

Media Literacy: Expanded Questions

for more sophisticated inquiry

As students become more skilled in media literacy, more complex analysis is possible. The following outline is only a sample of the kinds of *Expanded Questions* that can be asked in order to fully grasp the overall *content, form, purpose* and *effects* of any media message. The numbers at the end of each question indicate which *Key Question* it expands.

1. Messages and Values– exploring the *content* of a media message.

These questions help us understand how the symbol system of a message influences its interpretation by different people; how the symbols that are selected for a message tap into our existing attitudes, knowledge and understanding of the world.

1. What makes this message seem realistic or unrealistic? (#2)
2. How does this message fit with your lived experience of the world? (#3)
3. How are various social groups represented? (#4)
4. What social or ideological messages are a part of the message’s subtext? (#4)
5. What kinds of behaviors and what kinds of consequences are depicted? (#4)
6. What type of person is the reader invited to identify with? (#4)
7. What is omitted from the message? (#4)
8. Whose point of view is presented? (#4)

2. Codes and Conventions– exploring the *form* of the message.

The following kinds of questions help us appreciate the “constructedness” of messages, how ideas and concepts are created, expressed and “packaged” for specific audiences.

1. What is the message genre? (#1)
2. What techniques are used to attract my attention? (#2)
3. What conventions of storytelling are used in this message? (#2)
4. What types of visual and/or verbal symbolism are used to construct the message? (#2)
5. What kinds of persuasive or emotional appeals are used in this message? (#2)
6. What technologies were used to construct this message? (#1)
7. How is this message similar and different from others with similar content? (#1)

3. Producers and Consumers– exploring the *purpose* and *effects*.

These questions help us see the multiple decisions that are made from beginning to end as the message is created and distributed plus the multiple interpretations that are created in the audience as they watch, see or listen:

1. Who created this message? (#1)
2. What is the producer’s purpose? (#5)
3. Who is the target audience? (#5)
4. How have economic decisions influenced the construction of this message? (#5)
5. What reasons might an individual have for being interested in this message? (#3)
6. How do different individuals respond emotionally to this message? (#3)
7. How might different individuals interpret this message differently? (#3)

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