

Mass Media and Youth Culture

GRADE 9



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BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Education
Education Technology Branch

OVERVIEW

In this unit, students explore the impact of mass media by examining the critical question “To what extent do mass media realistically show the values and concerns of teenagers?”

Students first develop a description of youth culture by identifying their own values and concerns. They then analyze a variety of media messages to determine the extent to which mass media accurately portray those values and concerns. Students complete the unit by developing personal web pages to present their views.

The technology focus is on web page design and development. There are also suggestions for using word-processing programs or electronic spreadsheets to track their research and manage their data, using the Internet for research, using project-management software to organize their work, and using e-mail to share information.

Unit Goals

In this unit, students can:

- work as a class to define the values and concerns of teenagers and develop a personal opinion of how realistically teenagers are portrayed in mass media
- use available technologies to gather, record, and analyze examples of media messages
- use specific techniques to identify bias, stereotyping, and persuasion in media messages
- analyze web page design for impact on the user
- use available technologies to design and develop personal web pages

Notes

- Approximate time: eight to 12 hours.
- This unit provides support for the key concepts and issues related to web page design and development. For detailed tutorials on constructing web pages either using HTML or a graphics-based editor (e.g., Frontpage or Netscape Composer), visit the ministry’s web site, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/technology/6-9.htm, and click on Technology Connections.
- If it is not possible for your students to actually develop personal web pages, they can apply the understandings they develop in this unit to other media. See Variations for suggestions.

WHAT THE UNIT OFFERS

Lessons	Approximate Time	Curriculum Connection
<p>1. DEVELOP THE CONTEXT</p> <p>Students develop a basic understanding of the critical question and hypothesize what they think they will find when they do their research.</p>	<p>one or two 45-minute classes</p>	<p><i>English Language Arts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify and investigate how different cultures and socio-economic groups are portrayed in the media • identify examples of the use of stock or stereotypical characters • explain how mass media can influence social attitudes • evaluate information for its suitability for an identified audience • adjust form, style, and use of language to suit audience and purpose • evaluate and modify their own roles in group interactions in a variety of contexts <p><i>Social Studies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defend a position on a controversial issue after considering a variety of perspectives • plan, revise, and deliver formal oral and written presentations
<p>2. PLAN THE RESEARCH</p> <p>Students review the research process in the context of this unit and decide how to best organize their work in a group. They also discuss the criteria for assessing the research aspect of the project.</p>	<p>one 45-minute class</p>	
<p>3. GATHER INFORMATION</p> <p>Students work in groups to define the values and concerns of teenagers. They then gather evidence of values and concerns commonly shown in mass media, including identifying bias, stereotype, and advertising hooks. They tabulate their data and review hypotheses.</p>	<p>three or four 45-minute classes, plus homework time</p>	
<p>4. INTERPRET AND REFINE</p> <p>Students work in their groups and as a class to compare their research results with their description of the values and concerns of teenagers. They then individually summarize what they learned about media portrayals and give a personal answer to the critical question.</p>	<p>one or two 45-minute classes</p>	
<p>5. SHARE INFORMATION</p> <p>Students first analyze a variety of web sites for effective design features, then create personal web pages sharing their values and concerns.</p>	<p>three to six 45-minute classes</p>	
<p>6. THINK BACK, THINK AHEAD</p> <p>Students reflect on what they learned about both media and web page design in this unit by first discussing these topics as a class, then writing a personal reflection.</p>	<p>one 45-minute class</p>	

Research Emphases*	Technology Opportunities	Assessment
➔ FOCUS	Word-processing systems or spreadsheets to manage research	
➔ FOCUS	Using the Internet for research Project-management software to organize work E-mail to share resources	
➔ FIND AND FILTER	Spreadsheet programs to develop survey questionnaires RS 6: Technology Focus: Targeting a Web Page Audience (page 24) Word-processing programs or spreadsheets to tabulate data	Teacher, Student, Peer: RS 3: Media Research Assessment (page 21) Student and Teacher: RS 2: Group Work (page 20)
➔ WORK WITH THE INFORMATION		Teacher: Review students' personal responses to the critical question
➔ COMMUNICATE	RS 7: Technology Focus: Signs of a Good Design (page 25) RS 8: Technology Focus: The Design Process (page 27)	Teacher, Student, Peer: RS 9: Personal Web Page Design (page 28)
➔ REFLECT		Student: Journal reflection (teacher may review)

*Based on BCTLA's Research Quest developed in 2000.

1. DEVELOP THE CONTEXT

In this lesson, students develop a basic understanding of the critical question and hypothesize about what they think they will find when they do their research.



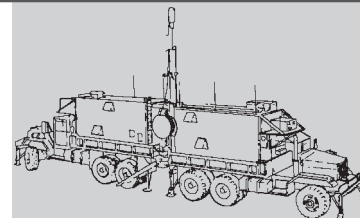
GET ON - LINE

The ministry web site includes links to a number of sites for teachers that offer instructional resources on media issues. There are also sites with specific information for young people on how they are portrayed in media and how to use media to communicate their concerns. Visit the ministry's web site, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/technology/6-9.htm, and click on Sample Units.

Describe the Task

Students become familiar with the critical question and the focus of the unit.

- Write the critical question on the chalkboard: "To what extent do mass media realistically show the values and concerns of teenagers?"
- Discuss what mass media are, clarifying as required that mass media include technologies such as television programs, billboard advertising, web sites, and videos. The format of material in these media includes news, entertainment, sports, and documentaries.
- Point out that whether or not teenagers are realistically portrayed in media is a *controversial issue*—people have different opinions. In this unit they can gather information so that their personal opinion is an *informed* opinion. Discuss what it means to have an informed opinion (a view that is based on considering facts and a variety of perspectives).
- Explain that they will first work as a class and in small groups to gather information needed for an informed opinion on this issue. They can then develop personal web pages to help give a realistic view of the concerns and values of teenagers.



Technology Opportunities

Research Process

➔ Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

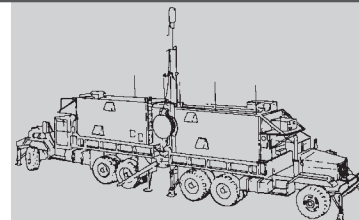
Communicate

Reflect

Activate Prior Knowledge

Students work in their research groups to form hypotheses. This helps them think about what they already know about media. Using RS 1: Analyzing Media Messages also helps them become familiar with techniques used in media messages.

- Refer again to the critical question. Suggest that they might already have some ideas about what they will find when they research media messages. Explain that you'd like them to form research groups of four or five. They can begin working together today by forming hypotheses about what they will find when they analyze media messages.
- Distribute copies of RS 1: Analyzing Media Messages. Give students time to read it, then discuss this as a class. Clarify terms as needed. It would also help students to see and discuss examples of each of the categories on the sheet.
- Distribute copies of RS 2: Group Work. Discuss how reviewing this now can help them participate in their research groups. Ask them to keep this so that they can complete it at the end of the unit.
- Ask students to work in their groups to hypothesize to what extent they expect to find evidence of bias, stereotypes, and sales hooks in media messages about or including teenagers. The group should write up a summary of their hypotheses to present at the next class.
- At the next class, have each group report on its hypotheses. Discuss similarities and differences in the hypotheses. Allow students time to revise their hypotheses, based on class discussions.



Technology Opportunities

Students could now begin to use a word-processing program to set up files for their research. The first file could be a record of their hypotheses. If you are using software that supports tables, they could use that feature to record their predictions for each category. Alternatively, they could set up a spreadsheet for recording their hypotheses and later entering the results of their research.

Research Process

➡ Focus

Find and Filter

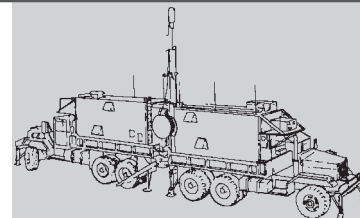
Work with the Information

Communicate

Reflect

2. PLAN THE RESEARCH

In this lesson, students review the research process and decide how to best organize the work.



Technology Opportunities

The Big Picture

Students review the research process and find out how their work will be assessed.

- Remind students of the critical question. Ask: “What steps do we need to follow to come up with an informed opinion on this issue?” As students offer suggestions, guide them to recognizing that they need to do three things:
 - Develop a description of the values and concerns of teenagers in their community.
 - Review media messages for evidence of bias, stereotyping, and sales hooks in reporting on or portraying youth. Also gather research articles that have analyzed this issue.
 - Compare their class-developed description of the values and concerns of teenagers with what they discovered when they investigated media.
- Review with students the Research Quest wall chart (accompanying these materials), pointing out what they will do for this specific project at each stage of the process.
- Also distribute copies of RS 3: Media Research Assessment, and discuss the criteria as a class. Explain that each group will self-assess its own work and provide feedback on the work of another group. Remind students that they will also be asked to self-assess their group-work skills.

Getting Organized

Students decide what forms of media they will research and how the work will be divided.

- As a class, brainstorm forms of media and decide on at least five to investigate. A good range would be: television programs, music videos, teen-oriented web sites, magazine advertisements, and news reports.

Note that because of the focus on web page development in the latter part of the unit, it is important that one of the categories reviewed be web sites.

Research Process

➡ Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

Communicate

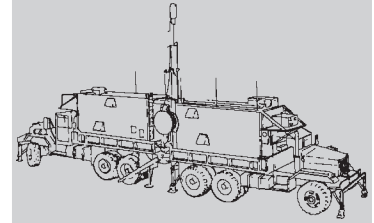
Reflect

- Explain that you would like groups to do individual research, then have the class compile their results. Each group will analyze two or three examples of each medium. Each group will also be responsible for locating at least one article or research report that includes some information on how young people are portrayed in a pre-assigned medium. (It is common for a single article to discuss a variety of media.)
- Distribute and discuss copies of RS 4: Media Record Sheet and RS 5: Data Tabulation.
- Discuss timelines for completing the information-gathering phase of the research.
- Ask students to meet in their groups to decide on how to organize their work. Circulate as students are planning, to ensure a reasonable plan.

Ensuring Reliability

Students think about how to conduct their research fairly.

- Ask: "What kind of biases might we have when we collect examples of how teenagers are portrayed in the media? How can we avoid these biases?" Help students to understand that they need to make an effort to make random selections, not look for especially blatant stereotypes or especially realistic representation. Point out that their hypotheses can be used to help them identify their own biases and preconceptions.
- Also discuss how having several groups doing the same research can help ensure reliability. (If the results are duplicated among groups, this is evidence that the research results are repeatable and likely to be reliable.)



Technology Opportunities

Students could use the Internet to research articles on how youth are portrayed in the media. The Media Awareness Network (see ministry web site) is an especially good source of articles on this topic.

Students could use project-management software to do detailed research plans identifying responsibilities and deadlines.

Students could use e-mail to share web sites that might be useful to other groups in the class.

Research Process

➡ Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

Communicate

Reflect

3. GATHER INFORMATION

In this lesson, students first work in their groups to define youth culture, then gather evidence of how it is portrayed in mass media.

Values and Concerns of Teenagers

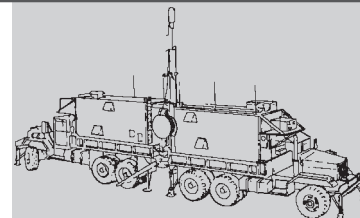
Students develop a class description of the values and concerns of teenagers.

- Point out that when it comes to researching the values and concerns of teenagers, they are the experts.
- Ask students to work in their research groups to create a web or a list of values and concerns important to them and their peers. Before they start their group work, ask students to suggest ways to handle differences of opinion. (Possibilities: record all ideas or make a list of main ideas with which most group members agree, but also list the others.)
- After students have had some time to record their ideas, share as a class. Record, or have a student record, values and concerns on chart paper that can be posted in the class for the remainder of the project. Use questions such as the following to prompt discussion:
 - What common values and concerns do we see in our ideas?
 - Why might there be differences? Are differences a good or bad feature of society?
 - How do teenagers express their values and concerns (e.g., what they do, what they wear, the music they listen to, the movies they see, the books they read)?

Gather Examples

Students work in their groups to gather examples of how teenagers are portrayed in mass media.

- Provide students with library and computer time to gather examples as planned in Lesson 2. Some media (e.g., television programs) may require homework time.
- Depending on resources available to students, you may want to provide a class collection of a variety of sources of examples (e.g., magazines, videos, on-line).



Technology Opportunities

Students could expand their research by developing survey questionnaires to distribute at their school or to other schools via the Internet. Spreadsheet programs can be used to create questionnaires and record results.

Research Process

Focus

➡ Find and Filter

*Work with the Information
Communicate
Reflect*

- Early in the process, conference once with each group to see how their collection is going and to ensure that they understand how to complete the data sheets.

Tabulate Data

Once students have gathered their data, they should work in their groups to tabulate it on copies of RS 5: Data Tabulation. Some students may need the support of working through one or two examples before doing this.

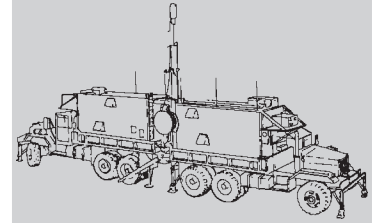
Review Hypotheses

Finally, groups should review their hypotheses and summarize the extent to which the data they gathered supports their hypotheses.

Review and Assessment

Have groups exchange their work with one other group, asking for a peer assessment using RS 3: Media Research Assessment. After reviewing that assessment, groups should submit to you their own assessment, the peer assessment, and their work. Provide your own assessment and written comments. Conference with groups whose assessment is significantly different from your own. Try to determine if the problem is in not understanding the issues or in not understanding how to locate evidence.

Also ask students to submit completed copies of RS 2: Group Work.



Technology Opportunities

RS 6: Technology Focus: Targeting a Web Page Audience provides specific information to help students identify elements of a web page that indicate what the developer sees as the viewers' concerns and values.

If students are not already using the Table feature in a word-processing program or a spreadsheet program to gather data, they may find these technologies useful now for tabulating the data. Once students have gathered their data, they should work in their groups to record it on copies of RS 5: Data Tabulation.

Research Process

Focus

➡ **Find and Filter**

Work with the Information

Communicate

Reflect

4. INTERPRET AND REFINE

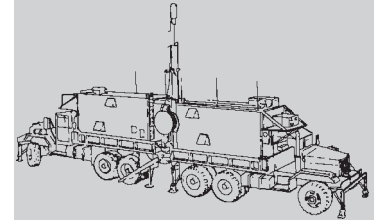
In this lesson, students work in their groups and as a class to analyze the data they have collected. They then write individual responses to the critical question.

Analyze Data Students share the results of their research and discuss what conclusions they can draw.

- Ask each group to give a three-minute presentation on what they found in their research. Create a master tabulation sheet on chart paper as the groups report. Encourage members of the audience to ask questions at the end of each presentation.
- As a class, review the description of teenage concerns and values they recorded on chart paper in Lesson 3. Compare the concerns and values in that list or web with the concerns and values shown in the media.
- The discussion that follows the comparison will depend, to a certain extent, on what students have found in their review of the media. If they find that the media realistically portray teenage concerns and values, prompt further discussion with questions such as:
 - When you look at this view of teenage concerns and values, do you generally like what you see?
 - What would you change? What would you encourage?
 - How might seeing these images influence people’s view of teens?
 - How can young people help others understand the values and concerns of teenagers?

If students find that media present a biased view of teenagers, prompt further discussion with questions such as:

- Why might media choose to present this particular view of youth? (This could lead to a discussion of the fact that most mass media messages have the main purpose of getting a person’s attention long enough to sell something. Controversial issues are more attention-grabbing.)
- How could seeing this unrealistic information about youth affect young people? Adults?



Technology Opportunities

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

➡ **Work with the Information**

Communicate

Reflect

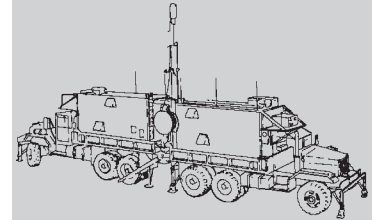
- How can young people help others get a more realistic picture of teenage values and concerns?

In either case, encourage a lively discussion with a variety of opinions.

- Ask students to individually summarize what they learned about media portrayals of teenagers and to give their personal response to the critical question. Ensure that they understand that the critical question requires more than a yes/no answer. You may want to clarify the phrase "to what extent." Also ensure that they understand they do not have to agree with any general consensus reached by the class during discussions.

Review and Assessment

Read each student's personal response to the critical question and comment on his or her understanding of the issues and ability to come to an informed opinion after considering various perspectives.



Technology Opportunities

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

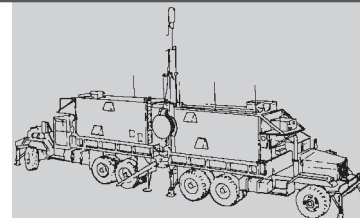
➡ ***Work with the Information***

Communicate

Reflect

5. SHARE INFORMATION

In this lesson, students share their views of the values and concerns of teenagers with the world by creating personal web pages.



Technology Opportunities

Understanding the Task

Students get an overview of the next part of this unit.

- Point out to students that in this unit, they've had a chance to see how much time and money mass media spend on sending out messages about youth culture. Now it's their turn to use one of the most powerful mass-media tools around today to get their view of teenage concerns and values across. They are going to each have a chance to create personal web pages to express their values and concerns.
- Explain that they will learn a process to follow for designing a web page. But before that, you will analyze some web pages to see what makes a web page effective.

Analyzing Web Site Design

Students work in pairs to analyze the design of a number of web sites.

- Distribute copies of RS 7: Technology Focus: Signs of a Good Design. Discuss and clarify the terms as required. Depending on students' levels of experience, you may want to use the sheet to analyze one or two web sites together before students do their pair work. This would work best with an LCD projector.
- Either assign students a list of sites to analyze or allow them to select their own. Students might find it interesting to analyze a variety of school sites. Since they will be creating personal pages, you might also want to identify some suitable personal pages posted by students their age. You might even want to create and post your own pages.
- After students have had time to analyze several sites, ask for volunteers to share one example of an especially good or especially poor design. Provide one or two of your own examples of each.

If your school has a web site, students' personal pages could be posted at the site, after review for suitability. Alternatively, a team of more experienced students could work to develop a site to host the pages.

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

➡ **Communicate**

Reflect

Designing a Web Page

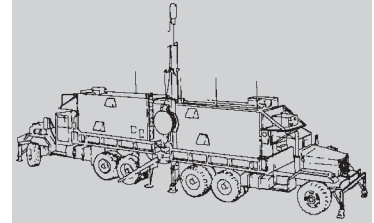
Students design personal web pages that present their concerns and values.

- Distribute copies of RS 8: Technology Focus: The Design Process. Explain that you would like them to follow this process to develop personal web pages. They should each create a home page with links to at least two additional pages created by them.
- As a class, work through a simple example of how this process could be used to present the results of their research on the portrayal of teenagers in mass media.
- Still as a class, brainstorm topics that students might want to include on personal web pages. Remind students that the main purpose of their pages should be to realistically portray the values and concerns of teenagers—especially their own.
- Also discuss information that should not be included on personal web pages that are going to be posted on the Internet. For example, it is a poor idea to give out highly personal information, addresses, or telephone numbers. Remind students to also protect the privacy of friends and family.
- Students can then follow the process on RS 8 to create a design for their personal pages. Ask them to share their design with a partner and ask for feedback based on RS 9: Personal Web Page Design. (This uses the same criteria as RS 7: Technology Focus: Signs of a Good Design.)

Creating Their Pages

Provide computer time for students to create and test their pages.

- How students go about actually creating their pages will depend, to a certain extent, on their levels of expertise and the tools you use (e.g., either HTML coding or a graphics-based editor). If students are going to use HTML, you may want to provide a template that they can modify, rather than asking them to start from scratch.
- Have students ask for peer feedback on their running version before they consider their pages complete. Once again, they could use RS 9: Personal Web Page Design as a framework for feedback. It would also be helpful to have the reviewer identify one aspect that is working well and one aspect that needs work.



Technology Opportunities

Students who are more experienced in web page development should be encouraged to experiment with advanced features but reminded to keep in mind ease of access for a wide variety of users.

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

➡ **Communicate**

Reflect

- If you plan to host the pages at a site that will be kept running, you will also need to make plans for maintenance.

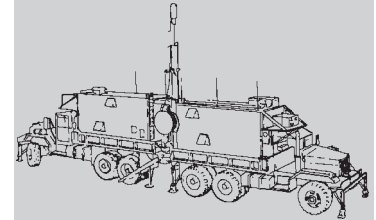


GET ON - LINE

The ministry web site includes links to a number of sites that provide step-by-step tutorials in the basics of coding web pages in HTML or in using graphics-based editors (e.g., Frontpage or Netscape Composer). Visit the ministry's web site, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/technology/6-9.htm, and click on Technology Connections.

Review and Assessment

After students have completed their web pages, ask them to use RS 9: Personal Web Page Design to assess their work. Add your own ratings and comments.



Technology Opportunities

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

➡ **Communicate**

Reflect

6. THINK BACK, THINK AHEAD

In this lesson, students reflect on what they learned in this unit about the portrayal of youth culture and the design of web pages.

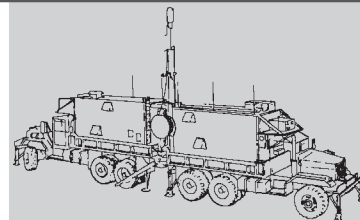
Discuss the Unit

Discuss what students learned by creating web pages. Prompt the discussion with questions such as the following.

- Now that you've built web pages, how do you think it might affect how you view web sites in the future?
- How did the process outlined on RS 8: Technology Focus: The Design Process work for you? What changes would you make? What worked well?
- What advice would you give to someone designing personal web pages?
- How do you think the research you did in this unit will affect the way you look at mass media messages in the future?
- To what extent would you consider personal web pages to be a good source of information about the values and concerns of teenagers?
- What other ways can you think of to use the Web to help people learn about the values and concerns of teenagers?
- Did you prefer working in groups or individually? What would be the benefits of working in a team if you were going to develop a complex set of web pages?

Personal Reflection

Ask students to select one of the questions discussed in class and write a two-to-three-paragraph personal response. You may or may not choose to review these personal responses.



Technology Opportunities

Research Process

Focus

Find and Filter

Work with the Information

Communicate

➡ **Reflect**

VARIATIONS

Other Media for Personal Viewpoints

If it is not possible for your students to actually develop personal web pages, they can still express their views in the news. Some possibilities are letters to the editor, press releases, or giving interviews on local radio or television.

Exploring the Impact of Media

Some students might want to extend beyond the critical question to a second critical question: "To what extent are teenagers influenced by what they see in the media?" This is a complex research question. A simple survey may tell you whether or not people think they are influenced, but it is more difficult to find out if they actually are. In addition to doing their own primary research, students should be encouraged to locate research already done on the topic.

Teen Contacts

Students who would like a greater technical challenge could create a "teen issues" web site that includes articles, examples from media, and discussion groups.

Other Issues

The process described in this unit could be used to analyze the portrayal in the media of other groups in society.

Focusing on a Specific Topic

Instead of doing a general survey of how teens are portrayed in media, each group could focus on investigating "media myths" around issues such as teen violence, teen substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. These issues would connect well to CAPP learning outcomes.

Technical Research

Some students might be interested in doing research to determine the minimum computer system requirements for a variety of web page features. This would require access to a variety of test systems, although some research could be done via secondary sources. This group could offer to test web pages developed by other students.

RESOURCE SHEETS

RS 1: Analyzing Media Messages

RS 2: Group Work

RS 3: Media Research Assessment

RS 4: Media Record Sheet

RS 5: Data Tabulation

RS 6: Technology Focus: Targeting a Web Page Audience

RS 7: Technology Focus: Signs of a Good Design

RS 8: Technology Focus: The Design Process

RS 9: Personal Web Page Design



RS 1: ANALYZING MEDIA MESSAGES

When you analyze media messages, you need to be alert for clues that the information you are seeing might not be accurate or fair. Here are some common problems to look out for.

Stereotypes

A stereotype is a generalized way of representing a particular group of people in society. The group may be based on just about anything, including type of employment, gender, age, or ethnic background. The stereotype is usually based on one or two simplified characteristics of behaviour or appearance that people imagine are common to that group. The “absent-minded scientist” or “dumb jock” are examples of stereotypes. The danger of stereotypes is that the more we see them, the more likely we are to believe them. They also stop us from seeing people as individuals.

Where to Find Them; Why We Have Them

Stereotypes can be found in almost all types of media messages. For example, when a news report mentions an “angry protester,” this is a form of stereotype. Minor characters (and sometimes major characters) in movies and television programs are often stereotypes—the “evil villain” and “brave hero” are two common ones. In advertising, stereotypes are used to show clearly who is the target audience for the product—the “busy housewife” or the “cool teen.”

Stereotypes make the writer’s job easier. In most media messages, there is only a short time to get across a lot of ideas. By using a character that the viewer or reader instantly recognizes, the message gets through faster.

Clues

Here are some clues that you are reading or viewing a stereotype.

- You instantly recognize the “type” of person.
- Exaggerates the flaws or good qualities of a person or group of people.
- Makes everyone in a particular social group seem the same.

Bias

Bias is a limited perspective on an issue or problem. Every person has an opinion about what she or he sees in the world, but when the writer of a media message lets her or his personal point of view be stronger than any others in the material produced, the result is biased information.

If the writer is clear about the bias, this can still be a good source of information. For example, an environmental group might have a web site that only includes information on the damage done to rivers by a local company. This is a good source of information about the environmentalists’ perspective, but it isn’t a full picture of the issue.

Where to Find It; Why It Is There

Advertisements are almost always biased. The writer wants to convince you to buy that product, after all.

A more dangerous kind of bias occurs in news reports. Because it is the news, the viewer or reader is more likely to expect it to be a fair and accurate accounting. Bias can get into the news on purpose—because the organization sponsoring or producing the news has a particular point of view it wants to support. Often, it is more a result of needing material right away. When a reporter is rushed, she or he may just quickly gather a few facts. The most obvious perspective is the one that gets reported. Also, selecting an exciting view of the topic, rather than a fair one, often provides more interesting material for the reader or viewer.

Clues

Here are some of the places to look for bias in news reports.

- *Source.* Read or listen carefully for the source of the information. Was it an “eyewitness” report? A comment from the head of the company? A politician speaking? Consider what biases the source might be inclined to have.

continued...

RS 1: ANALYZING MEDIA MESSAGES...continued

- *Selective reporting.* The news media choose what stories to report each day. Because it seems to be human nature to be more interested in bad news, the news is generally biased toward presenting a more troubled view of the world than is really true. For example, research shows that people who watch a lot of television tend to overestimate the amount of violent crime in their community. On the other hand, some very important stories can go completely unreported if the media think few readers would be interested.
- *Headlines.* Headlines are meant to grab attention, so the most exciting view of the event is often selected. A headline that reads “Teens Riot” might be put on an article about a house party of 10 young people that resulted in one broken window. Because many people only read the headlines when they look through the news, headline bias is a big problem.
- *Choice of photos.* As with headlines, photos have a stronger impact on readers or viewers than the main body of the report. Camera angle, lighting, and what is shown in a picture can all be selected to make a person or situation look better or worse than it is.
- *Language.* The exact words chosen to describe something go a long way to making a positive or negative impression. For example, compare “citizens strongly protested” to “two complaints were received.” Both could be used to describe the same event. The impact of language is important both in headlines and in the body of the report.
- *Statistics.* There are a number of ways statistics can be manipulated to suit different points of view. Look for evidence that the full picture is presented. Also watch the language used. “A vast majority” might mean 52 per cent. “Hundreds” might mean 200 or 900—a big difference.

Sales Hooks

A sales hook is a special technique used to persuade the viewer or reader that something or some action is very desirable.

Where We Find It; Why We Have It

Of course, you’d expect to find sales hooks in advertising. The main purpose of an advertisement is to make you want to buy something. But most media messages are in fact designed to just keep your attention long enough to get you to notice some advertising. Think of commercials on television and advertisements in magazines. And although music videos are great entertainment, their real purpose is to convince you to buy that new CD. So be on the lookout for sales hooks built into media messages other than advertising.

Clues

Here are the “hidden messages” in some of the common techniques used to persuade the viewer or reader to want something.

- *Bandwagon.* Everybody else has one. Don’t you need one too?
- *Insecurity.* Are you sure you are pretty enough, smell right, have the right clothes? Try this, and you’ll be more popular.
- *A real deal.* This is so cheap and so special, you’d be foolish not to take advantage of the offer.
- *Official approval.* Nine out of 10 doctors/coaches/moms choose this one.
- *Stars in your eyes.* Famous people use this product. If you use it, you’ll fit right into their circle—and get famous too!

RS 2: GROUP WORK

Group Members: _____ Date: _____

Signs of Effective Group Work	Our Rating	Evidence
<i>We were well organized and got the job done.</i>		
<i>We shared the work fairly.</i>		
<i>We all completed our individual tasks.</i>		
<i>We all participated in making decisions.</i>		
<i>We solved disagreements calmly.</i>		

Key: 3 = Always
2 = Sometimes
1 = Not This Time

RS 3: MEDIA RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

Group Members: _____ Date: _____

Parts to Include	
<input type="checkbox"/> Two to three examples of a message from each medium agreed on by the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> A detailed analysis of each example.
<input type="checkbox"/> One research report or article with information on the assigned medium.	<input type="checkbox"/> Tabulation of data.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Comparison of results to hypotheses.

Criteria	Not Yet Within Expectations	Meets Expectations	Fully Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Analyses of Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> missed obvious evidence of bias, stereotyping, or sales hooks frequently did not acknowledge fair portrayal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> detected obvious evidence of bias, stereotyping, and sales hooks often acknowledged fair portrayal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accurately detected most evidence of bias, stereotyping, and sales hooks; identified some subtle messages consistently acknowledged realistic portrayal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accurately detected all evidence of bias, stereotyping, and sales hooks; identified most subtle messages consistently acknowledged realistic portrayal
Selection of Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> selection of examples shows obvious bias in favour of one viewpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> selection of examples shows some effort to be unbiased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> selection of examples shows a good effort to be unbiased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> selection of examples shows signs of a specific method used to ensure random selection
Data Tabulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows a poor understanding of the process; many or major errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic process followed; several errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> process followed accurately; few or minor errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> process followed accurately; no errors
Hypothesizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hypotheses show little understanding of issues revision of hypotheses shows little relationship to evidence gathered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hypotheses show basic understanding of issues revision of hypotheses shows some relationship to evidence gathered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hypotheses show good understanding of issues revision of hypotheses clearly based on evidence gathered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hypotheses show insightful understanding of issues revision of hypotheses is thoughtful and logical; based on evidence gathered

Rating done by: _____

RS 4: MEDIA RECORD SHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____

Medium:

Topic:

Description of Message

(Attach original, photocopy, or printout, if possible.)

Concerns and Values

The concerns and values of teenagers shown in this media message are:

Rating: Realistic Unrealistic

This media message includes:

bias stereotypes sales hooks

The evidence for this is:

RS 5: DATA TABULATION

Group Members: _____ Date: _____

Medium	Topic	Concerns/ Values Shown	Rating (Realistic/Unrealistic)

Three most common concerns/values shown:

Percentage of total messages that show a fair representation:

RS 6: TECHNOLOGY FOCUS: TARGETING A WEB PAGE AUDIENCE

A web page developer hopes to keep you at his or her page for as long as possible. The best way to do this is to have a clear idea of the target audience—the typical person the page will appeal to. Then the developer includes as much information as possible that relates to the values and concerns of that target audience.

When you analyze a web site, you can “work backwards” to find out what the developer thinks are the values and concerns of the target audience. For example, a site on music meant for teens can give you evidence of what the developer thinks are the concerns and values of teens.

Look closely at the following parts of the web page.

Language and Tone

The developer will choose language, including “in” phrases and slang, that she or he thinks will appeal to the target group. This language often expresses a particular attitude toward the world and toward oneself.

Graphics

The images included at the site will either show topics of interest to the target audience or show members of the target audience doing something fun or interesting.

Advertisements

Many web pages include advertisements. You can tell what the developer thinks the target audience is interested in buying by looking at the ads. And what people buy usually reflects their concerns and values.

Links

Many web pages include links to other pages that the developer thinks will be of interest to the audience—that is, reflect their concerns and values. The pages that the web page can be accessed from also give you information about how the developer sees the target audience.

RS 7: TECHNOLOGY FOCUS: SIGNS OF A GOOD DESIGN

Technology is great! And creating web pages is especially great. You can add colour, animation, sound, moving banners, blinking lights. Every day there's something new. The danger is that a web page designer can get carried away with special effects and forget that the most effective web page design:

- clearly describes the purpose of the site
- quickly shows what information is available at the site
- makes it easy to navigate (move around) the site
- presents information clearly
- makes sure the material is accessible to a wide range of users—that is, even people with slow Internet connections and smaller computers

There are lots of different ways to achieve these goals, but the golden rule is "simple is better." Here are some of the signs of good design to look for when you visit a web page and to consider when you create your own pages.

Clean Layout

The basic layout should stay the same for every page. There should be plenty of white space around text so that it is easy to read. Dark text on a lighter background is usually easiest to read. Avoid text on top of images or complex background patterns. Choose a colour scheme and keep it the same for all pages. Smaller is usually better for graphics, with an option to "magnify."

Avoid fancy features such as complex graphics, moving banners, and blinking lights. Complex graphics take a long time to download. Blinking lights and moving banners distract the viewer from reading the information and can give some people headaches. Only use sound for a specific purpose, and make it a choice. For example, it is very irritating to hear the same piece of music every time you return to the home page.

Audience Considered

However, the developer should always consider the audience when making design choices. She or he may know that the target audience of "web fanatics" will be wowed with complex graphics, so may decide to include them anyway.

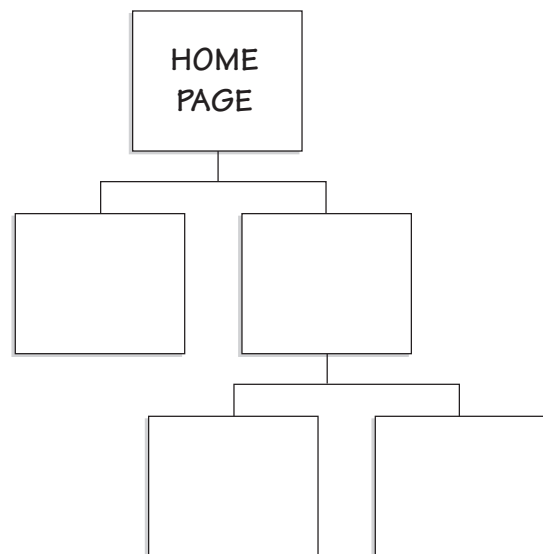
As for content, keep it focused on your target audience's interests. If you find you are including a number of different topics, consider starting another home page.

Focused Home Page

Every group of pages should begin with a simple and clear home page that explains what information is available and offers a menu of choices. It should load quickly—again, avoid complex graphics and special features.

Logical Structure

A menu or site map should make it very clear how to get from one page to another. The most common structure is a hierarchy.



continued...

RS 7: TECHNOLOGY FOCUS: SIGNS OF A GOOD DESIGN...continued

As a general rule, it shouldn't take more than three "clicks" to get to a specific piece of information. Every page should include a button to return to the home page. This is very helpful if the person has accessed the page from another site and wants to know more about this site.

Information should also be "chunked" into pieces that are long enough to provide information but not so long that they require hours of scrolling. Again, think of the audience. Is the viewer more likely to be looking for fast facts or in-depth information?

Housekeeping

Spelling, punctuation, and grammar should be accurate. Sloppiness in these areas indicates that the information might not be accurate or reliable. They can also lead to miscommunication. Spelling errors may cause problems with search engines.

Identification

Unless it is a personal page, a home page should include information other than an e-mail address that allows a viewer to confirm the source of the information. This might be a telephone number or a postal address.

Currency

The page should indicate when it was last updated. Responsible developers keep their pages up to date.

RS 8: TECHNOLOGY FOCUS: THE DESIGN PROCESS

Here are some steps to follow when developing personal web pages.

1. Focus

- Write out the purpose of your pages.
- Describe your audience. What are typical interests?
- Make a rough list of the information you'd like to include.
- "Chunk" the information into topics of a reasonable length.

2. Develop a Page Design

- Make a template of your page design that indicates areas for text, graphics, menus, and any specific features such as banners. You can do this by hand or use a graphics program.
- Don't forget that every page needs a navigation bar—information on how to get back to the home page and possibly to other pages at the site.

3. Make a Storyboard

- Fill in one copy of the template for each page. Be as detailed as possible—include specific menu items, navigation bar details, location and size of graphics, and amount of text. This will save you redoing work later!
- Lay out your pages, and figure out the best way to connect them. Don't forget to begin with a home page. It may take some time to get it right. You may need to go back and "rechunk" your information. If you have several pages, create a site map.

4. Check it Over

- Get a friend to check your plans. Ask him or her to describe what the pages are about and how to move from one to another.
- Leave your plans for a day and check that they still make sense to you.

RS 9: PERSONAL WEB PAGE DESIGN

Name: _____ Date: _____

Parts to Complete

Home page. Two additional pages.

Criteria

See RS 7: Technology Focus: Signs of a Good Design, for clarification of the design criteria.

Key: 4 = Excellent 3 = Good 2 = You've got the basics 1 = Needs some work

	<i>Ratings/Comments</i>		
	<i>Peer</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Design Criteria			
• Layout is clean and easy to read.			
• Layout stays consistent.			
• Clear idea of audience and purpose.			
• Home page gives essential information briefly and clearly.			
• Structure is logical.			
• Navigation is easy and clear.			
• Very minor or no errors of spelling, punctuation, or grammar.			
Technical Aspects			
• Functions smoothly.			