

Increasing Literacy through Media Texts

Susan Sparks

Rationale

As my students and I approach the end of another semester and continue reviewing for another round of state tests, I regularly hear what has become the anthem of state test review: “Why do we have to know this?” This frustration reflects the disconnect students feel between what they learn in school and how they live their daily lives.

My curriculum unit should provide a context for my tenth grade English II students to bridge the gap between school and “real” life, providing a sense of authentic meaning in their literary analysis which, in turn, should propel them to higher academic success and more effective critical thinking in general. Students will enrich both their personal and academic lives when they recognize that they interact with text throughout their daily experiences (email, texting, television, social networks, etc.) and that they can analyze these daily-life texts just as they do traditional English class texts (such as textbook selections, essays, and articles).

It is our duty as educators to teach students how to interpret all of the messages with which they are confronted.¹ If I want to increase my students’ literacy levels, I must teach them to effectively interpret several types of texts, not just written texts. This ability to analyze multiple texts will not only improve their general literacy and their capability to think critically, it will give a voice to students who would normally perceive themselves as being limited or shut out of traditional ideas of literacy.²

Students don’t usually recognize media as a text. To them, text is an article or story that we study in English class. In order to pivot students’ ideas of text more broadly, the unit will build on contemporary definitions of *text* as any cultural object that produces meaning.³ Students may initially balk at this definition, but after the pre-reading activities and whole class text analysis, students will recognize text as going beyond the written text traditionally analyzed in high school English classes. For the purposes of this unit, traditional text will refer to the written works commonly associated with high school English classes, and media text will refer to texts such as commercials, television shows, online games, and game or movie trailers. Students will identify media as a text and will analyze it as they do written text.

Objectives

The broad goal for the curriculum unit is to teach students to think critically about media and then to use those same critical thinking skills to analyze traditional text, providing a

common groundwork for students to become literate in both types of text. When I ask my students to define text, I usually get answers such as “story,” “articles,” “text evidence,” or “phone texts.” The students don’t view media as text at all, so it doesn’t occur to my students to think critically about those types of text. In order to meet this goal of teaching students to think critically about both media and written text, the unit prepares students to be able to answer the following essential questions.

Essential Question1: What is a text?

Before students can think critically about text and analyze text, they must recognize text. This may seem an obvious and unnecessary essential question to a teacher who is teaching this unit for the first time, but it is important to provide this foundation for the students. Since the whole point of the curriculum unit is to teach students to critically analyze various types of text, it is vital that the whole class defines text similarly.

Students will use a free association exercise to think about how they define text. This will prepare students to think about the similarities between media texts and traditional texts (for example, written texts like books, articles, literary analysis, and other written works commonly associated with English class).

Essential Question #2: How do I interact with media texts?

Even though some may consider this essential question introductory or background information for the students, it is significant that students recognize text personally; that is, they identify all types of texts in their personal lives, including both in school and outside school. Rather than viewing students’ current interactions with texts as background information, the teacher should view them as fundamental. Students’ recognition of the number of texts in their lives is a key part of achieving the unit’s purpose of students’ analyzing those texts critically.

Students will use surveys and charts to identify how they interact with media regularly. Students will more effectively analyze text when they recognize the degree to which they encounter, whether purposefully or not, texts at and outside school.

Essential Question #3: Why is it important to analyze media?

Understanding the *importance* of analyzing media is inherently a part of analyzing media. Often, teachers imply, purposefully or not, that media is secondary in importance to traditional text, but students must begin to see that media texts significantly affect them and their community.

Students will use charts and group brainstorming to convey the importance that media have in their lives. These activities will introduce to students or, for those students familiar with media analysis, emphasize to students that media is as powerfully effective as written text.

Essential Question #4: How do media and traditional text (for example, written texts like books, articles, literary analysis, and other written works commonly associated with English class) relate to each other?

A critical part of student buy-in for this unit, the students' willingness to accept the rationale for this unit and to participate in all the aspects of the unit, is student-generated criteria for analyzing text. The teacher will guide the students, but it is imperative that the students feel that the criteria is authentic and valid.

As students create criteria for analyzing both media and traditional written text, they will identify the common elements between them. This will show students the validity of using the same criteria to analyze both types of text.

Essential Question #5: How can I analyze multiple texts?

Students will ask questions associated with the analysis criteria to analyze both media and traditional texts. These questions are listed in detail in the list of activities, but the important aspect of these questions is that the same questions will be used to analyze both media and written text, again showing students the need to think critically equally about both types of text.

Essential Question #6: How can I use media to circulate my message?

Students will use traditional or media text to convey their own social messages. Creating their own products allow students to fully experience the effectiveness of multiple types of text.

Strategies

This unit will last ten to fifteen classes, depending on the number of texts used and the amount of time students need to create their products.

The strategies will align as much as possible with Gee's learning principles.⁴ These thirty-six learning principles, originally associated with gaming, can be used as a guide for any product or assessment. The faculty at Elgin Community College briefly summarized what students should experience: actively do and reflect, appreciate good design, see interrelationships, master game language, relate game world to other worlds, take risks with reduced consequences, put out effort because they care, combine multiple

identities, watch their own behavior, get out more than what they put in, be awarded for achievement, be encouraged to practice, master new skills at each level, complete tasks neither too easy nor too hard, think and strategize, do things their own way, discover meaning, read in context, relate information, mesh information from multiple media, understand how knowledge is stored, think intuitively, practice in a simplified setting, be led from easy problems to harder ones, master upfront things needed later, repeat basic skills in many games, receive information just when it is needed, try rather than follow instructions, apply learning from problems to later problems, think about the games and real world, think about the game and how they learn, think about games and their culture, find meaning in all parts of the game, share with other players, be part of the gaming world, and help others while modifying games.⁵ While the unit does not teach students to create games, these learning principles are adapted for the strategies.

The unit's strategies include a media survey, a Day in a Life chart, a free association exercise, a small group brainstorming activity, modeling and guided practice, text analysis, and a student-created product. Each strategy is listed in chronological order.

Media Survey

The media survey will specifically answer essential question #2: "How do I interact with media text?"

In order for the teacher to have a context for the students' familiarity with digital media, students will complete a media survey. The survey will include questions concerning media access and media skills. Although not comprehensive, the survey, compiled in part from a gaming survey⁶ and an existing student technology survey,⁷ should provide the teacher with an overview of how often and to what degree the students interact with media. Some teachers may want to combine this survey with a more traditional reading and writing survey and distribute to students at the beginning of the semester. Teachers may also want to re-work the survey format (such as offering answer choices) so that it's more user-friendly for a variety of students on a number of grade levels. The survey will also make students more conscious of their own everyday exposure to diverse kinds of media texts.

Survey questions will include the following: When were you first exposed to the internet? To what extent do you have access to the internet? How often do you access the internet? Are you active on Facebook or Twitter? How often do you check Facebook? What kinds of websites do you normally visit? Do you play games online? What kinds of things do you learn from online games? Is gaming a valid way to learn? How often do you use computers at school? What is the primary reason for using a computer at school? Have you used Power Point presentation software? Have you ever created a web page? Which is easier for you, using a computer or using pencil and paper? Do computers

improve the quality of your work? Do you think using a computer for class is an advantage? Does it require “English class” skills to use the internet? How many televisions do you have in your home? How many hours a day do you watch television? Do television advertisements influence you?

This media survey allows the teacher and individual student to begin developing a knowledge base of what kinds of texts that student interacts with regularly. Even if the student does not yet recognize the survey questions as asking about text, he or she is identifying all the media that ubiquitously enters the student’s world.

Day in a Life

Day in a Life will specifically answer essential question #2: “How do I interact with media text?” and essential question #3: “Why is it important to analyze media?”

Before analyzing text, the unit introduces students to the idea of multiple texts using a Textual Day in a Life chart. After the teacher models a chart for the students, the students will complete their own charts, which clearly show the variety of media and written texts people interact with on a daily basis. Hagood⁸ offers the following headings for the chart: texts, identities, values, social networks, and literacy learning. The teacher and students then complete the chart based on the texts they usually encounter.

The teacher begins by modeling for students how she completes her chart. For instance, a teacher’s typical day may include the following texts: news radio on the way to work, online newspaper, work email, lesson plans, smart board flipcharts, literature textbook, class content-related Youtube clip, text message, online shopping, e-reader. For each text, the teacher would assign an identity (citizen, teacher, friend, consumer), a value (current events, communication, education, friendship, connections with others), and a social network (community, other teachers, students and parents, friends). The teacher will wait to complete the literacy learning column. After the teacher models the activity using her own chart, the students will complete the first four columns of their charts, also omitting the literacy learning column. As the students share their completed charts with the class, the teacher or another student will compile a list of the different texts encountered by the students. A variety of texts will emerge, and, as the teacher validates the legitimacy of each one as a text, students should begin to feel comfortable considering each one to be as “textual” as the works in their literature books. After a discussion of the compiled texts, the teacher will model completion of the literacy learning column (current events, communicating to students, communicating with colleagues and friends, analyzing advertisements, story content). Then, students will work in pairs or small groups to complete the literacy learning column of their chart, reinforcing the literary skills required for the texts, both traditional and non-traditional.

Free Association

The free association exercise will specifically answer essential question #1: “What is text?”

Students will use chart paper to free associate as a whole class. The chart paper will have the word *text* in the middle and students will freely write any ideas they associate with the word. The teacher will use this information to determine if the students have a sense of the nature of text. Since this activity follows the survey and chart, students may be more likely to recognize a variety of objects as texts. If students seem to focus on text as being stories, poems, etc. the teacher will need to define text for the students using the broader definition provided at the beginning of this unit.⁹

Student Small Group Brainstorming Activity

The small group brainstorming activity will specifically answer essential question #2: “Why is it important to analyze media?” and essential question #3: “How do media and traditional text connect to each other?”

Students will generate criteria for text analysis by working together in small groups. Assign students heterogeneously to groups of three or four. Students will divide a large piece of chart paper in half and label one half “What should we analyze in traditional written text?” Students are familiar with analyzing traditional text, so they will be comfortable creating a list of criteria. (Usually, younger high school students list criteria such as author’s purpose, tone, point of view, style, voice, and a number of fiction and poetry elements.) After listing details on the chart paper, each group will share their results while the teacher or another student compiles a list for the class to reference. The teacher will use the compilation as a means to discuss text analysis and guide students to identify elements they may have missed. Then, student groups will label the second half of their chart paper “What should we analyze in media?” (Usually, younger high school students list criteria such as facial expressions, body language, and characters’ inflections, as well as many of the fiction elements, especially those related to plot structure.) At this point, the teacher will remind students of the types of media the class identified from the Day in a Life activity. Groups will create a list of criteria for analyzing media text and share their list with the whole class. If a group seems to be having trouble grasping the idea of media analysis, the teacher will point their attention to the original list and have the group use the first list as a starting point. As groups share their lists, the teacher will compile a list for the class to reference, emphasizing the overlap between the lists for traditional texts and media texts. Since students are not as used to analyzing media, the teacher will again guide the students to include any significant points they may not have considered. The teacher may need to point out to students that even if the wording for traditional text list and media text list is different, the ideas are the same. Students will circle similarities between the two lists on their own

charts. The teacher will use the students' charts to introduce eight concepts¹⁰ that the class will use to analyze both media and traditional text.

The teacher will clearly post the students' charts, the compiled lists, and the eight concepts for the students to reference throughout the unit. The teacher should have students indicate connections between their charts/lists and the eight concepts, again emphasizing the role the students have in creating criteria. The eight concepts will be organized into three main ideas⁹ to make the concepts more clear and concrete for the students. The first main idea, "The text has intention," will include the following concepts: all texts are constructions; the text constructs reality; texts contain ideological and value messages; texts have social and political implications; and texts have commercial implications. The second main idea, "The form has meaning," will include the following concepts: form and content are closely related in the media; and each medium has a unique aesthetic form. The third main idea, "The reader has responsibility" includes the concept that audiences negotiate meaning in the text.

Modeling and Guided Practice

Modeling and guided practice will answer essential question #5: "How can I analyze multiple texts?"

Depending on the students' developmental levels and their prior knowledge, the teacher may need to post vocabulary lists or have students take notes on content vocabulary. The teacher or students will define vocabulary such as the following: medium, connotation, function, intention, interpret, analyze, tone, image, author. When the students have a clear understanding of the vocabulary that will be used, the teacher can move on to the actual format of analysis.

After the teacher reviews the eight concepts and the process the class used to generate them, she will need to model for the students how the concepts can be used to analyze text. First, the teacher will assign questions to each main idea.¹² It is more developmentally appropriate for the high school students to use questions as an approach to text analysis rather than the concepts themselves. As the teacher clarifies the questions for the class, she can add appropriate student suggestions. If a class has received instruction on media analysis previously, the teacher may use a more inductive approach. To address the main idea, "The text has intention," the class will ask questions such as, "What are the connotations of the words and images in this text?" "Is the tone of this text primarily positive or negative?" and "Is the primary function of the text to inform, persuade, explain, or some other function?" To address the main idea, "The form has meaning," the class will ask questions such as, "How does the medium itself affect the meaning?" and "Why did the author choose this medium to create these particular meanings?" To address the main idea, "The reader has responsibility," the class will ask questions such as: "What previous knowledge about this topic do I bring to this text?;"

“How did I identify the author’s intention?;” “Does the medium affect how I interpret the text?;” and “Does the author’s intention matter in my interpretation of the text?” The students should have the questions easily accessible to use during their text analyses. The teacher can confirm that the students understand the relation of the questions to the concepts and corresponding main ideas by disassembling the information that has been posted on the actual walls of the classroom and having the students group them correctly or by virtually scrambling the information on a smart board and having the students group them correctly. Before the students begin to analyze text, it is important that they have a clear understanding of the analysis criteria.

Students may be unclear about the questions concerning *medium*. Since most students haven’t been previously exposed to analysis of media text, it may be difficult for them to recognize that medium does affect meaning. One method to reinforce this idea is to reference the infamous “Dean Scream” from the 2004 presidential primary. In general, students in high school, especially the ninth and tenth grades, will have no prior knowledge of the 2004 presidential primary. In order to support the effect of medium on meaning, the teacher can play a sound clip of Howard Dean’s speech following the Iowa Democratic primary. After listening to the speech, students should write their initial reflections of Dean and his speech on a yellow sticky note. Then, the teacher can show the same clip for students to listen and watch. After watching the speech, students should write their initial reflections of Dean and his speech on an orange (or another different color) sticky note. Finally, the teacher will give students a written transcript of the speech or an article about the speech. Students should read the written work and write their initial reflections of Dean and his speech on a blue (or another different color) sticky note. The teacher will then label three sections of the room as angry/out of control, excited/hyper, and encouraging/motivating. Students will put their three sticky notes under the most appropriate description. Once the colored sticky notes have been placed in the three categories, the students and teacher can discuss why the students chose the categories, leading to a discussion of how the medium affected each student’s choices. Teachers whose students are experienced in analyzing multiple texts can have their students create their own descriptive categories based on what they wrote on the sticky notes. While some teachers may not need to use a separate activity to clarify the role of medium in text analysis, this is one strategy to help those students who are completely unfamiliar with the idea of form contributing to meaning.

At this time, the teacher will explain that the media chosen for the guided practice will be based on the types of texts the students mentioned on their surveys and day in a life charts. The teacher and students will work together as a whole class to analyze a piece of visual media text and written text. This will allow students to feel confident in their individual analysis and will reinforce the similarities between the types of text. Of course, teachers can use a variety of examples to illustrate the process for analysis; some specific examples are listed here for clarification. For a media example, the class will watch a 1944 Women’s Army Corp recruitment video.¹³ The teacher and students

together will analyze the media text using the questions related to the eight concepts. Then, for a traditional text example, the teacher will use a news article from May, 2012 entitled “Army opens jobs in combat battalions to women.”¹⁴ The teacher and students together will analyze the text using the questions related to the eight concepts. In order to further empower the students as they move toward independent work, the teacher will group the students in small groups or partners to analyze a Michael Jordan shoe commercial.¹⁵ Students will analyze the advertisement using the same questions; each group will then share its analysis. Then, students will analyze a Time magazine article titled “Shoptimism: Why We Buy Things.”¹⁶ Again, each group will share its analysis. The teacher can use this time to redirect students if needed and confirm students are prepared to work independently. Based on the teacher’s evaluation, the class may benefit from continued guided practice. A number of television examples may be found from CNN video, which has the added advantage of being easily accessible from most high schools. Gaming examples such as the trailer for “Transformers: Fall of Cybertron” may be found from Game Trailers,¹⁷ a website providing a wide variety of gaming material. When students analyze online games from Lego,¹⁸ a world traditionally used by young children, the teacher and students have an effective opportunity to discuss point of view and the role of the reader in text analysis. Traditional text examples may include articles, editorials, book excerpts, selections from the textbook, etc. The number of media texts should be at least the same as the number of traditional texts, but, for the purposes of teacher-guided learning, the texts don’t need to reflect the same content. As they work, students will constantly be reminded that visual media is indeed text and can be legitimately viewed as having the same significance as traditionally written text, indicating a necessity for equally thoughtful analysis.

Text Analysis

Students’ text analysis will specifically answer essential question #5: “How can I analyze multiple texts?”

Students will work independently or with partners to analyze a variety of media and traditional text using the format they learned working as a whole class group. Since students will be working more independently, the teacher will narrow the focus to remove distractions. For this unit, students will analyze examples of family units using the same eight concepts and corresponding questions. There are a number of easily accessible media examples of families. Some possibilities include *Modern Family*,¹⁹ *My Wife and Kids*,²⁰ and the *George Lopez Show*.²¹ IMDb²² actually contains lists of movies about family. (Students are great sources for television shows or games about any specific subject, and, in this case, it is especially eye-opening for them to analyze media with which they are already familiar.) Of course, it is important that teachers carefully choose excerpts from the movie and television texts so the content is appropriate for school while still effective for analysis. Written texts that portray families include Gary Soto’s *Neighborhood Odes*,²³ *House on Mango Street*²⁴ by Sandra Cisneros, and *Woman*

Hollering Creek: and other stories,²⁵ also by Cisneros. Most middle school and 9th and 10th grade high school literature textbooks contain a number of short stories about families. Again, as they work, students will grow in critical thinking skills in general and in the ability to carefully read both media and written texts.

Student Product

Students' work on their products will specifically answer essential question #6: "How can I use media to circulate my message?"

Students will create media products to show their synthesis of the concepts used to analyze text. They will choose from two mediums we analyzed in class: media advertisement or traditional text. The teacher will introduce the product to the class and tell students that their topics must be in reference to a societal problem or a problem at our school. The product will increase awareness of the problem or illustrate a solution to the problem. The class will brainstorm possible topics as a whole group before students choose a topic. Students may complete the product individually or with a partner. The teacher will assign a topic due date, and the students will submit a topic, identify the medium, indicate challenges expected when creating the product, and identify resources needed to complete the product. The teacher will conference with each student or set of partners to verify that the students have an accurate sense of what they need to successfully fulfill their requirements for the product. To what extent the students have to provide their own computers, cameras, etc. will depend on the number and types of resources available to students at the school.

Students will receive a rubric based on Wysocki's²⁶ work when the teacher introduces the assignment. The rubric will be the same regardless of which type of text the students choose to use. The rubric will include six categories: overall effect, author's tone, coherence, organization, documentation, and reflection. Each category consists of three ranges—does not meet requirements, meets requirements, exceeds requirements—with specific criteria for each category. The rubric criteria is listed as follows: The "does not meet requirements" range for *overall effect* is "Text does not address awareness of/solution to problem, overall impact is low." The "meets requirements" range for overall effect is "Text mentions problem, overall impact is minimal." The "exceeds requirements" range for overall effect is "Text clearly contributes to awareness of/offers solution to problem, overall impact is strong." The "does not meet requirements" range for *author's tone* is "Text provides some information about author's feelings." The "meets requirements" range for author's tone is "Text provides adequate information about author's feelings." The "exceeds requirements" range for author's tone is "Text provides clear, identifiable information about author's feelings." The "does not meet requirements" range for *coherence* is "Text is confusing." The "meets requirements" range for coherence is "The text's meaning is generally understood." The "exceeds requirements" range for coherence is "Text's meaning is clear." The "does not meet

requirements” range for *organization* is “Essay’s organization is unclear or confusing.” The “meets requirements” range for organization is “Text’s organization is helpful and clear.” The “exceeds requirements” range for organization is “Text’s organization effectively contributes to overall meaning.” The “does not meet requirements” range for *documentation* is “Images are not documented.” The “meets requirements” range for documentation is “Images are documented incorrectly.” The “exceeds requirements” range for documentation is “Images are correctly documented.” (Some teachers may prefer to re-word the documentation element of the rubric. Students using written work as their preferred medium may not have images and would be exempt from this section. Also, some teachers may not want to indicate to students that incorrect documentation meets any kind of expectation. The teacher should adapt the rubric to his or her specific guidelines and preferences.) The *reflection* category of the rubric refers to the reflection each student will submit as part of the product. Students will answer the following questions about their products: “What messages were you trying to convey? How did your medium influence your messages? How do you think your classmates will interpret your product?” The “does not meet requirements” range for reflection is “Reflection is incomplete.” The “meets requirements” range for reflection is “Reflection is addressed but does not reflect thoughtful consideration.” The “exceeds requirements” range for reflection is “Reflection indicates thoughtful consideration.”

Students will read and analyze each other’s work using the same criteria they used for the various text examples earlier in the unit. Students will analyze each other’s works, regardless of medium, using the same questions from earlier in the unit: “What are the connotations of the words and images in this text?” “Is the tone of this text primarily positive or negative?” “Is the primary function of the text to inform, persuade, explain, or some other function?” “How does the medium itself affect the meaning?” “Why did the author choose this medium as his text?” “What previous knowledge about this topic do I bring to this text?” “How did I identify the author’s intention?” “Does the medium affect how I interpret the text?” “Does the author’s intention matter in my interpretation of the text?”

When students receive feedback from their classmates, they will add and answer the following question on their reflections: “In what ways are you responsible for your classmate’s interpretations?” Answering this last question brings the students full circle around the idea of analyzing meaning in text. The students have identified text, have recognized their interactions with varied texts, have illustrated the importance of analyzing media texts, have shown how written text and media text relate to one another, have analyzed multiple texts, and have created a media or written text, recognizing the role of the author and audience in creating meaning.

After participating in this unit and completing the culminating product, students will be more literate in reading varied texts, able to think critically about text in any form. They will have the tools to read both media and written texts in a thoughtful, purposeful

way. Students will be able to recognize the authentic connections between reading texts in English class and reading texts in “real-life.” The unit empowers students to escape the passive acceptance of words and images and provides students the ability to approach life as active critical thinkers.

Notes

- ¹Jesse Gainer, "Comparatively Reading Multiple Text Sources in a Sixth-Grade Classroom," in *Teaching New Literacies in Grades 4-6: Resources for 21st-century Classrooms*, ed. Barbara Moss and Diane Lapp (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 259.
- ²Eugene F. Provenzo, *Multiliteracies: Beyond Text and the Written Word* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2011), xxiii.
- ³Barry Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 7.
- ⁴Lesley M. Smith, "James Paul Gee: Learning Principles," Learning Principles, <http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/jamespaulgee2>.
- ⁵Tim Moore, "Games in Learning: Learning in Games," Elgin Community College, June 17, 2009, http://faculty.elgin.edu/tmoore/Games_Presentation.
- ⁶Cynthia L. Selfe and Gail E. Hawisher, *Gaming Lives in the Twenty-first Century: Literate Connections* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 9.
- ⁷"Student Technology Survey," Learning and Performance Support Laboratory, University of Georgia, 2012, http://lpsl.coe.uga.edu/Projects/AAlaptop/MEMBERS/instrument/initial_student_revisedUS.pdf.
- ⁸Margaret C. Hagood, Donna E. Alvermann, and Alison Heron-Hruby, *Bring It to Class: Unpacking Pop Culture in Literacy Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 4.
- ⁹Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading*, 7.
- ¹⁰"Media Literacy Key Concepts," Media Awareness Network, <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers>.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Ibid.

- ¹³“WAC: It’s Your War Too,” U.S. Army World War II, June 5, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enYgk47gQi8>.
- ¹⁴“Army opens jobs in combat battalions to women,” *NY Daily News*, May 17, 2012, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-05-17/news/31753346_1_combat-units-female-soldiers-new-jobs.
- ¹⁵“One shoe, three flights,” Air Jordan 2012 commercial, April 4, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr3IU1-7cSc>.
- ¹⁶Claire Suddath, “Shoptimism: Why We Buy Things,” *Time*, Nov. 5, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1934825,00.html>.
- ¹⁷“Transformers: Fall of Cybertron,” Viacom Entertainment Group, Sept. 11, 2012, www.gametrailers.com.
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- ¹⁹“Modern Family,” ABCNetwork, Sept. 24, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laSzTVrP5FQ>.
- ²⁰“My Wife and Kids,” Nickelodeon Networks Group, 2012, <http://www.nickatnite.com/videos/my-wife-and-kids-videos>.
- ²¹“George Lopez,” Nickelodeon Networks Group, 2012, <http://www.nickatnite.com/videos/george-lopez-videos>.
- ²²IMDb, IMDb.com, Inc., 2012, <http://www.imdb.com>.
- ²³Gary Soto, *Neighborhood Odes*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1992.
- ²⁴Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
- ²⁵Sandra Cisneros. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*, New York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- ²⁶ Anne Francis Wysocki. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004), 81.

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Foss, adhering to an anti-intentionalist point of view, proposes three processes to evaluate visual imagery based on the image's function.

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Gainer emphasizes the necessity that students must be able to analyze a variety of texts.

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Gee portrays video games as tools for learning, primarily because of their inherent quality of engagement. He believes the principles of gaming should be incorporated into classroom instruction.

Hagood, Margaret C., Donna E. Alvermann, and Alison Heron-Hruby. *Bring It to Class: Unpacking Pop Culture in Literacy Learning*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2010.

Hagood uses a backpack metaphor to illustrate the technology influences on students. The book gives specific ways to use media resources in the classroom and includes lesson plans and a helpful glossary.

Kajder, Sara B. *Adolescents and Digital Literacies: Learning alongside Our Students*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2010.

This easy-to-read book portrays English teachers who effectively use media in the classroom and provides practical ideas for creating digital literacies in students. Kajder emphasizes the need to teach students that text is not value-free.

Kelly, Frank S., Ted D. E. McCain, and Ian Jukes. *Teaching the Digital Generation: No More Cookie-cutter High Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009.

Focusing on whole school, rather than an individual classroom, the book provides a checklist to determine if a high school is a 21st century school.

Kist, William. *New Literacies in Action: Teaching and Learning in Multiple Media*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.

Kist portrays students whose teachers have used varied media and written texts in the classroom learning authentically and performing well on standardized tests. This book offers an approach to analyzing media and other text: RAFT (role, audience, format, topic).

"Media Literacy Key Concepts." Media Awareness Network. Accessed May 29, 2012. www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers.

The Media Awareness Network identifies key concepts and questions related to media literacy.

Messaris, Paul. "Visual Aspects of Media Literacy." *Journal of Communication*, (1998): 70-80.

Messaris discusses the need for viewers to become media literate by understanding visual language. Visual literacy recognizes the analogical relationship between images and life and the implicit connections portrayed in media.

Montgomery, Kathryn C. *Generation Digital: Politics, Commerce, and Childhood in the Age of the Internet*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

Montgomery worked at the Center for Media Education and provides an overview of the increasing significance of technology and its effects on children.

Moore, Tim. "Games in Learning: Learning in Games." Elgin Community College. June 17, 2009. http://faculty.elgin.edu/tmoore/Games_Presentation.

Moore's paraphrase of Gee's principles makes it easy to transfer the principles to the high school or middle school classroom.

Potter, W. James. *Media Literacy*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008.

Potter identifies three building blocks of media literacy: personal locus, knowledge structures, and skills. He emphasizes the role and characteristics of a media literate person and the advantages of being a media literate person.

Provenzo, Eugene F. *Multiliteracies: Beyond Text and the Written Word*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Pub., 2011.

The book discusses postmodern literacies that have previously been overlooked as legitimate literacies.

Rice, Jeff. *The Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007.

Rice uses the idea of “cool” to describe the combination of outside real-world writing with school writing and the subsequent re-forming of the teaching of writing.

Rose, Frank. *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

Rose shows the all-encompassing nature of media and its tendency to blend lines of reality and fantasy by providing interesting specific examples.

Rozema, Robert, and Allen Webb. *Literature and the Web: Reading and Responding with New Technologies*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008.

Rozema and Webb offer practical ideas for using media sources in the classroom, including specific ideas for the English classroom.

Selfe, Cynthia L., and Gail E. Hawisher. *Gaming Lives in the Twenty-first Century: Literate Connections*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

The book builds on ideas in Gee’s book using real people and real games. It identifies principles of gaming teachers can use in the classroom without using actual games.

Sheridan, David M., and James A. Inman. *Multiliteracy Centers: Writing Center Work, New Media, and Multimodal Rhetoric*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2010.

While coming from the point of view of using writing centers, this book offers an approach to analyzing media and other text: MAPS (mode, audience, purpose, and situation).

Shifrin, Susan. "Visual Literacy in North American Secondary Schools." In *Visual Literacy*, edited by Jim Elkins, 105-12. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Shifrin discusses three viewpoints concerning visual literacy. As part of her discussion, she emphasizes the importance of an education which emphasizes media literacy.

Smith, Lesley M. "James Paul Gee: Learning Principles." Learning Principles. Accessed June 18, 2012. <http://mason.gmu.edu/~lsmithg/jamespaulgee2>.

This document from George Mason University lists Gee's principals for learning with brief explanations.

Williams, Bronwyn T. "Reflections on a Shimmering Screen: Television's Relationship to Writing Pedagogies | The Writing Instructor." The Writing Instructor. December 2001. <http://www.writinginstructor.com/williams.html>.

Although Williams focuses on television media, she addresses the need, in general, to use similar criteria to analyze media and print text.

Wysocki, Anne Frances. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004.

In addition to providing a rationale for analyses of media texts, Wysocki provides assignments and rubrics for specific types of media analyses.

Student Reading List

"Best Practices." Center for Media Literacy. Accessed October 22, 2012.

<http://www.medialit.org/best-practices>.

The website provides a general overview of media literacy and offers a theoretical and practical foundation for students, as well as adults.

"Controversies in Media Ethics." Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group. 2012.

<http://www.routledge.com/cw/gordon-9780415963329/p/students/>.

The website accompanies the book *Controversies in Media Ethics* but is helpful on its own as well. It provides case studies and related primary texts.

"Media Literacy Key Concepts." Media Awareness Network. Accessed May 29, 2012.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers>.

The Media Awareness Network offers foundational information for media literacy.

"Media that Matters." Art Engine. Accessed October 22, 2012.

<http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org>.

The website contains, among other sources, short films on controversial topics.

"Multimedia Resources for Educators and Students." Utah Education Network. Accessed October 22, 2012.

http://www.uten.org/general_learner/multimedia_resources.shtml.

The Utah Education Network provides resources students can use to create multimedia products.

“Resources for Students: News and Articles.” Society of Professional Journalists.

October 3, 2012. <http://www.spj.org/rr.asp?t=students>.

The site, created for students, contains articles about media-related topics.

List of Materials

Student Survey

Chart Paper

Computer with online access

Copies of works by Soto and Cisneros

Media product materials

Media product rubric

Critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power. It involves cultivating skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts. Media literacy helps people to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms,