

# Media are constructions

**GRADES** 4-6 **DURATION** 45-90 minutes

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students watch a video introducing the media literacy key concept that media are constructions. They then explore this concept by considering a pair of cereal boxes and identifying the different elements of the box and the purposes they serve. In an optional final task, students pick a target audience and create their own cereal box to appeal to that audience.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- understand the key concept that media are constructions
- identify the constructed nature and parts of a media product
- identify the possible purposes of a media creator in making a media product
- apply their understanding of the constructed nature of media by creating a cereal box designed for a specific audience

## PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Arrange to have access to a digital projector or digital whiteboard and cue up the video **“Media Are Constructions”** [<http://bit.ly/16iDYcE>]
- Bring to class two or more cereal boxes, with at least one of them from a cereal aimed at children

## PROCEDURE

Begin by showing the video **“Media are Constructions”** [<http://bit.ly/16iDYcE>]. At the end of the video, ask students to think about the points that are raised. What does it mean to say that “media are constructions?” (*It reminds us that any media product was made by somebody.*) How does knowing this help us to understand media? (*We can look at the choices the creators made – what to include, what to leave out, and so on – to figure out what the creators were trying to do.*)

Now read from the screen the assignment: “Think about a webpage, advertisement, or video and identify all the parts in its construction. How are the parts put together and what is the goal of the creator?”

### Media are constructions

Bring in several boxes of cereal aimed at different markets (a kids' cereal and a cereal aimed at adults, for instance) and repeat the question from the video. Explain to students that a cereal box is basically an in-store ad for the cereal, which serves to make it stand out from other cereals and make it appeal to the people who might buy it.

Have students identify the different parts of the cereal box.

(Make sure to look at all sides of the cereal box and point out things they might not think of as “parts,” like the background colour.)

- logo
- image of the cereal
- image of any other food along with the cereal (fruit, etc.)
- slogans
- mascot (if any)
- any other images
- ingredients
- nutritional information
- contests
- premiums (prizes or toys that come with the cereal)
- activities
- health claims
- connections to other media content (tie-ins to TV shows or movies, links to websites, etc.)

Once students have identified the different parts, have them discuss what purpose each part serves – making the cereal stand out on the shelves, making it seem fun or healthy, creating an appealing character for kids to relate to, getting kids to visit the website, etc. *(Make sure to note that some elements of the cereal, such as the ingredients list and nutritional information, are required by law. How big are these elements compared to the others?)*

Now have students look at the second cereal box and go through the same process. What choices were made differently and why?

### OPTIONAL TASK

Referring back to the classroom discussion of all of the elements that are used to construct a cereal box, have students pick a target market (young boys or girls, teenage boys or girls, adult men or women) and create their own box design to appeal to that audience. Students may then show their cereal boxes to the class and explain why they made their choices.