Professional learning activity: Approaches to media analysis

**Activity suggested duration:** 50 minutes

**Activity description:** In this activity, participants will explore a media analysis activity and reflect on implications for their teaching of contemporary issues.

**Resources:** paper for participants to complete media analysis chart (the two-column chart below can be printed or drawn during the session); participants will need to be able to view a video during this activity so will need either a projector or their own devices

**Learning leader preparation:**

* Read the articles below:
* ['TikTok takes on climate as new social activism sweeps the net'](https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/tiktok-takes-on-climate-as-new-social-activism-sweeps-the-net-20220210-p59vcc.html) (*The Age*, 20 February 2022)
* ['We live in an age of "fake news" but Australian children are not learning enough about media literacy'](https://theconversation.com/we-live-in-an-age-of-fake-news-but-australian-children-are-not-learning-enough-about-media-literacy-141371) (The Conversation, 6 July 202).

**Participant preparation:**

* Read the articles below:
* ['TikTok takes on climate as new social activism sweeps the net'](https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/tiktok-takes-on-climate-as-new-social-activism-sweeps-the-net-20220210-p59vcc.html) (*The Age*, 20 February 2022)
* ['We live in an age of "fake news" but Australian children are not learning enough about media literacy'](https://theconversation.com/we-live-in-an-age-of-fake-news-but-australian-children-are-not-learning-enough-about-media-literacy-141371) (The Conversation, 6 July 202).
* Participants will need to bring their own devices to be able to watch a video as part of this activity if a projector is not provided.

Activity steps

Small-groups brainstorm: What are the goals of media analysis? (5 minutes)

Prompts that might help participants include:

* How can we learn more about the content?
* How are media messages constructed?
* How can we read media texts ‘deeply’?

Participants watch ‘They weren’t originally bin chickens’, a TikTok video by Tara Bellrose embedded in the pre-reading article [TikTok takes on climate as new social activism sweeps the net](https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/tiktok-takes-on-climate-as-new-social-activism-sweeps-the-net-20220210-p59vcc.html). (5 minutes)

The learning leader introduces the activity: (5 minutes)

‘When we consume (read, watch, listen to) media texts, we are interpreting lots of different information. To understand how we do this, we are going to do a basic, two-step media analysis, then discuss how this changes our experience of the text. Firstly, we are going to list what we see and hear. This could be the framing of a camera shot, the subject in the frame, phrases or language that the creator uses. The only rule is that it needs to be directly observable, with no judgment or interpretation yet.’

1. Participants fill in the first column of the chart (prepared by learning leader, see preparation notes). (5 minutes)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is there | What it means |
|  |  |

**Example:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is there | What it means |
| * a vertical shot (mobile phone recording) * setting is a house * young woman is the subject * brown hair and freckles – no make-up * close to the camera * text across screen: ‘What animals can teach us: why bin chickens are bin chickens’ – a little green recycling emoji * flames and white blocky writing accompanied by pop music * sound has echo * ‘40 per cent of white ibises live in urban areas’ * speaks quickly * clear, loud tone * ‘respose to climate change, bushfires’ |  |

Learning leader introduces the next part of the activity: (5 minutes)

‘So media is constructed using a variety of symbols, which are sometimes called codes. All of these codes are interpreted or read by the audience. We have a list of codes that create meaning in this video. Take two minutes to jot down your interpretation of these codes in the second column. Note that you might interpret the video totally differently to the participant next to you or your students.’

Participants share their interpretation with the person next to them or add to a list of interpretations. A Media teacher has filled in the second column below as a high-level exemplar. (10 minutes)

**Example:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What is there | What it means |
| * a vertical shot (mobile phone recording) * setting is a house * young woman is the subject * brown hair and freckles – no make-up * close to the camera * text across screen: ‘What animals can teach us: why bin chickens are bin chickens’ – a little green recycling emoji * flames and white blocky writing accompanied by pop music * sound has echo * ‘40 per cent of white ibises live in urban areas’ * speaks quickly * clear, loud tone * ‘respose to climate change, bushfires’. | * vertical framing of the video indicates it is created by an amateur content producer and normally shared informally or through social media * the producer is close to the camera, which can help to create a closer relationship with the audience * a highly literate viewer might feel judgment at the spelling mistake of ‘respose’ and this could make the text less authoritative * the simplicity of ideas expressed fits the short length of TikToks, which doesn’t allow for much complexity * nothing is sourced apart from a David Attenborough documentary * the producer is a teenager, not a journalist or ‘voice of authority’ – this might make the content more relatable to young people * the meme-style outro situates the producer as a pop culture ‘insider’ – using flames, block ‘Impact’ meme fonts and contrasting pop music adds humour and relatability * the green recycling emoji shows it is about environmentalism * using the statistic (albeit uncited) could add to the legitimacy of the message * this is an amateur producer who may be popular enough to have paid content on their TikTok but is probably not gaining income from this * the video is produced for distribution through social media, which means the platform will do little to monitor the quality of information * this producer is not tied to journalistic codes of practice |

Reflection: discuss some of the following questions in small groups, record responses and share as a whole group. (15 minutes)

* How did going through step 1 draw out new information about the media text?
* What kinds of skills and knowledge does this type of media analysis activity build?
* How could this activity be improved?
* How did this activity progress towards the goals of media analysis identified in activity step 1? What kinds of activities could flow on from this learning?
* This kind of media text is representative of the way many of our students (and a lot of adults too) are getting their news. What implications does this have for Civics and Citizenship educators?
* What media literacy skills and knowledge would help you plan these kinds of activities for your students?