

SECONDARY UNPACKING MEDIA MESSAGES:

A CRITICAL THINKING ACTIVITY



Why Thinking Critically about Media Messages Matters: Media messages are everywhere—on TV, online, and in everyday life. Teaching children to think critically about these messages helps them become informed and thoughtful consumers of information.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS

Choose a Piece of Media to View Together:

- 1 Select a commercial, advertisement, TikTok video, social media post, news article, or another media message.

Watch or View the Media:

- 2 Watch the piece of media together at least once and take note of the details, techniques or strategies used.

Discuss Using the Prompting Questions:

- 3 Engage in a discussion with your child about the media message using the discussion prompts.

Compare Across Media (Optional):

- 4 View and analyze multiple media messages on the same topic. Discuss how different creators approach the subject, the techniques or strategies they use, and the potential impact of these choices.

Reflect Together:

- 5 Reflect on any new insights or conclusions developed through the activity. Encourage your child to reflect on how this process may change the way they think about media messages in the future.

TIPS FOR FAMILIES

- Make it a fun and interactive experience.
- Use open-ended questions and encourage your child to think about the purpose and impact of media messages.
- Share your own thought process when evaluating media.
- Connect media messages to larger societal issues and encourage your child to think about their role as an informed consumer and contributor.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Have your child create their own ad, social media post, or public service announcement on a topic they're passionate about. Discuss the techniques they used and how they targeted their audience.
- Discuss a recent event or trend where media coverage influenced public opinion or policy. Ask your child to think about how the role of media shaped people's perspectives and decisions.



UNPACKING MEDIA MESSAGES:

Example Discussion Questions

GRADE LEVEL

UNPACKING MEDIA MESSAGES ACTIVITY GOALS

DISCUSSION QUESTION EXAMPLES

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- Uses evidence and reasoning to support conclusions and ideas.
- Evaluates media messages for credibility, accuracy, and relevance.
- Identifies and analyzes patterns, trends, and perspectives within media content.
- Critically examines why a media message was created and how the creator's purpose shapes the content, tone, and delivery of the message.

- What evidence does this message use to support its claims? Is it convincing? Why or why not?
- What patterns or techniques do you notice in this media? How do they affect the audience?
- Whose perspectives are represented in this message, and whose are missing? Why do you think they chose/excluded these perspectives?
- How might people with different backgrounds or experiences interpret this message? What parts of the message might cause them to react in different ways?
- How do you think the creator's intent influenced the choices made in this media?
- What questions would you ask the creator about this media message?

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- Uses evidence and logical reasoning to develop conclusions and insights about the media message.
- Evaluates the reliability, accuracy, and credibility of sources, analyzing their impact on the message.
- Critically assesses the creator's intent and its alignment with the message's content and audience.

- What evidence does this message provide to support its claims? What additional information would strengthen this message?
- How does this message compare to others on the same topic? Which media message do you find the most/least compelling, why?
- What was the creator's intent, and how successfully does the message achieve it?
- Whose perspectives are represented in this message, whose are missing, and how might the inclusion or exclusion of certain perspectives shape the message's impact or credibility?
- How might individuals from diverse cultural, social, or political perspectives interpret or respond to this message?