

CRITICAL LITERACY AND MEDIA VIOLENCE PROJECT

JUNIOR UNIT

INTRODUCTION

This Junior Division Media Unit is designed to assist teachers in delivering a program that will help students develop their Critical Literacy skills. Children in grades four to six are bombarded daily with media images, messages and manipulations. They need assistance to recognize their own media habits, and to become more aware of the subtle and overt ways in which merchandisers are trying to attract them. Because these young people are impressionable, it is important that they be made aware of the differences among heroes, celebrities, stars and role models.

The media to which young people are exposed often is violent. Television shows and movies use “put-downs” and ridicule as a source of humour, and demonstrate physical brutality as a means of acquiring power and success. Entertainment magazines and shows feature celebrities who abuse themselves and others as a means of gaining popularity. In sports programs, violence is sanctioned and encouraged. Even the evening news programs often seem to be comprised of a string of horrific images, suggesting that violence is the norm in the world in which we live. The levels of violence in media to which young people are exposed daily may give them the idea that objectionable behaviour is acceptable or unavoidable.

Critical Literacy skills are essential if these young people are to recognize that violence is not acceptable, and that they have choices about how to behave. The lessons in this unit begin by making the students aware of their own viewing habits, and then naming the kinds of violence that occur in their choices. Students then explore the degree of violence that is shown in TV shows, movies and sports programs. This is followed by a discussion about heroes, celebrities,

stars and role models. Video games and the aggressive marketing that sells them are examined. Even the local news comes under scrutiny, as it is crafted for a specific audience. Students will create a variety of responses to these issues, including thoughtful journals and effective Public Service Announcements. The work will conclude with an exploration of the question, “How much violence is too much?”

The lessons of this unit may be used individually, or in their entirety. Each one encourages the students to question what they are seeing, and to recognize the methods used by the media to attract a specific audience. As these young people become more aware of the constructs used by media, they will become more sophisticated and selective consumers.

Lesson 1

Measuring Our Media Activities

Grades 4, 5, and 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Producing Media Texts

Grades 4-6 3.4

- *Produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.*

Metacognition

Grades 4-6 4.1

- *Explain, with some support and direction, what strategies they found most helpful in making sense of and creating media texts, and explain how these and other strategies can help them improve as media viewers/listeners/producers.*

Key Concept:

- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Junior students have lived in a multi-media world for all of their lives. They have always been exposed to the Internet, computer and video games, television, radio, music and music videos. This significant exposure to media messages provides many opportunities for students to understand that producers of media texts have their own beliefs, values, opinions and biases that influence what gets told and how it is told. In this lesson, students will be asked to examine critically their own media habits, to determine which media forms might have some elements of violent content.

Key questions to consider:

- *What lifestyle and/or points of view are represented in this text? Who or what is missing?*

Introduction/Overview

This introductory lesson calls upon students to examine critically their personal media habits. Before students explore the impact and influence of mass media and popular culture, this lesson provides the opportunity for teachers to understand the kinds of media texts that are popular, and the kind of prior knowledge and skill that already exists among their junior students. Students

then will examine these media texts to determine if they contain any value messages or assumed truths or beliefs about the different forms of violence.

There is extensive cross-curricular potential for this introductory lesson. Ideally, students should be creating a final product that represents their personal and class media habits, and they could represent their findings using a variety of graphs or pictorial representations (Data management). Students also could compare their findings to the kinds of media influences from different time periods or cultures (Social Studies). In addition, there are strong connections in these lessons to the Health curriculum; for instance, students might engage in an investigation of time spent in physical activities compared to less active and more isolated activities. Teachers are encouraged to integrate this lesson so that students become more aware of their media experiences and how important these are in shaping who they are and how they respond to a variety of media messages.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Using the *think-aloud strategy*, model for students the kinds of media texts you are exposed to on a typical morning (from the time you wake up to the time you arrive at school). For example, you might suggest these ideas: listening to the radio, reading the cereal box, watching the weather network, reading headline news stories, etc.
2. Instruct students to think about their day and the variety of media-related activities that they might be exposed to, from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to bed. Using the *quickwrite strategy*, students, individually, write down all of their ideas within a short period of time (approx. 10 minutes). Have students review their lists to determine approximate time devoted to each activity.
3. As a class, create a *web organizer* on the board to collect the classroom ideas. They may include the following: television, radio, cell phones, websites, online arcade games, video games, music and music videos, digital cameras and webcams, video recording, reading clothes with logos, messages etc, games, toys, food packaging, signs and billboards, magazines, books, movies.
4. Ask students to give examples of some of the media texts from the web that might have some violent content. Circle these examples using a different colour of chalk, if you are using the blackboard. Discuss as a class: What is media violence? Are there examples of verbal, physical or emotional violence represented here? What forms of media generate some of these violent messages? Why do we enjoy these texts? Who might have a different perspective? Why? Can you approximate the amount of time a typical junior

student might be exposed to these violent messages? Who might be harmed from these kinds of media texts?

5. Have students track their media related activities for one week, using Measuring My Media Habits (Student Handout 1.3). Individual students could then represent their results using graphs, charts or diagrams. Classroom data also could be collected and shared with other classes. Students should discuss in small groups the range of production ideas that would be most appropriate given the specific purpose and audience. For example, which kind of graph would be most effective to make other students aware of the amount of time grade 5 students play on-line games every day?
6. Give students the opportunity to reflect on their personal media habits by completing a journal response. See Journal Response (Student Handout 1.1) and Rubric for Journal Response (Student Handout 1.2).
7. As a school-wide activity, students could interview and/or survey other classes in order to collect, analyse and share the results. What could others learn from this research? A presentation to the Parent Council might be a useful and effective way to generate awareness about media literacy as well as other related topics (i.e. health issues, bullying, media violence, internet safety).

Activism

Students could compare their personal media habits with the Canadian national statistics generated from the project “Young Kids in a Canadian Wired World” (2002): <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/ycww/index.cfm>

How do their findings compare nationally? How have media habits changed for students in grades 4 to 6 since 2002? Choose one media-related activity that seems to have increased usage since 2002. Invite students to respond to this final question: How can we use this media text to help promote safety and/or non-violent resolutions?

Assessment Opportunities

Rubric for Journal Response (Student Handout 1.2)
Measuring My Media Habits tracking sheet (Student Handout 1.3)
Graphs, charts or diagrams that represent individual media consumption

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite students to investigate the textbooks, trade books and the reference books in their school library for content that might be considered violent. Are historical

depictions of violence different? Why or why not? Have students generate a list of questions they have as they complete their inventories of the books represented in their schools

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language and Writing

Mathematics- Data management

Health

Social Studies (comparison with early civilization and media use)

Science

Materials and Resources

- Student Handouts 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Definition of Media Violence: Violence is behaviour that is abusive, threatening, or hurtful, by way of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual, or regulatory (restrictions, rules, laws) means. Media images and messages containing such content are violent.

Mass Media: Means of communication aimed at a very large audience. Examples include mass-market paperback books, television, movies, newspapers, Internet.

Media: The plural of medium. Means of communication, including audio, visual, audio-visual, print, and electronic means.

Media literacy: An informed and critical understanding of the nature of the media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. Also includes the ability to understand, use and create mass media in an active and critical way.

Media text: A product that is communicated through a medium. Examples of media texts might include the following forms: films, songs, video games, action figures, advertisements, CD covers, clothes, billboards, television shows, magazines, newspapers, photographs and websites.

Journal Response

Choose one or two of the following questions to consider for a written journal response:

1. What patterns do you notice about your media habits? What kinds of activities do you prefer? How much time do you spend engaged in two or more media-related activities at the same time?
2. How much time do you spend engaged in a media-related activity alone? With others? What kind of advice might you give parents or teachers who might be concerned about their child's media habits?
3. Considering your personal media habits, what kinds of media texts contain content that might be defined as violent? Do your parents monitor these kinds of activities? What kind of advice might you give parents who might be concerned about their child's exposure to media violence?
4. Name 2 examples of media texts you feel would be inappropriate for a primary student. Explain why this younger student might be frightened by these texts. How might you comfort a younger student who might be exposed to the violent content of this media text?

Rubric for Journal Response

Level	Criteria
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete entry that addresses several the questions related to personal media habits ▪ Entry demonstrates a thorough understanding of personal media habits and makes several connections to the weekly tracking sheet ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with no visible spelling, grammatical or structural errors.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete entry that addresses most questions related to personal media habits ▪ Entry demonstrates a good understanding of personal media habits and makes several connections to the weekly tracking sheet ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with limited errors.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entry is only partially complete ▪ Some evidence of insight into personal media habits ▪ Opinions and ideas are at times unclear due to grammatical, spelling and/or structural errors.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entry is incomplete ▪ Little evidence of insight into a perspective ▪ Opinions and ideas are not expressed clearly or effectively.
Level	Comments:

Lesson 2

Understanding Media Violence: Reflecting On Our Own Media Experiences

Grades 4 to 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Audience Responses

Grades 4-6 1.4

- *Explain why different audiences might respond differently to the same media text.*

REFLECTING ON MEDIA LITERACY

Interconnected Skills

Grades 4-6 4.2

- *Explain how their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing help them to make sense of and produce media texts.*

Key Concept:

- *Audiences negotiate meaning in media messages.*

Through media, students are exposed to various representations of violence – from its most subtle to its most obvious. This wide exposure may result in a wide range of responses by students, including becoming desensitized to anything less than the most brutal forms of violence. In some media texts, such as TV sitcoms or cartoons, more subtle representations of violence, such as name-calling or put-downs, are often used as tools for humour. Therefore, it can be challenging for some students to negotiate the meaning of media messages about violence. Students' reactions to violence can differ, depending on their unique experiences.

Key questions to consider:

- *How might different people understand and react to different forms of violence?*

Introduction/Overview

Having had the opportunity in Lesson 1 to analyse different forms of media violence and the value messages conveyed by different media texts, students

now will consider the range of responses that different audiences may have to these messages about violence. In constructing meaning, audience members will bring their prior knowledge and experiences to their interpretations. Therefore, attitudes and tolerance for violence may vary greatly. By creating a continuum of violence, students will analyse different forms of violence, and then organize them into a continuum from what they consider least to most violent. Working in collaborative groups, students will place items on the continuum after engaging in **accountable talk** and achieving consensus, based on self-set criteria.

Note: This lesson is the first of two parts. In this lesson, students will analyse forms of media violence. In the second part (Lesson 3), students will reflect on their own reactions to media violence and consider “where they draw the line” between “just kidding” and violence. Ultimately, students will produce media in response to the understanding built in these lessons.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. To **activate prior knowledge**, briefly review the web from Lesson 1. Ask students to talk with an elbow partner using the following focus question:
What are some examples of violence that we might see, read, or hear in the media texts found on our web?
2. Using the **think aloud** strategy, model for students the forms of violence that you are exposed to when consuming media (e.g. subtle put-downs in billboard advertisements to degrading lyrics in songs to extremely graphic depictions of murder in films). Jot each idea onto a sticky note and randomly post onto the blackboard. **Note:** Students likely will be familiar with more overt examples of media violence, so you may want to expand student understanding by focusing your **think aloud** on more subtle forms of violence. For example:

You know, I am a huge Star Wars fan. I remember when I was younger, and how excited I was when the next installment of the series was released. I loved the action, the adventure, and especially the amazing special effects. When I watch the movies now, as an adult, it sometimes hits me just how violent the movies are. Many people are killed in the movie. There is also a lot of other violence – less obvious violence. Like, in one scene, the server at the cantina refuses service to C-3PO and R2-D2 because he doesn't serve “their kind.” Now, I know that they are just make-believe droids, but I also know that that kind of talk takes place everywhere, everyday. Refusing service, for no apparently good reason, is a way for someone to try and show they have power over someone. It may not hurt physically, but it sure hurts emotionally.

3. Provide students with sticky notes. Using the **think-pair-square** strategy, students will build from their earlier conversations and brainstorm their own examples of violence depicted in media. Students first will work independently to jot down examples, one per sticky note.

4. After ten minutes, invite students to join with a partner to share their examples. Ask students to attach together any duplicated examples.
5. Next, invite partners to join with other partners to form groups of four. In these groups, ask students to share their examples.
6. Return students' attention to the sticky notes you placed on the chalkboard at the beginning of the lesson. Using the *think aloud* strategy, model for students how you would group similar ideas (e.g. TV sit-com mom uses sarcasm to make fun of her husband – and – children on commercial mock teacher → grouped as “Put Downs”). Invite students to share one or two examples (from their piles) that belong in this category.
7. Ask students to continue working in groups of four to sort and categorize their examples (e.g. put downs, mocking, name-calling, bullying, physical violence, etc.). Students can use Types of Media Violence: Tracking Sheet (Student Handout 2.1) to organize their thinking.
8. Consolidate learning by inviting groups to share the categories they have developed. Write names of categories on the board (avoiding any duplication).
9. As a **school-wide** activity, students could interview or survey students in other classes, representing all grades in the school, to consider the different forms of violence that different age groups are exposed to, and what different age groups consider “violence” in the media they consume. This information could be organized graphically and posted in the school as part of a media awareness campaign aimed at promoting school and community safety.

Activism

Using the categories generated in this lesson, students could choose one media form (e.g., television, music, magazines) and track the frequency of examples that they are exposed to over the course of a week. Lesson 10 considers the different forms of violence in children’s programming and students are asked to track the number and frequency of examples of violence. Additional questions for students to consider may include: What effect does such exposure to violence have on me? My friends? Society in general? How might such exposure to violence affect my future and the world I live in?

Assessment Opportunities

Group conversations (accountable talk)

Types of Media Violence: Tracking Sheet (Student Handout 2.1)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

In Lesson 3, students will re-examine the various categories of violence, and then place them on a continuum from least to most violent. Students will set on their own criteria for judging degree of violence.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language
Mathematics – Data Management
Health
Character Development

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 2.1

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Media Violence: Violence is behaviour that is abusive, threatening, or hurtful, by way of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual, or regulatory (restrictions, rules, laws) means. Media images and messages containing such content are violent.

Media text: A product that is communicated through a medium. Examples of media texts might include the following forms: films, songs, video games, action figures, advertisements, CD covers, billboards, television shows, magazines, newspapers, photographs and websites.

TYPES OF MEDIA VIOLENCE

Tracking Sheet

<i>Category:</i>	<i>Category:</i>
<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Examples:</i>
<i>Category:</i>	<i>Category:</i>
<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Examples:</i>
<i>Category:</i>	<i>Category:</i>
<i>Examples:</i>	<i>Examples:</i>

Lesson 3

How Violent is Violent? A Students' Continuum of Violence

Grades 4 to 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Making Inferences/Interpreting Messages 1.2

- *Use overt and implied messages to draw inferences and construct meaning in media texts.*

Audience Responses 1.4

- *Explain why different audiences might respond differently to the same media text.*

Point of View 1.5

- *Identify whose point of view is presented or reflected in a media text, ask questions to identify missing or alternative points of view, and, where appropriate, suggest how a more balanced view might be represented.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Producing Media Texts 3.4

- *Produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.*

Key Concepts:

- *Each person interprets messages differently.*
- *Media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Students are exposed to many, varied representations of violence in the media – from the subtle to the obvious. Value messages about violence are influenced by how violence is represented in media, and the context in which it is presented. Students need opportunities to reflect on such media messages in order to think more critically about how they influence their own attitudes and behaviours.

Key questions to consider:

- *How does my point of view influence my judgments about media violence?*
- *How might others think differently about what I consider violent?*
- *Why?*

Introduction/Overview

Having had an opportunity in Lesson 2 to brainstorm and analyse/discuss various examples of media violence, students now will consider the range of responses that different audiences may have to these media messages. In constructing meaning, audience members will bring their prior knowledge and experiences to their interpretations. Therefore, attitudes and tolerance for violence may vary greatly. Students will work collaboratively. First, they will engage in **accountable talk** conversations to reflect on different forms of violence. Next, based on group consensus, they will organize these forms into a continuum from what they consider least to most violent. Then, students will consider what has influenced their judgments. Finally, students will use their new learning to create a poster aimed at promoting school and community safety, with a particular focus on challenging more subtle (and often excused) forms of violence.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. To **activate prior knowledge** ask students to work with an elbow partner to review Types of Media Violence: Tracking Sheet (Student Handout 2.1). Provide the following focus question:
 - *Which example do you consider to be the most violent?*
 - *Why?*
2. Invite a few students to share their examples of what they consider to be “most violent.” Students must also explain their rationales.
3. After a few students have shared, ask students to talk with an elbow partner using the following focus question:
 - *How were the examples different?*
 - *What might be the reasons for these differences?*
4. Invite students to share their ideas with the whole class. Chart ideas on an anchor chart titled **Things That Influence Audience Responses**.
5. In pairs, have students complete The Continuum of Violence (Student Handout 3.1), using the ideas from Types of Media Violence: Tracking Sheet (Student Handout 2.1).
6. When students have completed their Continua, ask them to post their sheets around the room for others to see. While waiting for others to complete the task, students can write in their media journals, choosing from prompts on Response Journal Prompts (Student Handout 3.2).
7. Using the **gallery walk** strategy, invite students to tour the room, making note of the differences between their own continuum and those of their peers. They

may use the sheet entitled Gallery Walk (Student Handout 3.3) to track their thinking.

8. Using the **think aloud** strategy, model for students your interpretations of messages about media violence based on how it is presented. For example:

Having taken a look at your violence continua, I want to talk about some of the “not so obvious” forms of violence. One of my favourite television cartoon shows has a supporting character who is a variety store clerk. When I think about it, his whole character is built on stereotypes about his culture. In fact, these stereotypes are the basis for most of the jokes. So, although the overt message is that the character is funny, the implied message is that making fun of him based on his culture is okay and not really harmful. You know, I am just not comfortable with that.

9. Ask students to choose an example that they placed closer to the “least violent” end of their continuum. Then, ask students to talk with a partner using the following focus questions:

- *Who might feel differently about where you placed this, and why?*
- *What message does this form of violence express?*
- *Are you okay with this message?*
- *What message would you like to send others about these less obvious forms of violence? How can you make others aware of the effects they have on others?*

10. Share with students that many school and community safety campaigns focus on challenging the more obvious forms of violence (e.g. physical bullying). (Note: You may want to show students sample PSAs such as those found at www.cca-kids.ca.) Tell students that they are going work with a partner to create a public awareness announcement that targets less obvious forms of violence (e.g. stereotyping, ostracizing). These announcements will be brief (30 to 60 seconds) oral presentations that will be broadcast to the whole school on the Public Address system as part of the school’s opening exercises routine.

11. Brainstorm with the students some possible ways to communicate their messages through awareness announcements (e.g. direct appeal to audience, dramatization of issue, and conversation between individuals). Students then can use the Announcement Planning Guide (Student Handout 3.4) to guide their planning.

12. Have the students make scripts for the announcements. Students should present to small groups of about six to obtain feedback, using the Announcement Feedback Form (Student Handout 3.5) to revise their

announcements. Finally, students should present to the whole class, before a schedule is developed for daily presentations over the public address system.

Activism

Building on the public announcements that they created, students can engage in a print campaign to reinforce their messages by creating public service posters. These posters should be posted around the school. When the posters are ready to be posted, students could repeat their daily announcements as a means for emphasizing the message of the campaign.

Assessment Opportunities

Oral discussions about Continuum of Violence (Student Handout 3.1)

Response journal (Student Handout 3.2)

Announcement Planning Guide (Student Handout 3.4)

Feedback form (Student Handout 3.5)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students can survey students in the school to measure the impact of their campaign. They may ask students to reflect on how successful the campaign has been on reducing the number of incidences of less obvious forms of violence. Students may create a “before and after” survey to make comparisons. Findings could be translated into graphical or written form.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language

Visual Arts

Health

Mathematics – Data Management

Writing

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 3.1 – Continuum of Violence
- Student Handout 3.2 – Response Journal Prompts
- Student Handout 3.3 – Gallery Walk
- Student Handout 3.4 – Announcement Planning Guide
- Student Handout 3.5 – Feedback Form

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

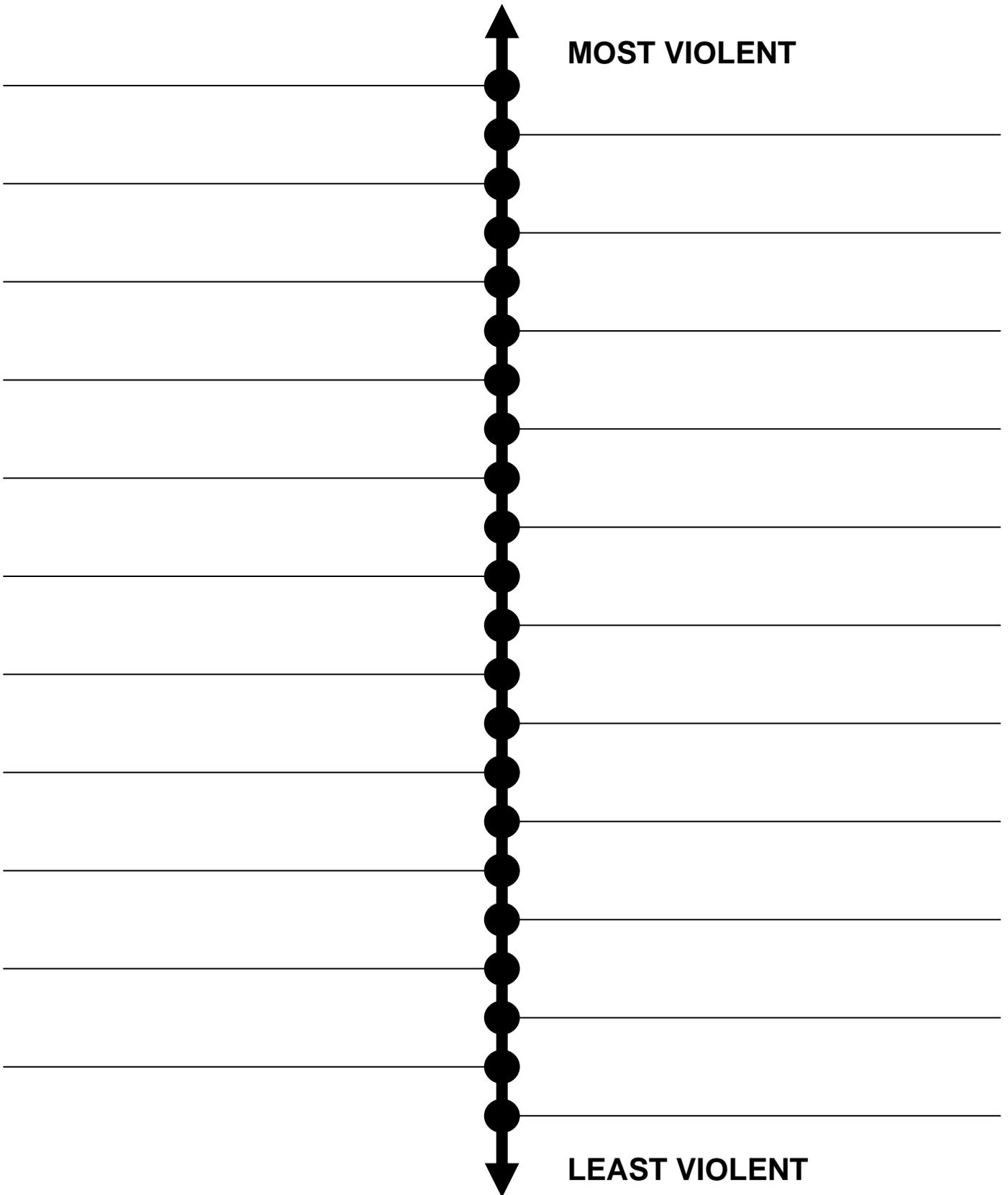
Media Violence: Violence is behaviour that is abusive, threatening, or hurtful, by way of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual, or regulatory (restrictions, rules, laws) means. Media images and messages containing such content are violent.

Accountable Talk: The term **accountable talk** refers to talk that is meaningful, respectful, and mutually beneficial to both speaker and listener. When students engage in accountable talk (Allen, 2003), they do the following:

- Focus on the topic and purpose of the discussion
- Attend to the listener's needs and what others are saying
- Seriously respond to and build on what others have said
- Give evidence to support their points of view
- Help each other to reach a common understanding, and share responsibility for the learning of the whole group

(From *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Volume 1*, p. 32)

CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE



RESPONSE JOURNAL PROMPTS

1. Think of your favourite television show and reflect on your continuum of violence. How does your favourite show present violence? Are the presentations of violence closer to the “least violent” or “most violent” points on your continuum?
2. Reflect on what you placed at the “least violent” point on your continuum. Who might feel differently? Why?
3. Reflect on what you placed at the “most violent” point on your continuum. Who might feel differently? Why?
4. Thinking about your own experiences at school, which forms of violence do you see most? Where do they fall on your continuum?

GALLERY WALK

“Most Violent” Example	My Reactions <i>Did this surprise me? Why might this be considered “most” violent? What questions do I have?</i>

“Least Violent” Example	My Reactions <i>Did this surprise me? Why might this be considered “least” violent? What questions do I have?</i>

ANNOUNCEMENT FEEDBACK FORM

GROUP 1:		
<i>What is the message? Is it clear?</i>	<i>Who is the target audience? Is it clear?</i>	<i>Other comments:</i>

GROUP 2:		
<i>What is the message? Has it been made clear?</i>	<i>Who is the target audience? Will this grab their attention?</i>	<i>Other comments:</i>

Lesson 4

Up Next: Sportz Highlightz Representing Tough and Cool in Televised Sports

Grades 4 to 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Making Inferences/Interpreting Messages 1.2

- *Interpret media texts, using overt and implied messages as evidence for their interpretations.*

Responding to and Evaluating Texts 1.3

- *Evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation and treatment of ideas, information, themes, opinions, issues, and/or experiences in media texts.*

Key Concepts:

- *The media construct versions of reality.*
- *Media messages contain commercial implications.*

Many students enjoy watching televised sports. Sports heroes play an influential role in the lives of many students. The sports segment of news programs, as well as sports highlights shows, frequently choose to focus on images of toughness (e.g., body checking, collisions, “trash talk”). These images help to shape students’ interpretations of what it means to be athletic, thereby associating toughness with “cool”. In this lesson, students will examine critically sports programming for representations of toughness and cool, and consider the impact of these messages.

Key questions to consider:

What images do you associate with your favourite sports heroes?

What images are chosen by producers when highlighting a sporting event?

What message does that send?

Introduction/Overview

In this lesson, students will examine critically media messages about violence as they are represented in sports highlights programs. Students will view a number of sports highlights clips and use focus questions to guide their thinking as they consider the media messages expressed in the clips. Students then will express their thinking, either in oral or written format.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Engage students in a discussion about professional sports. Some questions to guide the discussion include the following:
 - *What are your favourite sports to watch on TV? Why?*
 - *What impresses you most about the athletes in your favourite sport?*
2. Using a **quick write** strategy, have students write about a sporting moment that they think is worthy of highlighting. If some students do not watch televised sports, they can write about what they think should be highlighted about sports.
3. Tape a few segments of sports highlights from a local newscast (or a sports highlights show from a network like TSN or SportsNet). Show a clip to students. The first viewing is intended for students to view for pleasure and to set context.
4. Have students form groups of three. Show the clip a second time, this time providing students with a focus, using a deep viewing strategy. Use Televised Sports Highlights – Deep Viewing (Student Handout 4.1). Students will view for:
 - **Which** sports are highlighted?
 - **Who** is highlighted?
 - **What** type of behaviour is highlighted?
5. After viewing the clip for a second time, provide students with some time to complete their notes, and then share their findings with their group members.
6. Provide students with the following focus questions: *Now that you have shared your notes, decide, as a group, what messages about sports were expressed by the clip. What was valued? What was not?*
7. Organize students' thinking into a graphic organizer on the blackboard. In a three-column chart, place one value in each column (e.g. Athletic Excellence, Sportsmanship, and Toughness). Provide students with Televised Sports Highlights – Values (Student Handout 4.2) to allow them to create their own organizer.
8. Using Student Handout 4.2, have students watch a new clip of sports highlights. Have them record onto their organizer examples that fall into the different categories.
9. Invite students to reflect on their organizer as well as their **quick write** from earlier. Focus question: *How does your own thinking about what should be highlighted compare to what you have observed from televised clips?* Ask students to share their thinking with a partner.

10. Consolidate thinking by having students write a response to summarize their observations and conclusions. Use Response Journal Prompts (Student Handout 4.3). You may want to consider having students present their thinking orally (e.g. small group presentations), graphically (e.g. storyboard of sports highlights), or dramatically (e.g. various tableaux of sports highlights), rather than in written form.

Activism

Students could write a letter to the news or sports editors of the local news calling for sports highlights to reflect a greater valuing of excellence and sportsmanship over glorifying toughness and aggression. Students could include evidence from their own research and conversations with other students to support their demands.

Assessment Opportunities

Televised Sports Highlights – Deep Viewing (Student Handout 4.1)

Televised Sports Highlights – Values (Student Handout 4.2)

Journal responses to Response Journal Prompts (Student Handout 4.3)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could interview students across the school to find out what others consider highlights of their favourite sports. Highlights then could be summarized and then written into brief paragraphs. This information then could be analyzed for values (e.g. athletic excellence, sportsmanship, and toughness/aggression).

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language

Writing

Health

Drama and Movement

Visual Arts

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 4.1 – Deep Viewing
- Student Handout 4.2 – Values
- Student Handout 4.3 – Response Journal Prompts

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Quick write: This is a strategy by which students write freely for period of time pre-determined by the teacher (often five or ten minutes). They don't have to use full sentences or punctuation. They should not stop writing during the allotted time. The purpose is to free students' thinking, without concern for organization and presentation. Graphic representations of thoughts are equally acceptable.

TELEVISED SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS – DEEP VIEWING

Which sports are highlighted?	Who is highlighted?	What behaviours are highlighted?
Our conclusions (what is the message):		

TELEVISED SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS – VALUES

As you watch the sports clip, jot down examples you see that fit into the categories on the chart. Think about which categories are highlighted the most. What is your reaction to that?

Athletic Excellence	Sportsmanship	Toughness/Aggression

Response Journal Prompts

Choose two of the following questions/prompts to write about in your journal.

1. Why might a broadcaster choose to highlight aggressive behaviour over sportsmanlike behaviour?
2. What influence might images of tough or aggressive behaviour have on viewers?
3. If I were in charge of the sports reel for the six o'clock news, I would include...
4. Who appears to be missing from the sports highlights? Why? How might the highlights be different if this group of athletes were included?
5. What do you think is "cool" about sports?

Lesson 5

Analyzing Fame and Stardom

Grade 4, 5, and 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Responding to and Evaluating Texts

Grade 4-6 1.3

- *Express opinions about ideas, issues, and/or experiences presented in media texts, and give evidence from the texts to support their opinions.*

Audience Responses

Grade 4-6 1.4

- *Explain why different audiences might have different responses to a variety of media texts.*

Key Concepts:

- *Each person interprets messages differently.*
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Heroes, celebrities and stars have a strong influence on our junior students. What does it take to become a hero? A celebrity? Junior students are beginning to look at popular culture for ideas about whom they should become, how they should act, what clothes to wear and to what music to listen.

Key questions to consider:

- *What values do heroes, celebrities, stars and role models represent?*
- *Do the admirers have the same values as their heroes?*
- *How can one's point of view influence his or her judgement of who is a hero, star, celebrity or role model?*

Introduction/Overview

In this lesson, students are asked to examine critically the issues surrounding celebrity and fame. Students will brainstorm and reflect on their current heroes, role models, stars and celebrities. Students then will extend their thinking to include how the media presents people's images and voice to represent specific beliefs and values. This lesson is ideal as a starting point for many cross-curricular teaching and learning opportunities. Lesson 6 continues with an investigation of the heroes and celebrities in the community.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. As a class, brainstorm a few examples of heroes, celebrities, stars, and role models. Use examples that might illustrate the following definitions:
 - *Heroes*: people who have risked themselves to help others (often a one-time event)
 - *Celebrities*: people who are famous for who they are, rather than for what they do
 - *Stars*: people who are very good at one task
 - *Role models*: people whose qualities are worth copying
2. In pairs, have students complete Analysing Fame and Stardom (Student handout 5.1).
3. Debrief this activity by considering the common names. Why do people put the same names in different quadrants? What have you learned about people's perceptions or definitions of heroes, celebrities, stars, and role models?
4. Have students examine the names of people on their own organizers to determine what values they each represent. Do any of these people use or promote the use of violence, or are they violent themselves?
5. Have students complete a written response to one or more of the following questions:
 - *Do violent heroes encourage violent behaviour?*
 - *Can you think of examples of heroes, stars, celebrities who have influenced violent behaviour in people? Which ones? How do you think the influence occurred? How did you find out about it?*
6. Alternatively, students could complete a 3-2-1 Self-Reflection (Student Handout 5.2) to document their reflection.

Activism

Students could generate a list of people they feel have made a positive contribution to a global issue (for example). Students either could write a letter or send an e-mail or e-card to the individual or group, asking for information about how their class could be involved. This could be the initiative for a *school-wide activity* that promotes using heroes, stars and celebrities for positive social change.

Assessment Opportunities

Analyzing Fame and Stardom Organizer (Student Handout 5.1)

3-2-1 Reflection (Student Handout 5.2)

Oral language and listening

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could research the idea of heroes, fame and celebrity and prepare an oral presentation. Some ideas might include the following:

List three of your personal heroes and describe why they are heroes.

Compare and contrast real life heroes and super heroes.

What makes an image heroic?

Investigate how heroic acts and events are represented on television and/or print news.

Cross Curricular Connections

Writing

Social Science

Mathematics

Current Events

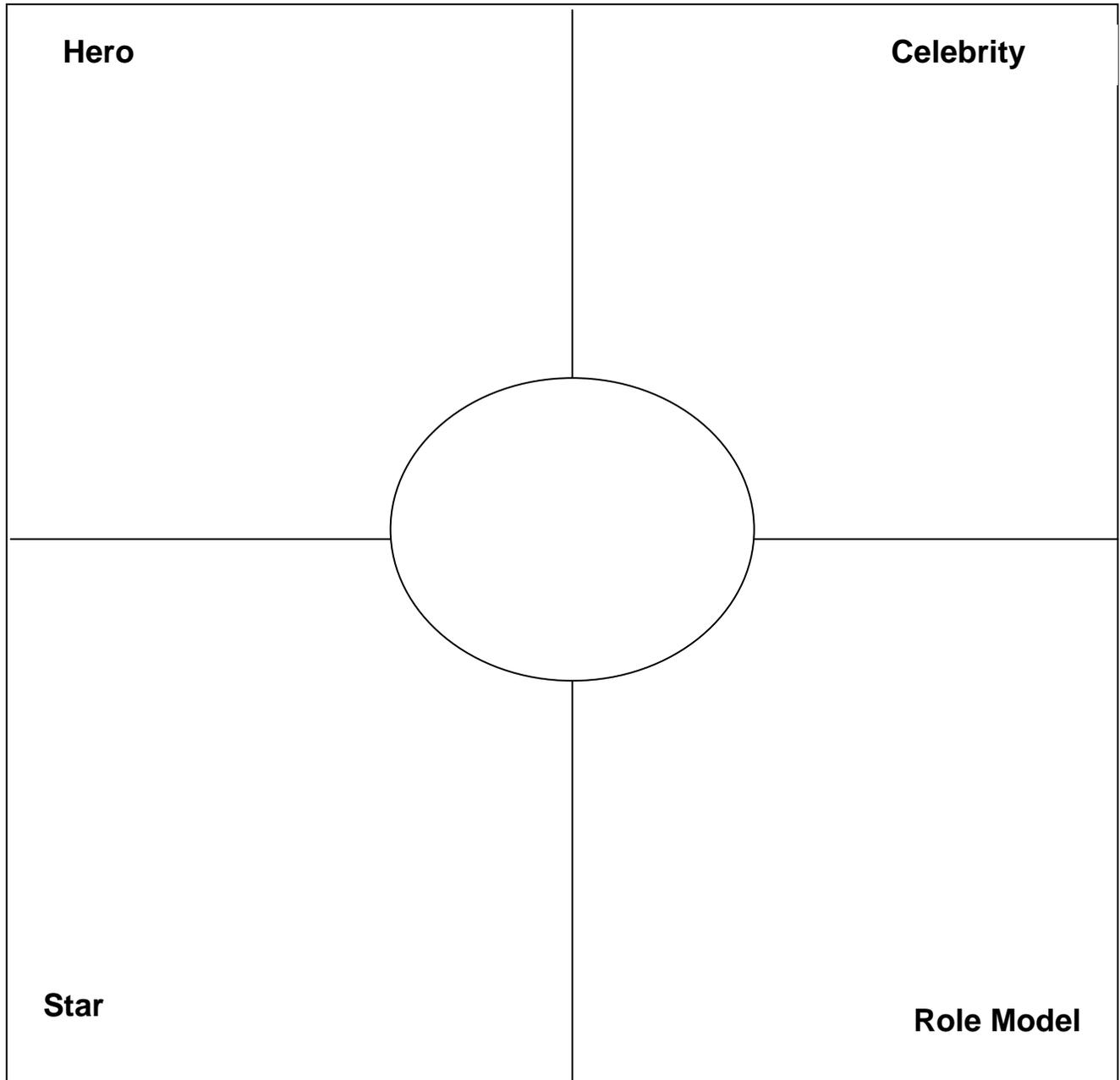
Art

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 5.1
- Student Handout 5.2
- This lesson has been adapted from *YTV In Class Lesson Plan 8* (February 1995). For further lesson ideas see www.schoolnet.ca

Analysing Fame and Stardom

Working in pairs, brainstorm a list of your heroes, celebrities, stars and role models. Decide where the names of the people listed should be placed on the grid. People who are clearly heroes, for example, can be placed inside the Hero quadrant. People who have some of each quality can be placed on or near the lines. People who have several qualities can be placed inside the circle.



(adapted from *YTV In Class Lesson Plan 8*)

3-2-1 Self-Reflection

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

List three important qualities that most heroes demonstrate. How can separate heroes help us in different situations?

Describe two dead heroes and explain what made them heroic.

Name one person who was once a hero but lost his/her heroic qualities. How did this happen?

Lesson 6

Promoting Community Safety: The Radio PSA

Grades 4, 5, and 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Producing Media Texts

Grades 4-6 3.4

- *Produce media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.*

REFLECTING ON MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Metacognition

Grades 4-6

- *Identify, with some support and direction, what strategies they found most helpful in making sense of and creating media texts, and explain how these and other strategies can help them improve as media viewers/listeners/producers.*

Key Concepts:

- *Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions, and aesthetics.*
- *The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).*

Public Service Announcements for radio broadcasts allow students the opportunity to use their oral language skills to construct a very short audio text for a specific purpose and targeted audience. Understanding the use of vocabulary, tone of voice, and sound effects are some of the codes and conventions students will need to use in order to promote the idea of community safety and responsibility.

Key questions to consider:

- *Who benefits from this Public Service Announcement?*
- *What effective techniques can we use to support this message, using this form?*

Introduction/Overview

This lesson builds on the skills and strategies learned from Lesson 5. Students will extend their understanding of media heroes, celebrities, stars and role models to the people they know personally. Who are the heroes and role models in their community? Who has a “voice” that can help promote community safety? This key question will be addressed and students will be given the opportunity to produce a radio PSA that promotes safe and responsible neighbourhoods.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Review the concepts from the previous lesson by asking students to brainstorm a list of people known through mass media who have promoted global awareness of a specific issue (i.e., AIDS, hunger and poverty, child labour). List the factors that helped these people become successful leaders of change.
2. Ask students now to think of the people they know personally who are role models and/or heroes in the school community. What kinds of issues do they promote and what kinds of actions and events might they support? Using Thinking About our Community (Student Handout 6.1), have students work in small groups to brainstorm ideas and to begin to address the relationship between community concerns and the people who have a “voice”.
3. Instruct students to choose one community issue to address from list B (on Student Handout 6.1) to produce a PSA for radio. Students should produce a rough draft of their script for the PSA, as outlined in Producing a Public Service Announcement for Radio (Student Handout 6.2).
4. Students should rehearse several times before recording. As a *school-wide activity*, recordings could be saved as a podcast or recorded for school announcements. These recordings also could be shared with other elementary schools in the neighbourhood.

Activism

Students could invite to their school members of the community whom they feel represent a voice that could address a safety issue. These people could also be part of the production process of the PSA, by using their recorded voice on the PSA. Students and schools also could submit their PSAs to a community group that supports the same issue.

Assessment Opportunities

Tracking sheet for Thinking about our Community (Student Handout 6.1)

Journal Reflection

Individual PSA script writing and final group recording

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

How is television journalism different than other (ie, print, radio, on-line) forms of journalism?

What are the differences in the way these sources cover this event? What do the differences tell you about each news source? Did the newspaper and the television newscast use the same lead story? Why or why not? Did the different news sources provide different information on the same topic? Did they take a different position or perspective?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language and Writing

Current Events

Health

Materials and Resources

- Pre-recorded local news television programs (in accordance with copyright regulations)
- Student Handout 6.1
- Student Handout 6.2

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Public Service Announcements (PSA) are non-commercial advertisements for radio or television. The main purpose is to change public attitudes by raising awareness about an issue.

Podcasts use technology to record digital audio files to a website which can be shared.

Thinking about our Community

Working in a small group, brainstorm a list of people in our community who might be considered heroes or role models. Place these names in List A. Brainstorm a list of safety concerns or other community issues and place these ideas in List B. Discuss some possible connections between these two lists and write down your ideas in the bottom section.

List A People in our Community who have a "voice":	List B Safety concerns in our Community:
<p>Who from List A could help promote an awareness of an issue or concern from List B?</p>	

Producing a Public Service Announcement for Radio

Your group must decide on a public service message that could be communicated effectively through a radio broadcast. As a group, you must work together to produce a 15 second script for an audio recording of your broadcast.

1. Decide on the community issue from Thinking About our Community (Handout 6.1). Decide on a target audience. On what local radio station would you like your public service announcement to be heard? Why?
2. Brainstorm your ideas on chart paper. Include ideas for appealing to your target audience by asking yourselves these questions: Is the announcement informational? Do we want the listener to be afraid? Do we want to use humour? Whose voice do we want represented?
3. Write a rough draft of the script for the narration, playing close attention to the vocabulary used. Indicate the places where you will use sound effects and music. What kind of narration would be most effective? Who in your group will do this? Who will provide other necessary voices?
4. Decide how you can produce the sound effects and who will be responsible for this.

Reflection

- What techniques were the most effective in this PSA?
- How did these techniques help the listener understand the message?
- What was the most difficult part in producing this PSA?

What could be done next time to improve this PSA?

(Adapted from *Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches, 7-12, Media Literacy.*)

Lesson 7

Coming Soon To A Theatre Near You: Examining the Codes and Conventions Used in the Representation of Violence in Movie Trailers

Grades 4 to 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Production Perspectives 1.6

- *Identify who produced various media texts, the reasons for their production, how they are produced, and how they are funded.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Conventions and Techniques 2.2

- *Identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.*

Key Concept:

- *Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions, and aesthetics.*

Movie trailers are used to create hype for an upcoming movie. They generally are very short in length, and usually show highlights of the action and special effects, while raising curiosity in audiences by keeping them guessing as to the storyline. Movies targeted to students in the junior division generally are action-adventure in nature. Movie trailers for these types of films generally draw upon large-scale special effects and representations of violence and aggression to entice audiences. Students will view trailers for a variety of movies in order to analyse the techniques used in them to draw audiences.

Key questions to consider:

- *How has my interest been piqued by this movie trailer?*
- *What has the producer done to grab my attention?*
- *Am I interested in this movie?*
- *Why?*

Introduction/Overview

The reading of moving images is a complex process. Film and video information is sent in a continuous stream, requiring viewers to use a variety of skills, strategies, and roles in order to monitor comprehension and make meaning. This lesson will focus on an approach offered by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke in their “four resources model” (2003). This model allows students to focus their discussion on questions that relate to the literate learner. In this lesson, students will learn to make meaning of film texts (i.e. movie trailers), to “break their codes and conventions,” to use texts functionally, and to analyze them critically for their media messages. Students will be encouraged to view a variety of movie trailers in order to understand the violent content and how it is used as a technique for drawing audiences.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Using a **think-pair-share strategy**, to **activate prior knowledge**, ask students to think about the last time they went to the movie theatre and sat through a number of movie trailers before the feature presentation. Provide students with the following focus questions:
 - *Which movie trailers do you remember (or stick out in your mind)?*
 - *Why?*
2. On chart paper (or the blackboard), record students’ thinking using a web organizer. In the centre of the web, place the title *“How movie trailers grab our attention.”*
3. Select two or three movie trailers to show students (either from DVD’s or the Internet). Be sure to choose trailers for movies targeted to pre-teen and teen audiences. **First Viewing:** Watch all trailers once without interruption or discussion.
4. Invite students to share briefly their reactions to the trailers (e.g., *What did you notice? What are your thoughts?*).
5. Using a **think aloud** strategy, model for students your reactions to the representations of violence in the trailers. For example:

“Wow, the first thing I notice is just how fast-paced everything is in these trailers. I also notice that there is a lot of violence – both obvious and implied. I seem to be jolted every couple of seconds with gun blasts, explosions, and yelling. Based on what I am seeing, it seems that the whole movie is about threatening others, blowing things up, and hurting others. By the fact that the producers are using those images to sell the movie to me, I can infer that the producers think violence is exciting, it’s what will make their movies more interesting, and it’s what I want to see.”

6. Ask students to watch the trailers a second time for a **focused viewing**. This time, ask students to track the number of “jolts” they get while watching the trailer. A “jolt” is considered a sound or image used to grab attention quickly (e.g. loud blast, character leaping from the darkness, screaming). See Movie Trailer Jolts (Student Handout 7.1).
7. After viewing, have students turn to an elbow partner to share their thinking and to discuss the “Conclusion” questions from Movie Trailer Jolts (Student Handout 7.1).
8. **Small Group Work:** Organize students into groups of four. Using Role Cards For Discussion Groups (Student Handout 7.2), assign each member a role. Give students a few minutes to reflect on their role and to consider the questions on their role card.
9. **Deep viewing:** Show students a new movie trailer (one that was not part of the previous part of the lesson). Encourage students to jot down notes as they view the trailer. These notes will guide their group discussion after viewing.
10. After viewing, have students engage in group discussion driven by the questions on their role cards. Each member discusses, in turn, the questions assigned (two examples that connect to two questions from each role card should be documented on chart paper).
11. Each group presents their analysis to the rest of the class.
12. You may want students to record a summary of their group discussion in their response journal.

Activism

As a school-wide activity, students could create posters for their favourite books, as if they had been made into major motion pictures. Students could create their posters by drawing upon their understanding of the codes and techniques that they discussed in reference to movie trailers.

Students could write a response to the question: *Would audiences be interested in an action-adventure movie that does not depict violence? Why or why not?*

Assessment Opportunities

Movie Trailer Jolts response (Student Handout 7.1)
Small Group Work

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could compare the movie trailers to the actual movies, and discuss whether the depictions of violence in the trailers were fair representations of the actual films. They then could write a response, sharing their reactions to the discrepancies, or lack of discrepancies.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language

Health

Mathematics – Data Management

Writing

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 7.1 – Movie Trailer Jolts
- Student Handout 7.2 – Role Cards

MOVIE TRAILER JOLTS

Movie Trailer	Length in Minutes	Number of Jolts	JPM Jolts per minute	Notes What "jolted" you? <i>What are your reactions to this film?</i>
Conclusions				
<p>Which movies seemed the most exciting?</p> <p>Which movie(s) appealed to you most? Why?</p> <p>What influence did the "jolts" have on what you thought about the movie?</p>				

Role Cards

For Discussion Groups

CODE BREAKER

How do I read/view this?

- How do you view a movie trailer?
- Which images are interesting?
- Which images are confusing?
- Are the images close-ups? Mid shots? Long shots?
- Are the images high angle? Low angle?
- How did you keep track of what the movie is about?
- How quickly do the images move or change?
- How is violence shown or implied in the movie trailer?

TEXT USER

What do I do with this text?

- What are the characteristics of a movie trailer?
- What is the purpose of a movie trailer?
- Who likes to watch movie trailers? Why?
- If you were to make a movie poster for the same movie, how might you use the ideas from the movie trailer?
- What, from the trailer, would have to change if you were to create a poster?

MEANING MAKER

What does this text mean to me?

- Based on the trailer, what do you think the movie will be about?
- Who are the main characters?
- What do you think is the plot?
- What is the producer's message?
- What is the producer's message about violence?
- What did you feel as you viewed the movie trailer?
- How is violence represented (e.g. facial expressions, weapons, explosions, physical contact)

TEXT ANALYST

What is this text trying to make me think, feel, or do?

- Why do you think the producers chose these images/scenes to include in the trailer?
- Are there stereotypes in this movie trailer?
- Whose voice is missing from this movie trailer?
- Who seems to have the power in this movie trailer?
- How might the trailer be different if the main characters were girls rather than boys, or vice versa?
- How might the trailer be different if told from another point of view?
- How might the trailer be different if it took place in a different place or time?

Lesson 8

The Marketing of Video Games

Grade 4-6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Audience Responses

Grade 4-6 1.4

- *Explain why different audiences (e.g., with respect to gender, age, nationality, ability/disability, income level) might have different responses to a variety of media texts (messages in chat rooms, television broadcasts of international news stories, music, documentaries, clothing).*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES

Grade 4-6 2.2

- *Identify the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.*

Key Concepts:

- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*
- *The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).*

Junior students represent a very large and powerful market. The buying power of children between the ages of 8-12 is estimated at five hundred billion dollars per year in North America. A recent Canadian national school-based survey of 5,272 children and youth in Grades 4 to 11 found that playing games online is the favourite weekday activity for younger students. Eighty-nine per cent of Grade 4 students report playing games online. It is further estimated that 50 billion dollars is spent a year to advertise to this group of consumers; therefore, our students need to understand that the marketing of video games and the advertisements in their on-line environments have commercial implications.

Key questions to consider:

- *How do video games attract their audience?*
- *How real is this text?*
- *What values are represented and what values are missing?*

Introduction/Overview

In this lesson, students will examine and respond to a variety of perspectives, statements and facts about video games. Some students may not have much prior knowledge or experience with either video games or online games, so teachers are encouraged to have their students bring a variety of artifacts that represent the kinds of games enjoyed by junior students. Game covers, magazine advertisements, game manuals and game reviews are some examples of video game texts that students could deconstruct in order to understand how video games attract their audience. There is also a gender divide in boys' and girls' interest and enthusiasm for some video and computer games. Students will be asked to examine critically which games appeal to boys (for example), and what game producers could do to attract a larger and more representative audience. The extension activities provide opportunities for subject integration and opportunities for students to share with teachers and parents new information they learned about the games they enjoy.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Using *Musing to Music: Statement Strips for Discussion* (Student Handout 8.1), divide your class into 5 groups and provide each group with an envelope containing the statement and question prompts cut into strips. Each group member should select a strip, read each statement independently, and think about his/her responses to the question prompts.
2. Using the strategy, **Musing to Music**, provide the following instructions:
 - When the music begins, mill around the room.
 - When the music stops, turn to a partner and share your statement and thoughts.
 - Trade statements and repeat the cycle.
3. Debrief this awareness activity by summarizing the different perspectives related to the marketing of video games.
4. Have small groups of students choose an artifact related to the marketing of video games. Using an artifact and the **think aloud strategy**, model some responses to the questions provided in the framework on Understanding Video Games (Student Handout 8.2). For additional information about the triangle framework, refer to the **Background Information** section for this lesson.
5. See resources list below. Using *Understanding Video Games* (Student Handout 8.2), have small groups of students use the placemat to record their ideas, based on the questions for understanding a media text.

6. Groups of students should share their analyses and understanding of the texts with the rest of the class.
7. Students should consolidate their thinking and new learning by writing a response to one of the statements made on Musing to Music: Statement Strips for Discussion (Student Handout 8.1).

Activism

Students could write a letter to the producers of video games voicing concerns, questions or ideas for future games. For example, if the class was concerned about the lack of action games designed for girls, then suggested improvements might be the goal of writing this letter. Alternatively, some students may be concerned about the use of violence as the only strategy to win points. These letters may suggest alternative solutions. As a school-wide activity, have your students create a book of game reviews that include information that parents might find useful before purchasing video games for children under the age of eight.

Assessment Opportunities

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 8.3)

Student conferences (teacher observations about group skills might be discussed)

Journal response

Oral Language, Writing

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite students to be school newspaper reporters covering a story about the popularity of video and computer games. In pairs, have students interview others in order to include the following information in their newspaper article: Who enjoys video games? Where do children find out what video game to purchase? What makes them appealing to some children but not to others? Is there too much violence in video games? Can playing video games be harmful to some children?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language-discussion

Writing-Students could write the narrative for a favourite video or computer game

Reading-Students could suggest a favourite video game for a main character in a novel, short story or film

Social Studies/Science -Students could draw a scene from a video game that illustrates a theme or topic (ie- a video game set in Medieval times, a video game that illustrates the effective use of pulleys and wheels).

Materials and Resources

- Collect or invite students to bring in artifacts that represent the marketing of video games (game boxes, magazine ads, a TV commercial, game guides or game reviews)
- Student Handouts 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3

www.media-awareness.ca/english/research/YCWW/index.cfm Young Canadians in a Wired World, 2005.

This research project tracks and investigates the behaviours, attitudes, and opinions of Canadian children and youth with respect to their use of the Internet.

Kids Take on the Media

Visit the Lesson Plan Library on the *Canadian Media Awareness Network* website (<http://www.media-awareness.ca>) for additional lessons related to video and computer games for students in Grades 4 to 6.

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Video games: This is a generic term used to describe any game played on a console, a computer, or the Internet. Moving images appear on a screen.

Console games: These games are played on a stand-alone system that connects to a television screen. Popular examples include Nintendo and PlayStation.

Computer games: These games come on a CD or a DVD, and must be installed on the computer system. They are self-contained, which means that they do not require an Internet connection or a game console, as they are run by the computer.

Internet games (also known as online games): These games are played on the computer, but do not require special hardware or software. All materials needed for the game are provided on an Internet website, on which the player must sign-in to play.

Introducing the triangle framework in Understanding Video Games (Student Handout 8.2)

The triangle represents a framework for understanding a media text. In this case, the text is an artifact related to the marketing of a video game. The questions are used to guide students' discussion by visualizing the connections between audience, text and production. The framework also introduces students to media language in order actively to examine and gain new understandings of how and why video game products are made and sold.

Encourage students to work through the questions on each side of the triangle in order to understand some of the codes and conventions in the marketing of a video game product.

From: *Responding to Media Violence: Starting Points for Classroom Practice*, 1998. Page 20.

Musing to Music: Statement Strips for Discussion

“Playing games online is the favourite weekday activity for younger students. Eighty-nine per cent of Grade 4 students report playing games online.”

- Do you agree with this research finding? How much time do you spend playing video or computer games? What are your favourite games? Why do you find them enjoyable?

"Video game producers need to stop thinking pink...research shows that girls want games that engage and challenge, as well as entertain them, not 'girly versions' of games originally designed for boys."

- Do you agree with this quote? How might game producers create games that girls would find enjoyable?

“Parents supervise video and computer games far less than TV programs. Parents’ knowledge of games’ content is very limited.”

- Do the adults you know enjoy and play video games with you? Who purchases the games in your household? Where do you get information about new games? What should parents know before purchasing games for children under the age of 8?

“Most of the top-selling video games (89 percent) contained violent content, almost half of which was of a serious nature.”

- Do you agree with this research finding? What games contain violent content? What does violent content in a video or computer game look like?

“Some violent video games can cause some people to have more aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.”

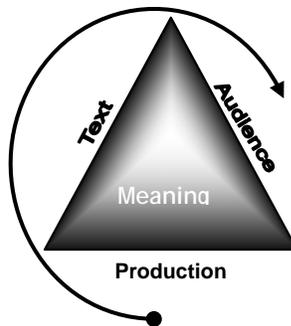
- Do you agree with this research finding? Why or why not? What are some examples of games that might cause this kind of behaviour? Can video or computer games be good for you? Why or why not? What are some examples that show how these games might make you smarter?

Understanding Video Games

The triangle shows the relationship between *Audience*, *Text*, and *Production*. These are important ideas to think about when you discuss the video game artifact. As a group, discuss and record your responses to the questions from the three sides of the triangle. Some questions are directly related to the game that the artifact represents, while other questions are specific to the actual artifact (ie advertisement, game cover).

Text

What is this?
Can you name other texts like it?
What colours, symbols, lettering are used?
Could this be used to hurt somebody?
Are there any violent pictures on it? Are there any stereotypes?



Audience

Do you like the game this text represents?
Would your parents like it? Why or why not?
Could this scare somebody?
What age group is this game intended for? Who else would buy this game?
How do you use this text? How might others use this text?
Would you want to play other games like it?

Production

Who makes this text?
Where are some places you could buy it?
How much does it cost?
How do you know what game to buy?
Have you seen a commercial for this game on television?
How does this text relate to the actual game?
Who do you think makes money from this game?
How could this text be improved?

(Adapted from *Responding to Media Violence: Starting Points for Classroom Practice*, 1998. Page 22.)

Lesson 9

Violence in the Neighbourhood How Violence is Reported in Local Newspapers

Grades 4 to 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Purpose and Audience 1.1

- *Explain how a variety of media texts address their intended purpose and audience.*

Making Inferences/Interpreting Texts

- *Interpret media texts, using overt and implied messages as evidence for their interpretations.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Form 3.2

- *Identify an appropriate form to suit the specific purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create, and explain why it is an appropriate choice.*

Key Concepts:

- *Media construct versions of reality.*
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Although newspapers report factual events, they are also in the business of selling newspapers to an audience. When reporters are limited by space, they must make decisions about what information will be included and what will not. They also must consider the angle from which they will tell the story, in order to appeal to their audience. The angle of a newspaper report on local violence can influence with whom an audience will sympathize or lay blame. Therefore, students need opportunities to analyze newspaper reporting in order to understand better how media messages are carefully crafted for particular audiences.

Key questions to consider:

- *From whose point of view has this story been told?*
- *How might it have been told differently if it had been told through another voice?*
- *What has influenced the message? (e.g., How did the length of the article influence the message?)*

Introduction/Overview

Students often assume that news that is reported in newspapers is “factual” and therefore “truth.” Yet, the bias of the news organization or the reporter can have a tremendous impact on the way in which the news event is reported. Newspapers are businesses, and, therefore, accountable to their audiences. Students will analyse a variety of local newspapers to determine how violence is reported. Students will look for evidence of bias, and note tools used to influence a message. In the end, students will write two versions of a story – one longer and one shorter – to demonstrate their understanding of how meaning is constructed.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Provide pairs of students with copies of local newspapers. Give students time to browse through the newspapers, looking for articles that report on violence in their community (e.g. city, neighbourhood). Ask students to cut out three to four articles for use throughout this lesson.
2. Have each partnership read aloud the headlines of the articles they have cut out. Students should be listening attentively. Each partnership needs to find another partnership that has an article on the same event, but from a different newspaper. If this is not possible, simply organize students into groups of four.
3. Provide students with How To Detect Bias In Newspapers (Student Handout 9.1). Ask students to examine their news articles through the lens of the 8 different categories provided on this handout. Newspaper articles should be glued to larger sheets of paper (e.g. chart paper) to allow students to make notes of examples that reflect the points on the handout.
4. Ask students to consider the underlying message of their news articles. That is, *what does the reporter want you to think, feel, or do as a result of reading this?*
5. Invite groups to share examples of their evidence of bias, as well as their conclusions.
6. You may want students to record a summary of their group discussion in their response journal.

Activism

Students could take an article and re-write it from the opposing point of view (e.g. from the point of view of the aggressor).

As a school-wide activity, students could interview other students for personal stories. Students then could write the stories, following a newspaper article framework, demonstrating a distinctive angle and a clear purpose.

Assessment Opportunities

News Article Chart Paper

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could choose an article and rewrite it for the commuter version of the paper. Therefore, the article will be shorter and take up less space. Decisions will have to be made as to what is left out and what is included.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language
Health
Writing

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 9.1 – How To Detect Bias In Newspapers
- A variety of copied of local newspapers
- Chart paper

HOW TO DETECT BIAS IN NEWSPAPERS

OMISSION	PLACEMENT
<p>Sometimes, a reporter may choose to omit, or leave out, some of the information from a story.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> An article called, “Violent Protest” might leave out the fact that there were only two or three protestors.</p>	<p>Where a newspaper editor places a story is very important.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Placing “Violent Protest” deep in the back of the paper may imply that the newspaper doesn’t consider the story very important.</p>
HEADLINE	IMAGES
<p>Headlines can be used to summarize the bias of the newspaper.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> “Violent Protest” sounds a lot more harsh than “Local Nuisances Whining Again”</p>	<p>Images can express bias too.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Of the many, many photos taken where someone is smiling, an editor may choose the one photo where the person is frowning – to put the person in a negative light.</p>
NAMES or TITLES	STATISTICS
<p>How someone is referred to can say a lot about the bias of an article.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> The same person may be referred to as an “unfortunate victim of the system” or a “thug,” depending on the angle of the article.</p>	<p>Words and numbers can be used to shade the truth.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> “Handful turn up to challenge local councillor’s views” sounds a lot less eventful than “Throngs stampede as councillor back-pedals on his statements.”</p>
SOURCE	TONE
<p>Where one gets their information can say a lot about how credible the story is.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> If the main source for “Video Games Don’t Lead to Violence” is the president of Game Box Corp, you may have some questions.</p>	<p>The choice of words can express bias.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> There is no questioning the bias in: “Filthy and neglected, gang-plagued housing complex is a pressure cooker, waiting to explode.”</p>

(Adapted from excerpt from *Newskit: A Consumers Guide to News Media*, by The Learning Seed Co.)

Lesson 10

You are the Judge: How much violence is too much?

Grades 4, 5, and 6 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Responding to and Evaluating Texts

Grades 4-6 1.3

- *Express opinions about ideas, issues, and/or experiences presented in media texts, and give evidence from the texts to support their opinions.*

Audience Responses

Grades 4-6 1.4

- *Explain why different audiences might respond differently to the same media text.*

Key Concepts:

- *All media are constructions.*
- *Each person interprets messages differently.*

Junior students enjoy and spend a significant amount of time viewing television. This carefully constructed environment gives our students a sense of reality that is different from their own. Students need to be aware of the representation of violence, including the different forms and amount of violence in children's programming. Different people who watch the same television show often do not have the same experience, or may interpret the message differently, based on their age, culture and life experiences. Junior students need to become aware of the potential impact of realistic acts of violence on a younger television viewing audience.

Key questions to consider:

- *How well does this television show represent reality?*
- *How is it constructed?*
- *What understanding do I get from this program?*
- *How might others understand it differently?*
- *Why?*

Introduction/Overview

This final lesson allows students the opportunity to analyse some of the representations of violence in children's programming. Students further will be

required to consider some of the current restrictions placed by the Television Violence Code from the CAB. In this manner, students will be using their viewing and analytical skills to evaluate if current television programs meet the CAB standards. By isolating, deconstructing and reflecting on specific acts of television violence, students will understand how realistic images of violence are constructed and used to appeal to a specific viewing audience.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. As a class, **brainstorm** a list of television shows that students currently watch. From this list, choose one program that students agree represents different forms of violence. This could be a cartoon, a sports program, a news program, a reality-based program or a situation comedy.
2. Using this program as the text, create a **web** on the blackboard, with examples of physical and emotional acts of violence that are represented. A short 10 minute clip of this program may be useful, to use as a **shared viewing** experience to illustrate some of the emotional acts of violence (yelling, put-downs, name-calling) and physical acts of violence (threatening, bullying, pushing, hitting, punching, kicking, stabbing, vandalizing or shooting).
3. Using the Tracking Sheet for Violence on Television (Student Handout 10.1), have students monitor a selection of different types of programs they currently view. This could be done individually, in small groups, at home or in class, using a range of pre-recorded short clips of television programs. Students should track the types and numbers of violent acts in their assigned program.
4. As a group, students will compile the data and evaluate the programs by giving each one a rating. At this point, students in each group should agree upon their own rating system, and apply it to their group's television programs.
5. Using Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming (Student Handout 10.2), have students make judgements about how well some of the children's programs follow the codes as outlined by CAB. Consider, as a class, the following questions:
 - Why do we have a rating system?
 - Are the rules outlined in Student Handout 10.2 reasonable?
 - Are there other rules that you think should be included? What are they?
 - How do you think television violence affects you? How does it affect younger children?
 - How much violence is too much?

6. As a **school-wide activity**, students could produce television program reviews aimed for younger children and their parents. These could be compiled and stored in the Library Resource Centre for school access. Alternatively, these could be produced electronically and shared on the school's website for parent and community access.

Activism

Have students generate a list of children's programming they feel is suitable for younger children. Students could write a letter to CAB explaining what television shows promote safety and are entertaining for children. Included in their letters would be reasons to support choice(s). Alternatively, students could write letters with suggested improvements for programming that contains too much violence. Included in these letters would be specific ways violent situations could be resolved and still be effective in engaging the intended audience.

Assessment Opportunities

Tracking Sheet for Violence on Television (Student Handout 10.1)
Oral responses to teacher-guided questions
Written journal responses

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite students to investigate the issues of bullying on popular television programs. Are there gender differences in the kinds of bullying with girls as opposed to boys? Junior students also could interview primary students about their favourite cartoons, and ask them about the portrayal of violence and how it makes them feel. Students also could present their findings to a middle school classroom where students might be participating in a babysitting course and would be interested in the content and viewing habits of children for whom they soon may be responsible.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language and Writing

Reading-students could suggest possible favourite television programs of a main character in a story or novel (they are currently reading), and support their response with evidence from both texts.

Mathematics- Data management and representation of data from violent acts on a television program

Materials and Resources

- Student Handouts 10.1 and 10.2
- For more lesson ideas and further background information for teachers: www.media-awareness.ca See “Taking Charge of TV Violence/Grades 4-7/Lesson Plan.”

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Definition of Media Violence: Violence is behaviour that is abusive, threatening, or hurtful, by way of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual, or regulatory (restrictions, rules, laws) means. Media images and messages containing such content are violent.

Tracking Sheet for Violence on Television: Frequency and Type (Physical and Emotional)

Name of Program: _____

Time: _____ Target Audience: _____

As you view your assigned television program, focus your viewing on the action by tracking the examples of violence. Focus your listening by paying attention to the words and tones of voice used in order to track the examples of emotional violence. Use a tally system.

Examples of Physical Violence		Examples of Emotional Violence	
Hitting, punching or kicking		Put-downs	
Pushing or shoving		Name-calling	
Shooting or Knifing		Yelling	
Destruction of property		Other	
Accidents (falling, car, etc.)			
Other			

My personal rating for this program:

Questions I have about the violence in this program:

Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming

<http://www.cbsc.ca/english/codes/violence/violence.htm>

2.0 CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING (*Children refers to persons under 12 years of age*)

2.1 As provided below, programming for children requires particular caution in the depiction of violence; very little violence, either physical, verbal or emotional shall be portrayed in children's programming.

2.2 In children's programming portrayed by real-life characters, violence shall only be portrayed when it is essential to the development of character and plot.

2.3 Animated programming for children, while accepted as a stylized form of storytelling which can contain non-realistic violence, shall not have violence as its central theme, and shall not invite dangerous imitation.

2.4 Programming for children shall deal carefully with themes which could threaten their sense of security, when portraying, for example; domestic conflict, the death of parents or close relatives, or the death or injury of their pets, street crime or the use of drugs.

2.5 Programming for children shall deal carefully with themes which could invite children to imitate acts which they see on screen, such as the use of plastic bags as toys, use of matches, the use of dangerous household products as playthings, or dangerous physical acts such as climbing apartment balconies or rooftops.

2.6 Programming for children shall not contain realistic scenes of violence which create the impression that violence is the preferred way, or the only method to resolve conflict between individuals.

2.7 Programming for children shall not contain realistic scenes of violence that minimize or gloss over the effects of violent acts. Any realistic depictions of violence shall portray, in human terms, the consequences of that violence to its victims and its perpetrators.

2.8 Programming for children shall not contain frightening or otherwise excessive special effects not required by the storyline.