

Message, Audience, Production (MAP) Framework for Teaching Media Literacy Social Studies Integration

PRODUCTION

All media messages - a film or book, photograph or picture, newspaper article, news story, propaganda, advertisement, song or music – are constructed using carefully crafted creative techniques. But this is more than just a creative process. The media text is financed, owned and distributed by companies, businesses and organizations which are wedded to financial returns. Independent producers, who are outside mainstream commercial networks, also have their objectives, which may be aesthetic and creative, but are often social and political as well. The messages they create can be deeply important to them to impart. The intention is to guide students towards an understanding of how media messages are put together, both in technical terms using specific codes and practices, but also as products that are owned, produced and distributed for a purpose.

Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in a variety of sources. In the context of social studies, this is imperative in analyzing history sources and understanding history. The PRODUCTION component of the Media Triangle asks students to focus on how media messages are put together, by whom and for what purpose. Using the PRODUCTION questions below, students will have tools and a framework on *how* to read representations of history.

Pre-viewing Questions

Ask students to answer the following questions before they view the media message.

1. Who created this media text?
2. For what purpose(s)?
3. Who owns it and who controls its distribution? Is this relevant?

Post-Viewing Questions

1 After “reading” the media text the first time, ask students to answer the following questions:

Literal Phase

- Describe the work in as much detail as you can
- What do you notice about the way it is constructed?
 - a) visual images – color, setting, clothing, costume, props, movement, mood
 - b) sound – music, language, narration, dialogue, sound effects, silence
- How is the story told? *See notes attached on “narrative”*
- Are there symbolic or metaphorical devices?
- Does it seem real?

II. Examine the text again asking students to think about the codes and practices and the commercial objectives and then to answer the following questions:

Analytical Phase

- What do you think is the purpose of this text? Why was it produced?
- Who is the intended audience?
- How does the production of the media text (camera work, music, narration, etc.) support your hypothesis?
- Could the same story be told differently - how?
- What devices are used to attract our attention, convince or inspire us?

Ask students focus on the camerawork and the effects produced by the different types of shots. Choose a short segment for them to analyze in depth.

- Where is the camera?
- Describe the relationship between camerawork and viewpoint?
- How does this impact the “reading” of the piece? *See notes attached on “shot type” and “camera angles”*

III. After having examined the media message, ask students to draw their own conclusions

Summarizing Phase

- Review the source of the media and check its background. When was it made and by whom? How does this inform our analysis of the media message?
- Review the intention of the producers to check against your reading.
- Is the media text open to different interpretations?
- Do you think it is effective as a media text? Is it well crafted? Does it achieve its purpose?

Learning Extension

After having discussed the media and its audience, ask students to draw their own conclusions using prior knowledge and examining other media sources of the *same* content.

Central Questions for Comparing Sources

1. What do the media works have in common?
2. Are they trying to do the same thing?
3. Do they invite different interpretations?
4. How do they differ technically in terms of the codes and conventions discussed above?
5. What other information would you need to determine the validity of your reading?
6. What other questions do you still have?
7. Is there ONE historical truth to be found?
8. What does this tell us about how we make sense of history and its different media representations (film, text, etc.)?

MEDIA PRODUCTION

VOCABULARY, CONCEPTS, TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS USED IN PRODUCING NARRATIVE MEDIA

NARRATIVE

A narrative is a plot or storyline. In a piece of media, a narrative is the coherent sequencing of events across time and space. Dramatic action in a narrative usually involves key turning points, and moments of tension that are resolved at the end – i.e. the story has a beginning, middle, and an end. Most films produced at large, commercial studios follow a formulaic narrative arc, starting with contentment and then moving through disruption, identification of a problem, pursuit of a solution, struggle, resolution and then back to contentment.

POINT OF VIEW

The opinion or perspective expressed. This can be the perspective of the producer – the person who researched and produced the story - as expressed through the narrator or through the viewpoint(s) of the characters. Point of view can also be expressed through the eyes of a first person narrator telling his or her own story.

SHOT

A shot is a single sequence of a film, video or television program taken by one camera without interruption. A shot can be of an artist working in a studio, or of a symphony orchestra playing. A story is comprised of many shots, one after another, that have been edited together. Celluloid footage (actual film) is physically spliced together – that is, two ends of film are melded together. In digital video, shots are sequenced on a computer by lining up the end of one shot and the beginning of another, although it is still called a “splice.”



SHOT TYPES

Different types of shots produce different effects, determined by the camera's proximity to the main subject.

Establishing Shot – A long shot used at the beginning of a sequence to establish a setting or scene

Close-Up – A shot taken very close to the subject (head, neck and shoulders) so that it fills most of the frame

Big Close-Up – A shot in which a person's face fills up most of the frame

Medium Close-Up – A shot framing a person from the level of mid-chest

Full Shot – A shot in which a person's complete body is included, usually equal to the height of the frame

Long Shot – A shot in which a person's complete body is included but is at a distance from the camera

Extreme Long Shot – A shot in which a person's size is very small in comparison to the screen



CAMERA ANGLES

A producer or director will also use camera angles to achieve different effects.

Straight On/Eye Level

The camera is located at the eye level of the subject(s)

High Angle/Angle Down

The camera is positioned above the subject

Low Angle/Angle Up

The camera is positioned below the subject.

Dutch Angle

The camera is tilted so that the frame is not parallel to the horizon.



OPTICAL DEVICES

Optical devices are used to exaggerate transitions for particular effect.

Fade-In

A shot that begins in darkness and gradually brightens.

Fade-Out

A shot that begins in brightness and gradually fades to black.

Iris-In

A shot beginning in darkness and gradually getting lighter in a circle

Dissolve

Superimposition of the end of one shot onto the beginning of another so that the two images overlap for a period of time.

Wipe

A vertical line seems to wipe across the screen, wiping out one scene and wiping in the next.



CAMERA LENS

By adjusting the lens, a camera can alter the perceived magnification, depth of field, perspective and scale of subjects and objects in a shot.

Normal

Produces an image with normal perspective, akin to looking with the naked eye.

Wide-Angle

Produces a field of view that is wider than the human eye can apprehend, exaggerating the distance between foreground and background. In a wide-angle shot, objects or subjects moving towards the camera appear to do so very rapidly.

- Telephoto** Enlarges or magnifies distant planes, making them appear closer to those in the foreground, such as with foreshortening. In a telephoto shot, objects or subjects moving towards the camera appear to take quite a long time.
- Zoom** A lens that can be adjusted during a shot to many foci, including normal, telephoto and wide angle.
- Deep** A shot in which all objects and subjects are seen close up in the foreground in sharp focus.
- Soft Focus** A shot in which the foreground is in sharp focus and the background appears out of focus or unclear. This effect can also be affected by taking the shot out of focus, or by putting gauze or other object in front of the camera.



CAMERA MOVEMENT

How a camera moves when taking a shot.

- Panorama (Pan) Shot** The camera rotates from one position on a horizontal plane, (i.e. "pan right," "pan left").
- Swish Pan** The camera takes a very fast panorama that blurs the action.
- Tilt** The camera rotates vertically from a single position.
- Traveling Shot** The camera is mounted to an apparatus, such as a car, track, etc. that moves it is filming.
- Crane** The camera is mounted to a long boom made just for this purpose.

FURTHER IN-DEPTH CONCEPTS, TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS USED IN PRODUCING NARRATIVE MEDIA

LIGHTING

- Three-Point Lighting** Lighting that is projected from three different sources: a key light (a bright, primary light source that casts shadows); a fill light (light that eliminates or softens the shadows made by the key light); and a backlight (lights positioned behind the subjects or objects that outline or highlight their contours).
- High-Key Lighting** Bright, even light with low contrast and few visible shadows.
- Low-Key Lighting** Low level light with high contrast areas of light, such as in Film Noir and horror films

Directional Lighting Use of all other sources, such as overhead, under-lighting, backlighting, etc.



TRANSITIONS

A transition refers to the relationship between a shot and the one that immediately preceded and followed it. Most of the time, a producer aims for continuity, a form of editing by which the action between shots is smooth and continuous. Continuity is often created by making match cuts or “matches” so that a viewer does not lose their orientation to the space, place, or person(s). Art or experimental filmmakers often intentionally disregard continuity so as to affect a broader range of visual and emotional effects.

- Movement Match** A movement of a subject begun in one shot is or appears to be seamlessly continued or completed in the next shot with the result that the viewer does not notice the cut.
- Direction Match** The direction in which a subject or object is moving is consistent across the splice.
- Eye-line Match** One subject's eyes in one shot appear to meet with those of another subject in the next shot.
- Reverse Shot** Alternating shots of two or more different subjects in conversation. In continuity, the eye-line match in a reverse shot is critical to making the scene seamless.
- Axis Match** When the camera angle is kept the same from shot to shot, sustaining a singular point of view or perspective.
- Position Match** When the position of an object or person remains in the same are of the frame from shot to shot.
- Graphic Match** The juxtaposition of graphically similar images, such as the start of a marathon and a car speeding away.
- Rhythmic Match** The juxtaposition of images with actions moving at similar rates or speeds.
- Jump Cut** When the rules of continuity are disregarded; sometimes used to call attention to the medium (film, television, or video).

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