



We the People

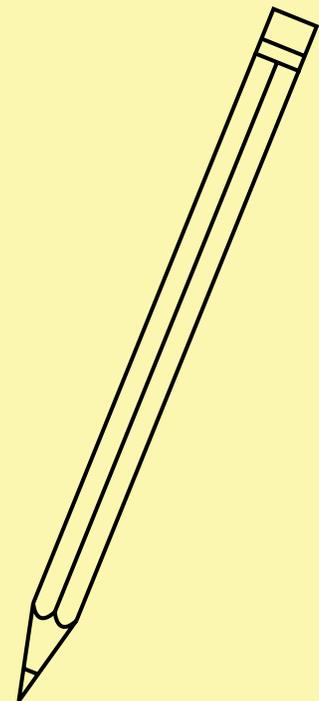
STUDY GUIDE

Content written by **Beth Espinoza**.

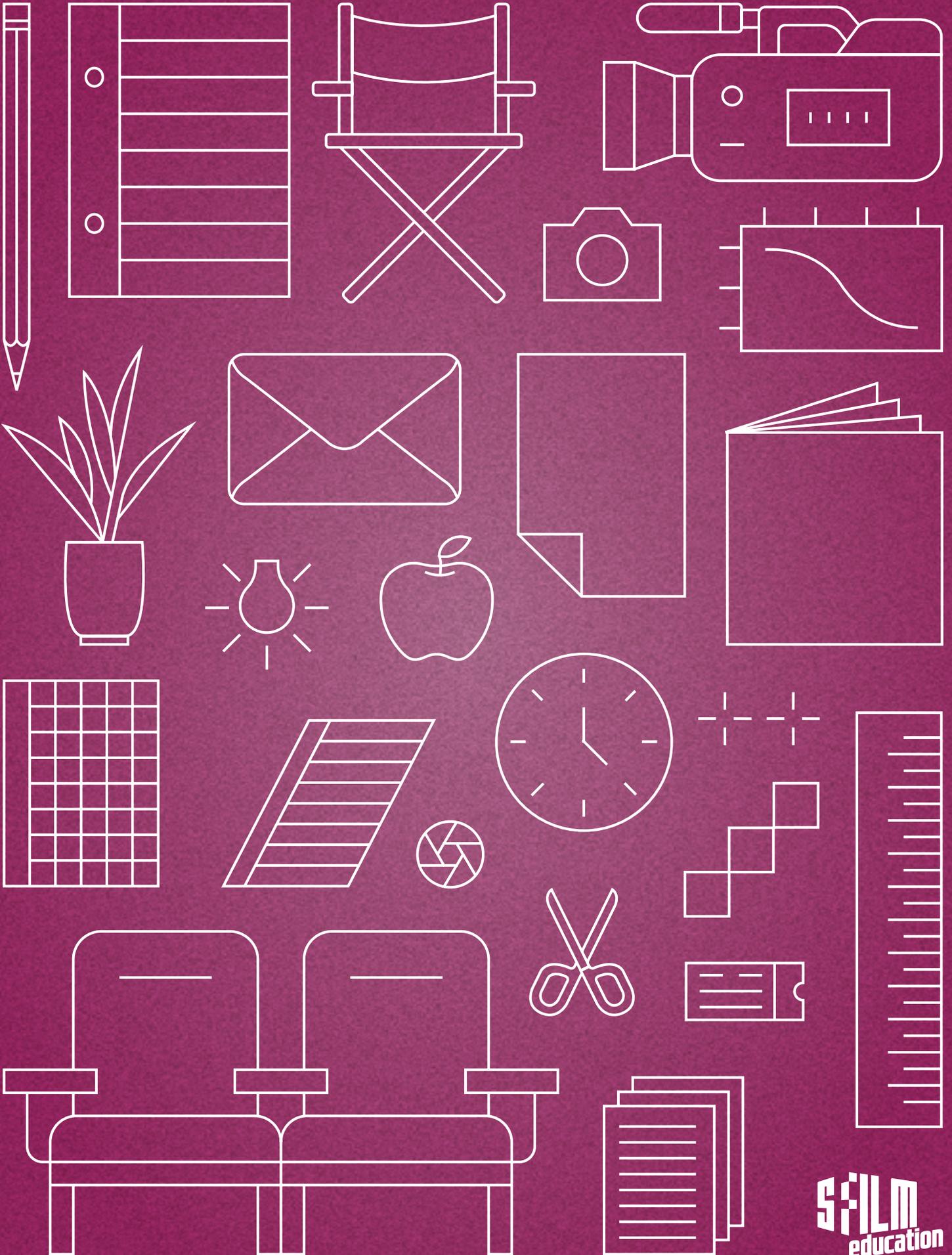
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All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

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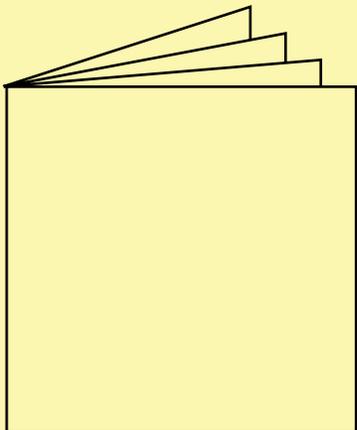
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Index

| | |
|----|--------------------------|
| 02 | About the Episodes |
| 02 | Teaching the Episodes |
| 02 | Subject Areas |
| 03 | Presenter Bio |
| 05 | Discussion Questions |
| 07 | Activities |
| 09 | Animation Guide |
| 10 | Common Core Standards |
| 11 | Media Literacy Resources |





About the Episodes

Combining music and animation to educate a new generation of young Americans about the power of the people, **We the People** is a series of 10 animated music videos that covers a range of basic U.S. civics lessons in not-so-basic ways. Set to original songs performed by artists such as **H.E.R.**, **Janelle Monae**, **Brandi Carlile**, **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, **Adam Lambert**, **Cordae**, **Bebe Rexha**, **Kyle**, **Andra Day**, and poet **Amanda Gorman**, and a groundbreaking mix of animated styles — each episode of **We the People** is an exuberant call to action for everyone to reimagine civics and reframe their understanding of what government and citizenship mean today.

CREATED BY
Chris Nee

DIRECTED BY
Various

PRODUCERS
Various

(USA 2021) English,
48 mins

We the People on Netflix

Teaching the Episodes

Each 3-5 minute animation is jam-packed with important civic messages that explain how governmental laws and guidelines actually affect the everyday lives of kids. Many of the songs encourage young people to become engaged in active citizenship by learning more about the U.S. government and working in their own communities. To help your students engage in meaningful calls for action, it may be helpful to replay the episodes you choose a few times. This will help viewers capture the many messages throughout each animation. Choose what episodes (if not all) resonate with you and your classroom community. How can students feel empowered to activate change? How can students feel that they are part of a larger whole with the people they share this country with?

Subject Areas

- **Art**
- **Media**
- **Music**
- **English Language Arts**
- **History**
- **Government**
- **Social Justice**
- **Social Studies**



Presenter Bios



Chris Nee

Peabody, Humanitas, NAACP and Emmy Award-winner Chris Nee is the creator and executive producer of the acclaimed series, “Doc McStuffins,” an imaginative animated series about a six-year-old girl who is a doctor to her stuffed animals and toys. She also developed for television and executive produced the hit animated series “Vampirina,” about a young vampire girl who faces being the new kid in town when her family moves from Transylvania to Pennsylvania.

In 2018 Nee began her multiyear overall deal at Netflix, where she now writes and executive produces across live action, animation, kids, teens and adults. Nee’s first five project announcements at Netflix include “Ridley Jones,” “Dino Daycare,” “Ada Twist, Scientist,” which she is producing with Higher Ground Productions, with President Obama and Mrs. Obama serving as executive producers, and “Spirit Rangers,” which is created and executive produced by Native American Karissa Valencia and staffed with an entirely Native writing staff.

Nee’s production company, Laughing Wild, is focused on uplifting up-and-coming talent with diverse points of view. The recently announced “Antiracist Baby,” a series of musical animated shorts to be created with the work of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, fits squarely within the mission of Nee’s work.

An accomplished children’s television writer, Nee has also managed to juggle a successful career as a documentary and reality TV producer. While on location in Alaska for Discovery Channel’s cult hit documentary series “Deadliest Catch,” Nee was simultaneously writing the first “Wonder Pets” Christmas Special for Nickelodeon. Nee received Emmy Award nominations for her work on both series.

Nee has received sixteen Emmy Award nominations and won an Emmy in 2002 for her work on the series “Little Bill.” “Doc McStuffins” won the Peabody Award in 2014. Her series have attracted top voice talent with series regulars Lauren Graham, Loretta Devine, Wanda Sykes, Patti LuPone and James Van Der Beek. Her series have also highlighted the voice talents of Michelle Obama, Ludacris, Carol Kane, Geena Davis, Portia de Rossi, Curtis Stone, Andrew Rannells and Audra McDonald amongst many others.

Nee began her career as an associate producer at Sesame Street International and spent time in Mexico, Finland, Israel



Presenter Bios (Cont.)

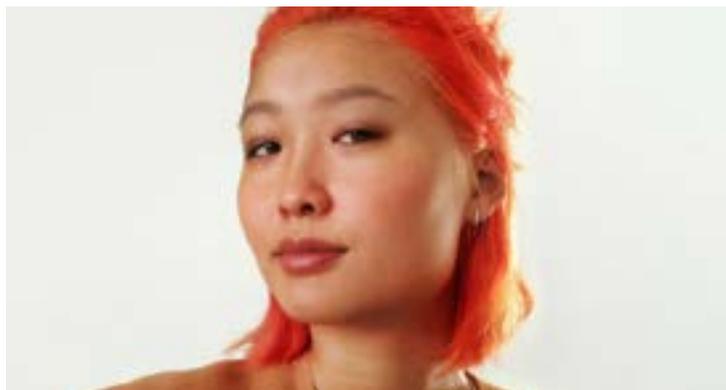


Ada Chiaghana

Ada Chiaghana is the Senior Vice President of Development and Production at Higher Ground. Since joining Higher Ground, Chiaghana's purview has expanded to include all television series and film. Chiaghana most recently produced the short film anthology **We the People** with Laughing Wild and Khalabo Ink Society for Netflix and featuring songs for top artists including **Janelle Monae**, **H.E.R.**, and **Lin-Manuel Miranda**. She is currently , and is finishing production on the upcoming hybrid comedy series, **The G Word**, hosted by Adam Conover and based on *The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis.

Prior to joining the team at Higher Ground, Chiaghana served as a Creative Executive at HBO, working on the development and production of original half-hour series for the network, including Emmy Award®-winning series **Insecure**, **Los Espookys**, Emmy nominated **A Black Lady Sketch Show**, and Emmy winning and Golden Globe nominated series, **Silicon Valley**. Chiaghana got her start working at Creative Artists Agency and shortly thereafter she joined Fabrik Entertainment (**Bosch**, **The Killing**), where she dove into the fringe scene in Los Angeles. From Fabrik, she worked in comedy development at ABC Studios before joining HBO's Original Programming team in 2015.

Ada Chiaghana graduated from University of Southern California and is a native of Houston, TX.



Mabel Ye

Mabel is an artist in Los Angeles. Originally from New York, she attended CalArts' Character Animation program before working at studios such as Cartoon Network, Sony Pictures Animation, and Netflix Animation. Mabel's personal work, such as her animated shorts with original music, have been screened at over 40 festivals worldwide including the notable Angoulême International Comics Festival. Besides creating shorts, she enjoys writing music and short journal comics.



Discussion Questions

1. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- What type of challenges did you see in this neighborhood? What type of actions were taken to improve and change these hardships?
- What do active citizens do? How can you be an active citizen?
- How do you share your thoughts about the things you believe in?
- What change would you like to see in your neighborhood or school community? What steps can you take to make this change happen?

2. THE BILL OF RIGHTS

- What freedoms do you have?
- What does “amend” mean? Is there a rule or guideline that you would amend? Why do you want this amended? How can you voice your opinion?
- What are your beliefs about the 2nd amendment? Should citizens be able to own guns to protect themselves?
- Why does this episode mention that we made a “glorious mess” by giving the people the freedom of speech?

3. TAXES

- What services in your community are funded by the taxes that you and your family pay?
- How can you voice your opinion about how taxes are used, raised or lowered? How can voting affect the taxes that you pay?
- Who created the internal revenue system? What purpose did it serve?
- If the government did not collect taxes, how would this impact you, your family or your school community?

4. THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

- How are legislative, executive and judicial officials hired?
- Why do we have three branches of government and not just one? How might life be different if we had a king that made the laws, carried out the laws and evaluated the laws ?

5. THE FIRST AMENDMENT

- If knowledge is power, what are two of your superpowers? How do you share what you know?
- What does justice mean to you?
- What do you do when someone shares an opinion that is different from yours?
- Why is freedom of speech important to you? What would life be like at home or school if you were not allowed to voice your opinion?

6. FEDERAL VS. STATE POWER

- Who establishes public schools?
- Who makes laws and collects taxes?
- What happens when court decisions can’t be made at the state level? What court does the case go to?
- How did the artists show the balance of power between federal and state responsibilities? What did the characters do? What information did the lyrics convey?



Discussion Questions

7. IMMIGRATION

- The lyrics mention many rights that American citizens have. What is one right that you are proud to have? What privileges do you have because of this right?
- What are people born outside of the United States required to do to become an American citizen?
- What are some reasons people immigrate and become American citizens?

8. THE COURTS

- What laws would you like to see changed in your community? Who can you talk to about making this change? Are there alternative actions that you can take?
- What is one court ruling that surprised you? How do you think things were different before the court was involved?

9. WE THE PEOPLE

- How did people help one another in this episode?
- What do you do to help your community?
- What do these lyrics mean to you? "Every time you think we get a little weak, we get a little bit stronger"? Who is someone that helps you become a little stronger when things are challenging?
- Why do you think there are people in the military helping this community? What are they doing to help?

10. THE MIRACLE OF MORNING

- How did community members show kindness to their neighbors?
- What experiences or activities define a good day for you?
- What does belonging feel like?
- Describe a time when you made someone's day better.

11. WE THE PEOPLE (REFLECTING ON MULTIPLE EPISODES)

- Who do you define as "we the people"?
- Why is it important to stay informed on things happening in your community? What is your responsibility to your community?
- Why is it important to vote?



Activities

Post Viewing Writing Activities

Create a call to action using the power of storytelling

What animation inspired you to take action in your community? Use the writing prompts to reflect and express your views through a writing medium of your choice. What call to action can you encourage your readers to take to make an impact or change in your community? Perform or share your written message(s) with one another through a small group share or an open mic event.

STORYTELLING PROMPTS

- List all the things that you know of that are funded by taxes. Choose your storytelling medium to express what would happen if funding was taken away. (Episode 3)
- Choose your storytelling medium to teach others about an episode of your choice.
- Identify and investigate a community problem. Plan and implement a call for action in response to a social change that you would like to see.

STORYTELLING MEDIUMS

- a free write journal entry
- buddy writing
- a poem
- a children's picture book
- a persuasive letter for change (to school or community leaders, businesses, or a peer)
- a community newsletter

If time and interest allow, celebrate the diverse stories of your community through the [power of the interview](https://bit.ly/poweroftheinterview) (https://bit.ly/poweroftheinterview) to gain diverse perspectives, to develop empathy and to bring focus to active listening skills and follow up questions.

INTERVIEW PROMPTS

- Conduct an interview with a trusted adult in your community to gather their perspective on a social change they are passionate about. Take things a step further and choose your story telling medium to introduce your interviewee and the changes they would like to see.
- Students choose [3-5 questions](https://bit.ly/interviewprompts) (https://bit.ly/interviewprompts) to interview one another, then draw or paint portraits containing symbols that represent the subject's identity, beliefs, values or areas of interest. (episode 5+)



Activities

Post Viewing Multimedia Activities

Create a call to action using print or digital media

Create visuals and reach broader audiences by displaying your message through imagery. Who do you want to view your message? What do you want the audience to learn or do once they see your message? Where or how can you share your message to reach your intended audience? If posting online, make sure to follow the social media guidance that your teacher has shared with you.

PRINT ACTIVITIES

What **collage** materials do you have access to? Be on the lookout for old magazine/newspaper images, scraps of paper, fabric, buttons and natural objects like leaves, feathers, or sand.

- Create an image or collage that shows your audience why the 1st amendment is important to you. Consider the animation style of this episode for your design. (episode 5)
- Put together a collage that conveys your story, feelings and three words that represent you. (episode 7+)
- Design and display a poster of a change you would like to see in your community. Who can help you make this change? What other steps can you take to address these challenges?

DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

- Convert your storytelling creations into a community blog post. Free and safe blog site options: [Seesaw](http://seesaw.me) (web. seesaw.me) or [Edublogs](http://edublogs.org) (edublogs.org)
- Research, organize and facilitate a (social media) campaign to raise awareness of a social issue or a political topic. What actions can your audience take to contribute to change or become more informed? (episode 5+)
- Research, plan, write, edit and distribute a piece of print or digital journalism about a relevant social problem or issue. What actions can your audience take to contribute to change or become more informed? (episode 5+)
- Use online resources to analyze current voter registration and turnout rates in your state and local community. Create a visual to share this information with other community members. What are potential roadblocks to the voting process? What can be done to help make voting more accessible?



What is Animation?

Animation is a process used to create motion pictures through the combination of still images (e.g., digital graphics, photographs of drawings, photographs of objects, etc.) which, when played in sequence, create the illusion of movement. All television cartoons, for example, are animations, and are made up of thousands of still images (drawn by hand or on a computer) that are played sequentially, along with a soundtrack, to tell a story.

TYPES OF ANIMATION

- Classic animation
(e.g., Disney's **The Lion King**, most TV cartoons)
- Rotoscope
(e.g., **Star Wars** lightsabers)
- Flip books
- 3D animation
(e.g., Pixar's **Toy Story**, **Wall-E**, **Up**)
- Stereoscopic 3D
(e.g., **Avatar**)
- Cut-out / Silhouette animation
(e.g., **South Park**)
- Claymation
(e.g., Nick Park's **Wallace and Gromit**)
- Puppet animation
(e.g., Tim Burton's **The Nightmare Before Christmas**, **Coraline**)

History of Animation

The world's most famous animator, Walt Disney, began making short animated cartoons based on children's stories in 1923. In 1928 he introduced Mickey Mouse in the first animated sound cartoon, **Steamboat Willie**, which became an immediate sensation. Throughout the next decade, Disney would add such elements as carefully synchronized music (**The Skeleton Dance**, 1929), Technicolor (**Flowers and Trees**, 1932), and the illusion of depth with his multi-plane camera (**The Old Mill**, 1937), a device that allowed for animated cells to be photographed against a three-dimensional background. Although not the first animated feature, **Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs** (1937) was the first to use up-to-the-minute techniques and the first to receive widespread release. The film's success can be attributed in part to Disney's willingness to use animation to create a profound dramatic experience. He strove for photographic realism in films such as **Pinocchio** (1940), **Dumbo** (1941) and **Bambi** (1942). The success of television cartoons led to the virtual disappearance of animated shorts produced for theatrical release. Animated featurelength films, however, flourished, especially after the release of Disney's **The Little Mermaid** (1989), regarded by many as the studio's best animated feature in decades. Other Disney blockbusters followed, including **Beauty and the Beast** (1991), **Aladdin** (1992), **The Lion King** (1994) and **Lilo & Stitch** (2002). The development of computer animation was another great advancement in the form and resulted in feature films of astounding visual sumptuousness. In 1995, **Toy Story** was the first film to use only computer generated imagery (CGI). In 2001 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences added a new Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. The first recipient of the award was **Shrek** (2001).



Common Core Standards

1st Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.1.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2

2nd Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7, 2.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2

3rd Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1.A and B
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1

4th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.A and B
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.1

5th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1.A-D
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1

6th - 8th Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1-8C
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7



Media Literacy Resources: Screening with Meaning

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

1. **Medium:** the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
2. **Author:** the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
3. **Content:** the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
4. **Audience:** the target audience to whom it is delivered
5. **Purpose:** the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

MEDIA LITERACY STANDARDS

MEDIUM

All Media Is Constructed.

- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

AUTHOR

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.

- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

CONTENT

Media Is A Language For Information.

- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

AUDIENCE

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.

- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

PURPOSE

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.

- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?