowledge of the arts is also helpful in mastering the creative languages of media construction. Theater requires knowledge of writing and storytelling techniques; dance and motion demand understanding of choreography; music involves knowledge of tempo and instruments and orchestration; visual arts require knowledge of perspective and line and form and color. And technology plays a role, too, because the technology provides the tools and also the environmental constraints in which the tools can be used. In cases like video games or search engines the technology often dictates the form of the message. Before making or breaking the rules, I must first know what the rules are and thoroughly understand the rules.

Keyword:	**Format**
Guiding Questions:	• What do I want people to notice…or not…(about the way I am constructing my message)? • What technologies am I using? How is my message structure affected? • What techniques stand out the most? Color and shapes? Sound? Silence? Dialogue or Narration? Movement? Composition? Lighting? Texture? Scent? • How am I telling the story? Do I know the storytelling conventions available to me? What storytelling conventions am I using? • When does my message take place? What is the setting or timing of my message? What impact might the setting or timing of my message have on other choices I make? • What visual or verbal, musical or visual symbols or metaphors am I using? • What emotional appeal am I using? • What persuasive devices am I employing? Am I being ethical? • What factual information am I presenting? Are my facts and information accurate? How do I know? • Does my message seem "real?" Why?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Producer: Media Construction Framework

Key Question #3:	Is my message engaging and compelling for my target audience?
Core Concept #3:	Different people experience the same media message differently.

Creative techniques alone are not enough to attract the attention of an audience, because each audience and indeed, each individual is different. The more I know about the audience I am appealing to, the better chance I have of engaging that audience, whether the audience is one person or many. And if the audience is engaged, the audience will feel compelled to take in my message and possibly even view or hear or interact with my entire message, from start to finish.

When I go to see a movie, I never "see" the same movie as my neighbor or friend. I can only see through my own eyes. Yet media appeals to life experiences that we have in common, or otherwise we would have no interest in the message. It is for this reason that advertisers "target" audiences, sometimes to reach the widest audience possible, and sometimes to reach only a select few. But in either case, knowledge of the audience and data about the audience helps provide understanding in reaching the audience efficiently and effectively, hopefully for mutual benefit.

Keyword:	Audience
Guiding Questions:	• Who is the target audience for my message? • What do I know about this person or people? What are some important characteristics about them I should know? • How wide an audience do I want to appeal to? Or how narrow? • Have I respected the need for privacy or confidentiality on the part of my audience? • Have I taken into consideration the appropriateness of my message for special or vulnerable audiences, such as very young children or youth or those disabled? • How might my audience interpret my message and respond to it? • What effect might I anticipate my message having on my audience? Positive, negative, neutral? • Why should my audience care about my message?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Producers: Media Construction Framework

Key Question #4:	**Have I clearly and consistently framed values, lifestyles and points of view in my content?**
Core Concept #4:	**Media have embedded values and points of view.**

Because I am me, I always bring myself—my values, my life experience and my points of view—to my message. Yes, I can represent other voices and other viewpoints to the best of my ability, but there is never a way for me to represent all other voices; necessarily, someone or something is always left out. Because I am human, I can only aim to be fair and balanced, or admittedly biased in my viewpoint, but I can never be truly objective or provide perfect information.

Instead, when I present my message to my audience, I am selecting and framing the content that I am presenting according to my own priorities. Perhaps I consider the needs of the audience or perhaps not. The more clearly and consistently I frame and select my content, the more readily my audience can identify the values, lifestyles and points of view I am presenting, and determine whether that frame suits them or not.

Keyword:	Content
Guiding Questions:	• What is my main message? • How am I supporting my main message? What information am I including? What am I leaving out? Why? • Who or what do I invite my audience to identify with through my message? What lifestyles, values and points of view are overt? What are implied? • Have I represented other voices or social groups? Are these representations nuanced or are they stereotypical? • What might the opposition to my message say? Have I treated my opposition with respect? • Have I made appropriate disclosures about conflicts of interest or assumptions? • Have I considered the needs of the "whole" person that I'm relating the message to? If not, are my reasons ethical? • Does my message convey real-life behaviors or consequences? If not, why not? • What is the overall worldview depicted in my message?

CML's Five Core Concepts and Key Questions for Producers: Media Construction Framework

Key Question #5:	**Have I communicated my purpose effectively?**
Core Concept #5:	**Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.**

If I am going to send a message, I must have a reason or a purpose. Generally, there are three reasons: I want to persuade or influence or inform someone of something, and as a result, I have a power motive (defining power as neutral and in its broadest sense!). Or I want them to buy something that I am selling, and so I have a profit motive. Or perhaps I have a mix of both a profit and a power motive, where I want to sell the world on a new idea and a new product at the same time. These motives are not necessarily good nor bad, but purpose is always present.

Behind media messages there is always intent. Inherently, there is nothing wrong with profit or power; they can be honorable and serve the public good. Is my intent to make the world a better place? Does my message provide mutual benefit for individuals and for the social good, as well? These are questions I must ask of myself.

Keyword:	**Purpose**
Guiding Questions:	• What is my intent? Whose needs am I trying to satisfy with my message? • Am I primarily entertaining, persuading, informing, or encouraging action and participation as the form of my message? • Who is paying for this message to be constructed and sent? Should I disclose this underwriting for any reason? • Do I want my audience to feel, think or do anything specific as a result of engaging with my message? • How is the audience served by my message? How do I profit or benefit? How does the audience profit by or benefit from my message? • Who wins? Who loses? Who decides? • What economic decisions may have influenced my message and how I constructed or transmitted it? • Have I considered ethical, social and/or legal constraints on achieving my purpose?

5. Media Literacy Process Skills
(Access/Analyze/Evaluate/Create/Participate)

In its report, *Learning for the 21st Century*, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a public-private organization of leaders and educators in business and education, outlined what it will take to be successful in the 21st century work and living environment:

> "People need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills—by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, making decisions. (They) need to become lifelong learners, updating their knowledge and skills continually and independently."

Using the **CML MediaLit Kit™** resources, students not only gain knowledge about the content of contemporary media but perhaps more importantly, they learn and practice the skills needed to navigate one's way in a global media culture. These skills include the ability to:

Access…
When people *access* messages, they are able to collect relevant and useful information and comprehend its meaning effectively. They can:
- Recognize and understand a rich vocabulary of words, symbols and techniques of communication.
- Develop strategies for locating information from a wide variety of sources.
- Select an assortment of types of information relevant to the purpose of a task.

Analyze…
When people *analyze* messages, they are able to examine the design of the message's form, structure and sequence. They can make use of artistic, literary, social, political and economic concepts to understand the context in which the message occurs.
For example,
- Use prior knowledge and experiences to predict outcomes.
- Interpret a message using concepts such as purpose, audience, point of view, format, genre, character, plot, theme, mood, setting, context.
- Use strategies including compare/contrast, fact/opinion, cause/effect, listing and sequencing.

  For a sample exercise in analyzing a media message, see page 62 "How to Conduct a 'Close Analysis' of a Media Text."

Evaluate…

When people *evaluate* messages, they are able to relate messages to their own experience and make judgments about the veracity, quality and relevance of messages. This includes being able to:

- Appreciate and take pleasure in interpreting messages in different genres and forms.
- Evaluate the quality of a message based on its content and form.
- Judge the value of a message based on one's ethical, religious or democratic principles.
- Respond orally, in print, or electronically to messages of varying complexity and content.

Create…

When people *create* (or communicate) messages, they are able to "write" their ideas, using words, sounds and/or images effectively for a variety of purposes, and they are able to make use of various technologies of communication to create, edit and disseminate their message.

- Make use of brainstorming, planning, composing and revising processes.
- Use writing and oral language effectively with mastery of rules of language usage.
- Create and select images effectively to achieve various goals.
- Use technologies of communication in the construction of messages.

Participate…

When people *participate* in constructing messages, they are in a constant process of engagement and interaction which results in sometimes exponential dissemination, circulation, connections and collaboration.

- Require interaction and engagement with others.
- Interplay between media users and usages, calling for consumption of messages at virtually the same time as production, since the interaction may happen so quickly.
- Use the work of others to create new forms and new expressions, building on the ideas of productions such as remixes, mashups, wikis, gaming.
- Interact responsibly and ethically, based on Shakespeare's idea: Love all, trust a few, harm no one.

—With thanks to Renee Hobb

How to Conduct a 'Close Analysis' of a Media 'Text'

While getting "caught up" in a storytelling experience has been the essence of entertainment since our ancestors told tales around the fire, the relentless pace of entertainment media today requires that at least once in awhile, we should stop and look, really look, at how a media message is put together and the many interpretations that can derive from it. The method for this is called "close analysis." To learn to conduct this basic media literacy exercise, try it first yourself; then introduce it to a group or class using tips at the end of this section.

Any media message can be used for a close analysis but commercials are often good choices because they are short and tightly packed with powerful words and images, music and sounds. Find a commercial to analyze by recording, not the programs but *just the commercials*, during an hour or two of TV watching. Play the tape and look for a commercial that seems to have a lot of layers—interesting visuals and sound track, memorable words or taglines, multiple messages that call out for exploration. Replay your selection several times as you go through the following steps:

1. Visuals.
After the first viewing, write down everything you can remember about the visuals—lighting, camera angles, how the pictures are edited together. Describe any people—what do they look like? what are they doing? wearing? What scenes or images do you remember clearly? Focus only on what is actually on the screen, not your interpretation of what you saw on the screen. (See the following sample exercise, *What Do You Notice?*) If necessary, play it again but with the sound off. Keep adding to your list of visuals.

2. Sounds.
Replay again with the picture off. Listen to the sound track. Write down all the words that are spoken. Who says them? What kind of music is used? Does it change in the course of the commercial? How? Are there other sounds? What is their purpose? Who is being spoken to—directly or indirectly? (That is, *who* is the audience addressed by the commercial?)

3. Apply Key Questions for Deconstruction
With the third viewing, begin to apply the *Five Key Questions* and the *Guiding Questions* that lead to them. Identify the author(s) and how the specific "construction" techniques you identified in steps 1 and 2 influence what the commercial is "saying"—values expressed and unexpressed; lifestyles endorsed or rejected; points of view proposed or assumed. Explore what's left out of the message and how different people might react differently to it. What is the message "selling"? Is it the same as the product being advertised?

Continue to show the text over and over; it's like peeling back the layers of an onion.

4. Review Your Insights.
Summarize how the text is constructed and how various elements of the construction trigger our own unique response—which may be very different than how others interpret the text. Try this exercise with other kinds of messages— a story from a newscast, a key scene from a movie, a print advertisement, a website. Are different questions important for different kinds of messages?

Doing a close analysis with a class or group can be exhilirating, with insights coming fast and furiously. After the first showing, start the group exercise with the simple question: *"What did you notice?"* Different people will remember different things so accept all answers and keep asking, *"What else did you notice?"*

If the group is having a hard time, show the clip again and invite them to look for something that stands out for them. Continue the brainstorming until you have at least 15 or 20 answers to the question: *"What did you notice?"* Challenge any attempt to assign interpretation too early. Keep the group focused on identifying only what was actually on screen or heard on the soundtrack. The key to success with this exercise is for the teacher/leader to *keep asking questions.* Refrain from contributing too many answers yourself.

While no one has the time to subject every media message to this kind of analysis, it takes only two or three experiences with close analysis to give us the insight to "see" through other media messages as we encounter them. It's like having a new set of glasses that brings the whole media world into focus.

Teaching Tip:
When you find a text that is useful for a close analysis, put it on a videotape six or eight times with 5 seconds of black between. This makes it easier to show it several times without having to stop and rewind.

What did you notice? *A sample inquiry into visual language.*

Media Text: A: 60 commercial showing an attractive middle-aged woman driving on a dark, lonely road when her car breaks down. She tries in vain to restart the car…a truck passes going the other way but does not stop. (Turns out to be a commercial for a cell phone.)

Teacher/Leader:	What did you notice about this text? First, what did you actually see on the screen?
Group Responses:	driving on a lonely road…it's night / dark…woman alone…car breaks down…she's afraid…
Teacher/Leader:	Oh?, you saw fear?! How did you see fear? Fear is an abstract concept…what did you actually see that led you to conclude: fear? (Find the evidence!) (You might want to chart the following typical responses in two columns which can later clarify: denotation / connotation)
Group Responses:	Closeup of woman turning key in ignition with sound of car grinding but not starting…close-up of foot on gas pedal…close-up of engine light…close-up of her fingers drumming on the steering wheel…closeup of her looking out the window to see if anyone around… no…on the sound track, the music is in a minor key, kind of eerie.
Teacher/Leader:	Okay! After the establishing shot which put her on a dark country road, there were four quick cuts showing her trying to start the car. Put those together with the eerie music and we viewers jump to the conclusion that she's afraid—or that she should be afraid…

Further exploration reveals that each shot of the commercial, plus the editing which goes faster and faster like a racing heartbeat, is carefully constructed to build the case that the woman is in danger and afraid. If we, as viewers, buy into it and begin to identify with a feeling of fear, we've been "hooked" by the commercial's premise, whether we ever buy a cell phone or not. This is the power of visual language and why we need to help our students learn to "read" it.