

LESSON PLAN

Recognizing Emotional Appeals

This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.



LEVEL: Grade 4 to 8

DURATION: 90 minutes, plus time for the media making task

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This lesson plan is part of the [Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum](#) program. Funding provided by the Government of Ontario.

Overview

This is the third lesson in the *Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum* series, though it can also be delivered independently. In it, students learn how we can be persuaded by emotional appeals as well as by arguments. After identifying emotionally charged words, they find them in an article and analyze their persuasive effect. Students study a public service announcement to examine how images and story can be emotionally persuasive, then watch a pair of videos to compare how they use emotional persuasion. They then conduct a *red teaming* exercise to identify the possible risks or drawbacks of using emotional appeals and ways of mitigating those. Finally, they create their own persuasive work using emotionally charged languages, images and music.

Learning goals

Big ideas/key concepts: Students will understand that...

Media are constructions: Media makers choose elements to produce particular effects

Media have social and political implications: People can be persuaded by emotional appeals as well as logical arguments

Each medium has a unique aesthetic form: Words, images, stories and music can all be used to create emotional reactions

Essential knowledge: Students will learn that...

Reading Media: Words, images, story and music can be used to produce an emotional effect

Key vocabulary: Connotation, public service announcement (PSA), red team

Performance tasks: Students will be able to...

- Access public domain or Creative Commons media
- Use media tools and techniques to produce emotionally persuasive appeals
- Understand how media makers use emotionally persuasive appeals
- Engage with the risks, drawbacks and implications of using emotionally persuasive appeals

Preparation and materials

Prepare to project the following videos:

Recognizing Emotional Appeals (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1QKt2qHrFc>)

Autumn Peltier's Watermark (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fs5CwTI-o8>)

Misunderstood (https://applework.s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/apple+work/IPHONE_MISUNDERSTOOD_720p_90.mp4)

Prepare to distribute the following handouts:

- *Emotionally Charged Words*
- *Why School Should Start Later*
- *Emotional Media*
- *"To You, It's Just a Small Gap"*
- *Red Team*

Prepare to distribute the assignment sheets *Dealing with Emotional Appeals* and *Making Emotional Media*

Procedure

WHAT PERSUADES US?

Start by asking students to think about a time they changed their mind about something. (You can give examples of fairly small things they might have changed their minds about: whether or not they like a particular food, their favourite snack, how they feel about cats or dogs.)

Now ask: What was it that changed their minds?

- How many changed their minds because of a personal experience (such as trying a food with an ingredient they didn't like prepared in a new way)?
- How many changed their minds because they were persuaded by new information or an argument someone made?
- How many were persuaded by something that made them *feel* a certain way (such as deciding to see a movie because you saw an exciting trailer, or wanting to try a sport because you saw a video that made it look fun)?

(If you like, you can give them an example of something you have changed your mind about, and why.)

EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Explain to students that while we think of ourselves as making decisions based on reason and arguments, we are all influenced by emotions as well.

Now show the video *Recognizing Emotional Appeals* and then ask students:

- What are some of the tools media makers use to persuade you emotionally? (Words, images, music.)
- What are some ways that advertisers use emotional appeals? (Making you worried about a problem, connecting the product with something or someone you already have good feelings about, taking advantage of your fear or anger about something.)

EMOTIONALLY CHARGED WORDS

Highlight the idea mentioned in the video (and referenced in the first question) that specific words can be emotionally persuasive. Distribute the handout *Emotionally Charged Words* and have students work individually or in pairs to sort the list of words on the first page into the chart below.

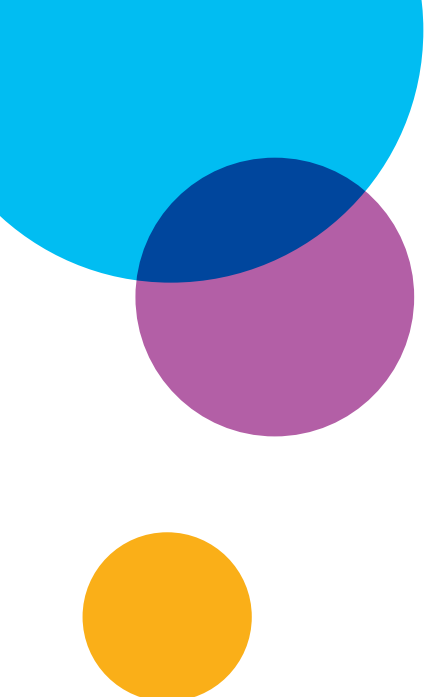
Take up the chart with the class to ensure that students have sorted them correctly:

Neutral

Walk
Different
Group
Filled
House
Young
Relaxed
Smell

Emotionally Charged

Stroll
Unique
Gang
Crammed
Home
Juvenile
Lazy
Stink



Next, have students turn the page and (either individually or in pairs) choose five of the emotionally charged words and explain their *connotation* – what feelings are associated with the word?

Now distribute the worksheet *Why School Should Start Later* and read through it with the class. Have students put a circle around every word with a *positive* connotation and put a box around every word with a *negative* connotation.

You can choose to have them mark the positive or negative words in a different way if you prefer – for instance by underlining them in red and green – and you can have them do the exercise individually, in pairs, or as a whole class.

Take up the worksheet with the class:

- Did they identify the same words as having positive and negative connotations?
- How do those connotations make them feel?
- How much does the article rely on positive or negative words to make its point?

EMOTIONAL MEDIA

Now display or distribute the handout *To You, It's Just a Small Gap*.

Tell students that this is a PSA or *public service ad* (an ad that is meant to convince people to do something, instead of selling a product or service) by a Hong Kong artist named Li Chi-Tak.

Ask students what *facts* or *arguments* are presented in the poster.

- “What may be a simple task for you, may be an impossible obstacle to overcome for others.”

Now ask students how it provokes emotional reactions by using:

Words?

- “To you” makes you feel like you have a responsibility to help
- “Small gap” is ironic because it’s within what looks like a large gap
- “Impossible obstacle” emphasizes the challenge the wheelchair use is facing
- “Barrier-free society” sounds inspiring

Images?

- The image of the wheelchair user in front of the gap causes a feeling of helplessness
- Seeing only the feet of the other person makes us feel guilty because they don't seem to care

Story?

- We imagine being in that situation and what the wheelchair user might have to do to cross the gap

Explain to students that skilled media makers can use emotional appeals to *draw our attention* or *make us care* about an argument. In this case, the emotional appeals make it more clear why accessibility is important.

Now distribute the handout *Emotional Media*. Highlight to students the three emotional persuasion tools you've already looked at (words, images, story) and the additional one (music).

Show the video [Autumn Peltier's Watermark](#) and have students complete the first column of the handout.

Next, show the video [Misunderstood](#) and have students complete the second column.

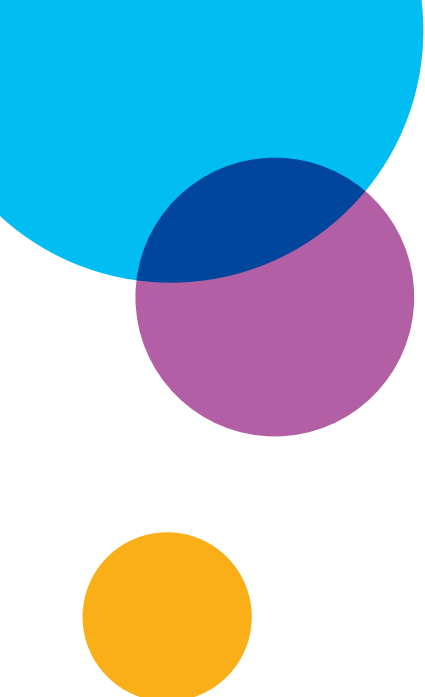
Take up the handout with the class, using the *Teacher's Version*.

Make sure to highlight the similarities and differences between the two videos, in particular:

- the difference in how much relies on emotional appeals relative to facts and arguments (*Misunderstood* relies almost totally on emotional appeals, while *Autumn Peltier's Watermark* has a balance of emotion and facts/arguments)
- the difference in their purposes (*Autumn Peltier's Watermark* is trying to get you to care about access to clean water, while *Misunderstood* is trying to get you to buy an iPhone.)

RED TEAMING

Point out to students that two of the examples you've looked at (*To You, It's Just a Small Gap* and *Autumn Peltier's Watermark*) use emotional appeals for what most people would probably think are good reasons. They also use them *in addition* to using facts and arguments to persuade, rather than just trying to persuade people emotionally.



Now ask if they think there could be drawbacks to using emotional appeals, even for a good purpose.

After a few minutes' discussion, tell students that they are going to do an exercise called *red teaming*. A “red team” is a group inside a business, a government or another organization whose job is to guess what might go wrong with a plan.

Distribute the assignment sheet *Red Team* and have students work in pairs or groups to identify every possible *problem*, *risk* or *drawback* of using emotional appeals to persuade people. This should be done brainstorming-style, writing down as many thoughts as quickly as possible rather than expanding on each one.

After five minutes, have students turn the assignment sheet over to make sure they have considered the *challenge prompt*:

We're much less likely to change our minds about something we believe for emotional reasons.

Give students another three to five minutes to think about the implications of that idea and write down any more problems they can think of.

After ten minutes, have all the pairs or groups share the results to make a master “red team” list for the whole class.

DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Distribute the assignment sheet *Dealing With Emotional Appeals*. You can have students work individually or in pairs or groups.

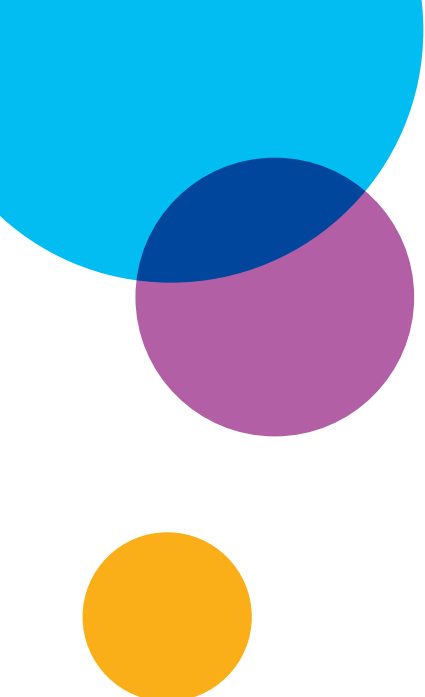
Have students choose items from the “red team” master list.

(You can assign them to write on one, two or three items, depending on their grade level and your assessment of the class's writing ability.)

For each of the items, they should write:

What the item is

Why they think it is an important problem, risk or drawback to consider



At least two ways of dealing with the problem, risk or drawback. One of these should be something that **media makers** can do when making works that use emotional appeals, and one should be something that **regular people** can do when consuming them (reading, watching, playing, etc.)

THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Now tell students that they are going to practice making a media work that uses emotional appeals.

Distribute the assignment sheet *Making Emotional Media* and go through it with the students.

If you want, you can limit students to using the graphics that are in the MediaSmarts Digital Story Maker tool's Gallery. If you want to let them find their own images, you can share these sources of Creative Commons and public domain images:

Pexels <https://www.pexels.com/>

Pixabay <https://pixabay.com/>

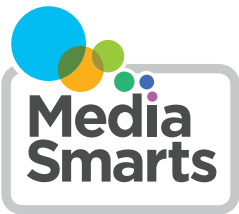
Unsplash <https://unsplash.com/>

Iwaria: <https://iwaria.com/>

Openverse: <https://openverse.org/>

Pics4Learning: <https://www.pics4learning.com/>

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Emotionally Charged Words

Read through the list of words below and then use the T-chart to sort them into words that are *neutral* and ones that have an *emotional charge*. There are two examples in the chart to get you started.

(If you don't know the literal meaning of any of the words, look them up or ask me.)

Walk Stroll Unique Smell Group Different
Filled Young Relaxed House Gang
Home Lazy Crammed Childish Stench

NEUTRAL	EMOTIONAL
Walk	Stroll

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Now choose five of the emotionally charged words and explain their connotation: how do they make you feel?

Here's an example to get you started:

1. Word: Stroll

Connotation: A *stroll* is a pleasant, relaxed walk.

2. Word:

Connotation:

3. Word:

Connotation:

4. Word:

Connotation:

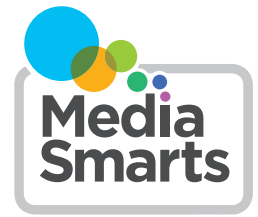
5. Word:

Connotation:

6. Word:

Connotation:

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Why School Should Start Later

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Imagine waking up feeling refreshed and ready to learn, instead of groggy and tired. That's what could happen if schools started later in the morning. Many students struggle to rise early, not just because of staying up late, but because their growing bodies crave more sleep than adults.

Doctors and scientists agree that kids need a generous 9 to 11 hours of sleep each night to be at their best. But with schools starting cruelly early, many students don't get enough sleep. This lack of sleep can make it a challenge to pay attention in class, remember what they learned, and even get along with friends.

Imagine how much better students could do in school if they were more awake. They might get higher grades, feel happier, and have more energy for fun things like sports and hobbies.

Starting school later isn't just about feeling more awake. It's about giving students the best chance to succeed instead of setting them up to fail. When kids are well-rested, they can think more clearly, solve problems better, and be more creative.

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Emotional Media

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Watch the videos *Autumn Peltier's Watermark* and *Misunderstood* and answer these questions for each one.

	Autumn Peltier's Watermark	Misunderstood
What information, facts or arguments are presented?		
How does it use words to provoke an emotional reaction?		
How does it use images to provoke an emotional reaction?		
How does it use story to provoke an emotional reaction?		
How does it use music to provoke an emotional reaction?		

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Emotional Media (Teacher's Version)

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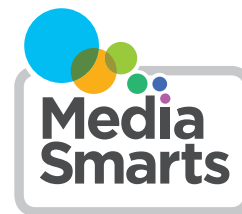
Watch the videos *Autumn Peltier's Watermark* and *Misunderstood* and answer these questions for each one.

	Autumn Peltier's Watermark	Misunderstood
What information, facts or arguments are presented?	Autumn is an advocate for access to clean water because her community had a boil water advisory. This is an issue that affects many people and will affect many more.	You can film and edit videos on an iPhone and play them on a TV (if they both have AirPlay)
How does it use words to provoke an emotional reaction?	Autumn uses emotionally charged words like "ceremony" and "contaminated" that communicate the importance of her story and the issue.	Almost no words are used except for "A Harris Family Holiday" on the TV screen halfway through. The words "family" and "holiday" provoke feelings relating to families and nostalgia.
How does it use images to provoke an emotional reaction?	We see images of Autumn, a 13-year-old Anishinaabe teen from Wikwemikong First Nation, along with images of water and nature. In particular, we see a composite image of her and rushing water at the 8 second mark. Autumn's appearance, facial expressions and mannerisms make her seem very likeable and endearing. The emotional effect is to make us like her and listen to what she says.	The first half of the video is somewhat dark, grey and colourless. We see repeated images of a boy who is always looking at his phone. The rest of the family is doing winter activities such as making a snowman, but we don't see them having much fun. The second half is much brighter and more colourful. We see people having fun (throwing snowballs, making snow angels, etc.) and see lots of close-ups and shots where many family members are together. We see people kissing and crying from happiness.

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS

How does it use story to provoke an emotional reaction?	<p>Autumn tells a story about how she saw a boil water advisory and her mother told her the water was contaminated, which inspired her to advocate for access to clean drinking water.</p> <p>The story makes us feel how important the issue is to her, her family and her community, and makes us more likely to feel the issue is relevant to us.</p>	
How does it use music to provoke an emotional reaction?	<p>The music is relaxed, rhythmic acoustic guitar. It helps to make the overall feeling of the video inspiring instead of sad.</p>	<p>The music is slow and a bit sad in the first part of the video, with no lyrics. The music in the first section ends with discordant note, like someone hitting the wrong key on a piano, and then is silent until the video on the TV starts playing.</p> <p>When the song starts again it has lyrics and a happier, nostalgic sound.</p> <p>The effect is to make you sad in the first half and then relieved and emotional in the second half.</p>

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Red Team

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A “red team” is a group that tries to guess what might go wrong with a plan. To do this, they brainstorm every *problem, risk or drawback* they can think of.

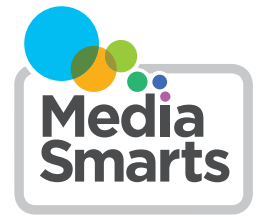
You are going to do a red team exercise to find the possible risks of **using emotional appeals to persuade people**.

Take a few minutes to write down every possible *problem, risk or drawback* of using emotional appeals to persuade people that you can think of:

Have you considered that we’re much less likely to change our minds about something we believe for emotional reasons?

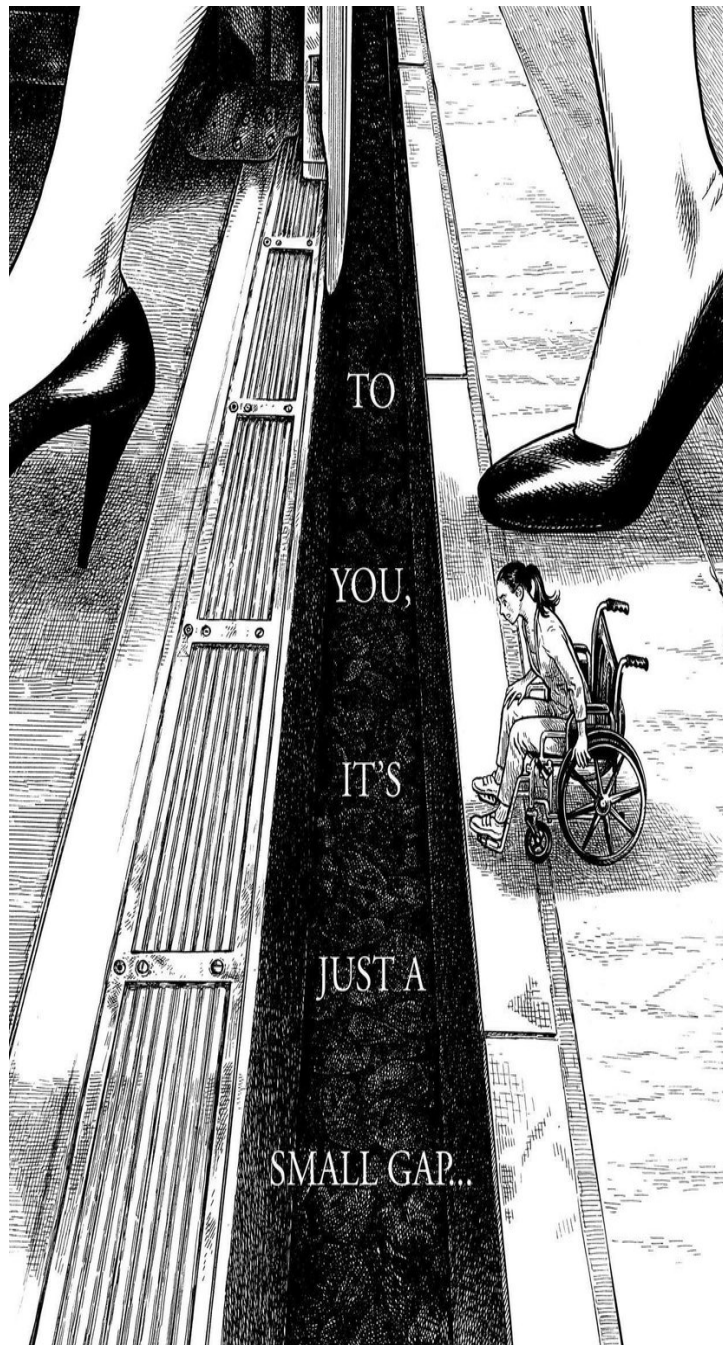
Take a few more minutes to write down any more problems, risks or issues you can think of.

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



“To You, It’s Just a Small Gap”

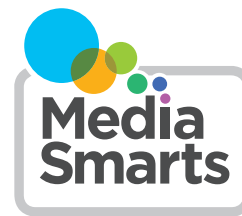
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What may be a simple task for you, can be an impossible obstacle to overcome for others. Hong Kong PHAB Association is committed to integration between people with and without disabilities, to create a barrier-free society for all.



RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Dealing With Emotional Appeals

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Choose an item from the class “red team” list that you feel is the most worrying or important.

Item:

Finally, think about at least **two** ways of dealing with the issue and explain them.

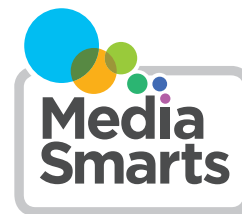
Next, why do you think it is an important problem, risk or drawback to consider?

One of these should be something that **media makers** can do when making works that use emotional appeals, and one should be something that **media audiences** (people who read, watch, play, or listen to media) can do.

What **media makers** can do:

What **media audiences** can do:

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS



Making Emotional Media

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For this assignment you will be making a media work that uses emotional appeals to convince the viewer. You will be using emotionally charged **words**, **images** and **music**.

Step 1. Choose a topic that you want to convince your audience about. You may choose your own topic or use one of these (or its opposite):

- Students should not have to do homework
- Classrooms should have pets in them.
- Phones and tablets should be allowed in class.
- Families should always eat dinner together.
- Every student should have to learn to play the ukulele

Step 2. Write 3-5 sentences to support your topic. Use as many emotionally charged words and phrases as you can.

Step 3. Now visit the MediaSmarts Digital Story Maker at <https://digitalstorymaker.mediasmarts.ca>. You can use any device that has an internet browser like Chrome, Firefox, Safari and so on.

You can make an account with your name and an email address, or just a username.

If you use your email address, you'll have to open the email you get and click on the confirmation link. If you ever forget your password, a recovery email will be sent to that address.

If you use just a username, you will be logged in right away. There is no way to recover a lost password if you only have a username, so make sure to record your username and password.

To start making your digital story, click or tap "Start Here":

Create a new digital story

Start here 

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Give your story a name and click or tap “Start”:

Start a New Digital Story

What would you like to call your digital story?

Story title

Start

Step 4. Now you’ll add the audio and image for each segment.

For the audio, you can use the story maker to record each sentence, or upload audio files you made with a different app. (If you upload it, you will need to say whether you made it or what right you have to use it.)

Step 5. Choose an image to go with each of your lines of audio. Your images should cause the same emotional reaction as your words.

You can either upload an image for each segment or choose one from the gallery. (If you upload it, you will need to say whether you made it or what right you have to use it.)

Audio

You can choose to either upload an audio file or record your spoken audio here for this segment of your story.

Upload

No audio

Record

Your image will appear with no narration. Use the slider to set how many seconds you want your image to appear.

30

Step 6. Once you have made at least three segments, you can choose your music.

You can play the different music options to find one that has the emotional effect you want. When you have chosen on, click or tap the circle next to the title:

Choose a background music option for your video.

Atmosphere

CC Naoya Sakamata

0:00 / 3:51

Better Days

Royalty free music from Bensound

0:00 / 2:34

RECOGNIZING EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Step 7. When you've made at least three segments and chosen your music, you can **render** your video. That turns it into a video format that you can play in other apps and on other devices. To do that, click or tap *Render video*.

Needs rendering...

Length: 00:00:41

Segments: 5

Created: 2024-06-13

Render video

Make sure you have added all your segments and chosen background music before you render your video. You will be able to continue making changes and re-rendering your video until you are ready to submit it to the Sharing Gallery.

Step 8. Once it's rendered, you will be able to download it onto your device by clicking or tapping *Download video*:

Download video