

English Language Arts 2: Media and Images

Aim/Rationale

Cycle 1: Students will exercise critical judgment concerning the restrictive nature of media images. They will understand how these images can perpetuate sexual stereotypes and may affect self-esteem/body image.

Cycle 2: Students will exercise critical judgment concerning the restrictive nature of media images. They will understand how these images can perpetuate sexual stereotypes and may affect self-esteem/body image. Students will apply their critical media literacy skills by analysing subvertisements and hidden media messages.

Trigger Warning

Gendered discrimination and stereotypes

Cycle 1 Competencies

- 1) *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn*
- 2) *Represents their literacy in different media*
- 3) *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts*
- 4) *Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes*

Cycle 2 Competencies

- 1) *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn*
- 2) *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts*
- 3) *Produces texts for personal and social purposes*

Lesson

Materials

Cycle 1:

A wide assortment of magazines (at least 15), scissors, paper, glue

Cycle 2:

Prepared selection of subvertisements, your own or those provided, wide assortment of magazines (at least 15).

Note for educators: The take-away message of this activity is that there are more types of ‘healthy’ bodies than society usually allows for. Make sure not to focus too much on thin bodies as unhealthy or anorexic as there are naturally thin ‘real’ people in the world and likely in your classroom. This activity is also a good opportunity to discuss male body ideals as well as social norms for height, age, race, ability etc. Discuss the concept of unrealistic images - what that means in terms of bodies, but also the way people are presented in images (e.g. poses, advertising slogans, situations in fashion photo shoots, etc.).

Hook [5-10 min]

Cycle 1

Concept map: What does the term “Body Image” mean? (5 min) Come up with a definition that satisfies the group and that everyone understands, for example:

Body image is a subjective term that generally indicates an individual’s perception of their physical body as generated by internal and external influences.

Cycle 2

Concept map: What does the term “Subvertising” mean? (5 min) Come up with a definition that satisfies the group and that everyone understands, for example:

Subvertising refers to the practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political advertisements. Subvertisements may take the form of a new image or an alteration to an existing image or icon, often in a satirical manner.

What does this have to do with the media, your understanding of body image, how you interpret information?

Development/Teaching Methods [40 min (20 min part 1 and 20 min part 2)]

Cycle 1 Learning Activity

1. Ensure that all students are familiar with the vocabulary on the concept map from the hook. Students may explain terms to the rest of the group if desired. This is to ensure that there are no misconceptions about any of the terms and if there are, to correct them before moving on.

What are some patterns? Are there any stereotypes that advocate things such as gender normativity? If so, how? What are ideals, where do we see them, and who defines them? How are body image ideals socially constructed? How does this impact the formulation of identity? Add any new ideas to the concept map.

As you feel the discussion is coming to a natural end, start distributing magazines for a learning activity. If the discussion is fruitful, you may want to keep the conversation flowing for the entirety of the class and save the learning activity for another time.

2. Magazine Analysis Part I: Distribute assorted magazines and have students play detective (independent or in pairs). While analysing magazines, students should consider the following questions:

- Do you feel represented by the photos in this magazine? Why or why not? Are your friends represented? What is missing? Who is the target audience?
- Does your magazine use photos of people who realistically represent the general public? Do you see various ethnicities or cultures represented?
- Do the people in the magazine look real, or digitally altered? How might these depictions make people feel about themselves?
- List the five physical qualities you see represented the most in both men and women. What do you think the magazine is saying about how women should look? And how men should look?
- How might these depictions make people feel about themselves? What messages might these magazines and pictures reinforce?

Give the students some time to flip through their magazines and think about the questions. Have these questions on display somewhere in the classroom either on the chalkboard, projected on a screen, or on a handout and have students record their findings for a follow-up discussion:

Define or have a participant define the definition of body image that you came up with as a group. Reiterate some of the important concepts that came out of brainstorming, discussing, and dissecting magazines.

Magazine Analysis Part II: In small groups, give groups two pieces of paper. On one paper, ask students to collect realistic images of teenagers or adults, pictures that they relate to, or relate to people in their daily lives, or people that they see on the street. On the other paper ask them to collect images that they identify as demonstrating an unrealistic beauty standard. Ask them to consider bodies, poses, clothing, and other messages included in the photo.

Adaptations for Cycle 2

1. Ensure that all students are familiar with the vocabulary on the concept map from the hook. Students may explain terms to the rest of the group if desired. This is to ensure that there are no misconceptions about any of the terms and if there are, to correct them before moving on. In relation to what is understood by the term “Body Image,” how does subvertising fit in? Add any new ideas to the concept map.

2. As you feel the discussion is coming to a natural end, start distributing examples of subvertisements and magazines for the following learning activity. With the class definition in mind and having looked over some examples of subvertising, initiate a discussion about the purpose of subvertisements. An example of an endpoint understanding is: Subverts create cognitive dissonance. It cuts through the hype and glitz of our mediated reality and, momentarily, reveals a deeper truth within.

3. In the context of body image through subvertising, ask students to select advertisements in the magazines provided and identify the context of the advertisement, the audience for which it was produced, the hidden messages and implications. The next task is to subvert the intended message.

Culmination [5 min]

Cycle 1

Invite students to share/present their profiles with the class, and highlight the differences between their collages. Ask them to reflect on the importance of the observations they have made, and how it affects them.

Cycle 2

Invite students to share/present their subvertisements with the class, and highlight the differences between their original advertisements. Ask them to reflect on the importance of the observations they have made, and how it affects them. Questions to guide their presentation are:

- How has the message changed?
- Who is the new audience?
- Is the new advertisement realistic?
- Why would it be to an advertiser's advantage to make people feel satisfied or dissatisfied with themselves? How does the old ad and the new ad achieve this?
- In what ways do ads benefit us?

Performance Objectives

Cycle 1

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Consider the ways in which various media messages may influence perspectives, behaviours
- Consider the potential reasons behind media messages i.e. who benefits and who does not
- Gain a more holistic impression of body image, which is based on health rather than socially constructed beauty ideals
- Exercise critical media literacy skills

Cycle 2

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Consider the ways sex and sexuality are portrayed in the media and why this may be the case
- Consider the realistic and/or unrealistic nature of sex in media and how this may affect personal behaviours and opinions
- Exercise critical media literacy skills in a new fashion by applying knowledge about media and its messages in order to create a subvertisement.

Assessment Ideas

Cycle 2

Research the history and use of subvertisements and write an essay/article

Cross-curricular

History lesson on body image



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