

HAND OUT 1:

What is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is the ability to sift through and analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day. It's the ability to bring critical thinking skills to bear on all media— from music videos and Web environments to product placement in films and virtual displays on NHL hockey boards. It's about asking pertinent questions about what's there, and noticing what's not there. And it's the instinct to question what lies behind media productions— the motives, the money, the values and the ownership— and to be aware of how these factors influence content.

Media education encourages a probing approach to the world of media: Who is this message intended for? Who wants to reach this audience, and why? From whose perspective is this story told? Whose voices are heard, and whose are absent? What strategies does this message use to get my attention and make me feel included?

In our world of multi-tasking, commercialism, globalization and interactivity, media education isn't about having the right answers—it's about asking the right questions. The result is lifelong empowerment of the learner and citizen.

Source: Jane Tallim, Education Specialist, The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Media Awareness Network. (2007). http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm

Group work:

- 1) Get into groups of 3, and each read the above information about Media Literacy. Look at each paragraph, think about what she is saying, then discuss what you think is trying to tell us about media.
- 2) After you have discussed it, you need to come up with your own answer (i.e. in your own words) about what you think media literacy is. You don't have to write as much as you see in the above information, just one paragraph will do.