CONNECT!ONS Med!aLit moments

In This Issue…

Theme: Media Literacy and the Common Core

As this issue of *Connections* is being released, field testing of computerized assessments for the Common Core State Standards is already underway. For the last few years, media literacy educators have been anxiously wondering whether there will be any place for media literacy skills in the new standards regime. The answer to that question largely depends on the directions taken in implementation and professional development.

On March 22nd, UCLA Center X convened a conference titled "Critical Teaching and the Common Core: Access, Equity and Justice." According to the Center X website, the Center provides a setting for researchers and practitioners "to collaborate in designing and conducting programs that prepare and support K-12 teachers and administrators committed to social justice, instructional excellence and caring in low-income urban schools." Among other sessions, the conference included a presentation on "Critical Media Literacy and the Common Core." (Please visit our "Worked Example" Resources article for more).

The day began with a panel composed primarily of faculty from the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Sciences. Given the social justice orientation of the panelists, it wasn't surprising that they criticized the standard's emphasis on "college and career readiness," expressed little satisfaction with the standards' single reference to "responsible citizenship," and discussed the need for standards which could empower students to become active participants in a democratic society. But some of the most vocal panelists built their comments on the irony of implementation which did not fulfill the spirit of the standards themselves. If the English Language Arts standards envision that students should be able to "reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic" (p.7)," then why shouldn't professional development training for the standards proceed with the same careful deliberation? Wouldn't that be a more responsible and democratic course than the hasty process shepherded by the U.S. Department of Education?

Indeed, a sampling of recent news and opinion reveals a good deal of frustration with the process of implementation. Two professors at respected New York institutions argue that the standards were introduced with little public discussion: "Americans know more about the events in Benghazi than they do about the Common Core." (Hacker and Dreifus, "Who's Minding the Schools?"). In New York state, which began testing for the Common Core standards a year earlier than other states, education commissioner John B. King, Jr. conceded "we could have prioritized parent engagement, and helping parents understand what the Common Core is, and is not" (Baker, "Common Core Curriculum Now Has Critics on the Left"). The president of the American Federation of Teachers affiliate in Washington DC, complains that, in its focus on field testing of assessments, a local district has broken its pledge to provide experienced instructional coaches in every building, creating a pattern of uneven professional support for teachers (Gewertz, "Year-End Exams Add Urgency to Teaching").

An English teacher at Palo Alto High School in California describes the standards as "reasonable," but adds that "the resistance and the anger are still coming largely, though not entirely, from the process" (Rich, "School Standards' Debut Is Rocky").

As the English teacher from Palo Alto intimated, the standards aren't all bad. In general, they emphasize critical thinking, learning of concepts and skill development over delivery of content. For example, the authors write, "To be ready for workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize and report on information and ideas, and to conduct original research in order to answer questions and solve problems. . ." For media literacy advocates, the further assertion that students should "analyze and create a high volume and extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new" (ELA standards, p.4) should be encouraging. [Please note: all page numbers for ELA standards are taken from the PDF file, and not the web text, which contains no pagination)

And yet the authors of the ELA standards demonstrate a bias--reflective of our current culture of schooling--which favors print media. While the range of text types indicated for grades 6-12 includes graphic novels, all of the exemplar texts, both in the standards, and in the appendices, are print-based. Moreover, students are expected to engage with "works of quality and substance" (7) and of "increasing text complexity" (8), and are expected to read "great classic and contemporary works of literature"(7). Taken together, these directives suggest that canonical status (the literary equivalent of sainthood) should be accorded to a select few print texts.

With proper deliberation, teachers who become familiarized with the Common Core State Standards may realize that they have latitude to incorporate a wide variety of media texts into their curriculum planning. Without that opportunity for reflection, however, professional training might look more like this scenario:

A district chief who oversees the curriculum resources, professional development, and assessments for the Common Core is pacing up and down the center aisle as he reads aloud the first two pages of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas*. He leads a group of administrators through a detailed explication, "parsing words to plumb the meaning of a challenging 53-word sentence. Heads lowered, the administrators read and annotate" (Gewertz, op. cit.).

The scene re-creates the hushed ritual by which students are inculcated into admiration of a 'complex' print-based literary text. It's a time-honored tradition which can only be shaped into something else if teachers have the time and opportunity to consider the alternatives. CML's own experience with teachers doing close analysis of visual, verbal and written texts has revealed that teachers typically need training in how to conduct a deep deconstruction exercise – and teachers can'be expected to teach students what they themselves don't know.

In this issue of *Connections*, we show why rumors of the death of media literacy at the hands

of the Common Core have been greatly exaggerated. We show where media literacy and the Common Core English Language Arts intersect, where they diverge, and how media literacy educators can boldly interpret the standards to meet their purposes. We begin by presenting a ground level view of the intersections between media literacy and the Common Core, and move on to provide a wider, more comprehensive view of the relationships between media literacy and the standards. And in our MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will learn how the human interest story contributes to the bottom line of many media producers, including producers of crowdfunding sites.

Research Highlights

Some Basics About Media Literacy and the Common Core State Standards

In May 2012, we interviewed Frank Baker, who had much to say about what he found lacking in the Common Core standards.   His comments are still salient today. Here are a few:

"The Common Core focus on reading, writing, listening and speaking completely ignores viewing. . .Media and visual literacy and media as representation is totally ignored. That's a crime in the 21st century."

"It's amazing to me that storyboarding and scriptwriting are not found in any English Language Arts textbook, though all these media started as writing. One of the reasons that I'm so disappointed with the Common Core standards is that they could have been written in the 1960s."

On the other hand, Baker admits that there is room for accommodation: "The skills of analysis and construction in print media can be applied to non-print media. You just have to show teachers how to do that. Unfortunately, that's not usually a part of their professional development. . .It's one of the reasons why I've been putting together a webinar for NCTE on how to teach the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. . .All of the objects displayed in the box during the opening credits are symbols used later in the film. Why not teach symbolism in film? It's not a huge stretch."

Recognition should also be accorded to the standards' treatment of new media and communications technologies. Take, for example, Reading Standards for Informational Text, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 7, Grade 8: "Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (for example, print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea." While media literacy educators might prefer that the standard mention media techniques, or even the "creative languages of media," the standard does ask students to develop an awareness of the fact that the medium affects the message.

In many cases, media literacy interpretations of the Common Core standards are not the 'huge stretch' educators might imagine. For example, the authors write, "The need to conduct research and produce and consume media is embedded into every aspect of today's curriculum. In like fashion, research and media skills and understandings are embedded throughout the Standards rather than treated in a separate fashion" (p.4). If media skills are embedded throughout the standards, then it can be readily argued that viewing and media creation belong together with the more traditional skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Scheibe and Rogow, *The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy,* "Links Between Media Literacy and Education Standards").

Or, for another example, take the assertion that students should "demonstrate independence":

"Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines" (7). Fortified with this directive, teachers can defend the argument that students should develop the critical autonomy necessary to evaluate media messages and decide how they will respond to them.

Furthermore, media literacy educators should take note of the fact that the Common Core authors distance themselves from any notion of a prescribed curriculum. In the Key Designs Considerations of the ELA Standards, the subheading "A focus on results rather than means" includes the direction that teachers are "free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the *goals* set out in the Standards" (p. 4, emphasis added). Media literacy educators may need to persuade administrators of the effectiveness of their teaching strategies or the curricula they create, but it's highly unlikely that their methods will come into conflict with the standards themselves.

For the diffident among us, an article by noted NCTE "new literacies" scholar William Kist may embolden media literacy educators to confidently draft lessons aligned with the new standards. In one lesson, Kist shows his students the first few minutes of the opening episode of *Lost* without any introductory comments. He breaks students into groups, provides each group with a description of a film element or technique, and asks them to concentrate on that element in a second viewing of the clip. Kist observes that these key details become an intellectual fulcrum point which allows students to take their interpretation of the scene to another level ("New Literacies and the Common Core"). How does Kist justify the lesson? Broadly, with this standard: Reading Standards for Literature, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Standard 7, Grade 7: "Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (for example, lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film)."

Kist obviously focused on film techniques, and felt that he could disregard the direction to compare a visual text with a written text. If he can do so and have his article published in ASCD's *Educational Leadership*, you, too, can take similar liberties with the standards.

Interview with Jeff Share, UCLA Center X Teacher Education Program

Jeff Share began his professional life as a freelance photojournalist for a decade with the *Los Angeles Times*, *Life*, *Time* and other major news magazines. In the1990s he made his transition into education through a teaching internship at LA Unified School District. After seven years of teaching elementary school in downtown LA, Share became Regional Coordinator for Training at the Center for Media Literacy. In that position he lead the trainings for CML's Project SmartArt, a comprehensive arts and media literacy integration program at an LAUSD elementary school, and he trained teachers and students in *Smoke Detectors!,* a tobacco cessation program conducted for Orange County Health Agency (CML just released a curriculum based on this successful program). At the conclusion of these projects, Share

entered the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA and earned his PhD in education focusing on Critical Media Literacy. Since 2006, Share has been a Faculty Advisor in the UCLA Center X Teacher Education Program. During his time at UCLA, he has designed and served as primary instructor for a critical media literacy course that has become a requirement for all teacher education students at UCLA.

CML: What do you think are the most important strategies for widespread integration of media literacy and the Common Core standards?

JS: What I focus on in reading through the Common Core standards is that the standards go well with the goals of media literacy--the goal of literacy across all subject areas. One of the things that the Common Core is bringing into the education scene is a really important piece that is definitely in our favor. It supports the notion of what media literacy is for---*everything* is literacy.

CML: What enabling and constraining factors do you see for the integration of media literacy education in the Common Core standards?

JS: One of the problems that we see happening, with anything new, is that people interpret it differently. But because it's so new, we also have a ground level opportunity to start defining this. I think the Common Core is very well set up to be interpreted through a media literacy lens. And yet I've seen workshops on the Common Core that are awful. There's no previewing of text, no connections with the world. Everything is about citing from the text. It's such a myopic understanding of what the Common Core is trying to get at. It's not what research shows, either. But that's how some people are working with this. They don't connect it with other things. It goes against a hundred years of research, from the time of Dewey, who wrote about the connection of education to the world. Since then the research has supported this.

A second thing that is really helpful about the Common Core is the embedding of technology and media in the standards. To ask students to demonstrate and show and use digital tools is fabulous. Some have misread that requirement. At LAUSD schools they're buying iPads and technology just for taking tests. All they want to do is teach people how to keyboard so they can take a test online.   It's very short-sighted, but again it's test-driven. Within the Common Core it pushes the idea that kids should demonstrate their knowledge by using digital technology and texts. Media literacy is in the writing of it.

The Common Core does work more towards concepts and skills, and not just content. They're linked to media literacy learning skills which students can use and apply. In addition, the Common Core tends to be more action-based, with kids demonstrating what they know through action, including producing media. Just the fact that the standards call on students to use digital media and displays--that's something concrete that you can bring to principals and ask, what are you going to do to prepare students, and how will you teach kids how to do it?
One positive thing in the Common Core that's mentioned is responsible citizenship. I think it's in

the Common Core introduction. Another thing I've been using are the anchor standards for college and career readiness. They're very specific about using media, including "integrating and evaluating texts in diverse media and formats." That's right on for media literacy stuff.

CML: Have you seen the NAMLE guide to media literacy education and the Common Core standards? In part the guide seems to be intent on stretching and extending the Common Core's ideas about literacy? Any thoughts?

JS: I think in a way that's what we have to do. Any kind of national standards are so open to interpretation. It relates to the point that I was making earlier. We have to be part of the conversation, and pushing and pulling in our direction. If the Common Core can be interpreted in such limited ways, we need to be out front promoting the notion that the Common Core supports a cracking open of the old definition of literacy. We should be pulling that, and not just talking about print, but about all these different languages-- because information is coming at students in such different ways, and they need to know how to work with it--because that's what's likely to be needed outside of the classroom. In a way the fact that the Common Core talks about career readiness and college preparation acknowledges the reality of that. One of the problems with Common Core is that there's very little about democracy and citizenship at a time when so many grassroots movements today are taking advantage of these literacies, too.

We need to play with the Common Core. Even if these college and career ready standards are calling for responsible citizens, I don't think they ever mention social justice. That's a problem that you have with something so big that's meant to please everybody. I can cherry pick and use them for my pieces of evidence to argue why we need to think beyond college and career prep.

In general, I'm in favor of standards, but not standardization. I'm in favor of standards as goals. But that shouldn't be the same thing for everyone all the time. We're not widgets. We can't use a factory system with people. In thinking about different directions and vision, implementation is everything. As long as there is more flexibility for how standards are to be interpreted and applied, the greater the chance that we can get really cool critical media literacy and applications with it. Standardizing is for the mass market. Education is not the place to be standardizing.

CML: Have you offered any workshops on media literacy and the Common Core? If you have, what arguments, methods and examples have you used?

JS: I've done workshops that connect with the Common Core and connect with whatever standards there are, especially English Language Arts. With Common Core workshops, I show teachers how to meet the anchor standards for reading and writing, and show how they could use different types of media and technology. I've actually done more technology workshops for meeting the Common Core. That's an opportunity, at the very least.   In the late '90s, Carmen Luke was talking about how the only opportunity to get media literacy in classrooms, would

come through the new waves of technology. There's an opportunity for showing how to use tools critically. There's so much of this business mentality in education. The superintendent of LAUSD was intent on spending a billion dollars on iPads, (with a B), but he had no idea of what to do with them. He was willing to spend a billion. He backed off temporarily. We really need to understand that these tools are not neutral. No medium of communication is neutral. If kids are going to be able to access the information, if they are going to create and produce and be prepared for life outside of class, we need to be teaching them about it and bringing more critical thinking into the classroom. There wasn't much of it going on when we were all using pencils. Now we have fancier tools. We need to help students think about how they can use them as powerful tools to challenge the problems that are being reproduced in the world.

CML: What questions, confusions, or difficulties do participants often have in understanding the links between media literacy and the Common Core? How do you address them?

JS: I don't think most people have any idea about what's unique about the Common Core. They don't really have an idea of what they're moving towards, and what's changing.

CML: Have you heard about or seen any teacher workshops around technological literacy and the Core standards?

JS: There are very few Common Core workshops that incorporate critical thinking about digital media. They usually just apply it to visual displays. Most of the requests I've received have been about that stuff---as if the tools are neutral. In the workshops that I give, I talk about the CML framework and go over the Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy. Typically people say afterwards, this involves a lot more than I thought.

CML: Are there any particular standards to which you direct teachers, to help them understand the links between media literacy and the Common Core?

JS: Really it's about understanding pedagogy. When you teach media literacy, you go beyond, here's a lesson to do, and get them to think about the Core Concepts and Key Questions as a tool that applies everywhere. Literacy is "in" everything you're teaching. The Common Core "gets" that. So you can use that when you're justifying a lesson. You can search through the standards and find what you need. You can make sure that students are reading and writing, and not just with print, but also with sound, and multimedia. It builds on this notion of integration, rather than dropping everything else we're doing to say, now we're going to do a Common Core lesson. It's the way we need to modify pedagogy that's important.

CML: What's new or innovative in the strategies for integration practiced by your students?

JS: They're teaching me so much! They're using new tools I never thought about. They know so much more about tools that are used. Like phones. One of my students took an idea out of math methods, by using pictures to analyze ideas, and brought it into language arts. They

were fabulous lessons that introduced new vocabulary words without telling meanings, but with photos. She showed pictures of different houses, but one was not a house. That represented the new word. She asked, which one doesn't belong? The kids were using visual literacy.

My students are using cameras a lot more. For science, my students created a fabulous project with cameras, they take four pictures and use a word game or app in which students use photos to learn science vocabulary. They took a picture of sky, water, sun, and a plant--to add up to photosynthesis. Students can guess the word. So this project allowed kids to take things that they knew from pop culture and social media, and to integrate it with academics.

I've also seen students creating curriculum which is challenging with regard to race and gender Is this fair? What do you notice? What is more fair and equal?   Getting them to understand-- that there's this deficit thinking about some people, and helping them understand how it plays out in the media. It certainly comes into play with many, many teachers. You find teachers bitching and moaning about how bad the kids and the culture and the families are. These deficit notions happen most often with kids in inner city schools, and poor schools. In the social structures of schools, poor kids, black kids, brown kids are extremely disadvantaged and are set up for failure. There's a lot of research to back that up. Shirley Bryce Heath was one of the first to show that, with her scholarship on the use of language in different communities. Typically U.S. school values are white and middle class, which is disadvantaging for other students. How is media reproducing that? How can it be challenged? How can students tell their own stories? Integrating all that is a matter of critical pedagogy--both critically analyzing media, and creating alternative media. In part that's what a program in media literacy is all about.

Critical media literacy involves re-taking ideas that went out of popularity, looking at ideology and social structures. There's so much in the mainstream commercial media that keeps playing off of the myth that we're post-racial, we're all liberal--and there's so much that's been left out of the picture. We're not creating a sustainable planet. We're using up our resources. We can't keep doing it. There's been an increase in hate crimes. There are a lot of different areas that kids need to think about, even in elementary school. They can write letters, and they can be involved in creating media, interviewing, researching about real issues. That's where media literacy has such a role to play. We should not wait to become adults to become responsible citizens when we can make movies that go around the world. It's never been easier and cheaper for humans on the planet to share messages.

CML News

CML's framework of Key Questions and Core Concepts is featured in an article titled *MediaSOS @medialiteracy* written by Jan Bartley and published this month by Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE).

Access AMLE publications http://www.amle.org

About Us...
The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.
http://consortiumformedialiteracy.org

Resources for Media Literacy

Towards a Wide Angle View of Media Literacy and the Common Core

For a broad view of the application of media literacy to the Common Core, the introduction to the English Language Arts standards is still the best place to start. In the subheading "An integrated model to literacy," the authors argue that the "processes of communication are closely connected (p.4)," a claim that can be used to validate the concept of multiple literacies in multiple media. On the same page, under the subheading "Shared responsibility for students' literacy development," the authors explain that literacy standards have been generated for history, social sciences, natural sciences and technical subjects because research supports the conclusion that 'college and career ready' students must be proficient in reading complex informational text independently in a variety of content areas. With its emphasis on reading across the disciplines, this direction provides fertile ground for the cross-disciplinary work common to media literacy education.

NAMLE has published an educator's guide to media literacy and the Common Core State Standards which not only documents the intersections between media literacy and the Common Core, but also makes arguments for extending the standards in different directions. If analysis of texts is part and parcel of the standards, what about production of media to help students ask "questions about authorship, purpose, point of view and key omissions that are all part of the media creation process"? (Connection #4). If the ELA standards require that students establish a base of content knowledge, including spelling, grammar and vocabulary, what about the broader social, institutional and other contextual knowledge needed to fully interpret many media texts? (Connection #1). This educator guide can be accessed at:

http://namle.net/publications/mle-common-core-standards/

This web page includes links to several other Common Core standards resources, so be sure to check it out. Additionally, CML's curricula, based on the research-based CML framework for media literacy, are all analyzed according to the Common Core standards for language arts, with each lesson identifying the relevant standards.

With its emphasis on new media and communications technologies, the Common Core standards place technical demands on schools which actually provide an exciting opportunity for integration of media literacy into the curriculum. In a short article for the *Journal of Media Literacy*, Media Spot director and NAMLE board member Rhys Daunic reflects that media consultants in schools have "gone from push-in designers and collaborators on isolated projects to collaborators on school-wide curriculum planning" ("10 Years of Media Literacy Education in K-12 Schools," 210). What if more of those media consultants had an interest in media literacy?

Finally, one of the more important issues arising out of the implementation of the Common

Core standards involves assessment. Many, if not most of the statewide assessments of the standards will be computerized and individualized. Embedded in this assessment system is the image of the 'college and career ready' student who will compete individually in the labor market. On the other hand, the ELA standards document indicates that the same students will "appreciate that the twenty-first century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together" (7). Which view of students will prevail? We have no crystal ball, but it's clear that media literacy education thrives best in a collaborative, inquiry-driven learning environment. Educators interested in these issues may also be interested in William Kist's latest book, *The Global School: Connecting Classrooms and Students Across the World* (Solution Tree Press, 2012), which profiles the work of international educators who incorporate media literacy into their instruction and create similar learning environments in their classrooms.

A Worked Example of a Media Literacy Unit Aligned to the Common Core

The March UCLA Center X conference on the Common Core (mentioned in our theme article) included an hour-length session on critical media literacy and the Common Core standards, which showcased the work of three students in the teacher preparation program advised by Jeff Share, a former training director at the Center for Media Literacy. The work exhibited by these students was both innovative and inspiring, and a Prezi presentation of this showcase is still publicly available at:
http://prezi.com/xbymbh_whtcf/cmlsocialjusticeccs/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

In this particular example, Cristina Terrazas, the instructor for a 5th grade dual immersion Spanish/English class, created a unit which invited students to respond to and analyze media at the same time that it introduced them to the arguments and reasoning that writers and speakers use about controversial social issues.

Terrazas framed her unit with a focus question for students: Why are you receiving a bilingual education? How are bilinguals portrayed in our community/society?   Next, students viewed the Coca Cola advertisement from this year's Superbowl which featured a multi-cultural cast of singers performing a rendition of "America the Beautiful" in seven different languages, and students took part in a closer reading of the ad.

Next, Terrazas scaffolded students in reading and comprehending a short *Huffington Post* article about the controversy which erupted around the ad (including the newly generated Twitter hashtag #speakamerican). She asked them to write blog posts to share their responses to the ad and their experiences and opinions about bilingualism. As Terrazas commented in her presentation, "If it's an issue that impacts my students, they don't have to stop at reading an article, they can use their own experiential evidence to back up their reasoning and interpretations about the controversy."

Here are the Common Core standards which Terrazas cites for this section of the unit:
Reading Informational Text, 5.1 -- Quote accurately when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
Reading Informational Text, 5.6 -- Analyze multiple accounts of the same topic, noting important similarities and differences in the points of view they represent.
Reading Informational Text, 5.7 -- Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

Next, Terrazas organized students into "jigsaw" groups to read and explain separate paragraphs from a *Latino Voices* article that argued for the cognitive, social and health benefits of bilingual education. After students gathered together again to hear the results of their separate investigations, they created a graphic which summarized the main points of the article. The graphic includes a two-headed character who declares, "I am Bilingual!/Yo soy Bilingue!"

Some of the students were so energized by the unit that they created another graphic aid for understanding, in which cartoon characters traded arguments and observations about bilingualism. Here's one of the interchanges: "You can't speak Spanish you're an English speaker"/ "That doesn't mean anything. Only because I speak English doesn't mean I can't learn Spanish."

Here are the Common Core standards which Terrazas cites for the final portion of the unit:
Speaking and Listening, 5.2 -- Summarize a text read aloud or presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
Speaking and Listening, 5.5 -- Include multimedia components (i.e., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas and themes.

In closing, it's worth noting that this unit is not only aligned to the Common Core, but also empowers students in at least two ways. Creating a unit around issues which are important to students not only allows them to support an argument with experiential evidence; they also have an ownership stake in what they're learning. Second, the assignment to create a graphic aid reminds students that, in addition to generating original responses to the advertisement and the news stories, they can be media creators as well.

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Companion website to book includes annotations on Common Core ELA standards.

CML Curricula Aligned with Common Core State Standards for Middle School/High School
Students. Available at www.medialit.com
    Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media
    A Recipe for Action: Deconstructing Food Advertising
    Smoke Detectors! Deconstructing Tobacco Use in Media

Med!aLit Moments

A Penny for Your Trouble

The human interest news story has been with us for some time--at least since the turn of the 20th century, when Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst deployed them to lure readers away from competing newspapers. What may be the latest and best source of human interest stories today? Crowdfunding sites. Take the personal fundraising site GoFundMe, for example. In a 2012 interview with *Fast Company* magazine, CEO Brad Damphousse, described GoFundMe as a "human interest gold mine." In this MediaLit Moment, your middle level students will learn how visitors to crowdfunding sites aren't just contributing to a deserving person or worthy cause, but are paying for a good story as well.

Ask students to compare personal crowdfunding appeals with personal interest stories in other media.

AHA!: I'm paying for a story that pulls on my heartstrings!

Grade Level: 6-9

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

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

Materials: Computer with high speed internet access, LCD projector and screen.

Activity: Pass out, play or display a human interest news story for your class. Local television news broadcasts and websites are a good source for such stories. Give your students some time to respond to the story. Ask, what do they find interesting about the story? You may wish to display a page or chart of news values, and ask students to identify which news values the story appeals to.

Next, visit the GoFundMe site and browse individual funding appeals. Ask students, if they don't have a close relationship with the person making the appeal, what would make them want to make a contribution? (The story). Discuss Core Concept #1 with students. What appeals do they respond to most? Why? (Most likely stories of personal adversity). You may want to discuss the human interest news values these appeals embody.

Next, draw students' attention to the business model for each medium. For news stories, the size of readership or the number of viewers helps bring in revenues from advertisers. In the case of GoFundMe, the company deducts an average of 8% from each contribution for processing and other fees. So contributors are paying for the media producer to publish these stories and to publicize these appeals across social media sites as well.

Ask, what information or advice might they want to share with someone who's thinking of using a personal fundraising site to make a contribution?

The *Fast Company* article on GoFundMe can be found at:
http://www.fastcoexist.com/1680780/crowd-funding-for-everything-else-pets-healthcare-college-you-name-it

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, ©2002-2014, Center for Media Literacy, http://www.medialit.com