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- Using Today’s Music and Movies as Powerful Leadership and Teaching Tools

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- Workforce Development Officer (Jacksonville, FL)

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MUSIC, POWER, ACTION
Using Today’s Music & Movies To Connect To Youth

PRESENTER BACKGROUND
• 40+ years in staff programming, after school programs, community facilitation, strategic planning, and training
• Roots in Juvenile Justice, Prevention, Education, WIA
• Developed/trained programs in 30+ states to over 150,000 adults and youth participants (600 trainings in 2016)
• Nationally awarded innovative program of year!

PRESENTER BACKGROUND

MILLENIAL LEARNING STYLES
This generation (the Millenials), more than any other before are:
• multi-tasking throughout the day
• navigating complex technical or social settings
• pressured to adapt to traditional didactic teaching methods
• analysis oriented and searching for meaning

More than any other generation, the Millenials are adept to all three learning styles: Auditory, Visual, Kinetic

Running Agenda:
Welcome
Pt. 1 MILLENIAL LEARNING STYLES
Pt. 2 MUSIC AS A TOOL
Pt. 3 VIDEO AS A TOOL
Closing/Evaluation
Music, Power, Action
Using Today’s Music & Movies To Connect To Youth

Running Agenda:
Welcome
Pt. 1: Millenial Learning Styles
Pt. 2: Music As A Tool
Pt. 3: Video As A Tool
Closing/Evaluation

MUSIC AS A LEARNING TOOL
Music is the great generational equalizer:
• #1 cultural identifying tool
• core element of each step/process = belonging
• Used to introduce, discuss, model, summarize

Methods could include:
BACKGROUND
HIDDEN MEANING
DISSECT/CSI
CHALLENGE

VIDEO AS A LEARNING TOOL
Millenials live in a visual age:
• Seeing is believing, seeing is understanding
• U-Tube, Flickr, MySpace - a culture of imagery
• Used to introduce, discuss, model, summarize

Methods could include
LEADERSHIP
NON-ACCEPTANCE
DISSECT/CSI
CHALLENGE

Running Agenda:
Welcome
Pt. 1: Millenial Learning Styles
Pt. 2: Music As A Tool
Pt. 3: Video As A Tool
Closing/Evaluation

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Music, Power, Action!
Using Today’s Music & Movies To Connect To Youth

Music Resources
www.promoonly.com
www.cpuy.org
www.songmeanings.net

(PRE 2010)
“Changes” – Tupak Shakur
“Superstar” – Lupe Fiasco
“Can’t Tell Me Nothing” – Kanye West
“Livin Like You’re Dying” – Kris Allen
“A Dream” – Common
“Test Car” – Wyclef
“Live Your Life” – T.I.
“One Day” – Matisyahu
“One Step At A Time” – Jordin Sparks
“Airplanes” – B.O.B.
“Awake And Alive” – Skillet
“The Show’s Goin On” – Lupe Fiasco
“You’re Beautiful” – Kelly Pickler
“Fast Car” – Tracy Chapman
“A Dream” – Common

“11” – Cassidy Pope
“Who Says” – Selena Gomez
“Teenage Love Affair” – Alesha Dixon
“I Ain’t Goin Down” – Eric Church

“(2010-2015ish)
“Till I Don’t” – Lil Wayne
“Power” – Kanye West
“Pricetag” – B.O.B.
“Perfect” – Pink
“Ain’t No More” – Redman
“Uprising” – Muse
“You’re Gonna Go Far Kid” – Offspring
“Coming Home” – Diddy Dirty Money
“Firework” – Katy Perry
“Not Afraid” – Eminem
“Strip Mo” – Natascha Beddingfield
“Awake And Alive” – Skillet
“The Show’s Goin On” – Lupe Fiasco
“You’re Beautiful” – Kelly Pickler
“Born This Way” – Lady Gaga
“Who Says” – Selena Gomez
“Is Anybody Out There” – K’Naan
“Carry On” – Foster The People
“We Are Young” – Fun
“Born This Way” – Lady Gaga
“Wrong Way” – Taylor Swift
“I Will Die” – Nelly
“Perfect” – Pink
“Pricetag” – B.O.B.
“This Is It” – Whitney Houston
“Just The Way You Are” – Bruno Mars
“The Show’s Goin On” – Lupe Fiasco
“You’re Beautiful” – Kelly Pickler
“Fast Car” – Tracy Chapman
“A Dream” – Common

(Summer Institute Scavenger Hunt)
Urban/Urban-Hip Hop/Latin
“Baby Mama” – Fantasia
“Brenda’s Got A Baby” – 2Pac
“Teenage Love Affair” – Alicia Keys
“Sweetest Girl” – Wyclef
“Test It” – Jason Derulo
“Retrospect For Life” – Common
“Tcha” – Outkast
“Lost Ones” – J. Cole
“Runaway Love” – Ludacris
“The Rain Comes Down” – Jean Groe
“3 Sides To A Story” – Joe Budden
“How To Love” – Lil Wayne
“Lollipop” (remix) – Lil Wayne
“Impeccable Intentions” – Jimmy Busch

Mainstream/Pop
“Wrong Way” – S Club 7
“Bored With” – Lacey’s Way
“Strip Mo” – Natascha Beddingfield
“10 Days Late” – Third Eye Blind
“Throw Youself Away” – Nickelback
“Orange County” – Stylo
“Positive” – Michael Franti
“Lookin’ for Love” – Kanyechasey
“Tattoo” – Taylor Swift
“The Rain Comes Down” – Shara Twain
“Red Rug Tap” – Tim McGraw

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MUSIC, POWER, ACTION

Using Today's Music & Movies To Connect To Youth

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RESOURCE ARTICLE

Worksheet & Article
“Teaching With Movies”
(www.FILMproject.org)

MUSIC, POWER, ACTION!
Using TODAY’s music and videos
as powerful teaching tools

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Teaching with Movies: A Guide for Parents and Educators

Developed by The F.I.L.M. Project

A Partnership of Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth
Introduction

Today’s youth experience a media-saturated world, from television to movies, the Internet, music, magazines, video games and more. Technological advances in the digital realm have even broadened access to programs from a variety of platforms, allowing youth to multitask with their media.

According to statistics from the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout, Roberts & Foehr, 2005), youth ages 8-18 spend approximately 6.5 hours each day using media, an activity that far surpasses the time they spend with parents, doing homework or playing sports (p. 6). While television is the most popular media choice, averaging 3 hours 51 minutes a day, other media forms also play an important role. Youth in the age group daily spend approximately 1 hour 44 minutes listening to music, just over an hour using the computer, 49 minutes playing video games, 43 minutes reading and 25 minutes watching movies (Rideout, Roberts & Foehr, 2005). For movies, that equals 9,125 minutes or 152 hours per year!

This heavy media intake for a typical American kid may sound alarming, particularly when themes of sex and violence can be so common in media. However, quality media programs, particularly, quality movies, have the opportunity to provide youth with positive learning experiences. While countless movies that incorporate positive themes, youth need guidance in selecting what to watch and making sense of the messages being conveyed. This guide will help you do that as well as provide an understanding of how youth can learn positive values, behavior and decision-making abilities from movies, whether they are in classroom or informal settings such as after-school programs or at home.

The F.I.L.M. Project (Finding Inspiration in Literature & Movies) has been crafting free activity and discussion guides around selected books and movies for several years to offer parents and leaders of youth a fun and insightful learning experience from watching a movie. This guide takes F.I.L.M. curriculum to a whole new level in offering the know-how to select movies with redeeming messages, and develop meaningful lessons and discussions for use with your group of youth. With this guide, the concept of F.I.L.M. is broadened to a greater breadth of movies, offering you a greater choice of movies and flexibility of lessons.
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In this module you will be reminded of the powerful impact that movies can have on youth. You will also learn that youth do not respond passively to media, but rather observe and retain messages that are conveyed over time. Moreover, youth of different ages have distinct preferences and aspire to watch movies with higher ratings than may be deemed appropriate for their age. Therefore, it is important that adults help youth make sense of the messages they hear and see on screen.

Sections in this module include:

1: Movies as Storytellers
2: How Youth Learn From the Media
3: What Youth Want to Watch
4: Making Sense of Media Messages
MODULE ONE
Section 1: Movies as Storytellers

Movies are truly modern-day storytelling instruments. They have the power to reach massive audiences, which is why they should, and do, matter so much to society. Whether they are stories of afar or just everyday existence, good movies are a way for people, particularly youth, to understand and relate to the world in constructive ways.

Countless films generate buzz and top dollars at the box office due to dashing special effects, comic relief or sensational action sequences. However, the movies that have a lasting impact are often those that also make us think in a new way or expose us to a meaningful story, more so than merely entertain.

Movie Memories Exercise
Can you recall movies that you watched during your childhood or adolescence that touched your life in a meaningful way? You may have memories of seeing the movie for the first time, memories from the actual day or remember certain lines that have stuck with you over the years. List some movies that either exposed you to a new way of thinking or had plots and/or characters that you learned from:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Ask yourself the following questions:
1. Why did each of these movies have an impact on my life?
2. Did I relate specifically to any of the characters in these movies? How so?
3. Did I have the opportunity to converse with family members, teachers or friends about these movies? If so, what did these conversations provide for me?
4. Were any of these movies based on books?
5. If I were to see, or have seen, any of these movies again as an adult, would/did they have the same effect?

These questions generate thinking and self-reflection, demonstrating the importance of delving below the surface of movies for important lessons. From recalling this type of information, you’ll probably be surprised at how much these movies impacted you. Hopefully this demonstrates to you the influence movies can have on young people, and the importance of having those movies leave a positive lasting impression.
As described in the introduction to this guide, youth spend an average of 6.5 hours each day with media. Therefore, it is important for adults to understand how youth process the messages being conveyed by the media.

Research has demonstrated that the media plays a significant role in the socialization of youth. Socialization refers to learning one’s culture and how to live within it. Social cognitive theory of mass communication addresses concerns about the effects of increased viewership on human behavior (Bandura, 2002). Media content consumed by children is likely to shape their perceptions of the real world and the people operating within it.

Because people are exposed to television continuously throughout their lifetimes, they begin to experience overarching patterns, despite individual variety within programs. These patterns become normalized over time and affect children from a young age as they are exposed to television and other forms of media, such as movies.

The effects of the media on children can be profound, often establishing gender and racial stereotypes. For example, constant exposure to men with major roles may lead youth to believe that men are dominant in society. The prevalence of the way women are portrayed, be it physical or emotional, may lead youth to believe this is how females are to be. A lack of minority characters with lead roles in movies and television may reinforce white-centric sentiments. Instead of observing the actual diversity of life with regard to gender, race, culture, attitudes, etc., youth can be exposed to repetitive homogenous patterns in the media.

With the beginning of adolescence, youth begin to develop abstract thinking capabilities. As a result, they become more in-tune with social norms and more concerned with discovering an identity acceptable among their peers. Depictions in the media come to serve as learning guides through which social norms are internalized (Nakkula & Toshalis, 2006). Therefore, it is critically important for parents, teachers and other adults working closely with young people to understand that youth do not passively experience media. Furthermore, adults can play a vital role in structuring activities and discussions around movies that contain thought-provoking material, particularly those films that go against certain Hollywood stereotypes. It is important that youth are able to find and assert an identity apart from negative or stereotypical media influence.
In addition to understanding how youth make sense of movies and other media forms, it is also important for adults to know what youth look for when they select what to watch. Youth will not enjoy a boring, slow-paced movie that lacks humor or action. The movies they choose will challenge their way of thinking because they are in the process of constructing their identity. They will often select movies that have characters that they can either identify with (age, race, gender, interests, etc.) or aspire to be like.

Research has revealed that preferences also change with age. In an investigation of how youth define the programs they watch, Davies, Buckingham and Kelley (2004) found that youth under the age of 10 are more likely to willingly accept the authority of their parents in the media selection process. Pre-school children in particular tend to watch programs specifically designed for their age range. However, around the age of 10, on the brink of adolescence, youth begin to aspire to a slightly older teen lifestyle. This is reflected in their selection of programs and movies to watch. Davies et al. (2004) conducted group interviews with older youth and found that “coolness” was associated with watching particular shows. This aspiration in the choice of media can be problematic for youth who may watch television shows and movies that depict older teens engaging in risky behaviors with no consequences because it’s “cool”.

A Kaiser Family Foundation Report (Federman, 2002) explained the “forbidden fruit effect” of the Motion Picture Association of America’s (MPAA) rating system, which may attract the audiences the ratings are hoping to deter. In a study where youth were told to select programs or movies that were randomly assigned ratings, youth ages 10-14 were especially attracted to PG-13 and R ratings and deterred from G ratings (Federman, 2002, p. 2). This finding substantiates the aspirational effect that Davis et al. described, and leads further to the need for adults to be involved in the selection process and the deciphering of the messages of what the youth see, age appropriate or not.
Because youth do not respond passively to media, over time, messages from the media contribute to their overall social development. Moreover, youth select movies with specific attributes, namely due to their humor, excitement and ability to identify with characters. So, what role do parents and educators play in this selection process?

Beyond controlling the remote or putting limits on movies according to their ratings, adults can help youth make sense of what they are seeing, and at what age they should see it. Valuable educational lessons and developmental topics can be derived from movies with the help of parents and/or educators. Many media researchers have pointed to dialogue and social interactions as important components of making sense of messages in the media. David Buckingham (1996) explains that identity “is not something that is simply fixed or given: on the contrary, it is largely constructed through dialogue” (p. 58). Therefore, dialogue provides an opportunity for youth and adults to engage in constructive analysis of media images and messages.

Movies are engaging due to the visual and audio stimulation they provide. Regardless of who you are in relation to youth, you can enhance their viewing experience. While youth, especially those in middle school, may not be excited by academics, they are excited by their social lives and popular culture. Parents and educators must find a way to involve youth’s interests and value their voices. Furthermore, youth learn in different fashions, with movies giving visual learners an opportunity to thrive.

Some examples of using movies as teaching tools are as follows:

- Parents can lead their children in discussions and activities after viewing a movie together.
- English teachers can select a movie based on a piece of literature, using segments of the movie to engage their youth in conjunction with the book.
- Social studies teachers can find a movie that covers a historical period they are teaching.
- Out-of-school youth workers can use movies to teach important character education skills such as leadership, setting goals and becoming advocates for a particular cause.

As youth on average watch 25 minutes of movies per day, why not make this an enjoyable learning opportunity? It’s an opportunity to make so much more of it with learning and dialog than to be merely passing time with it.
RESOURCE ARTICLE

Teaching And Reaching The Millennial Generation Through Media Literacy”
(Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, March 2009)

MUSIC, POWER, ACTION!
Using TODAY’s music and videos as powerful teaching tools
Students today live in an environment in which reading and writing, through digital media as well as traditional texts, are pervasive. The challenge for teachers is to connect the literacy skills that students develop in their social environment with the literacy environment of the school.

From Gutenberg to Gates, from the invention of the printing press to the emergence of digital communication, technology has transformed the way we produce, distribute, and receive information. In turn, new technology challenges our understanding of what it means to be literate. During the Gutenberg era, only a small number of clergy, scholars, and scribes were literate. In the Gates era, universal literacy is the goal, with the expectation of the ability to read and write complex text at critical and interpretive levels. In addition, the concept of text has changed from traditional printed materials to a variety of media, including the Internet, film, and television.

In times of rapid technological change, it has been typical for adults to criticize the academic achievement and work ethic of their own children. Because the Greek philosopher Socrates was a vocal critic of the youth of Athens, Berliner and Biddle (1995) dubbed this phenomenon the Socrates Legacy. In this tradition, there is currently a high level of concern about the literacy and academic achievement of today’s adolescents. For example, in To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence, the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) argued that “Americans in almost every demographic group were reading fiction, poetry and drama—and books in general—at significantly lower rates than 10 or 20 years ago” (p. 7).

While we agree that there is reason for concern regarding the literacy of today’s students, we believe that the problem is more complex than what is portrayed by the National Assessment for Education Progress and other reports (e.g., National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). We will argue in this article that because of the availability of digital technologies, today’s teenagers bring to school a rich and different set of literacy practices and background that is often unacknowledged or underused by educators. As always, it is the responsibility of today’s educators to build a bridge between the knowledge students already have and the content that they need to learn to be successful inside and outside of school.

Multiple forms of literacy have been named in the literature including information literacy, visual literacy, computer or digital literacy, and media
literacy, but there is considerable overlap between these forms. In *Literacy in a Digital World*, Tyner (1998) reminded us that “the overlap between the competencies and purposes of various multiliteracies is so close, that their differences have more to do with constituencies than anything else” (p. 104). Media literacy, an umbrella term, will be addressed in this article.

Media literacy has been broadly defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and effectively communicate in a variety of forms including print and nonprint texts (Considine & Haley, 1999). In the United States and Canada, professional groups such as the Alliance for a Media Literate America and the Association for Media Literacy advocate integrating media literacy across the curriculum, emphasizing its importance in developing informed and responsible citizens. A commonly recognized core of media literacy principles informs classroom pedagogy that focuses on media texts and popular culture. These principles have been articulated by leading scholars in the field, particularly Masterman (1985) and Buckingham (2003; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). Considine and Haley (1999) recapitulated these principles:

- Media are constructions.
- Media representations construct reality.
- Media have commercial purposes.
- Audiences negotiate meaning.
- Each medium has its own forms, conventions, and language.
- Media contain values and ideology.
- Media messages may have social consequences or effects.

The pedagogy that accompanies this approach helps students interrogate media texts along with the context in which they are both created and consumed.

We live in an era surrounded by media that bombard us with messages through text, images, and sound. But simply being surrounded by media does not necessarily mean we recognize or understand its content or intent. To prepare today’s students to succeed in the 21st century, educators must begin to address the complex, high-tech media environments that are part of everyday life. This involves understanding what media and technology do to today’s young people along with the equally intriguing issue of what they do with it. An excellent data bank for exploring these questions can be found at The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth & Media (www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse).

In this article we will provide a description of today’s adolescents in the United States, labeled the Millennial Generation, develop an argument for weaving media literacy into the curriculum, and provide specific instructional strategies. Readers should note that most of our references and our primary framework are with youth in the United States. However, as Friedman (2007) pointed out, the world is flat, and what is happening in terms of technology, economics, and education is a worldwide phenomenon and not restricted to countries or regions.

**Exploring the Millennial Generation**

Children who have grown up since the emergence of the World Wide Web and the assortment of related digital technologies (e.g., cell phones, text messaging, video games, and instant messaging) are now being referred to as the Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This generation is different from previous generations in important ways. For an excellent primer see the Howe and Strauss website *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (www.millennialsrising.com).

In this section, we will review what is known about the Millennials, particularly in terms of their use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). A theme of this review is the paradox that this generation presents to educators. Because of ICT, Millennials have access to more information, than any generation in history (Foehr, 2006; Lenhart, Arafah, Smith, & Macgill, 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005; Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). These technologies have created an increasingly complex environment that Millennials must navigate. In addition, their extensive use of ICT often creates a false sense of competency, as well as the misperception among many adults that contemporary youth are “media savvy.” Hands on is not the same as heads on.
The problem affects both girls and boys. For example, when 9- to 17-year-old girls encounter advertising about weight-loss products they are “cognitively vulnerable” with limited ability to recognize “persuasive construction strategies, including message purpose, target audience and subtext” (Hobbs, Broder, Pope, & Rowe, 2006, p. 1). As for boys, the media typically portrays male characters as stereotypically aggressive and violent. Commenting on the report *Boys to Men: Media Messages About Masculinity*, Lois Salisbury, president of Children Now, stated, “our study shows that boys are exposed relentlessly to a narrow, confining picture of masculinity in America, one that reinforces anger and violence as the way to solve problems” (Children Now, 1999, para. 2).

The defining factor that leads to the Millennials distinctive character is that they are the first generation to be immersed in ICT for their entire lives. Because computers and the Internet have generally been part of today’s adolescents’ home and school lives, Prensky (2005/2006) termed them *digital natives*. Digital natives are fluent in the language and culture of ICT, adjusting easily to changes in technology and using ICT in creative and innovative ways. Digital immigrants, those born before the rapid infusion of digital technology, always speak with an accent and struggle to learn and apply new ICT.

Digital natives seem to have boundless interest and curiosity about emerging technologies. As part of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, Lenhart et al. (2005) interviewed a representative sample of 1,100 American 12- to 17-year-olds and a parent or guardian. They found that 84% of the teenagers reported owning one or more personal media device, and 87% use the Internet; 51% reported going online daily. These data portray Millennials as highly engaged as Internet content creators. This includes sharing creations such as artwork, photographs, stories, and videos; working on webpages or blogs for others; and creating and maintaining their own websites, online journals, or blogs.

Most Millennials enter formal educational environments that are ill prepared to take advantage of the literacy and ICT skills that they bring. Public schools typically place heavy restrictions on the use of the Internet. Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube are often blocked in libraries and computer labs. The result is a failure to build a bridge between the technological world Millennials live in and the classrooms we expect them to learn in. Such restrictions are almost always justified by claiming that they are intended to protect students. Such protection, however well-intentioned, actually fails to prepare young people by not providing the adult supervision and guidance that many of them would benefit from during their online encounters.

If there is a crisis in today’s schools, it probably has more to do with students’ perceptions that school is boring and largely irrelevant to preparation for life outside school (Howe & Strauss, 2006; National School Boards Association, 2007; Prensky, 2008). The challenge for today’s teachers, largely digital immigrants, is to continue to provide students with the legacy content of the old curriculum while providing future content to prepare students for life in the 21st century (Prensky, 2001). What will today’s students face as adults? We encourage our readers to view the video *Did You Know*, available both on YouTube and at the Shift Happens wikispace (shifthappens.wikispaces.com/). This brief video provides an interesting perspective on the rapidly changing economic, technological, and social environment, and the challenges it presents to Millennials and their teachers. For
example, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, 1 of 4 current workers has been at their current job less than one year, 1 of 2 for less than five years, and it is predicted that today’s students will have 10 to 14 jobs in their lifetimes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). For specific references and additional statistics see shifthappens.wikispaces.com/space/showimage/Did YouKnow20Sources.pdf.

Clearly, educators today are confronted with a daunting task. In our next section, we will propose a modest beginning: engaging students in media literacy activities and instruction.

The Imperative for Media Literacy

As television penetrated American living rooms in the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan warned us that television constituted much more than mere entertainment. Societies, he argued, are always shaped more by the nature of their communication technology than by the content it carries and conveys. Television represented a sensory revolution, a world of “allotonceness,” the era of the “global village” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 63). McLuhan saw the writing on the wall for education; though perhaps he would be happier with the metaphor of the image on the screen. The rapidly expanding electronic environment of the 1960s challenged the very relevance of education. McLuhan and Fiore called school a “rear-view-mirror” (p. 75), suggesting that children reared on television technology interrupted their education by going to school. By privileging print, schools were failing to prepare students for tomorrow as well as for the day-to-day reality that surrounded the first generation of television students.

The emergence of ICT has intensified the impact of media on culture and schooling. Ravitch and Finn (1987) observed that “This generation as well as their younger siblings, has been weaned on television and films. It takes more than a textbook and lecture to awaken their interest and grab their attention” (p. 241). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) also acknowledged the powerful role media played in the lives of young people. The world of the adolescent cannot be understood without understanding the media landscape they live in. They concluded that electronic media have the potential to negatively influence impressionable children and teens, but more importantly, they can be harnessed for good. Developing media literacy skills, they wrote, “deserved widespread consideration in schools and community organizations as an essential part of becoming a well-educated citizen” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995, p. 118).

It should be noted that media literacy is not merely teaching with or through media or technology. Using an overhead projector, the Internet, a SMART board, a DVD, or a VCR is not, in and of itself, media literacy. Media literacy requires teaching about media—the language it uses along with its narrative, codes, and conventions. Explicit instruction in media is good practice for at least two reasons. First, students who can easily comprehend and master the meaning of printed texts may not be equally adept at comprehending images, sound, or multimedia texts. And second, students have different strengths, so that the use of both sounds and images enriches instruction, enabling us to reach beyond students whose comfort zone is the printed page.

Strategies for engaging students in media literacy activities are becoming more available as instructional frameworks or templates have been identified for analyzing different types of media. Caldecott Medal winner Gail Haley has developed templates for identifying the “look of the book” (Haley, 2003, p. 26). This helps children appreciate and understand the relationship between illustration, text, and layout in picture books. Thus a balance exists between information carried in words and information addressed only in the illustrations. For additional suggestions see www.gailehaley.com (Haley, 2007). Templates have also been identified to assist teachers and students to critically analyze and evaluate broadcast news, advertising, and films (Considine & Haley, 1999).

Film and television texts are routinely used in Australian high schools where one can find students studying the film Gattaca or the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Although some undoubtedly lament the pop culture intrusion and long for literary classics, thumbing through the study guides for these units quickly reveals literary merit. The Gattaca guide includes studying genre, narrative structure, themes, editing, and transitions (Simmons, 2003). The Buffy
Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation Through Media Literacy

Getting Explicit With Media Literacy Instruction

Exposing students to multiple texts that evoke emotional responses and tap into popular culture is not dumbing down the curriculum. Wade and Moje (2001) noted the importance of expanding our concept of text beyond traditional printed materials. Film clips, websites, photographs, graphic novels, music, editorial cartoons, lyrics, and advertisements can be both informational and motivational. Poor response to reading, and schooling generally, especially among boys, is often the result of unsuitable and unengaging texts. Brozo (2002) and Smith and Wilhelm (2002, 2006) believed that if students are given choice and control over the texts they read, their level of engagement and competency increases. Stone (2007) documented the "disconnect between the reading performances of young people in school and online" (p. 14), noting that websites recommended by so-called poor readers contained complicated vocabulary and syntactical structures. These "poor readers" gravitated to them because of their interest in the content.

The ability to access information obviously does not guarantee comprehension of that content. A report commissioned by the British Library (Joint Information Systems Committee, 2008) found that while the “Google generation” could access materials, their ability to process those texts was somewhat limited. Online search strategies of this age group are characterized as “skimming and squirreling behavior” (p. 10). They concluded that modern youth “have a poor understanding of their information needs,” “find it difficult to develop effective search strategies,” and spend little time “evaluating information either for relevance, accuracy or authority” (p. 12).

T.A.P.: A Media Literacy Model

Without the ability to question, analyze, and authenticate information found online, in print, or any
media format, Millennials are open to manipulation and misinformation. They need supportive comprehension strategies to help them compare, contrast, critique, and analyze such texts. One media literacy strategy is the T.A.P. model (Figure 1), which stands for Text, Audience, and Production (Duncan, D’Ippolito, Macpherson, & Wilson, 1998).

Text questions examine the type of text (e.g., novel, poem, photograph, film) as well as the genre of the text. As in traditional literature, genre in media literacy refers to specific categories of text. Categories in the case of television include sitcom, reality, and soap opera, and in the case of films include fantasy, western, science fiction, gangster, and comedy. Media literacy also addresses questions related to the structure of the text, including setting, characters, conflict, plot, and resolution.

Audience questions focus on the nature and needs of the target audience and attempt to analyze how the text might tap into interests, tastes, preferences, and lifestyles. A foundational assumption of media literacy is that meaning does not reside in the text but rather is constructed by the individual. Therefore, this category recognizes that the same texts can and should be read and responded to in significantly different ways. It suggests a shift away from correct interpretations, to richer readings in which audiences unpack, explain, and justify their interpretation. Consistent with multicultural literacy, it acknowledges that gender, class, and ethnicity are likely to shape the interpretation of texts, recognizing dominant as well as resistant
were described as “finding bread and soda from a local grocery store...” while dark-skinned people were viewed as “looting a grocery store.”

- Television personality and icon Oprah Winfrey’s highly public endorsement of presidential candidate Barack Obama.

**An Instructional Example:**
**A Multimedia Exploration of the Titanic**

In the final section of this article we describe a multimedia lesson exploring the *Titanic*, the ill-fated ocean liner that sank on its maiden voyage in 1912. The focus of the exercise and activities promotes greater student engagement and richer readings of the diverse type of texts available to them, including still images, sound, music, video, and print. The skills being developed are consistent with state and national standards of both English Language Arts and Social Studies. Table 1 provides a list of the media resources for this lesson.

No matter which side of the model we are most interested in, employing the categories of the T.A.P. model enables teachers and students to engage in the process of deconstructing media messages, exploring dominant as well as resistant readings, and recognizing the context in which such texts are both created and consumed. The T.A.P. model provides teachers with a structure to engage students in analyzing interesting and immediately relevant text. Some teachable moments from current events in 2007 include the following:

- Ken Burns’s release of a new television documentary simply called *The War*. Acclaimed by most critics, the documentary was criticized by Hispanic groups for underrepresenting their service in World War II.
- The firing of radio shock jock Don Imus in April 2007 after his remarks were deemed sexist and racist.
- During the Public Broadcasting Service’s broadcast of *Bill Moyers Journal*, the host raised serious questions about the demeaning and misogynistic language of image and words on numerous internet sites attacking Senator Hillary Clinton and her presidential campaign.
- Description by broadcast news reporting during Hurricane Katrina where light-skinned people were described as “finding bread and soda from a local grocery store...” while dark-skinned people were viewed as “looting a grocery store.”

Using the T, or Text, side of the T.A.P. model, we can classify the *Titanic* resources by type of text. In this case they include a song, an editorial cartoon, a documentary clip, a film clip, a newspaper account, and a pop-up book. The song may be from a genre described as folk, traditional, or ballad. But how would we classify the blockbuster Hollywood film? As a genre is it romance, historical fiction, epic? Thus, after categorizing and classifying this information, students must
to identify the intended or target audience of each text. One may compare the clips from the film and the documentary. Although both deal with the subject of the *Titanic*, they clearly have different audiences in mind. Questions to ask include In what way would the Discovery Channel’s audience be similar to or different from the film’s audience? How would these audiences be different from the readers of the 1912 edition of *The San Francisco Examiner*? What do you think critics meant when they referred to the fans that went to see the film time and time again as “Titaniacs”? What was the appeal of the film? Were Titaniacs more likely to be males or females, young or old? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td><em>The Great Titanic</em></td>
<td>This traditional song is not from the film of the same name. It is actually on the soundtrack of <em>Coal Miner’s Daughter</em>. It can be used with or without a lyric sheet. It contains claims not made in the other artifacts and sets up compare/contrast activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor’s account</td>
<td><em>Dr. Dodge’s Story of His Rescue</em></td>
<td>Eyewitness newspaper story. Access at <a href="http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/dodge6.html">www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/dodge6.html</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video clip</td>
<td><em>Titanic</em> (motion picture)</td>
<td>A five-minute clip. Begin with Rose as an old woman as she watches a forensics analysis of how the ship sank, and then begins to tell her own story. Finish at “They called Titanic the ship of dreams...” When you stop at this point expect your students to be disappointed, but the work is about to begin. Compare and contrast the technical and personal versions of the incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video clip</td>
<td><em>Anatomy of a Disaster</em> documentary from Discovery Channel (VHS #25173)</td>
<td>Again, using only five minutes, this time right at the start when the team of researchers are heading out in the Atlantic to where the ship went down. What different professions are on board, and what different questions do they have about what happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td><em>Titanic</em> (Pipe, 2007)</td>
<td>This pop-up style book is excellent for hands-on activity for middle grade students and is full of artifacts and primary documents including photographs, letters, menus, news stories, and ads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet resources</td>
<td>A search using the term <em>Titanic</em> on any of the common search engines (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Dogpile) will give you several million resources.</td>
<td>This is an opportunity to help students learn to select Internet resources from the huge number of available websites. For example, excellent photographs of the <em>Titanic</em>, including the building of the ship, can be accessed at <a href="http://www.maritimequest.com/liners/titanic_page_1.htm">www.maritimequest.com/liners/titanic_page_1.htm</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obituary</td>
<td>Barbara West Dainton, <em>The New York Times</em>, November 9th, 2007</td>
<td>The 96-year-old is believed to be one of the last survivors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connecting Millennials and Instruction

In this article we have identified a paradox that all educators must address. For Millennials, technology and media are intricately interwoven in their lives. This generation lives in an environment where reading and writing, through digital media as well as traditional texts, are pervasive. Thus, we have argued that reading and writing are a pervasive part of Millennials’ everyday life, and that they have immediate access to more information than any generation in history.

The ensuing contradiction is the disconnect between the literacy skills that they develop in their social environment and the literacy environment of the school. Evidence suggests that Millennials are still lacking in the academic literacy skills that are the foundation of further success in school and in adult life. To develop a curriculum that is relevant to this generation, educators need to acknowledge and respect the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that students bring with them to school and build on those to ensure success in the academic disciplines. Thus, students will become engaged and connected to the traditional curriculum while developing crucial technological skills. But beyond this, educators must recognize the increasingly complex environment that Millennials navigate outside of school. Success in 21st century economic and political environments depends on sophisticated understandings of technology and media.

One avenue for dealing with this contradiction is through media literacy instruction. Millennials are inundated with information from the Internet, television, advertisements, and film. Helping them construct meaning from these messages must become a central goal of schooling. Instruction must be developed to address this phenomena. Media literacy develops students’ abilities to analyze and evaluate every text, both print and nonprint. Teachers and schools must also address the social and commercial context of media messages as well as the potential effects or consequences of those messages. These life lessons can come only with multiple opportunities to cultivate skills in comprehending and creating media.

Developing media literacy is a necessary and critical component of schooling in an increasingly multicultural society. Different voices, visions,
and experiences must be recognized and respected. Teachers should assist Millennials’ understanding of how media representations of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect our society.

Throughout this article we have focused on access Millennials have to emerging technologies. We encourage our readers to recognize that while the digital divide seems to be decreasing (Jones, 2008), we need to remain vigilant to issues of equity and access. As teachers, we must help all students to analyze and evaluate each media message for text, context, and impact to produce more knowledgeable, creative, and cooperative citizens for the Global Village.

References


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