

INTRODUCTION

How To Use These Materials

Media Decoding Activities:

As you review the specific steps in the **Activity Plans** be prepared to adapt the suggested steps to meet the learning needs of your students. We encourage you to choose “A la carte” among documents and questions rather than thinking you have to use all the elements.

How to Lead a Media Decoding Activity

Constructivist decoding assumes that each student constructs their own meaning from the interaction between the document (video clip, web page, print article, etc.) and her/his own unique identity (age, experience, views, etc.). It is the role of the teacher to ask questions that will result in the richest discussions. The art of leading a constructivist decoding is more improvisational than it is scripted – with the teacher fluidly deciding where and how to respond to each student comment - considering how comments might be understood by the other students. The teacher must be open to where student meaning making leads while also staying focused on the learning goals.

Activity Plans: Organization and Description of Elements

Activities are all organized into the following element categories. *Objective Options* use language from the disciplinary standards referenced in the *Standards Options* table below. The first objective relates to a social studies concept. The remaining objectives combine English language arts standards and media literacy concepts.

Vocabulary, Media types and thumbnail images offer a quick view of the vocabulary and types of media materials that will be included in each activity

Additional Support notes several professional development materials, most of which are available for free on the Project Look Sharp website, www.projectlooksharp.org. We encourage you to access these materials prior to leading these activities, especially if you’ve not done constructivist media decoding in the past.

Time reflects a range of times it might take for the activity depending upon your approach. If you want to use this activity as an introductory exercise you might select one or two questions to lead a lively ten-minute classroom decoding. On the other hand you might choose to take more time and ask additional questions to more fully explore the document pairs. The power of the activities emerge when students actively apply their knowledge, identify evidence, articulate their interpretations, analyze authorship and point of view, and discuss meaningful issues.

Activity Procedures are the same for all activities. These should be used flexibly to achieve your teaching objectives.

Connections lists other Project Look Sharp activities that relate to the topics addressed in each activity. You might want to explore these if you’d like to extend the activity with additional media documents or activity steps.

Page three of the activity plan offers a series of question sets from which you may choose based on your teaching objectives. Each **Possible Question for Media Document Decoding** is based on the particular content of the media documents associated with the activity.

Question sets are broken out by the disciplines linked to the objectives and standards listed at the beginning of the activity plan. Once again we strongly encourage you to look over all the possible questions and not just those specific to your discipline. Rich questioning will easily spill over from social studies to language arts to media literacy and back again.

Follow up Evidence Questions and Comments model some of the questions you might choose to ask to deepen student reading of the media document at hand. Your follow up questions should always be tied to your goals for the activity. For instance, ask, "Tell me more about that," to deepen student questioning and "Does anyone have a better idea?" to solicit multiple interpretations. Ask, "Where do you see that?" to encourage evidence-based awareness and "How do you know?" to raise questions about sourcing and credibility.

The professional development materials referenced in the **Additional Support** section of the *Activity Plan* give more guidance as to when and how to use these follow up questions.

Page four of the activity plan gives several **Possible Answers**. These are not suggested as "the right answer" but simply as models for possible evidence-based responses by students that often highlight important details in the documents.

Accessing Materials

It may be helpful for students to be able to **access videos and PowerPoint slides on their own devices** to enable pausing as needed to make notes and to zoom in on images and text. If these devices are not available you can make print copies of individual slides for close reading. Other options for student viewing and accessing webpage images are to **go directly to the URL** (located in the reference list at the end of each PowerPoint).

Integrating New Technology

Using technology that allows students to interact with the media documents being analyzed can enhance the constructivist media decoding process. Through the use of interactive smart boards, tablet apps and computer programs, students can zoom in for more details or mark supporting evidence. This can also be done through paper and pen or on a projector. Web resources can also be helpful. The website *Vialogues* allows for time-stamped video discussions. The whiteboard app *Explain Everything* allows for narration of compiled presentation.

The use of individual devices can provide further flexibility for students to interact with the media texts since they are able to pause videos when they want, zoom in on distinct parts, or mark up documents with their observations and questions. When students are using their own devices it is advised that teachers devise a way to collect student annotations to capture the individual decoding process. This can be done through PDF editors, remix programs such as The LAMP's *MediaBreaker* for video, or *Mixxx* for audio or Screen capturing software such as *Quicktime*, *Camtasia* or *Jing*.

Do No Harm

One of the key requirements of constructivist pedagogy is to pay deep and constant attention to healing and harmful power of words and images. The issues raised in some activities can provoke powerful emotions from students (e.g. responses to the documents related to racial justice.) It is essential that the teacher monitors the emotional climate of the class and be willing to ask, "How are you feeling?" It is essential that the teacher create a setting in which personal sharing of feelings will not be obstructed by laughter, side comments or crosstalk that can hurt individuals and make it harder to discuss the sensitive issues that are at the core of this kit.

Teaching Students to Ask Good Questions

One of the key goals of this curriculum is to help students become better questioners. One good follow up question for any decoding is “What additional questions do you have about this media document?” It’s important that teachers take the time to engage with students in dialogue about what makes a good question and why.

Teachers can begin this opportunity to practice creative questioning by having a discussion as to why people in general ask questions, why teachers in particular ask questions and what’s the value of asking good questions. As they work on these themes you might suggest that students develop their own “question toolbox” in which they begin identifying and organizing questions into different types – *critical thinking* vs. *content* questions or, in the vernacular of the C3 social studies framework, *compelling* vs. *supporting* questions. An advanced activity might be to invite students to prepare and lead their own document decoding activity, following your model for good inquiry-based questioning.

Scaffolding

There are a wide variety of practices and tools that teachers might consider using to help students enter into media document decoding practice. The simplest of these is to encourage note-taking as students review videos or slides. Be prepared to pause after projecting media documents to allow students to work, alone or together, to deepen their own thinking before opening to full-class discussion. You might want to add to the PowerPoint slides your own slides with initial discussion questions, vocabulary and bulleted worksheet directions to help students with auditory processing issues.

Prior to a whole class analysis of the documents you may distribute (digital or printed) document pairs to individuals or small groups.

During the whole class analysis these students can lead the decoding of each document pair.

Ask students needing greater challenges to go to the original sources to find out more about the perspectives of the authors and creators of these media materials. Assign students to track down their own “counterpoint examples” for looking at points of view not expressed in the materials presented in the activities.

Another way to support deepened skills in the area of document decoding is to design skill building across three levels. For students who are new to this process begin with teacher led document decoding as described in the activity plan. As students become more comfortable with the practice consider having them lead the scripted decoding among their peers. Advanced students can harvest their own questions from the offered documents leading original decoding for the whole class.

Professional Development Support

There are many options for further teacher support available on Project Look Sharp’s website. These include:

Videos: of teachers using constructivist media decoding in the classroom URL:

http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=videos&category=media_decoding

Webinars: on topics related to sustainability and media literacy education URL:

<http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=webinars>

Articles on media literacy pedagogy URL:

<http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=medialitarticles>

Handouts for classroom support URL:

<http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=medialithandouts>

Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Guide for integrating media decoding into core content teaching URL: <http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=diy>

Workshop opportunities to hands-on teacher support. URL: <http://www.projectlooksharp.org/index.php?action=workshops>

We encourage you to make use of all of these as you seek to further incorporate media literacy education into your teaching.