



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Grades 6 to 8
<b>About the Author:</b>	<i>Media Literacy for Development &amp; Children's Rights</i> , UNICEF Canada. Used with permission. For more teaching and lesson ideas for global education from around the world, visit UNICEF Canada's Global Schoolhouse at <a href="http://www.unicef.ca">www.unicef.ca</a> .

# Adjusting the Focus

"Children are immersed daily in a dense bath of mass media images and messages. Some teach children about the world around them. Others promote deceptive, partial, stereotypical and sometimes harmful perceptions."

***Edunotes, Issue 2 Volume 3***  
**UNICEF Canada**

## Introduction

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"Media Literacy for Development & Children's Rights" was created by UNICEF Canada to help young people in grades 6 - 8 understand the role played by the media in influencing their attitudes and perceptions about developing nations and development issues. This module contains a series of lessons, exercises and background information to help familiarize students with the issues and challenges surrounding representation of other countries and cultures by the media. There are two activities in this lesson: Point of View: Children in the Media, and Censorship Case Studies: Who Decides What We See?.

General backgrounders for this lesson:

- [Why Teach About Media Literacy?](#)
- [Definitions for Use in Activities](#)

## Activity One: Point of View: Children in the Media

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This activity deals with images and perceptions of youth in the media.

Resources and materials needed for this activity:

- newspaper photos and articles used in [Lesson Two](#)
- a copy of the list, [Children's Rights and the Media](#), for each student (or a copy of the full text of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/index.html>)



## Procedure

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**Step One:** Ask the students, working in small groups, to select newspaper photos and articles that involve children, and then sort these into three categories: POSITIVE images of children, NEGATIVE images of children, and NEUTRAL images of children. They can discuss and record in their journals:

- How many items concerned children compared to other items?
- Compare the number of positive, negative and neutral images of children.
- Describe how children are portrayed in the news:
  - are they victims?
  - are they aggressors?
  - are they portrayed as contributing members of society?
  - are they given voice (e.g., quoted or consulted by the reporter)?
  - are they reporters?
- What stereotypes or bias about children/youth seem to be presented in the news?
- How much of the content is information to help youth improve their health and well-being?
- Do you feel that your lifestyle and point of view are reflected in the media? If yes, when and where? If not, what is missing?

**Step Two:** If the full text of the Convention is used, ask students in pairs to cut out the articles that have some connection to media issues (particularly the issues raised in Step One). Alternatively, give each pair one of the rights in the list, [Children's Rights and the Media](#). Ask each pair to give an example of how their rights can be positively affected by the media, and an example of how these rights can be negatively affected by the media. Students can paste examples from print media in their journals, or give written examples. Share an example from each right with the class.

**Step Three:** In pairs again, students choose an article of the Convention, and create and implement an action that promotes that right in the media. For example, for article 12 (children's opinion), students could write a letter to the editor of a news program, paper or magazine urging youth to be interviewed or contracted to report on issues that concern them. For article 24 (health and health care), students could analyze a teen-magazine for images and messages about health, and create a cover (and articles) for an alternative magazine that positively promotes health.

## Activity Two: Censorship Case Studies: Who Decides What We See?

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In this activity, students review two case studies to explore children's rights issues related to mass media and censorship.

### Resources and Materials

- a copy of the list, [Children's Rights and the Media](#), for each student (or a copies of the full text of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* at <http://www.unicef.org/crc/index.html>).
- a copy of ONE of the Censorship Case Studies for each pair of students: half the pairs should get Case Study One and half Case Study Two.



## Procedure

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**Step One:** Initiate a class discussion about censorship.

- How do the students define censorship?
- What is its purpose?
- What do you feel needs to be censored and why?
- Who should decide what should be censored?
- Should young people be consulted and involved in the censorship process?

**Step Two:** Stage a class debate on this statement: "Children's rights are protected (or harmed) by censorship," or on the statement, "Media Literacy/Education is better than censorship (or Censorship is better than Media Literacy) to protect children's well-being." Allow the two sides to prepare for the debate by giving them copies of [Children's Rights and the Media](#) - or the full text of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Students should particularly consider the potential impacts (positive or negative) of censorship on the rights to non-discrimination (article 2), information (article 17), participation (articles 12, 13, 14), health (article 24), culture (article 30) and exploitation (article 34).

**Step Three:** Give a copy of one of the [Censorship Case Studies](#) and the list, [Children's Rights and the Media](#), to each pair of students. Ask each pair to:

- Read their case study.
- Discuss if and how censorship is occurring, who is doing the censoring and why.
- Decide which children's rights the censorship will affect, positively or negatively: put a "+" beside the rights on the list that could be positively affected and a "-" beside the rights that could be negatively affected.
- Write in their journals a proposed resolution to the controversy that will best protect all the rights. Consider:
  - What would you do in this situation?
  - Who might help?
  - How could the young person work to protect their rights?
  - What resolutions might consider the interests of all parties - parents, teachers, students?

**Step Four:** Ask each Case Study One pair to join with a Case Study Two pair, and discuss their cases and resolutions. Invite the groups to share their observations with the whole class.



## Children's Rights and the Media

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### ARTICLE 1: Definition of a child

*A child is recognized as a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.*

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

### ARTICLE 2: Non-discrimination

*All rights apply to all children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.*

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

### ARTICLE 6: Survival and development

*Every child has the right to protection for survival.*

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

### ARTICLE 12: The child's opinion

*The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.*

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.



**ARTICLE 13: Freedom of expression**

*The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.*

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
  - a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
  - b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

**ARTICLE 14: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**

*The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.*

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

**ARTICLE 17: Access to appropriate information**

*The State shall ensure the accessibility to children of information and material from a diversity of sources, and it shall encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social and cultural benefit to the child, and take steps to protect him or her from harmful materials.*

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. To this end, States Parties shall:

- a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
- b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
- c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;



- d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;
- e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

#### **ARTICLE 24: Health and health care**

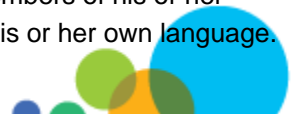
*The child has the right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable.*

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.
2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:
  - a) To diminish infant and child mortality;
  - b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;
  - c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;
  - d) To ensure appropriate prenatal and postnatal health care for mothers;
  - e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;
  - f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.
3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.
4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international cooperation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

#### **ARTICLE 30: Children of minorities or indigenous populations**

*Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to their own culture, language and religion.*

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.



**ARTICLE 34: Sexual exploitation**

*The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse.*

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

[www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/)

*For the full text of the Convention of the Rights of the Child*



## Censorship Case Studies

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### Case Study One

Renee is in grade eleven at a public high school. For the Independent Study portion of her English class she was asked to either choose a book from a list her teacher had given the class, or to choose her own book that she would need to have approved by her teacher. Renee decided to choose one of the books from the list her teacher had given her. Renee found the book very interesting and decided to tell her mother about it. After taking a quick look through the novel and discovering that it dealt with issues around sexual orientation, Renee's mother decided that the novel was inappropriate for her child. She discussed the matter with several other like-minded parents who concurred. The parents formed a petition asking the school board to ban this novel, and calling for stricter guidelines for what books were allowed in the schools.

### Case Study Two

Raj is fifteen and goes to a private school that is strictly regulated by the administration and parents. He would like to know more about sex and sexually transmitted diseases, but he only ever receives information from his class mates, and wonders if this information is reliable. Raj tries to ask questions in health class about HIV and AIDS, but the teachers say they cannot discuss the issue. When Raj tried to access information on the Internet at school, he found that a firewall prevented him from accessing sites with information on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Raj feels frustrated, because he knows that HIV/AIDS is a serious health risk, and isn't sure how to get correct information about it to protect his health.

