

CRITICAL LITERACY AND MEDIA VIOLENCE PROJECT

KINDERGARTEN/PRIMARY UNITS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Kindergarten/Grade 1 Unit is to develop the critical literacy skills needed by young students to recognize and evaluate violence in the media. Media violence material often is contained in moving-image texts (i.e. material that is viewed on screens). The Kindergarten/Primary Units provide solid foundation skills in decoding and creating still-image and moving-image texts. Students who have a good understanding of the codes and conventions of visual imagery are capable of bringing sophisticated analysis skills to any kind of visual text they may encounter. Since moving-image texts exist primarily beyond the classroom, it is important that all students can take these analytical skills with them for every engagement with visual media.

This complex task has several compelling challenges. There is normative data about the development of infant vision, and the stage at which young children learn to relate real objects to pictures. There are, however, no well-researched developmental norms to map the way young children relate to moving visual images, (TV, movies, DVDs, computer games). Moving images are an abstract construct, appearing to be completely real to a young child. Children's anecdotal comments hint at a variety of developmental stages of understanding, but the kind of developmental cognitive sequencing that is the foundation of the other language strands has not yet been developed for Media Literacy.

Secondly, the Media Literacy strand of the Ontario Elementary Language Curriculum has become significantly more important, now that digital visual media are the prime source of so many popular narratives for children. Characters such as Shrek and Nemo are universally recognized in our culture. In the lessons that follow, most of the texts will contain still and moving images, to

help children begin to recognize the subtle coding used in visual imagery. Professional development in Media Literacy is beginning to help teachers embed this strand in literacy programs; however, there is still a reluctance to embrace visual media literacy in the early years because it is seen as a competitor to print literacy. In England, however, “research and practice demonstrate that using media texts can motivate children and create the necessary conditions for engagement with literacy learning” (*Look Again! A Teaching Guide to Using Film and Television with Three to Eleven Year Olds*, British Film Institute). Very young children now represent a huge target market in the entertainment industry. Since the powerful influence of visual media begins long before children come to school, it is crucially important that students learn to “read” visual media from an early age.

Thirdly, critical literacy is a very new concept in early-year’s literacy instruction. McLaughlin and DeVood define critical literacy as “a dynamic process that examines power relationships, acknowledges that all texts are biased and encourages readers (viewers) to explore alternative perspectives and take action”(*Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students' Comprehension of Text*, Maureen McLaughlin & Glenn DeVooqd). This important aspect of literacy instruction is working its way down from more senior grades; however, what it looks like and sounds like in kindergarten and primary classrooms is still a work in progress.

Finally, the topic to be addressed is media violence, but the choice of texts must relate to the topic in a developmentally appropriate way. Fairy tales and myths have been important stories which help young children deal with fears of abandonment and loss, terrifying possibilities for the smallest, most vulnerable members of society. Stories of giants, wicked stepmothers, dragons, trolls and other monsters have been created to help children confront their fears in a symbolic way. Goodness triumphs over evil. Gretel pushes the witch into the oven and Hansel is saved for the happy reunion with Father. Stories from *Cinderella* to *The Lion King* all feature young heroes who survive the loss of a

parent, and overcome all foes on the road to a happy ending. Conflict, death and violence are enduring, elemental themes of childhood literature because they resonate with the most serious concerns of children. Variations on these themes occur in the literature for each generation, because ultimately they are optimistic. Even a child can overcome adversity, and create a better world. Concerns with violent images arise from the nature of the images used to tell these stories of conflict and loss. Picture books usually have illustrations which are thoughtfully created for specific age ranges. The wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* is an illustrated, sly, talking, fictional creature, not a real photo of a snarling wolf. Illustrations in books designed for older children contain darker, scarier images.

Moving images, (i.e. television, movies, etc) are much more confusing for young children. They seem to represent an open window on a part of the world outside the home. This makes it difficult, in the early years, to recognize reality in movies and TV. In this golden age of computer generated special effects, the line between fiction and reality is blurred intentionally and cleverly, adding another dimension to the interpretation of moving images. It is in this realm that good media literacy instruction can begin to help children successfully “read” the visually imagery used by modern storytellers. Very young children are only beginning to have the cognitive development and life experience to begin to consider the reality question. For the most part, we may assume that in kindergarten and grade 1, everything on a screen is considered to be real in one way or another. When heading out to see the second *Stuart Little* movie, a four year old remarked “Stuart Little will be very happy to see me.” With these ideas in mind, where is the best place to start? The lessons have been designed to lay the groundwork for the development of media literacy skills which will lead to healthy emotional and critical literacy responses to all media in general, and media violence in particular.

In the Kindergarten/Grade 1 section, the focus is on genres of still and moving images. The goal is to create awareness of some of the codes, conventions and

vocabulary of still and moving visual imagery. These skills will form the basis for more sophisticated analytical skills for more complex visual texts.

Showing Films in the Classroom

Q. *I read through the lessons and I notice that I am being asked to show a number of film clips. My school does not have a site license. Isn't it illegal to show films without a license?*

A. Currently (2007), Canada's Fair Dealing law allows teachers to show films and film clips without a site license, provided that the purpose of the viewing is instructional, and that there is an assessment component included in the lesson.

CRITICAL LITERACY / MEDIA VIOLENCE PROJECT

ANIMATION UNIT

KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 1

Junior Kindergarten

FROM STILL TO MOVING IMAGES

Senior Kindergarten

ANIMATION TECHNIQUES

Grade One

ANIMATION AND LIVE ACTION PROGRAMS

Lesson 1

Real or Not Real?

Reading the Illustrations in Picture Books

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.3 Responding to, and Evaluating Texts

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works (e.g., state whether they like or dislike a character in a cartoon, song, or movie; draw a picture of the character in a song).*

Lesson Focus:

Students consider how stories are like real life (real), and how they are not like real life (not real).

Big Idea (All media are constructions):

Authors and illustrators construct a reality for their audiences.

Introduction/Overview

For many young students, the line between what is real and what is not real is not very clear. It is not uncommon for young children to consider favourite cartoon or television characters as possible friends. Nor do they think it out of the realm of possibility to replicate some of the exploits of these characters. Therefore, it is important to provide young students with opportunities to consider what is real and what is not, by examining different forms of media for how “real-life” is constructed for audiences.

This introductory lesson is designed to help students look more closely at the illustrations in picture books, and to reflect on how these images are, or are not, like real life. Long before they begin school, young children have spent hundreds of hours viewing stories told through still images in a book and moving images on a screen. This prior knowledge is readily activated to create deep engagement with an exploration of visual imagery, which is an ever-present source of

information and entertainment in our culture. The codes of visual imagery provide an important intermediate step to the understanding the codes and conventions of print literacy.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *Could this story happen in real life?*
- *How is it like real life? How is not like real life?*
- *How do the author and illustrator make the story and pictures seem real?*
- *Do you like this book? Why?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Variety of favourite picture books
- Chart paper and markers
- Appendix 1 - Generic Checklist for Understanding/Creating a Media Text (K – 3)

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Over a number of days, read aloud a variety of favourite picture books to your students. As you do, use a **think aloud** strategy to demonstrate to students what you are thinking about how “real life” is constructed in texts.

For example:

Mercer Mayer’s A Nightmare In My Closet is one of my favourite books. When I look at the illustrations, they remind me of my own bedroom when I was little. There is a bed; I see toys on the floor; and that closet sure is messy. The illustrations show a room that looks a lot like what I remember my room looking like. So, in my head, I am thinking that this story is a lot like real life. But, of course, when we get to the part where the boy meets the Nightmare, I know that this story is not about “real life.” Nightmares may happen in our heads, but they are not real things, and they certainly don’t live in closets. So, this book is a story book, or what you might call fiction. The illustrator shows us things that may look real [s/he constructs reality], but we know that they are not real.

2. Choose another picture book to read to your students on another day. After reading aloud the text, ask your students:
 - *What in this story was **like** real life?*
 - *What in this story was **not like** real life?*
 - *Could this story really happen? How do you know?*Invite students to share their thoughts orally.

3. After a number of days of repeating #2, create a T-chart to record student thinking. Use the following prompts to guide the discussion:
- *How was this story **like** real life?*
 - *How was this story **not like** real life?*

Example:

Title: Where the Wild Things Are	
How was this story like real life?	How was this story not like real life?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The boy is about our age. ▪ He likes to dress up, just like we do. ▪ He misbehaves, like we do sometimes. ▪ He is sent to his room, like we have been before. ▪ His bedroom has a bed, closet, and dresser. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A jungle grows very quickly in his room. ▪ An ocean just appears. ▪ He sails by himself for over a year. ▪ He meets “Wild Things” (not real). ▪ He is made a king. ▪ He can smell his dinner from the other side of the ocean. ▪ His dinner is still hot, even though he had been gone for over a year.

4. In response to picture books read in class, students can draw or paint pictures on each of two sheets of paper: “Things That Were Like Real Life” and “Things That Were Not Like Real Life.” You may want to scribe for students, as they explain what they have drawn (see Appendix 1 for an assessment checklist).

Activism

Encourage children and parents to tell their own stories to the class. This process helps develop awareness of how stories are constructed. As a **school wide activity**, invite members of the community to come in and share their stories. Students could illustrate a favourite moment in the story and these illustrations could be organized sequentially, and displayed.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of students’ participation in group discussions about picture books, and individual attention to picture detail when viewing books and explaining artwork.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could examine other forms of media (e.g. posters or videos) and ask the following questions: *How is this **like** real life?* and *How is this **not like** real life?* Students then could engage in a class discussion to reflect on, and compare, how things are made to seem real in different forms of media.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing

All subject areas that might use a picture book to enhance and support the content

Personal and social development

Visual arts

Lesson 2

How Colour Influences Message: Looking More Deeply Into Children's Picture Books

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.2

- *Identify overt and implied messages, initially with support and direction, in simple media texts.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, and TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.2

- *Identify, initially with support and directions, the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms.*

Lesson Focus:

Students will begin to examine the codes and conventions of visual imagery, meaning illustrations in picture books, by looking at the role that colour plays in construction.

Big Idea (*All media are constructions*):

Illustrators can use colour to construct a reality for their audiences.

Introduction/Overview

Writers and illustrators often create stories for their own children, relatives and friends. It is important for primary students to understand that the stories in picture books are constructions, and they represent a reality constructed by the author and illustrator. Students at this age are very familiar with the picture book genre and can begin to discuss what authors and illustrators do to make these books attractive for children.

This lesson is designed to help students look more closely at the illustrations in the classroom collection of texts. The purpose is to make the codes and

conventions of visual imagery explicit, and to help students "read" all the information encoded in the picture. Specifically, this lesson will focus on colour and how it is used to convey mood and feeling (e.g. pastels represent gentle passivity, strong colours denote action). The codes of visual imagery provide an important intermediate step to the understanding the codes and conventions of print literacy.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *Could this story happen in real life? Why do you think that?*
- *How do the author and illustrator make the story and pictures seem real (or not real)?*
- *Do you like this book? Why or why not?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Selection of books with various styles of illustrations (e.g. use of dark colours, bright colours, warm colours, cool colours, etc.)

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Note: These activities are designed to create an awareness of the elements of illustration. The lessons can be taught sequentially or embedded in the discussions about the stories read daily to the class.

1. Choose several picture books to illustrate how the colours an illustrator chooses influences the mood or message of a story.
2. As you read these stories aloud, over the course of a number of days, use the **think aloud** strategy to demonstrate your thinking about the pictures in the books. For example:

I think that Robert Munsch's books are really funny. It is not just the words that I find funny; I also love the illustrations. One of my favourite illustrators is Michael Martchenko. He illustrates many of Robert Munsch's books, including We Share Everything. When I look at the cover of this book, I see a lot of bright colours. These bright colours make me feel really happy. So, I know that one way illustrators can make readers feel happy about a story is to use lots of bright colours.

3. As you continue to read books aloud to your students, continue to highlight how the illustrator creates a particular mood. See the following chart for some examples:

Text	Colours	Mood
<i>No David!</i> By David Shannon	Purple Vivid Yellow Warm blue	Anger Excitement Comfort
<i>How Georgie Radbourn Saved Baseball</i> By David Shannon	Gray, brown, cold blue Gold Bright blue	Bleakness Warmth Happiness
<i>Voices in the Park</i> By Anthony Browne	Pale colours Dark colours Bright and vivid colours	Seriousness Bleakness, boredom Care-freedom, joy, happiness

4. Ask students to share their reactions to the colours used in picture book images. Remind students that illustrators use colour as a tool (or technique) to create a mood. When reading a picture book aloud, ask students:
 - *What are you feeling when you look at this picture? Can you tell me why?*
 - *Has the illustrator done anything to help you feel this way?*
 - *What colours seem important in this picture?*

5. On separate sheets of chart paper, write the names of colours (e.g. blue, red, yellow, green, or warm colours, cold colours). When you stop to look at a picture, ask students:
 - *What colour seems to stand out in this picture?*
 - *How does this picture make you feel?*

Begin to record student responses. Ultimately, you will have a set of charts that show different colours and the moods they represent.

6. As an art activity, have students create pictures using different colours to represent the mood of the picture. Confer with students as they are creating their images, to listen for their explanations for choosing these colours (Assessment opportunity: *do their colour choices match their explanations?*).

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Model for students how you identify illustrations that may make you feel afraid (e.g. dark pictures of monsters in *Where the Wild Things Are*). Discuss with students how the illustrator uses colour and shadows to achieve this effect. Read a story to the class and invite students to provide an illustration that might support a “scary” text. Display the illustrations and invite students to complete a **Gallery Walk** in order to provide feedback to the illustrator about the desired effect.

Cross-Curricular Connections:

Oral language, reading, media literacy

Personal and social development

Visual arts

All subject areas that might use a picture book to enhance and support the context

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

Children's literature stories for the smallest and most vulnerable members of our society have always dealt with many violent and scary themes. These themes represent children's worst fears (e.g. the loss of a parent, angry or unpredictable ogres, giants, and witches who kidnap small children). The belief is that these symbolic stories help children to come to terms with their anxieties. The images of villains in stories for very young children are quite benign; however, visual content becomes more sinister in stories created for older children. Since the most contentious issues of media violence are related to visual imagery, it is important to give children the knowledge of good, evil, civility and violence. These lessons often are linked to the vocabulary of anti-bullying programs.

Lesson 3

Towards Moving Images: Animation

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 29

- *Begin to respond critically to animated works.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.2

- *Identify overt and implied messages, initially with support and direction, in simple media texts.*

Grade 1 1.3

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works.*

Lesson Focus:

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage students to share personal feelings about animated characters so that students may begin to consider both the overt and implied messages.

Big Idea (*The media contain beliefs and value messages*):

Students' favourite animated characters hold both overt and implied messages.

Introduction/Overview

Most students, regardless of class, culture, or time in the country, have spent many hours enjoying entertaining animated stories. Because of these experiences, teachers can tap into a deep knowledge base of narrative structure: plot, character and setting, gleaned from animation. Movies such as *The Lion King*, *Toy Story* and *Shrek* have production values which have made large scale, animated movies very successful financially. As a result, animation is the most popular style of all film products for children. Children from every class and culture universally recognize characters such as Cruella Deville, Nemo, Shrek and Fiona. It is crucial that teachers help students begin to understand the many layers of meaning that are encoded into these complex visual stories. They, like fairy tales, present stories of loss and abandonment, of good and evil forces.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *What words might you use to describe your favourite animated characters?*
- *How does your favourite animated character make you feel?*
- *Do you own anything that has your favourite animated character on it?*
- *What is the difference between cartoons and real life?*
- *Who is telling the story?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- A sample selection of merchandising for popular animated films (e.g. lunch box, tee shirt, action figure, knapsack)

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Invite students to bring in objects for show and tell that are connected with their favourite animated characters (i.e. merchandise such as tee shirts, lunch bags, knapsacks, thermoses). Be sure to bring in your own object.
2. Invite students to share the objects they have brought in. There needn't be any formal presentations; students can simply show their objects. Use the Question Cube in **Appendix 4** to facilitate the small group discussion about their personal favourite animated character.
3. In small groups, place one sample of merchandising (e.g. lunch box, tee shirt, action figure) onto a large piece of chart paper. Write the name of the character in the centre of the page. Then, engage students in a group discussion, recording their responses, using the following prompts to guide the conversation:
 - *What words can you use to describe this character?*
 - *Who might like this character? Who might not?*
 - *Do you like this character? Why or why not?*
4. In the drama centre, encourage students to act out parts from favourite animated shows

Activism

Have students respond to their favourite animated character by thinking about how their character would have to change to meet the school's code of conduct. Display the code of conduct and choose one animated character to model. As a class, make a list of characters who would have to change, and a list of characters who are good role models for student behaviour. As a **school wide activity**, classes could share the different ways the school's code of conduct is used, followed and respected.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of participation in group discussions.
Observe and note imaginative play scenarios in creative play, using cameras.
Save artwork in art portfolios.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Primary students could role play their favourite character in a number of different situations.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing
Social Studies: Animated films with relevant content
Personal and social development, school safety and behaviour
Visual Arts and Drama

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

All students can be successful in these lessons that discuss the stories students know by heart. When these topics are presented, children who usually are disempowered in school, because of their lack of knowledge of print literature, have a chance to reveal their understanding gained through engagement with animation. This success helps motivate a greater interest in print.

An interesting discussion develops around the question of why there are so many animal characters in animation. There are several possibilities: historically, animation developed from cartoon and puppet shows; now, in modern times, issues of racial and cultural representation are neatly sidestepped by using animated characters.

Lesson 4

Moving Images: Animation

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.3 Responding to, and Evaluating Texts

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works (e.g., state whether they like or dislike a character in a cartoon, song, or movie; draw a picture of the character in a song).*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.1 Form

- *Identify some of the elements and characteristics of a few simple media forms.*

Grade 1 2.2 Conventions and Techniques

- *Identify, initially with support and direction, the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms.*

Lesson Focus:

Students consider how animated moving images (e.g. films or television programs) are like real life (real), and how they are not like real life (not real). Having been introduced to similar concepts in a previous lesson, students will begin to discover how animators use colour and shadows to help construct reality for their audiences.

Big Idea (*Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions, and aesthetics*):

Animators use colour to imply messages about characters.

Introduction/Overview

Most students enjoy watching animated films or television programs. Along with a distinct form and style, many animated texts use animal characters that allow for

an introductory lesson on point of view, representation and stereotyping. Just as illustrators use colour to construct meaning in pictures, animators also use colour as a technique for positioning their audiences.

In this lesson, students will continue to explore visual imagery as it relates to animated texts. The codes of visual imagery provide an important intermediate step to understanding the codes and conventions of print literacy. In this lesson, students will view, and respond to, brief clips from animated texts. They also will view frozen frames from these clips in order to analyse how the animator has used colour as a means of communicating meaning.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *Could this story happen in real life?*
- *How is it like real life? How is not like real life?*
- *How does the animator make the story and images seem real?*
- *Do you like this text? Why or why not?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Clips from popular animated films (e.g. *Shrek*, *The Lion King*)

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Select brief clips from animated texts to show your students. Explain to students that a clip is a brief piece of a moving image text.
2. At the end of the viewing, ask students:
 - *Did you like this clip? Why, or why not?*
 - *How did the clip make you feel? Why?*
 - *Who are we supposed to like or not like? How do we know?*
3. Replay the clip. This time, freeze-frame the clip at a moment you would like to analyse with your students. Analyse the frame using the **think aloud** strategy:

For example:

Recently, we looked at pictures in picture books, and talked about how illustrators use colour to help set the mood or feeling of the story. I wonder if animators, those who illustrate for moving images, do the same thing. Let's take a closer look at this clip from The Lion King. This is the scene where Scar is telling the hyenas about his plans for becoming king. I have frozen the frame because I want to take a long hard look at the animator's work. I notice that the colours are very dark. Dark colours can be used to make things seem scary. I also see that the light is shining up on Scar. That reminds me of when I was little, and I would try to scare my little sister by putting a flashlight under

my chin. It made my face look scary. Look here, Scar's eyes are yellow. I don't recall anyone else in the film having yellow eyes. I think that it supposed to make him look evil or scary. So, I think that animators also use colour to help make their audiences feel a certain way.

4. Show another brief animated clip. Freeze-frame the clip at a moment you would like the students to analyse. Use the following prompts to guide the discussion:
 - *What is the mood of this clip?*
 - *Who are we supposed to like or not like?*
 - *How has the animator helped you to feel this way?*
 - *How does this clip make you feel? Why?*
 - *What colours were used to create this image?*
5. Continue to show brief clips from animated texts. When you freeze a frame, invite students to choose a character to imitate. Ask students to hold the pose. Then, circulate around the group. When you tap a student on the shoulder, invite the student to say something that they think the character would be thinking or saying.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of students' participation in group discussions about animated texts, and individual attention to students' responses when role playing a character.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students can dramatize the illustrations on the front covers of picture books to which you are introducing them. Ask students to give voices to the characters. Students will use their understanding of how colours influence mood to guide their dramatizations.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing
Visual and Dramatic Arts
Personal and social development

Lesson 5

Moving Images: My Own Animation Character

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 29

- *Begin to respond critically to animated works.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.3

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.1

- *Identify some of the elements and characteristics of a few simple media forms.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 3.4

- *Produce some short media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using a few simple media forms and appropriate conventions and techniques.*

Lesson focus:

After having analysed animated characters in the previous lesson, students will now create their own animated characters.

Big Idea (*The media have special interests*):

Media texts are created for specific reasons.

Introduction/Overview

Students will continue their study of favourite animation characters by looking at how they are constructed (colours used, male/female voice, weaponry etc.). By analyzing these images, students also are thinking about the commercial implications of their favourite characters. Many of their favourite characters are displayed on many of their toys, clothing, books and posters. Even our young

primary students can start to see why some of their favourite characters are so popular.

Children become very attached to a variety of animation characters because they are introduced when children are young, and they are presented in many forms (i.e. intertextually). Along with the film, there are dolls, clothes, lunchboxes, books, games, etc. This lesson considers the qualities of some of their favourite animated characters. Students then are encouraged to extend this learning in the creation of their own animated characters.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *What do I know about animated characters?*
- *What do I like about animated characters?*
- *How can I create my own animated character?*
- *What would it look like?*
- *Why do children like to collect things related to animated characters?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Images and examples of popular animation characters (e.g. Shrek, Buzz Lightyear, Winnie the Pooh, Big Bird, Cinderella, Mulan, Ariel ,Webkinz)
- Chart paper
- Art supplies (i.e. drawing and painting materials, plasticene, fabric pieces for costumes)

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Activate prior knowledge by discussing the collection of animation images. Choose one and discuss with the class the following questions:
 - *Who likes this character? Why? Who doesn't? Why not?*
 - *Could this character hurt someone? Scare someone?*
 - *Can you list the kinds of products with this picture on it? (e.g. t-shirts, stuffed animals)*
 - *Where can you buy these products? How much do you think they cost?*
 - *What colours are on these products?*
 - *Have you seen a commercial for this character or anything with its picture?*

Note: Vocabulary for this lesson includes words such as hero, villain, victim, weapons, good/bad, kind/mean, friend/bully, safe/dangerous, unsafe. A few children will welcome a safe environment in which to discuss these ideas. Also, remind students that schools are weapons-free zones, so superheroes will have to get along without their weapons while at school.

2. Have students create a new animation character that is a friend of their favourite character.

3. Students could choose between drawing materials or modeling clay (e.g. plasticene). Some students may prefer to make a costume for themselves as characters, or for a doll or stuffed animal as an animation character.
4. Once the work is finished, have a think/pair share activity to name and describe the characters. The Questioning Cube (Appendix 4) may be an effective way for students to share their finished products.
5. Display students' work.

Assessment Opportunities

Evaluate specific vocabulary acquisition, using “*Listen for*” prompts:

- *My character is a **hero** because...*
- *My character is a **villain** because...*
- *I am using this **colour** because...*
- *My character is [characteristic, e.g. friendly]. I'll show this by...*

Save artwork in the art portfolio.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could start visualizing and telling their stories about their new character. Short stories could accompany their illustrations or plasticene models. Students could extend their learning and create characters that would promote safety in the school. As a **school wide activity**, students could hold a contest encouraging other classes to submit their characters and safety messages. The top 10 could be displayed in the hallways and/or posted on the school website.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing
Personal and social development
Visual Arts and Drama

Lesson 6

Still Images: Introducing the Storyboard

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 3.1

- *Identify the topic, purpose, and audience for media texts they plan to create.*

Grade 1 3.4

- *Produce some short media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using a few simple media forms and appropriate conventions and techniques.*

Lesson Focus:

Students will work together to develop a storyboard, in order to retell in visual form a community walk.

Big Idea (*All media are constructions; each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions and aesthetics*):

By manipulating visual images (e.g. re-sequencing), alternative stories can be told.

Introduction/Overview

In this lesson, students will go on a community walk (or engage in some common activity). Guided by the teacher, the students will decide on pictures that should be taken to record the class event. The teacher (or students, if you feel this is appropriate) will take digital photographs to record the event. (**Note:** if the taking of digital images is not possible, then you may want to make quick sketches of different moments of the event.)

Through sequencing and re-sequencing images, students can begin to recognize how sequencing can influence the meaning of a media text. As they begin to use pretend/ old cameras in their play in the creative play centre, they can begin to understand the role of the photographer as a watcher, slightly outside the main activity.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *What story do I want to tell? What kind of picture will I take?*
- *How will I take it?*
- *Why am I taking this picture?*
- *How is this picture going to help tell the story?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Discarded old cameras and/or box sculptures as pretend cameras
- Discarded cell phones as cameras
- A digital still camera

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Show students how to create a pretend camera. Pretend cameras can be made by touching one's index finger to index finger, and thumb to thumb to create a frame. Students can pretend that their frames are the viewfinder of a camera. Encourage would-be photographers to practise with finger frames as a way to compose the subject of the photo.
2. Gather students together as a large group. Tell the class that they will be going on a community walk (e.g. around the schoolyard or neighbourhood). Ask students to have their pretend cameras ready, because you will be taking a number of pictures while on the walk.
3. Brainstorm with students the types of picture they think would be appropriate to take in order to tell others about their walk. Use the following prompts to guide the conversation:
 - *What might we see on our walk?*
 - *How might we tell others about our walk?*
 - *What pictures should we take while we are on our walk?*
4. If you can, take a long a digital camera on your walk. While on the walk, encourage students to remind you when to stop and take a picture. If you feel that they are missing an important moment, stop, and ask them: *Do you think that this is something that will help tell others about our walk? Should I take a picture?*
5. When you stop to take a picture, encourage the students to use their pretend cameras to take pictures as well.
6. After you have printed off the pictures from the walk, encourage students to sequence the pictures to tell the story of their walk. Invite students to point to the pictures to retell the story of the walk.

7. Next, rearrange the pictures into a new sequence. Invite students to “read” the images to tell the new story of the walk. The pictures can be arranged into many sequences, and each new sequence allows for a new story to be told. You may want to explain to students that video texts, such as films and television shows, often are filmed out of sequence. The director makes decisions about the sequence s/he thinks is best for telling his/her story.
8. Students can dramatize different versions of their community walk.

Activism

Invite students to generate a list of ways photographs could be used to promote safety in the school hallways. As a **school wide activity**, students could produce photographs of situations in the hallways, auditorium and outside that depict students acting in a responsible manner.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of play activities with the cameras and sequencing activities.

Keep a record of specific vocabulary acquisition (e.g. photography, photographer, photo, photograph, camera shot, camera, viewfinder, lens, flash)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Collect a variety of cameras and other gadgets (e.g. cell phones) that take pictures, to show to the students.

Invite a photographer to come in to show the children how s/he works.

Bring in books of the collected works of famous photographers for the children to see.

Create photography scrapbooks to commemorate the school year.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing

Drama and Movement

All subject areas that use the field trip opportunity to enhance student learning

Visual Arts

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

Digital camera technology is changing rapidly, making cameras smaller, easier to use, and cheaper to purchase. Young children are able to manage the technology and have almost instant feedback of their results when photos are downloaded to computers and printed. Young students, therefore, are very motivated by this topic.

Lesson 7

Moving Images: Live Action

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.6

- *Identify, with support and direction, who makes some of the simple media texts with which they are familiar, and why those texts are produced.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, and TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.2

- *Identify, initially with support and directions, the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms.*

Lesson Focus:

Students will begin to understand that television programs are pre-recorded and that the characters are played by actors.

Big Idea (*All media are constructions; each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions and aesthetics*):

Characters are played by actors. Most televised programs are pre-recorded.

Introduction/Overview

There are many live action programs that are filmed for kindergarten-aged children. A child's ability to understand that an actor is playing a role as a character is related to a specific cognitive developmental level. For many primary students, live action television programming represents reality. Programs such as *Sesame Street*, or *Blue's Clues* seem to take place as the children are watching; however, all such shows are prerecorded. Four and five year olds have great difficulty in sorting out their relationships with the actors in live action film products. It is almost developmentally impossible for young children to understand truly the idea that the character is an actor, playing a role.

Television programs and movies use settings, characters, lighting and sound effects. Students at this age also can begin to recognize the language and aesthetics of this popular medium. The purpose of this lesson is to help the children become aware of the conventions of live action movies, so they can begin to understand that such products are acted out, and recorded on tape, like a home (or school) movie.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *How is this family the same as/different than mine?*
- *How does the creator make the story and pictures seem real?*
- *How are animation characters different from live characters?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- Sample selection of films, TV clips and movie trailers of material designed for young children
- Art materials so children can create pictures of favourite live characters

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Discuss the creation of TV shows, and movies, using actors. Show small samples of suitable TV shows and use examples from your school collection of films. Ask students if they ever have seen the same television episode more than once on television. Explain that most programs are recorded on videotape, and shown many weeks later.
2. Guide students to think critically by asking some of the following questions:
 - *Is there someone like you /your family on the program/show?*
 - *Is that character important? A hero? A villain? A victim?*
 - *How is the family in the sitcom the same/ different from your family?*
 - *What programs do you watch on channels in your own language?*
 - *Which movies have heroes who are girls? Which movies have heroes who are boys?*
 - *Why are there more stories where boys are the heroes?*
3. Help students brainstorm a list of favourite live characters in popular media featuring actors. Compare animation characters with these live actors.
 - *How are they the same?*
 - *How are they different?*
4. In the drama centre, encourage students to act out parts from favourite live action shows.

Activism

Choose a live action television program that is popular with most of your class. Since most of these programs have related network websites, it might be useful to visit the home page and then have the students discuss the same questions as above, but now using a different medium to analyse. This would be an effective small group learning investigation when the teacher is working with a guided reading group and the classroom has only one computer. Students could describe the different ways the website attracts their attention. This kind of information could be shared with the parent council by two classroom student representatives.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of participation in group discussions.

Keep anecdotal records of relevant vocabulary acquisition (e.g. movie, video, DVD, CD, sound track, voice-over, actor, director, script, set, location, costumes, makeup).

Observe and note imaginative play scenarios, and using cameras in creative play.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Plan a field trip to watch a live theatrical performance. Have students review the production by drawing the costumes and set designs. Have students make predictions about the number of people who worked behind the scenes to make the production possible. As a ***school wide activity***, invite dance and drama groups to perform and have students review the production in the same manner.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing

All subject areas that might use a television program to enhance and support the content of the subject area

Personal and social development

Visual Arts and Drama

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

Children's ability to understand that an actor is playing a role as a character is related to a specific cognitive developmental level. It is impossible for children who have not reached that level to make the distinction. This is a very important idea when one attempts to interpret a young child's understanding of reality and artifice in media.

Older children with a variety of developmental delays perceive most media fiction as “real” because they have not reached this developmental milestone. This has important implications for the way in which young children and others interpret media violence.

Lesson 8

Moving Images: Live Action With Animation

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 29

- *Begin to respond critically to animated works.*

Kindergarten 30

- *Communicate their ideas verbally and non-verbally about a variety of media materials.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.3

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, and TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.2

- *Identify, initially with support and directions, the conventions and techniques used in some familiar media forms.*

Lesson Focus:

Students will examine media texts that blend live actors with animated characters.

Big Idea (*All media are constructions; each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions and aesthetics*):

Film is a medium that can entertain and convey information.

Materials and Resources You Will Need

Movie trailer or brief scenes from movies like *Stuart Little 1* and *2*, new version of *Charlotte's Web*.

Chart paper, chart graph paper

Introduction/Overview

Technical advances in digital animation and photography have created new methods of movie production, which can have live actors interacting with animated characters. With guidance, students can start to understand that all

characters are carefully constructed, using specialized techniques that are highly appealing for this young age group.

This lesson provides an opportunity to delve into the ideas that students have about all the characters in a story, real actors and animated ones. Questioning will reveal a broad range of responses, depending on cognitive developmental levels and life experience. This work is critical to the development of one of the fundamental ideas in media literacy: all media are constructions.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *How is this movie real/not real?*
- *Do some of the animated animal characters remind me of people I know?*
- *How are the animated characters different than the live action characters?*

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Note: The lessons can be taught sequentially or embedded in the discussions about movies viewed by the class.

1. Introduce a scene from a popular film (e.g. *Stuart Little*) by activating student prior knowledge of the characters, setting and plot of the film.
2. Create a **T-chart** to sort the **animated** and **live characters**.
3. Ask students to speculate on the technical process that allows the combination of live action and animation: *In this movie, the real actors talk to and play with animated characters. How is this possible? How do you think this movie was made? (Note: It is achieved with digital cameras and computer-assisted production.)*
4. Enjoy watching a scene that demonstrates the integration of techniques.
5. Follow up with a discussion about the reality of Stuart, the cats, and other animated characters (*Can animals really talk? How do the creators make this seem real?*).

Create a graph to record students' opinions about the reality of all the different characters they view (real and not real).

6. Have students create a picture of their favourite character.

Activism

Invite a guest speaker to your classroom to share his/her experiences with the production of animation. Consider parents, college students, artists or

community members to visit your school. As a ***school wide activity***, arrange for classes to participate in production workshops and then display finished products.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of participation in group discussions.

Keep anecdotal records of relevant vocabulary acquisition (e.g. movie, video, DVD, CD, animated character, actor, cinematographer, animator, special effects (FX), computer generated animation, script).

Save artwork and writing in student portfolios.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Many current DVDs now have a *Special Feature* section that allows the audience to view “behind the scenes” footage on the making of the movie. Have students view portions of this to help them understand the technical decisions made in the production of animated characters interacting with live characters.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing

All subject areas that might use a movie to enhance and support the content of the subject area

Personal and social development

Visual Arts

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

Check with the school technology department to see if primary animation programs (e.g. Kidpix) are available for your class. Arrange for a demonstration of relevant software for your class (e.g. iMovie).

Lesson 9

Moving Images: Conflict Resolution in Animation

Kindergarten/Grade 1 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA MATERIALS

Kindergarten 29

- *Begin to respond critically to animated works.*

Kindergarten 31

- *View and listen to a variety of media materials.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS

Grade 1 1.3

- *Express personal thoughts and feelings about some simple media works.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Grade 1 2.1

- *Identify some of the elements and characteristics of a few simple media forms.*

Lesson Focus:

Students will reflect on the problem-solving choices of animated characters.

Big Ideas (*Each person interprets messages differently; the media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political)*):

Cartoon violence contains both overt and implied messages.

Introduction/Overview

Shrek is a very interesting media literacy text. *Shrek*, the story, began as a book, has been spun out into 3 films, several video games and endless toys, colouring books and games. The ogre is the hero and the king is the villain. The land is populated with familiar nursery rhyme characters that normally belong in books. The story contains many different attempts at conflict resolution, including discussion, trickery, and cartoon violence.

The film raises interesting questions: *What can you do when negotiation fails? Is it all right to fight to defeat evil? How harmful is cartoon violence? Does it lead to violent play? What are teachers to do?*

Since almost all children in our culture know and love stories like *Shrek*, schools have a responsibility and an opportunity to provide learning experiences to help children learn the codes and convention of conflict in books, compared to the codes and conventions of the depiction of conflict in children's movies. Families control the "curriculum", the number and types of movies they deem suitable for children of different ages to watch. Teachers can insure that children bring a more sophisticated knowledge to their viewing of these popular movies, so they take away more information about the story, rather than just experience an addictive adrenalin rush from the action segments.

Key questions for students to consider:

- *Who has this movie been made for?*
- *Who have the products based on this movie been made for?*
- *Where might you get the toys based on the movie?*
- *Why do producers create these toys (to support the release of popular films)?*

Materials and Resources You Will Need

- *Shrek 1, 2, or 3*; or any other film of your choice, in a suitable format
- Video or DVD player and a TV

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Choose two scenes from the movie *Shrek* for students to view. Discuss the problem in the plot, and the variety of problem-solving techniques the characters use to overcome these problems. Every scene contains a problem. Choose a scene with negotiation (e.g. Donkey negotiates with Shrek to stay with him in his swamp) and a scene with action (e.g. Fiona takes on the Band of Merry Men when they try to "save" her in the forest).
2. Create a chart that shows the problem, how it was solved, and the outcome. Give students the opportunity to react to the problem-solving techniques used by the characters. Use the following prompts to guide the conversation:
 - *What was the problem in this scene?*
 - *Whose problem was it?*
 - *How did they solve the problem?*
 - *Do you think this was a good way to solve the problem? Why or why not?*
 - *How did the problem turn out in the end?*
3. Ask children to draw/write/act out their favourite part of the film. Ask students to consider drawing/writing/acting out how the problem might have turned out if the character had chosen a different way to solve the problem.

Activism

Have students respond to the film they viewed in this class by thinking of examples of behaviour which meet the school's code of conduct, and behaviour which does not. As a ***school wide activity***, students could create posters of positive social behaviour that was demonstrated in the film. These posters could be displayed throughout the school.

Assessment Opportunities

Keep anecdotal records of group participation.
Save drawings and writing for student portfolios.

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Have students create a **tableau** for each of the scenes that was used to illustrate a problematic situation.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral language, reading, writing
Social Studies: Animated films with relevant content
Personal and social development, school safety and behaviour
Visual Arts and Drama

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers:

As a division within your school, be prepared to develop a policy or recommended list of films you believe to be suitable for the age and stage of the children you teach. Involve the parent council in the process.

Generic Checklist for Understanding/Creating a Media Text (K-3)

This checklist can be used to make observational notes during small group sharing or discussions. You likely will focus only on one or two categories at a time. This student checklist also can be adapted and used for a range of curriculum expectations and media texts.

Criteria	Observed (✓)	Comments
identifies features of a media text (i.e. movie poster, big book, television commercial)		
uses information from a media text (i.e. discusses the message in a safety cartoon; compares the information between a trade book and an educational video; assesses a website)		
distinguishes between fact and fiction in a media text (i.e. distinguishes between real life and life depicted in a cartoon; distinguishes between a commercial and a program, or between a magazine article and an advertisement)		
communicates information for different audiences and purposes (i.e. uses media language to describe visual images in print and electronic media; understands and uses different technologies to share information to a parent group)		

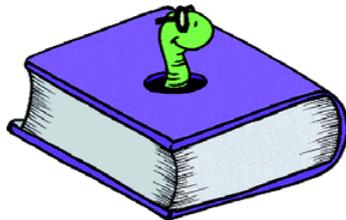
Appendix 1

Criteria	Observed (✓)	Comments
<p>compares media experience to own experience (i.e. makes personal connections between a commercial and its product; shares prior knowledge about a media text)</p>		
<p>applies knowledge of a media convention to create a media text (i.e. records sounds for a story or poem; creates a simple multimedia presentation; arranges photographs in a sequence)</p>		

Bookmarks for Critical Literacy Questions

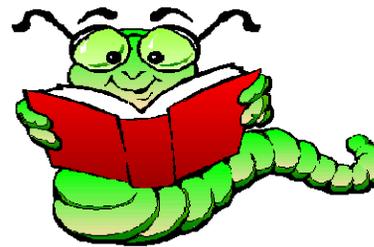
Questions to Promote Critical Thinking When Reading Illustrations in Picture Books

What are we looking at? How was it made?
Who is in the picture? Who is missing?
What colours do you see?
What words would you use to describe the feeling you get from this picture?
Can you tell what the people might be thinking? How do you know?
Why did the author include this picture?
How does this picture help you understand the story?
Do you have any questions about the picture?

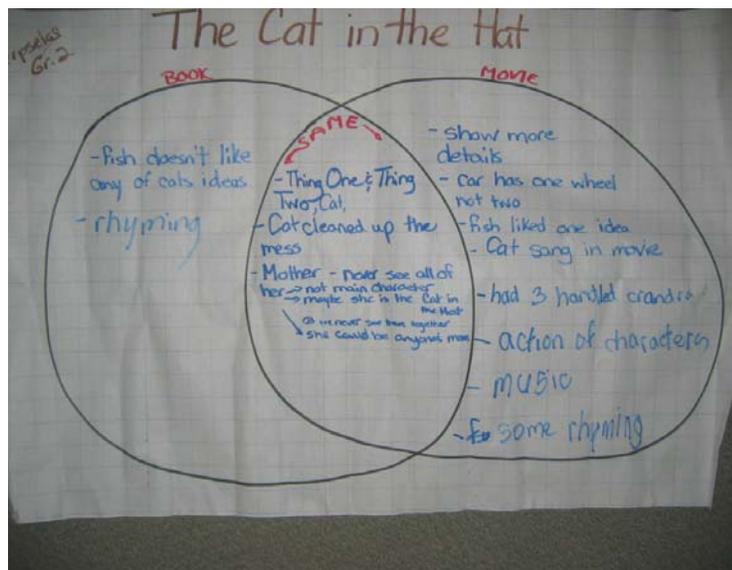
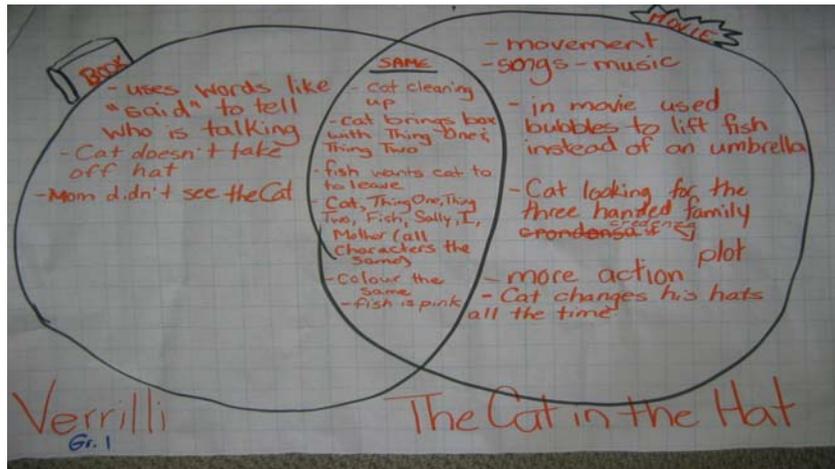


Questions to Promote Critical Thinking When Reading Photographs in Picture Books

What are we looking at?
Where do you think the photographer was standing?
Do you like it?
Who/what is in the photograph? Who/what is missing?
What colours do you see?
What words would you use to describe the feeling you get from this photograph?
Can you tell what the people might be thinking? How do you know?
Why did the author include this photograph?
How does this photograph help you understand the story?
Do you have any questions about the photograph?



Examples of student responses, recorded by the teacher using different graphic organizers.



Question Cube for Discussion of Favourite Animated Character

