

Audiences negotiate meaning

GRADES 5-8 **DURATION** 45 minutes

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students watch a video introducing the media literacy key concept that audiences negotiate meaning. They discuss the idea that different media products are aimed at different audiences and that different people may react differently to the same media product, and reflect on the experience of liking something they aren't “supposed” to. In an optional final task, students watch a pair of TV shows, one they would normally choose to watch and one they wouldn't, and identify the ways in which each is aimed at its target market as well as speculating on how someone other than the target market might react to it.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- understand the key concept that audiences negotiate meaning
- understand the idea that media products are aimed at particular audiences
- understand that different people react differently to the same media text
- reflect on the connections between media and personal identity
- analyze the intended audience of a media text (optional task)

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Arrange to have access to a digital projector or digital whiteboard and cue up the videos

“Audiences Negotiate Meaning” [<http://bit.ly/HgX1yI>]

“The Official Moon Sand Construction” [<http://bit.ly/175cihs>]

“The Official Moon Sand Ocean Princess” [<http://bit.ly/17wINR7>]

If unable to show these videos, photocopy or prepare to show the handout **“Who is this ad aimed at?”**

- Photocopy the handout **“Target Market”**



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PROCEDURE

Begin by showing the video “**Audiences Negotiate Meaning**” [<http://bit.ly/HgX1yI>]. At the end of the video, ask students to think about the points that are raised.

- What does it mean to say that “different people will react differently to different media products?” (*How we react to something depends partly on who we are – our age, sex, background interests, etc.*)
- What does it mean to say that “a media product is never complete until an audience sees it, hears it or experiences it?” (*Because different people react differently to a media product, the audience creates part of the meaning. For example, the same product may be funny to one person and sad to another.*)

Now read from the screen the assignment: “Think of an advertisement, website or social networking message. Identify how different people might react to it.”

Show students the **Moon Sand** ad at <http://bit.ly/175cihs> and ask them who they think would probably like it and why. (*Most likely students will say boys because of the emphasis on construction, breaking and building things; if they don't, point out the action movie-like music, bright colours and muscular characters.*)

Then show the **Moon Sand** ad at <http://bit.ly/17wINR7> and ask the same question. (*Make sure that students discuss the “princess” theme, pastel colours [especially pink] and the emphasis on decorating, animals and friendship.*)

(If unable to show these videos, show or distribute the handout “**Who is this ad aimed at?**”)

Point out to the students that the *product* being sold by these ads is basically the same, but the two media products are completely different. Ask students to name some other media products (TV shows, movies, magazines, toys, video games, etc.) that are clearly intended for one gender or another. Ask why they think media producers target their products specifically at a particular gender as well as particular ages, particular interests, etc. Answers are likely to include “to help people find it” and “because different people like different things.”

Make sure to introduce the idea that we *learn* about things like gender from media – we get different messages from “dolls” and “action figures,” for instance – and that we may feel pressure not to like media that aren't aimed at us. (*For instance, many people are likely to say that girls don't play video games even though studies have shown that almost all girls play them sometimes.*)

Ask students if they've ever liked a media product they weren't “supposed” to – something aimed at a different gender, age, etc. Was the experience different from watching/reading/playing something that was aimed at them? If so, how?

OPTIONAL TASK

For homework, have students watch a TV show that they already like and one that they would not normally watch. Using the checklist “Target Market” for scaffolding, students identify the elements that appeal to them (or don't) and think about how a different viewer would react to each.

Who is this ad aimed at?





Target Market: SHOW

What is the show's title?

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

What type of TV show is it (action, comedy, reality, etc.)?

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

Describe the title sequence and the music.

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

Who is the main character? Identify his/her age, sex, race, etc.

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

Who are the other important characters? Identify their age, sex, race, etc.

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

What causes conflict between the characters in the show?

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

How do the characters solve their problems?

Does this appeal to you? Why or why not?

Do you think someone who was different from you (different gender, age, interests, etc.) would like this show? Who do you think would most like it and why?
