



## Lesson 18.10 “Media Literacy”

### Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

#### Lesson Objectives

- Students will define media literacy.
- Students will engage in activities exploring and practicing media literacy.

#### Lesson Competencies

- I can recognize how media communicate values, information, and ideology. (Moose SS)
- I can analyze different accounts of the same event or topic, and note differences in information presented, authors’ points of view, or text types, such as primary and secondary sources. (ELA 3)
- I can integrate information, distinguish relevant-irrelevant information (e.g., fact/opinion), and (visually, orally, in writing) present what was learned. (ELA 8)

#### Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?  
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

#### Focus Questions

How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?  
What are the people’s rights and responsibilities?

#### Estimated Time

Determined by educator

#### Materials & Equipment

Access to Unit 18, Learn It! “[Media Literacy](#)”  
Determined by educator



## Educator Introduction & Rationale

Media literacy is an essential skill for students. Although elementary students may not be interacting with media without adult involvement, the younger grades are when skills for media literacy must begin to build a strong foundation. **Media literacy** is the ability to evaluate information from outside sources, usually news media, but also including social media, nonprofessional media, and advertisements. Even as young people, students are exposed every day to media's messages and tactics; tools to process these messages are vital.

To act as a good citizen in a democracy, people need to be well-informed not only on political issues and general news, but also on how to evaluate rumors and trends in their communities. The ability to discern what is true and what is a good resource for information creates informed voters and citizens who can ground their communities in sensible knowledge. Being media literate is a hard, complicated skill that even adults should continue to practice as they consume ever-evolving media.

Media literacy is more than becoming an informed voter through digesting news and information responsibly. It also involves other qualities that define civic virtue that all good citizens should practice. These include respecting the viewpoints and opinions of others, obeying laws, and encouraging participation in the community. Media literacy encourages these qualities, which help people practice good judgment in making compromises and building consensus. Democracy requires responsible participation in the community, and media literacy is a core skill for that participation.

This lesson is not in the usual format for the "Moose on the Loose" curriculum. First included is an introduction defining media literacy, but then, since there are many excellent resources available for free online, there is a curated list of the most useful and exceptional websites. Each website annotation includes a summary of the organization and website, then highlights the most helpful lesson plans or activities for upper-elementary grades on that website. Additionally, a set of links at the end of the curated list leads to wonderful graphics and posters for the classroom about media literacy.

Please note that these links are evaluated and provided at the time of lesson writing, and most are updated on an ongoing basis. We note which are elementary student-appropriate at this time and which are for teachers or include information for older students, such as on sexting or identity theft. Please use caution if providing these links to students.

## Learning Activity

**Student Reading**      **What is media?** Unit 18, Learn it! "[Media Literacy](#)" provides an overview of what media is and how it impacts our democracy. Direct students to read this section before moving on to the Activation.

**Activation**      **Defining media literacy.** Work with students so they understand the definition of media literacy. Find in the resources file separate definitions of "media," "literacy," and "media literacy." There are two definitions of media literacy, one more simplistic than the other. Use them as appropriate for your class to aid them in defining media literacy for themselves.

Discuss in small groups or as a class together:

- What are some examples of media?
- Why is it important to be media literate?
- How can we become more media literate?

If desired, use the worksheet to guide and record student responses.

We recommend these articles as introductions to media literacy:

Common Sense Media, *What is media literacy, and why is it important?* [www.common sense media.org/news-and-media-literacy/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important](http://www.common sense media.org/news-and-media-literacy/what-is-media-literacy-and-why-is-it-important)

Media Smarts, *Media Literacy Fundamentals* [mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/general-information/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/media-literacy-fundamentals](http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/general-information/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/media-literacy-fundamentals)

## Resources for Media Literacy

**Center for Media Literacy:** [www.medialit.org/educator-resources](http://www.medialit.org/educator-resources)

The Center for Media Literacy is a well-established international foundation dedicated to media literacy for the 21st century. While their website is not student-friendly and is text-heavy, their resources are solid, scalable, and well-conceived. Professional development is available as well as many approachable ideas for the classroom. Of special note is:

- “Five Key Questions That Can Change the World” [www.medialit.org/five-key-questions-can-change-world](http://www.medialit.org/five-key-questions-can-change-world) An older resource delivered in pdf form but surprisingly relevant since they have distilled media literacy into five questions students can internalize and answer with any type of media. 25 scalable lesson plans easy to use in any classroom.

**Federal Trade Commission:** [www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0003-educators](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0003-educators)

The Federal Trade Commission: Consumer Information section of the website called “Just for You: Educators” has elementary and middle school activities, booklets, and website resources. All resources are free, nonpartisan, and generally shorter than entire lesson plans. The website is intended for educators and is directed more towards online security than evaluating sources. Especially recommended for upper-elementary grades:

- “Heads Up: Stop, Think, Connect” is a guide designed for kids ages 8-12. It covers basic points to help kids protect themselves, their information, and their devices.
- “Net Cetera: Chatting with Kids About Being Online” is a guide for parents, teachers, and other adults who spend time with kids. This guide offers practical tips and ideas for getting the conversation started about social networking, privacy, mobile devices, computer security, and dealing with cyberbullying.
- “Living Life Online” is a selection of short articles and activities about behaviors to encourage so students can successfully live their lives online, including “Share with Care” and “Advertising Is All Around You: Go Ahead—Be Critical.”

**Get Media L.I.T.:** [app.getmedialit.com/lesson/explore](http://app.getmedialit.com/lesson/explore)

A platform with 26 comic-based lessons students can move through on their own or as a class. Each lesson is categorized as “Learn,” “Inquire,” or “Transform” and scaffolds learning from introduction of an idea to application. Media and digital literacy topics as well as social justice and self-image concepts. Lessons are not searchable by grade, but most are approachable for upper-elementary students. Free account needed; student accounts available. Of note:

- “Listen: How truthful do advertisements need to be?” in which students evaluate an ad that promises to help a character “soar like a hero” and then learn about the term “puffery.”
- “Breaking News: Is all news real news?” A character throws out pies when she sees a news story saying “Pies Kill!” Students learn about how to discern whether news is real.
- “Take the Bait: How many ways can news organizations spin a story?” Students explore the term “clickbait” and how to recognize clickbait stories.

**Learning for Justice:** [www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/digital-literacy](http://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/digital-literacy)

Learning for Justice is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center and is for educators. Their website has lesson plans about teaching many difficult topics. Their “Digital Literacy” section includes lesson plans for all ages, short videos for students, and advice and skills for teaching about digital literacy. Lesson plans for grades 3–5 include:

- “Evaluating Reliable Sources” addresses the importance of locating and verifying reliable sources when working with online information.
- “Understanding Online Searches” teaches about search algorithms so that students will start to understand that the information they get from searching online does not simply materialize out of thin air! This understanding enables students to critically evaluate search results.
- “Privacy and Security Online” discusses basic guidelines for maintaining privacy and security online.

**Media Smarts:** [mediasmarts.ca/](http://mediasmarts.ca/)

Media Smarts: Canada’s Centre for Digital and Media Literacy is an excellent, vast resource for digital and media literacy for educators. Searchable by grade level, topic, issue, and other filters, it is well-organized and up-to-date with videos, games, lesson plans, posters, and more. While there are great lessons on topics like “Break the Fake: How to Tell What’s True Online,” it’s best to start with their fundamentals page: [mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/general-information/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals](http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/general-information/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals)

**News Literacy Project:** [newslit.org/educators/resources/](http://newslit.org/educators/resources/)

News Literacy Project is a national group that provides resources and programs for educators and the public about being news literate. Has wide-ranging topics from the First Amendment to understanding bias to conspiratorial thinking. Includes lesson plans, infographics, interactive web-based teaching platform for grades 6–12 as well as a podcast, professional development, and more. It is a searchable site with more resources as students get older. Especially recommended for upper-elementary grades are:

- “Is It Checkable?” lesson plan using ‘Two Facts and a Feeling’ activity, a flow chart for how to decide, and activity using appropriate news article.
- “Critical observation challenge: Was Elsa Really Arrested?” Slide show activity engaging students in evaluating social media post about *Frozen*’s Elsa for veracity
- “How to speak up without starting a showdown” infographic has essential information with examples and suggestions for words to use to speak up effectively

**Project Look Sharp:** [www.projectlooksharp.org/](http://www.projectlooksharp.org/)

A nonprofit outreach program of Ithaca College, Project Look Sharp has hundreds of activities, videos, handouts, and lesson plans about how to integrate media literacy and critical thinking into curricula. Searchable by grade level, topic, and standard, among other filters. Free account required. While there are lessons focused on various topics, these lessons are specifically on media literacy:

- “YouTube Recommendations: What Do I Do?” In this media literacy activity students analyze results from a YouTube recommendations list for messages about how to select videos based on the likelihood of their offering credible information.
- “White Towel Activity” A media production activity to reinforce the concept of target audiences and how messages can be crafted for a specific audience through visuals, language and sound.
- “Why Vote?” In this media literacy activity students analyze videos for messages about why voting is important.



## Excellent Graphics for the Classroom

From the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE):

- Accessible infographic for elementary grades. Includes definition and purpose of media literacy as well as simple questions to ask to become more media literate. [namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/media\\_literacy\\_onesheet.pdf](http://namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/media_literacy_onesheet.pdf)
- For the educator or older grades. Identifies and categorizes more complex set of questions to ask to become more media literate. [namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NAMLE-Key-Qs.pdf](http://namle.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NAMLE-Key-Qs.pdf)

From Common Sense Education. Graphic organizer for upper elementary grades and above with 5 questions to answer when evaluating media. Includes teacher guide with standards and activity suggestions.

[www.commonsense.org/education/sites/default/files/tlr-asset/5-questions-to-ask-about-media-student-teacher.pdf](http://www.commonsense.org/education/sites/default/files/tlr-asset/5-questions-to-ask-about-media-student-teacher.pdf)

From Project Look Sharp. Infographics and other resources including handout with questions, grouped by purpose, to evaluate media. For upper elementary grades and above; be sure to click on downloads for posters for the classroom.

[www.projectlooksharp.org/our-approach.php#handouts](http://www.projectlooksharp.org/our-approach.php#handouts)

## Standards

### “Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that New Hampshire today is a modern, diverse state with a rich culture and thriving economy. (3-5.T8.1)

### “Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Using Technology Responsibly (3-5.S7.1)

### New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ US / NH History: Economic Systems & Technology (SS:HI:4:4.2)
- ✓ World History: Social/Cultural (SS:WH:4:5.1)

### NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 1: Culture
- ✓ Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

### C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Gathering and Evaluating Sources (D3.1.3-5, D3.2.3-5)

### Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.4.10)
- ✓ Fluency in Foundational Skills (RF.4.4)

## Lesson Vocabulary

- literacy** (noun) The ability to read and write
- media** (noun) The different ways of sending information to the public
- media literacy** (noun) The ability to identify different means of communication, to recognize and to evaluate the messages in the information, and to create your own communication

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) defines **media literacy** as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" and says media literacy "empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators, and active citizens."

Source: [namle.net/resources/media-literacy-defined/](http://namle.net/resources/media-literacy-defined/)