

What is media anyway?

INTRODUCTION

This opening video to the Key Concepts of Media Literacy video series introduces students to the idea that the word *media* - which they may already know in the sense of the media industry (“the media”) - means channels of communication between a person or persons and their intended audience. Any form of communication that carries a message is a medium. This can include things students might be aware of, like magazines, television, radio and the Internet; and also less obvious things, like text messages and branded logos on clothes.

Because we are constantly surrounded by media, we may not even notice that we’re consuming it - or, more importantly, we may consume it without paying attention or engaging with it critically. One way of introducing this idea is to use the expression “I don’t know who discovered water, but I’m pretty sure it wasn’t a fish.” Unlike fish, though, people can learn to pay attention and engage with the “sea” or media around us.

The video closes with the suggestion to students to “Imagine a typical day in your life and identify all the different kinds of media that are present.” Before teaching the lessons for the five key concepts, have students take five to ten minutes to do a “media audit,” of a typical day in their lives: making a list of all the media that they see, hear, play or otherwise consume. When students have finished, make a master list of media *forms* (TV shows, video games, etc.) on the board and have them fill in the most common forms of media they encounter on a daily basis. Make sure to include:

- Outdoor advertising (billboards, bus shelter ads, etc.)
- Product packaging in stores or in products they use at home (cereal boxes, for example)
- Logos or messages on clothing (theirs and others’)
- Posters, signs, pop and snack machines in school
- Text messages
- Background music in stores