The Medium Is The Message: How Media Influences the Message

This lesson helps students to deconstruct the messages of two media forms based on the same topic using the Media Triangle as a framework for questioning and understanding the message.

What the Teacher Does

Before
Engage students in a discussion around characteristics of newspaper articles (e.g. headline, by-line, image, caption, recount framework [5W+H], factual), using the text and audience sides of the Media Triangle.

Provide students with a brief newspaper article on a topic of interest.
- Model the reading of the article, explicitly teaching students how to summarize the article to identify the key message (e.g. Tovani’s chunking strategy)

During
Show students a news clip from a newscast (televised, or Internet-based) on the same story as the print article.
- Using a shared approach, deconstruct the video newscast using responses from the Guiding Questions found in the side-bar

Invite students to use the Media Triangle to compare the news story as communicated through both the print and video media
- How does the medium influence the message?
- How do physical space (print) and timing (video) considerations influence the story/message?
- Under what circumstances might you consider one medium more appropriate than the other?

After
Have students consider another medium (e.g. blog, email) and consider how the message would be influenced.
- Have students reflect on their learning, by describing the strategies they used to read these media texts.

What the Students Do

Apply
- Students brainstorm what they know about newspaper articles in order to generate a list of their characteristics
- Students read along with the teacher and make appropriate highlighting and sideline notes to summarize, and identify the key message of, a newspaper article
- Students use the guiding questions to examine the multiple messages from a video newscast
- In small groups, students share their ideas
- Students reflect on their learning by writing in their media logs their responses to some of the questions in the side-bar.

Questions for further discussion:
- Are the messages in the different texts primarily visual, verbal or both?
- Where should each of these media texts be displayed for maximum exposure?
- How might you influence the production of this kind of media text?
- How could you create a similar media text?
- Which media form would you use to communicate a message? What factors should you consider?

Media Triangle

Guiding Questions:
- What kind of media text is this?
- Does it follow a formula?
- What conventions are used?
- Whose point of view is communicated?
- What values or points of view are promoted? or omitted?
- Does it contain stereotypes?
- Who is the target audience? How do you know? What do you know about the target audience?
- How are these media texts distributed or sold to the public? Who profits?
- What techniques has the creator used to grab the attention of the target audience?
- How does the form influence the message?
Influence of Medium On Message

Print

Video

News Story: