Using Media in Teaching

Writers | Carol Bertram, Peter Ranby, Mike Adendorff, Yvonne Reed, Nicky Roberts

Editor | John Gultig

Saide

South African Institute
for Distance Education

Using Media in Teaching

Learning Guide

WRITERS

Carol Bertram
Peter Ranby
Mike Adendorff
Yvonne Reed
Nicky Roberts

SERIES EDITOR

John Gultig

Saide

South African Institute
for Distance Education

Using Media in Teaching
ISBN 978-0-9869837-2-6

SECTION FIVE

Understanding popular media

What will we learn in Section Five?

Remember that Zaki (pages 18 and 19, Section 2.3) spent at *least* six hours of her waking day being exposed to some form of media. This was the same length of time she spent at school! Almost all of this time was spent listening to, watching or reading *popular* media. In the whole day, she spent only *six minutes* developing her own media skills: one minute in independent reading, and five minutes working directly from her maths textbook.

Although learners are exposed to a good deal of popular media, much of it 'washes over them': it has simply become part of their natural environment. However, since Zaki isn't able to 'read' these media critically, this poses the danger that she will unknowingly and uncritically accept the hidden 'messages' they churn out. She then becomes the 'puppet' of advertisers, her thinking and habits shaped by the values and views embedded in advertisements, soap operas, videos and pop songs, rather than being able to weigh these up for herself.

How can we help learners to develop the ability to respond to media more critically? This section aims to enable you to do just that. In Section 5.1 we introduce you to two approaches teachers can use to teach media literacy. We will call these approaches – that, you will notice, have important overlaps – **a MAP approach** and a **Keys Concepts approach**.

> A 20-week study schedule would suggest you begin Week 12 now. You should have spent at least 66 hours on this module so far. The section is quite complex; work slowly and carefully. Don't continue *unless* you understand the concept discussed.

A MAP approach to analysing media

Media education involves examining the media in our lives and asking questions about the way they make sense of the world for us. For example: What is the purpose of the media? Who puts media messages together, and why? How are these messages constructed?

All media communicate messages. They are aimed at an audience and they are put together or produced in a particular way. So, when you are considering the media, you can ask these three questions:

1   What is the medium saying?   **Message**
2   Who is the message aimed at?   **Audience**
3   How is the message put across?   **Production**

We can call this the MAP approach – **m**essage, **a**udience, **p**roduction. Let's take a closer look at the elements of MAP.

Message

The popular media are in the business of conveying messages. Messages can take a lot of different forms, such as newspapers, magazine stories and pictures, advertisements, TV and radio programmes, billboards, or even balloons in the sky.

It is easy to forget that the messages we receive via the media are usually carefully planned. We saw in the video that whole teams of people are involved in putting together television advertising messages. Similarly, radio programmes, newspapers and magazines are also the product of an intense planning and production exercise on the part of a number of people, each with expertise in a particular field of communication. Under these circumstances, it would be surprising if there were not a lot more to media messages than 'meets the eye'.
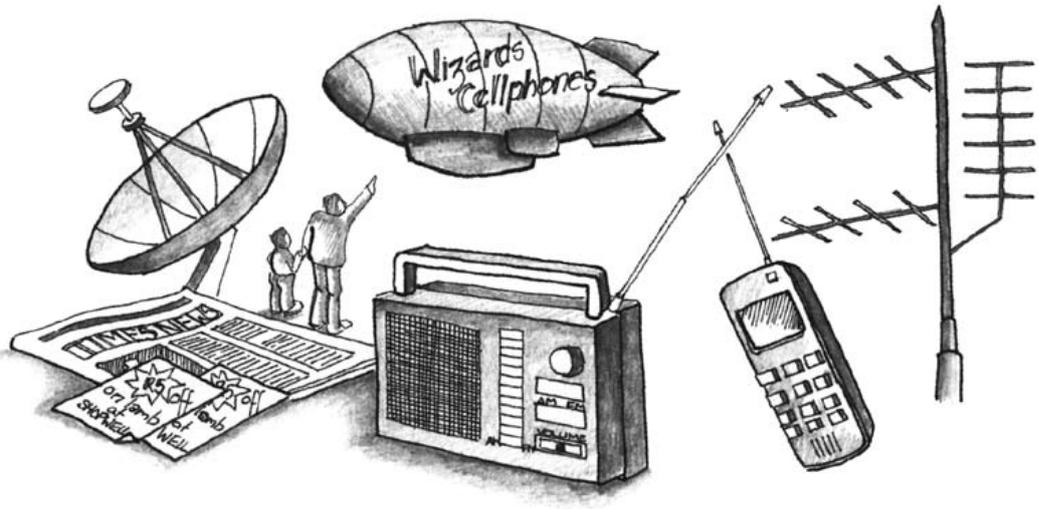
Saide

ACTIVITY 34

a What is the main message the makers of this advert want to communicate?
b Is this message the 'truth'? What other messages could the makers of the advert have communicated? (One of the producers who is interviewed gives us some clues.)
c Who do you think paid for this message to be produced by this team of people?

Audience

Media messages are aimed at an audience. We all experience a wide collection of media messages every day from a variety of media. This means we form part of a range of different audiences. For example, a television audience during one evening will be made up of people who watch different programmes on different channels. Some people may watch only news and sport, some may watch soap operas and sitcoms, others may just watch the movies, while others tune in for the documentaries and current affairs programmes. The same variety in the make-up of audiences can apply to newspapers, magazines and radio.

Not only are audiences different and varied - they also change over time.

For instance, television sitcoms may be built around social situations that would once have been taboo, such as unmarried couples living together. A soap opera may be 'killed' by its producers if it begins to seem 'dated' and ceases to attract the viewership it once used to. And, whereas some years ago, there would have been a very small audience receptive to the idea of a 'unisex' fragrance or scent for young men and women, there is now a growing one.

ACTIVITY 35

a Write down some of the different '*audiences*' that you regularly belong to (for instance, the TV soap opera audience, a community radio station in the taxi or your own car radio on the way to work).
b Think about and write down the size of each of these audiences (a TV soap opera such as *The Bold and the Beautiful* may run to many millions worldwide; a local radio station to a few hundred at anyone time).
c How do you think the makers of popular media think about their audiences? (For instance, as valued supporters? only in terms of 'ratings', i.e.

as sheer numbers that dictate the price which the series will fetch on the international television market?)

When the producers of media set out to make a piece of media such as a TV programme, a magazine article or a radio show, they think carefully about the characteristics of their audience. They may consider characteristics such as:

- the *age group* (for instance, teenagers or young professionals);
- the *gender* (for instance, there are magazines aimed at women and magazines mainly for men);
- the *income group* (for instance, advertising companies aim to target the people who can afford to buy their products, such as luxury cars);
- the *language group* (for instance, radio stations that broadcast in Sesotho have a particular audience in mind).

Using a MAP approach to analyse a magazine cover
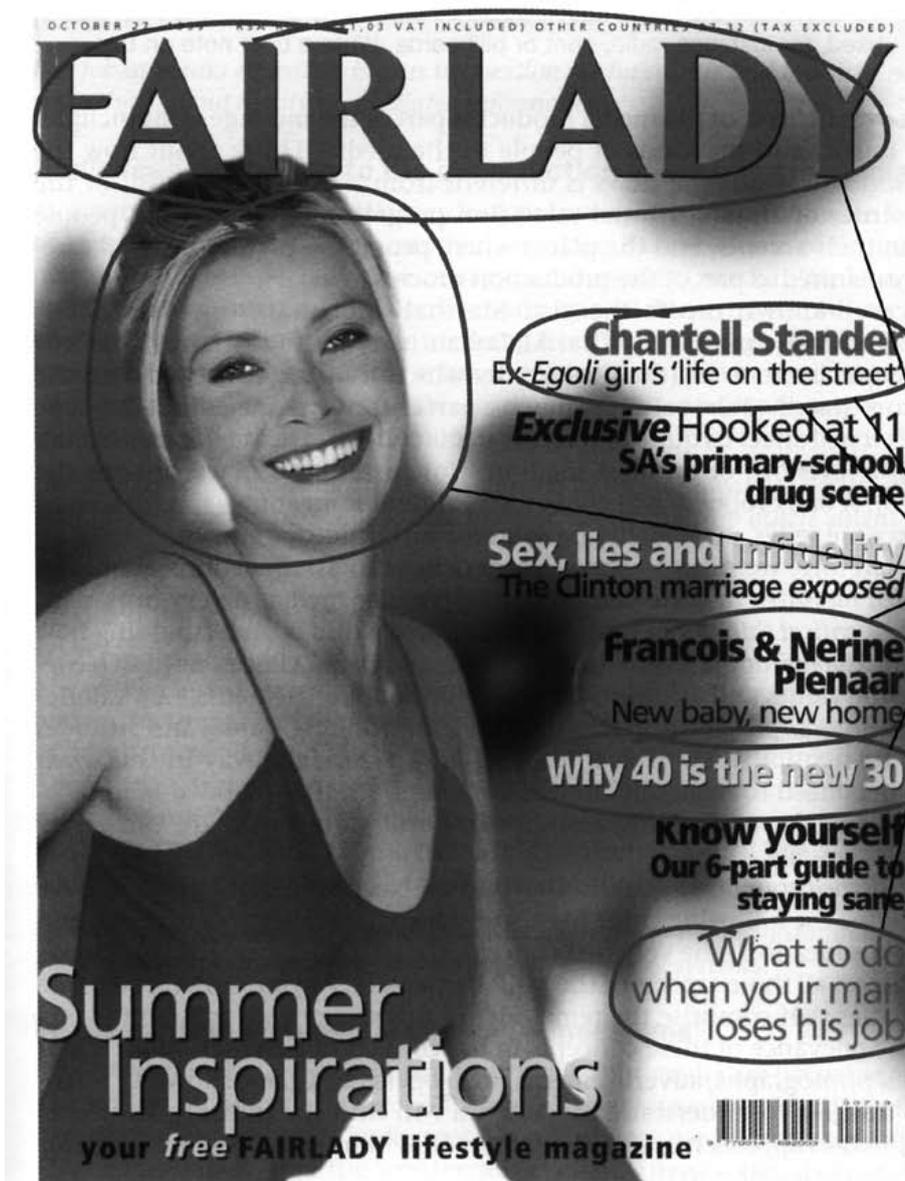
Message
- Emphasis on light, lifestyle stories (not news)
- Being young and healthy-looking is an important aim in life
- Marriage is important
- ?

Audience
- Women
- White and young (but not teenagers)
- Language?
- Income?

Production
On the cover, notice:
- the use of glossy paper (what does this suggest?)
- the use of colour
- etc.

Production

Producing a piece of media is a deliberate activity. People put the production together using specialized techniques and methods.

In the video we saw a team of people producing a TV advertisement. They produced a slick, 30-second collection of images, sounds and words all designed to have a particular effect on the audience. The car company could have commissioned the advertising agency to make other kinds of advertisements, for instance, ones that appear in the print media, on radio or large billboards. Why do you think they chose to use the TV medium to advertise this model of car?

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity

ACTIVITY 36

a Choose a presentation within a particular television format, such as a TV advert, a game show or a documentary. Write down:
  - Why do you think this piece of media has been put together?
  - How many people appear in it?
  - How many different elements can you identify in the presentation (for instance, music, voices, characters, different scenes)?
b Try to identify the *message* and the *audience* it is aimed at.
c Consider how the presentation would be different if another medium was used, for instance radio, print or billboards. Write a brief note on this.

The overall *'look'* of the media product is part of the message. This includes the music, and the kinds of people in the media. Think about how the person who reads the news is different from a game show host, or the presenter of an educational television programme. The clothes people wear, their accents, and the places where people are pictured, are all carefully planned as part of the production process.

A well-known media theorist, Marshall McLuhan, once said: 'The medium is the message.' What McLuhan is trying to say is that the *way* messages come to us (the medium by which they are conveyed, and the factors described above) are so much a part of those messages that the same *content* will affect us quite differently if it is conveyed through one medium (say, television) or another medium (for instance, a newspaper or the radio). A bank robbery will convey very different meanings if it forms part of a crime series, an actuality programme on crime, or a sitcom.

Therefore, we need to show learners how to ask questions about the *hidden messages* that are carried by the popular media. A very important part of *critical thinking* in our media-saturated world is understanding how the media manipulate us. We, like the learners in our classes, need to recognize the values and assumptions that *underlie* advertisements, news stories and photographs. If we do not, their and our thinking, values and attitudes will be manipulated. And, if teachers are to show the way in this, then teachers need to make themselves aware of both the intended manipulations and the underlying assumptions and values that are carried by popular media.

To *deepen* your understanding beyond the basic MAP framework, we have included the following guide to the most important concepts in media and media education. The very first concept, that 'all media are constructions', builds on all three aspects of the MAP framework. As you work through the activities that comprise the remainder of this section, we will remind you of the relevance of these concepts in the context of news selection, magazines, photographs, advertisements, soap operas and game shows. In teaching learners to understand media, you will find the message-audience-production approach useful, though the MAP framework is more useful for *introducing* learners to this area.

Key concepts in media education

All media are constructions

Media are *mediated* communication: media messages are *not* direct representations of reality – they are *constructed* by the media makers (journalists, ad agencies, etc.) who 'mediate' or 'come between' reality and the audience. They are not 'slices of life', 'windows on the world' or 'mirrors of society'. They are carefully manufactured' constructions', with nothing left to chance. They are not, by definition, 'real', although they attempt to imitate reality. In fact, the success of these manufactured constructs lies in their apparent *naturalness*.

Our job as media educators is thus to remove the familiarity of media messages and make them 'strange' and problematic to learners to show that they are not 'natural'.

All media construct reality

Although media are not real, they can shape our attitudes, behaviour and ideas about the world. If we haven't had firsthand experience with a person, place or thing, and yet we feel that we know something about them based on media information, then the media have constructed a form of reality for us.

Our job as media educators is thus to question media culture and to teach learners to think about reality vs. mediated information.

Audiences contribute to the construction of meaning in media

Audiences are not passive. We may look passive as we sit motionless in front of a book or a TV set, but our minds are working to make sense of the information. This is especially true of fast-paced modern media. We learn to anticipate and interpret the conventions by which media communicate, and to somehow 'read' or make meaning from their message. We do this as individuals and, in predictable ways, as groups. Our taste in media content and forms changes as we age. Advertisers know this, and try to target us as individuals and as group' audiences'.

Our task as media educators is to help learners to become aware of the way they interact with media personally, and to think about the way others might use media.

Media have commercial implications

Media industries add billions of dollars to economies and are, for example, one of the United States' largest exports. Commercial factors, such as distribution, technical costs, labour costs and potential advertising sales (ultimately the need to make a profit), influence the content of media. Advertising drives media businesses. Magazines, newspapers and broadcasting channels guarantee advertisers a number of consumers who will see their ads. This audience is targeted to buy consumer goods. The commodity that media companies 'sell' to advertisers is the *audience*.

Our challenge as media educators is to educate learners about media industries and the way they are intertwined with modem economic systems.

Media contain ideological and value messages

Objectivity and balance are journalistic ideals, but media are not value free. The notion of 'objectivity' in media is a relatively new idea. Until the first part of the 20th century, audiences did not expect media to be objective. They knew which were the 'conservative' newspapers or the 'democratic' magazines, and generally bought them according to their own ideological persuasion. Media content that is presented as objective can hide *implicit* values and ideology. Most important, media content today does *not* support social transformation, and it 'sells' a consumer lifestyle.

Freely adapted from *Media Literacy Resource Guide: Intermediate and Senior Division*. 1989. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education.

Saide

The role of the media educator is to guide learners to uncover ideological messages by using media literacy techniques and values education strategies.

Media have social and political implications

Media have changed the landscape of modern political campaigning. Media not only seek to sell us products; they also sell us political candidates, ideas and public health messages, and seek to shape the political thinking of mass audiences. Media technologies have altered our culture, our families and the way we behave, and the way we use our leisure time. Although they may not directly affect the way we behave, media seek to legitimize and reinforce social and political behaviour.

The job of the media educator is to increase learners' awareness of the political and social messages in media, and of the way they shape political and social attitudes.

Media have unique form that is closely related to content

People derive great pleasure from their use of media, and media literacy skills can heighten that pleasure. We can appreciate the artistry with which texts are created, the technical expertise in media production, and the creative vision. Each medium has unique conventions, benefits and limitations that influence its content. We can also understand that form and content are closely related in media, so that the overall 'look' of a media product is in the end *part of its message*. Students can learn creative self- expression by producing *their own* media texts in the classroom, as they analyse the texts of others. They can also see how each medium reports the same event in a different way, owing to the constraints and limitations of the medium.

Hands-on production and critical analysis are two halves of a whole media studies programme.

Desired learning outcomes

When you reach the end of this section you should be able to:
· identify that media messages are aimed at specific audiences, for specific reasons;
· recognize that media messages are constructed by people, often with a great deal of careful preparation;
· recognize that implicit values and assumptions, as well as more obvious ideo-logical and political messages, are carried by popular media;
· critically evaluate these values, assumptions and ideological messages;
· produce media-based resources which encourage critical interpretations of media messages;
· relate the use of media in the classroom to those Curriculum 200S critical outcomes which focus on critical thinking and awareness.

Checking your learning:
How should you use these outcomes? You may find that they don't mean much before you study the section. That's *why* it is so important to check back regularly. Ask: 'Have I achieved any of these outcomes yet? What do I still need to learn in order to meet these outcomes?' Write down those things you still think you need to learn, and use them to focus your learning.

Finding critical media literacy sources in popular print media

From time to time, the media themselves set out to make us think more critically about various media, and teachers concerned with media education should be sure to keep and file such I gems'. We have used one already in the activity on statistics (pages 59-60), which was really an exercise in critical thinking. This came from *The New Internationalist* magazine that is often a good source of examples of critical thinking. On pages 155 and 156 we will feature another example, an excellent (adapted) article on the image of women in women's magazines by Anne McClintock, from a now-defunct arts magazine called *Speak*.

   Here is a short feature from the magazine *SA Citylife* that raises interesting points about designer labels as media, and their influence among South African youth. How could you use this in class? Doesn't it address any of the media literacy questions raised in the two approaches we looked at in 5.1?

> You should have spent about 68 hours on this module so far. You should be in Week 12.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR

The 1990s haven't exactly been the decade of robust consumer activism. Remember the days when no one in a cold clime would even dare to wear their fur in public? Remember when pulling into a Shell garage was tantamount to treason because of the company's dealings with the Apartheid government? The 1990s clamour for hip visibility and designer label uniformity has all but drowned any attempt to raise the consciousness of greedy consumers guided by the dim lights of habits and impulse. Causes are passé and companies who exploit their workforce to bring designer labels to the world do so without fear of chastisement or boycott. At the opening of the Ikwezi Drama Festival at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town recently, the vast majority of black youth in attendance were wearing an astonishing array of American labels, from Tommy Hilfiger to Nike to Kangol to Polo. **What then of the African Renaissance?**

In a recent issue of the popular culture magazine *Y*, the new editor (who goes by the moniker 'The Citizen') muses that the greatest consumers of designer labels such as Kangol, Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, etc, in South Africa are black urban youth. Kwaito stars, who are often dressed from head to toe in American designer labels, no doubt serve as role models.

Perhaps he should enlighten readers of Tommy Hilfiger's attitude towards consumers of colour. Oprah asked Hilfiger if he had said: 'If I'd known African-Americans, Hispanics, Jewish and Asians would buy my clothes, I would not have made them so nice. I wish these people would not buy my clothes, as they are made for upper-class white people.' Hilfiger's reply was a simple: 'Yes.' (Oprah threw him off the show.)

Nike too has dubious offshore employment policies. None of the brand's goods are manufactured in the US. Men and women in sweatshops in Indonesia do the work. The irony is they sell the products, at a huge mark-up, to youth in developing countries who regard the brand as a mark of the ultra cool. If there is one group that seems oblivious to Thabo Mbeki's concept of the African Renaissance it is the South African youth, who will probably be too busy out shopping to bother casting their votes on 2 June. For more on consumer activism check out the Adbusters site, on the Web at www.adbusters.org.

Reproduced from *SA Citylife*, May 1999

Saide

Other, more offbeat sources that are worth scanning are *Mad* magazine and *Nose Week*. Here is an example from *Mad* magazine. Notice how it parodies the lack of 'reality' in many mainstream American films and TV fare. How could you use this kind of media in class?

Romance

1. A female character shall resist the advances of a male hero only due to some compelling, life-or-death reason, and never simply because she finds the hero unappealing. This situation shall in all cases be resolved before the end of the program.

2. No matter how hard-won the love relationship between a hero and a newly introduced female character, she shall be completely forgotten by the next show.
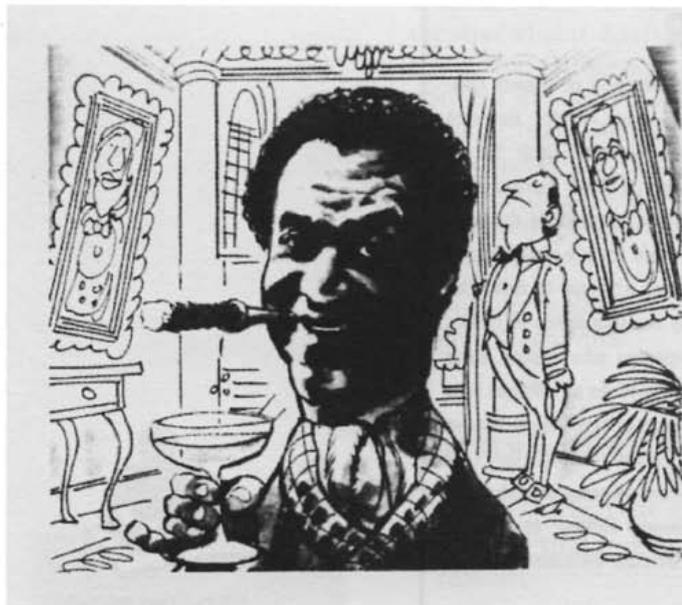
Houses and Apartments

1. No character shall be shown living in a house or apartment that is not at least 2½ times as expensive as what he can probably afford on his salary.

Finally, the weekly *Mail & Guardian* newspaper from time to time features articles on various media that illustrate critical thinking, or increase our media literacy. Here is an excellent example on maps, from the *Mail & Guardian* of 10 September 1999 – an article that could be used in a variety of Human and Social Sciences lessons:

Redrawing Africa's mind map

16 WEEKS MILLENNIUM COUNTDOWN

Bryan Rostron

Can South Africa's white tribe, the argument grumbles on, fit into the modern map of Africa? Before tempers fray and fights erupt, let's face it: it's a headache, this map. For a start, it was drawn by Europeans. This leads to all kinds of problems. Earlier this year, for example, the former and current presidents of Zambia used this colonial blueprint to declare each other unfit to run for office: Kenneth Kaunda pointed to Frederick Chiluba's birth in the former Zaire, Chiluba to the fact of Kaunda's Malawian descent.

Maps, frankly, have been a disaster for Africa. Europeans, to demarcate conquest and for administrative convenience, drew lines which frequently brushed aside underlying linguistic, kinship and migratory patterns. They imposed an order in their own minds; on such charts was Africa drawn and quartered.

But then, the picture of the entire world has actually been drawn up by the usual suspects: middle-aged white males.

Consider a world map. Chances are it shows Africa as about the same size as Greenland. Actually, it's 14 times larger. But you've almost certainly been looking at a traditional map, where the northern hemisphere occupies two-thirds; the southern hemisphere, twice the size, is squeezed into the remaining space.

This map, still in almost universal use, is based on the projections of 16th-century Flemish cartographer Gerhard Mercator. Given that two-dimensional illustration required some distortion, it is not surprising Mercator favoured Europe. Such inaccuracies have, however, inevitably skewered European attitudes. And such unthinking bias, rightly, rankles.

The problem is, as soon as someone charts something, you can be sure they are about to lay claim to it. It is also a way of ruthlessly excluding people. Think of the cliché: "wipe him off the map". The think of the old apartheid apologia: the colossal lie that much of the land was unoccupied anyway -- and that whites and blacks just sort of met up at the same time, so
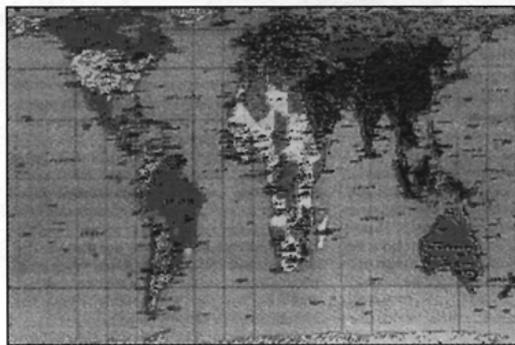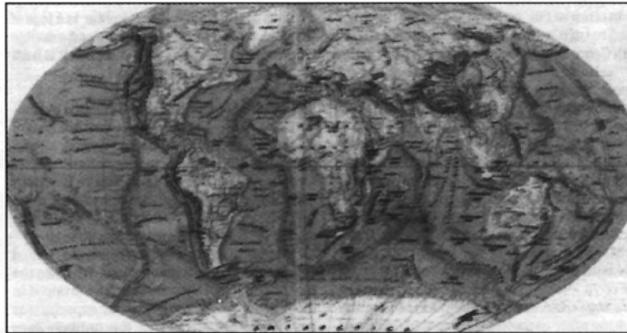
Right-sizing the world: The Peters Projection Map (left) restores Africa to its rightful relevant size and helps people rethink assumptions created by distorted maps like the one above

whites had an equal historical claim.

I have two maps of the Cape, dated 1710 and 1815; it is striking that in both the presence of indigenous people has virtually been obliterated from the landscape. These maps, marking white settlements and identifying rivers and mountains with European names, have almost eradicated evidence of other people, different customs. More recently, maps often blanked out black townships, whose population was sometimes larger than adjacent, named white towns.

Maps are power. The Portuguese and Span-

ish empires even considered them state secrets, revealed on the pain of death. In 1688, Heinrich Claudius was deported from the Cape for showing his sketch maps of the interior to passing French Jesuits.

The earliest surviving cartographic record of Bartolomeu Dias rounding the Cape was probably tampered with by the Columbus brothers. The exquisite Martellus map of 1489, now in the British Museum, shows the Cape as so exaggeratedly far south that it actually breaks through its frame -- thus lending sup-

port to Christopher Columbus's contention that the way to the Indies was westward.

Ever since, maps have been used as instruments of propaganda, justifying occupation and invasion. The Martellus Atlas, subconsciously, still promotes imperious assumptions. The Peters Projection Map, created in 1974, tried to redress the balance. It restores Africa -- with different distortions — to its rightful size. In the United States, the Peters Projection is widely used in training seminars, as a way of showing there is a radically different way of looking at the world. It helps people rethink assumptions.

In South Africa, whites still control most of the wealth — on a scale of Mercator-sized distortion. If this over-privileged minority began to think in terms of the Peters Projection, it may gain a desperately needed new perspective.

Maps, essentially, are mental constructs. They shape the way we think, outline the world we take for granted, and frame our cultural horizons. In short, they peg out our social boundaries.

In South Africa, our defining framework is very recent. My late father was born in 1908 -- two years before the Act of Union, which created our present borders. My mother was born in 1912, the same year as the African National Congress. And I was born (in Hillbrow, *nogal*) in 1948, the year the Nats came to power.

Yet how soon we accept such outlines as immutable. Today, our (white-drawn) national boundaries define a new South African xenophobia. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida defined apartheid as "a system of mapped-out solitudes". The silhouette of that same map of solitudes and exclusion, it seems to me, continues to dominate the row over who is an African.

What map, then, can we use to find our way forward? The old one of rigid lines and arbitrary frontiers? Remember: the former regime, to keep the realities of Africa at bay, even made its perimeter along the Mozambican border a vast electrified fence.

Fact is, we are all, black and white, still trapped by these outdated co-ordinates. The question "does whitey have a place in the modern map of Africa?" might be answered better when Kaunda and Chiluba can agree where they fit in, too.

Let's face it: on the cusp of the millennium, spinning ever faster with globalisation, our mental map needs to be redrawn. But not along old racial contours; otherwise it will remain one of exclusion, ringed around with electrified fences.

Articles and features like those we have mentioned or presented above are not common. In general, it is up to teachers and texts such as this module to supply critical input. What the popular media supply in abundance is material on which we can exercise critical analysis, and it is on such activities that we focus in this section.

Reading newspapers more critically

Another newspaper 'hunt':
How different newspapers select news

News forms a large part of much of the media we experience every day. Most radio stations give hourly or half-hourly news bulletins or updates. Newspapers are available on nearly every street corner in cities. There are television stations dedicated entirely to supplying news stories (*CNN, BBC World*). Many of the search engines on the Internet display a news summary feature. News, like other media industries, is big business.

Saide

Banner
Focus on light entertainment and competitions vs. more in-depth, intellectual articles

Font used
Heavy, 'sensationalist' font vs. smaller, more restrained 'intellectual' font

Price

Lead articles
Focus on sensation – deaths and fraud/crime vs. focus on politics

Main picture
'Black' victim of fire vs. 'white' international figure of Bill Clinton

---

INSIDE YOUR PEOPLE'S PAPER TODAY...

THE WINNING LOTTO NUMBERS ARE:
14   15   35   44   47   48   +   05

PRINCESS WANTS TO BE CROWNED 'QUEEN'

City Press

PRICE: R3.50 including VAT ★   LEADING THE WAY ON SUNDAY WITH 2.3 MILLION READERS   NOVEMBER 19 2000

THE PEOPLE'S PAPER

AFRICAN FASHION AT ITS BEST – DETAILS ON PAGE 3

TODAY ONLY! REGIONAL PAGES ON PAGES 10 AND 11

Roasted alive in firetrap

11 perish; Cosatu outraged

by DOMINIC MAHLANGU and STEVE DLAMINI

Fraudsters bleed RAF dry

By PHALANE MOTALE

The Mideast burns: news and views
Pages 3, 8, 9, 13 and 14

Darwin's legacy: the survival of the saddest
Page 17

INCORPORATING BR AND RECONSTRUCT

Gandhi's Jo'burg, the birthplace of Satyagraha
Page 18

The hills are alive with the sound of sangomas
Reconstruct

THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

NOVEMBER 19 2000   R6.50 (INC VAT)   ANNUAL SUBSCRIBERS R5.31   PUBLISHED IN SOUTH AFRICA

LOTTO WINNING NUMBERS 14 15 35 44 47 48 + 5   ESTIMATED JACKPOT R4,4 MILLION - FULL DETAILS PAGE 4

'Frustrated' Buthelezi wants to quit

Minister angry at the government's failure to meet chiefs' demands ahead of local elections next month

PAST AND PRESIDENT

Ramsamy, Balfour at odds over Olympics failure

BY ROBERT BRAND

But can newspapers be relied on to tell the truth and nothing but the truth? Many people seem to believe this, yet, as the next activity will demonstrate, different newspapers do not report on 'what's happening out there' in the same way. While few reporters and editors will intentionally lie to their readers, every newspaper has to *select* information (and thus *leave out* information) because of limited space and the limited time readers would want to devote to a newspaper. But this selection is

usually influenced, often without journalists even being aware of it, by their values, their (or their newspaper's) bias in favour of particular groups and political parties, and their newspaper's need to increase its sales as much as possible.

Examining news from a *variety* of sources allows learners to discover the *different* 'truths' carried by different newspapers. It can also be a very worthwhile activity for developing enquiry and analytical skills. The following activity – from a Port Elizabeth teacher – requires learners to examine news items from the different points of view of three newspapers. To run this activity, make sure you have copies of *Business Day, The Sowetan* and *The Citizen* published on the same day (preferably on a day when they each carry a different main story). Here is a copy of the teacher's worksheet:

Any three newspapers *that cater for different readerships* may be used. However, try to select newspapers that you know cater for different groups so that the exercise works.

Don't just read through this activity! Instead, do the activity with a couple of other teachers before doing it in class. Then discuss your experience. In particular, discuss what this activity 'taught' you about media.

Spend about 45 minutes on the activity and discussion.

COMPARING NEWSPAPERS

Make sure your group has copies of **Business Day**, **The Sowetan** and **The Citizen**.

1. Draw a table similar to the following one in your book. Then scan the front, back and 'comment/opinion' pages of the three newspapers for the information indicated in the left-hand column.

	Business Day	**Sowetan**	**Citizen**
(a) Write down the headline of the main story on the front page			
(b) Identify the main sports story			
(c) Copy out three other headlines that appear on the front page			
(d) Identify the different types of people who appear, or are named, in the front page news items. (Are they business people, politicians, or from some other group? Men or women? Black or white?)			
(e) What topics are dealt with on the 'comment page'? (Scan the editorial column, the political cartoon, any feature, articles/essays, and readers'letters.)			
(f) How many pictures appear on the front page?			

2   Write a paragraph about the similarities and differences of your findings. Think about the following questions:
   •   Are the main stories about the same event in all three newspapers?
   •   What reasons might explain any differences in the three main news stories featured?
   •   Who do you think decides what stories appear in these newspapers?
   •   Why might the different newspapers see different stories as being important?

3   Can you identify the different types of reader the reports might appeal to? Give reasons for your answer.

4   What does the 'comment page' in general tell us about the *political viewpoint* of each newspaper? (Does there seem to be general support and sympathy for the actions of the government? Is there open or implied support for any political party? Is the overall

Saide

trend of the comment more favourable towards, say, trade unions or employers?)

5   How many pictures are there on each of the three front pages? Consider how much space the pictures take up, for example, a quarter of the page. Do the pictures add to our understanding of the news stories? Suggest why the pictures have been included.

The teacher followed this activity with a report-back and discussion of the findings.

What did this activity teach?

Spend some time in your local library familiarizing yourself with the different kinds of information carried by different newspapers. This activity can be done by comparing television, radio and newspaper news too. This could lead into debate about how the particular medium influences the kind of news covered.

It developed media literacy skills further than the first news hunt (page 66). The activity allowed learners to discover that newspapers *differed* in the kinds of news covered and the prominence they gave that news. We found that, while the *Sowetan* that we looked at carried a main headline calling for the sacking of the South Africa soccer coach, *Business Day's* main story was about the Old Mutual company listing on the London stock exchange. *The Citizen* carried a story about the Democratic Party criticizing the government's lack of action on crime. In other words, each of the three newspapers appears to attach a different *news value* to the different events. (In most cases, the events not covered in the main story *were* mentioned elsewhere in the newspaper, but were given less prominence than in the other newspapers.)

The activity shed some light on *why* the newspapers differed. When we discussed this, some teachers suggested that the news differed because the three newspapers had *different target audiences*, each of which had different interests. They suggested that, in South Africa, target audiences are often still race-based, but are also linked to income. So newspapers such as *Business Day* carry exchange rates and stock market reports prominently, while newspapers aimed at working class audiences do not. Some newspapers, such as the *Saturday Star*, have developed specialist property advertising sections. One teacher suggested that this was because the people who bought them could afford to buy the more expensive type of house that would be advertised in a property supplement, and had the free time over weekends to go 'house-hunting'. Other teachers suggested that the news differed because the *political viewpoints* of the editors (and perhaps the owners) of the various newspapers were different.

While carrying out the above activity, you may have noticed the different 'angles' on - or even the contradictory versions of - news that can appear in the media. We often accept information as reliable and true just because it appears on television, or in a book, magazine or newspaper. We need to realize that the **selection** – by sub-editors and editors – of what is *featured* as 'news' is influenced by the aims of the news company. News media only give us a partial view of the world – and this may not be just because of a particular political bias.

The selection of what information is printed or broadcast is shaped by the following factors:

· fulfilling the economic objectives of the newspaper company, i.e. to sell the information to as many people as possible, thus maximizing the company's profits;

· reaching the audience which the *advertisers* are paying to target; expanding the size of the loyal audience;

· following the editorial policy of the company, for instance, with regard to political alignment (this is usually a matter of public knowledge and should not be seen as divorced from the other three factors).

These factors should warn us that, while newspapers need to maintain a reputation for well-presented, reliable information, *what is selected* for presentation, and the way it is presented, will be influenced by the editors' concern to keep the readership as happy with the product (the newspaper) as possible. Journalists develop a good

sense of their readers' characteristic thought patterns, likes and dislikes, and this knowledge is underpinned by market research, and by strictly-monitored sales figures. A particular front-page headline or photograph may lead to an increase in sales of tens of thousands, and this is taken note of by editors.

While it would be unjust to claim that such considerations are the *first* priority in the minds of reporters and editors of most South African newspapers, there is always a tendency to write (and select) with an eye on mass appeal, and to avoid what the readership may find uncomfortable. This is bound to influence:

- what events are presented as 'news stories';

- what happenings are discarded as 'not newsworthy', and therefore *not* reported;

- what sort of people are approached for comment;

- whose opinions are quoted in a report;

- which details are regarded as relevant or not relevant;

- the words used to describe people, societies and events. (For instance, a quotation may be included, or a report may be worded in a way that perpetuates stereotypes. *The Star* recently carried a report on an international conference on AIDS. The reporter quoted a Western 'expert view' which referred to the 'huge sexual appetites' of Nigerian men, and mentioned as evidence the supposedly sensational statistic that more than two-thirds of the Nigerian men in the research sample had sex with more than one partner! The report did not mention that most cultures in Nigeria allow polygamy.)

Newspaper 'hunt' 3:
Developing an understanding of news values and stereotypes

This activity, which is suitable for Grades 10-12, will add further 'depth' to your critical media literacy if you attempt it yourself, particularly with fellow learners in a tutorial group. Note that this sort of activity lends itself to adaptation as a 'jigsaw' lesson. This approach uses co-operative learning strategies to ensure that *every* learner in the class contributes to the learning process. (See *Getting Practical*, another module in this series, for a description of this effective and enjoyable method which ensures that there are no 'passengers' in the class.)

ACTIVITY 37

Ensure that every pair of learners has copies of two editions (i.e. published on two different days) of the same *daily* newspaper (any daily will do).

Do this activity with your class. Prepare carefully. Ask a fellow teacher to sit in on your lesson and provide feedback.
   Preparation and the lesson should take about 90 minutes.

NEWS VALUES AND STEREOTYPES

Scan the non-sport news pages of both editions of the newspaper for the information required below (your totals should reflect the tally from both editions combined). If you encounter particular difficulty understanding any of the questions, read the article 'Making the news' on the reverse side of this worksheet. Otherwise, read it when you have finished answering the questions below (at home, if necessary).

Questions	Findings
1 How many reports feature 'bad' news, how many feature 'good' news', and how many don't readily fit into either category? (Discuss these with other members of your group.)	
2 What do you think made the front-page	

Saide

stories 'big' enough to merit 'front-page treatment'?

3   Look at the reports on the second, third and fourth pages. Can you think of any reasons why they *didn't* make it to the front page?

4   Find reports that deal with gradual, ongoing developments, such as housing projects, or with ongoing problems, such as decaying services in our hospitals.

5   Are there many stories which focus on news that isn't 'sensational', or that is about positive development? Why or why not?

6   How many reports deal with events in countries other than South Africa? What proportion of these international reports relate to the 'G7' countries: the USA, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada or Japan? And what proportion relate to developing countries, such as Venezuela, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Vietnam or Nicaragua?

7   What were the stories from *developing countries* about? What sort of events taking place in the 'G7' countries got reported?

8   How many reports focus mainly on *individual* people?

9   What sort of individuals seem to be regarded as important enough to write about? (What kinds of positions do they hold in society?)

10 How many reports that focus on an individual are actually about government actions and policies, or some other organization, group or movement?

11 How many reports are about ordinary people, rather than prominent people? Are these reports of a similar size to those about more prominent people?

12 Try to find examples of expectations, assumptions or stereotypes that journalists may 'carry in their heads' - either in what they themselves write, or in the people they quote. For instance, race or gender stereo-concerning crime victims or criminals, corrupt officials, striking workers, youth subcultures, or pop stars.

13. What conclusions can you draw about how the newspaper makes selection decisions on what it will report, or how it will report

it? Consider what seems to be regarded as *newsworthy*, what *international* news is featured, and how the newspaper represents people (as distinct from events)?

In the subsequent lesson, ask a few pairs of learners to report on their findings (or a different pair to report on each question), then have a class discussion on the findings in the light of the article.

What did we learn from this activity?

News is not 'found' or 'gathered' so much as 'made'. It is the result of a journalistic process in which reporters and editors decide what will be reported on, the prominence it will be given (the day's 'top story', or a small story on page 3, for instance), and how it will be presented (a photograph and caption, or a reporter's description plus an eye-witness account, or quoting opinions from experts, etc.).

News is constructed, not a reflection of reality

Even if journalists consciously aim to be *balanced* and *objective*, and to avoid *bias* or political *propaganda*, newspapers and news programmes will almost certainly reflect the dominant *myths* and *stereotypes* of society, often without the journalists themselves realizing it. This is because journalists – like everybody else – have 'cultural maps' in their minds that they seldom think of questioning. These 'cultural maps', or assumptions, determine how they interpret the events they write about, and which events they will choose to write about in the first place.

Like the rest of us, journalists take many things for granted as being 'quite natural' when, in fact, they reflect the way we have come to see things in our culture – and, of course, that culture has itself been shaped to a considerable extent by media, including newspapers and news programmes. For instance, journalists tend to see – and project – an image of society as being led by *individual, elite persons* who are largely in control of their own lives and destinies in such a way that what happens around them is the result of their *personal intentions, motives* and *choices*. They are not seen as subject to the impersonal forces and circumstances that affect you and me: the rising cost of living, family problems (with the exception of the British Royal family), the need to pay bills and stand in 'queues. Their lives and actions are regarded as being of significance to us all. Events are often portrayed as being initiated by such elite individuals, even though in a democracy the reality is usually somewhat different – presidents of countries and companies, and other leaders, are not usually 'laws unto themselves'. Rather, they are the 'public face' of – and accountable to – political parties, boards of directors, shareholders, committees, movements and other formal bodies.

In addition, there are many unquestioned conventions that are regarded as 'routine' in the process of professional news-making. For instance, if something new or important comes up in a particular sphere, such as education, reporters will almost always approach *the same* well-known individuals for their responses, regardless of whether these individuals have even heard of the events yet, or had time to debate them with others.

The news media select events for reporting according to a complex set of criteria of 'newsworthiness'. Thus, news is not simply what happens out there in the world; it is what is regarded and presented as newsworthy. The 'news values' or criteria according to which events are selected for reporting, are partly shaped by the 'cultural maps' described above.

Saide

Commonly accepted 'news values'

Here is a selection of news values that have been identified by the media researchers Galtung and Ruge:

· *Threshold:* This mainly refers to the 'size' of an event. There is a threshold below which an event will not be reported at all. But, once reported, there is a further threshold of drama: the bigger the story, the more added drama is needed to keep it going. For instance, coverage of a war – already 'big news' – is unlikely to be increased unless an especially sensational event occurs. However, this drama may not be part of the event itself. After the murder of John Lennon, the Beatles' singer and songwriter, events which would never have reached the 'newsworthy' threshold were made into dramatic stories to keep the 'pot boiling'. For instance, one newspaper reported:

> *Heartbroken John Lennon fans 'in America are getting a helping hand with 'grief therapy'. Special 'grief clinics' have been set up in New York to aid those who cannot accept the singer's death ...*

· *Stereotypes and predictability:* If the media expect something to happen, it probably will. Thus, if journalists expect a demonstration to result in violence, their reports may well emphasize whatever violence takes place, even if hardly any does and the demonstration is essentially peaceful. However, reporting often fails to 'notice' events shaped by people who do not fit journalists' expectations - especially people who are not 'prominent'.

· *Elite nations:* Wars, elections and disasters in other countries will be reported if those nations happen to be prominent on the 'world stage'. Small, developing countries such as East Timor experienced obscurity for decades, even though vicious oppression and bitter fighting had taken place there since 1975. News organizations turned their attention to East Timor in 1999 only when the United Nations involvement in an independence referendum led to embarrassment for the world organization and the 'prominent nations' supporting this involvement. Events in poorer, developing countries generally go unreported, unless they are disasters such as spectacular plane crashes, floods, earthquakes or tornadoes.

· *Elite persons:* The tendency to focus on prominent individuals, rather than organizations made up of many people, has already been highlighted.

· *Negativity:* Bad news is good news for the media. This phenomenon is well known, but still projects a skewed picture of human actions and society.

Because news values like these both shape, and are shaped by, assumptions that are common to us all, the impression that we gain of the world through the 'filter' of the media both feeds off and maintains stereotypes. We come to see individuals, groups and nations that are other than ourselves as 'strange', 'bizarre' and dangerous, and the idea takes root that it would be better to keep them at arm's length.

Why use this kind of teaching methodology?

The point of such an activity is to help learners discover for themselves that, without intending to indoctrinate readers with propaganda or without displaying an obvious bias, journalists nevertheless 'construct' news in clearly definable ways. This happens even when they think of themselves as writing 'objective' reports. The world as they present it is at least partly a media construction based on their assumptions and news values – the world according to the news desk.

In preparing for this lesson, teachers should preferably choose the actual newspaper and editions with some care, trying out some of the worksheet questions themselves – some editions will yield more interesting findings than others. If you rely on free surplus copies, you should go through these and keep a set when you find a suitable edition, only running this activity when you have found a second edition. This means starting to select some time in advance of the lesson. The idea

of using *two* editions is to provide a better sample to base findings on. Though we have not included questions relating to reportage over time, it is also instructive to notice how ongoing topics are 'covered' differently on different days as events play themselves out.

You will probably also find that learners may need help in understanding concepts such as 'stereotypes', or with practical problems relating to the layout of the particular newspaper you have chosen – so be prepared to offer support.

Using magazines to deepen media literacy

Here is an entire activity that encourages learners to raise critical questions about media they see every day. It features a role-play aimed at detaching learners for a short while from certain taken-for-granted assumptions most of us probably share, and picks up the theme of stereotypes that was raised in the activity above. The entire learning unit could take place over two consecutive days, with the role-play and collage-making taking about an hour on the first day, and the discussion and reading taking about an hour on the second day.

Magazine covers:
Developing an understanding of taken-for-granted assumptions

You should have spent about 72 hours on this module so far. Now you should begin Week 13.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Stage 1 (Role-play): Ask the learners to divide into groups of three, then introduce the role- play more or less as follows:

'Imagine an alien from another planet is visiting the Earth to study our culture. This alien possesses an advanced technology that detects and translates the impulses in our brains, enabling it to understand and converse with earthlings.

'The alien's spacecraft lands in a South African city. It notices that earthlings vary in size, colour and shape. It has not gone very far down a busy street when it comes across an earthling seated before a number of small, neat stacks of flat, rectangular coloured images set out on a board. Many of the images resemble the faces of some of the earthlings, though they seem to have a more 'prepared' look than the real ones walking about in the street. Some of the earthlings passing up and down the street stop and look at these stacks of images, and some pick the images up to look more closely at them. When they do, the alien researcher realizes that the images are not just single images, but *collections* of images and other symbols on many flimsy sheets, all the same size and all bound together along one edge.

'Every now and then, an earthling takes some small shiny metal discs from its clothing, and exchanges them with the seated earthling for one of the collections of images. These earthlings then move off, taking the collections with them. The alien is curious, and decides to find out what this behaviour means.

'After initial explanations, the alien asks about these 'bound collections of images and symbols', and learns that they are called 'magazines'. It also learns that most of the images of faces represent the faces of female earthlings.

'In your groups of three, play the parts of the magazine vendor, the alien and a passer-by. (You can stay seated if you like, and concentrate on what you say rather than on actions.) Remember, the alien has no idea what these 'magazines' mean to earthlings.

'You have about ten minutes for this role-play. Here's a piece of the conversation to get you started:
Alien: Do female earthlings buy these?

Do this activity with your class. Prepare carefully. Ask a fellow teacher to sit in on your lesson and provide feedback.
Preparation and the lesson should take about 90 minutes.

Saide

Passer-by:	Yes.
Alien:	Not males?
Passer-by:	Not very often.
Alien:	Do males buy magazines for themselves?
Vendor:	*(pointing to a few magazines)*
	The males mostly buy these.
Alien:	I see. Why don't the males buy magazines with pictures of men? .. .'

Note to teacher: The point of this discussion is that learners realise that:
1   The fact that women are used to 'decorate' magazines is not natural; it is linked to the way in which our society perceives and treats women.
2   The images of women are not representative of real women. Instead, they are idealized, possibly sexist images that may impact negatively on women's ideals about themselves.

Stage 2 (Collage): 'Now we are going to use images from publications on sale at the vendor's stall to teach the alien more about "female earthlings".'

To half of the groups in the class, hand out a selection of women's magazines such as *Fair Lady, Femina, Cosmopolitan, Rooi Rose, Sarie, Ebony* and *Bona.* To the other half, hand out a selection of daily newspapers. Instruct the groups to cut out images from the periodicals they have been given, and to construct collages to reflect women and how they live (see the 'box' on collages, page 158). Allow 30 to 45 minutes for this activity. Get the groups to display their collages around the classroom walls.

The class should then discuss questions such as the following (these could be presented as a worksheet):
1   What difference do you see (if any) between the image of women that is built up from *magazines*, and that which is built up from *newspapers*?
2   What conclusions can you draw about the way women are represented in magazines and the way they are represented in newspapers?
3   Why do you think very few men's magazines similarly feature pictures of men on the covers? What is featured on magazines specifically produced for male readers (this does not refer to special-interest magazines such as hobby magazines)?
4   In what ways do the faces we see on magazine covers differ from most of the faces of women we are likely to see on the street?
5   What are the women on the covers of women's magazines *doing*? Why do you think women are hardly ever shown doing anything else on magazine covers? (See the covers on page 157.)
6   What do you think might be the long-term effect on women of seeing themselves continually depicted in the particular way they are shown on the covers of magazines? What might be the long-term effect on men of seeing such images so often?

Stage 3: (Reading and discussion) Hand out copies of the adapted extract from an article by Anne McClintock (on page 157). Give the learners ten minutes to read it, and then follow this with a discussion (whole class, or in groups) of the ideas in the article.

What did we learn from this activity?

This activity attempted, by getting learners involved in a media analysis, to understand that women's magazines *construct* a particular and idealized image of women. The final part of the activity – the reading by Anne McClintock – attempts to pull together the ideas that should have emerged from the activities. This is what McClintock says:

… One of the striking facts of women's magazines is that the average photographic image is almost without exception **that of a woman**. The average *Fair Lady* and *Femina* are roughly 150 to 180 pages long.

Over half of both is allocated to advertising (including fashion features), and almost all the advertisements feature women. This amounts to an impressive number of pictures of women in each issue .

. . . What is the significance of these pictures of women? There is obviously nothing natural about most of them, in the sense of depicting women as they are in life. The way the woman are arranged in picture after picture has nothing to do with the way women in reality behave, act, move, gesture, appear. The pictures are arranged to signify **an attitude towards women** – more specifically an attitude women are to have towards themselves. The central image is the face of a woman. Without exception, every issue of *Fair Lady* and *Femina* features on its cover this stereotype face.

What does it signify? There are a number of striking things about this face. First, the woman is not photographed in the act of engaging with another person besides herself. She is photographed looking out, most often smiling, often seductive, into the eyes of the reader. Her attention is directed towards the observer, not inwards. So the significance of her expression is that it conveys an awareness that she **is being looked at**. More important than this is the knowledge that it expresses the total assurance that her appearance is without flaw. This confidence is based on the requirements that, **as a visual spectacle**, her face fulfils the requirements imposed on it by the gaze of a man. Moreover, the range of emotions which each face expresses is so limited and so stereotyped that the photograph eventually comes to function not as the picture of a face expressing its inner emotions, but as a sign expressing those values desirable in the **face as spectacle, as visual object**. Finally, the face is made-up. The wearing of make-up is itself a sign, confirming the function of the face as a mask and the inadequacy of the female face without its disguise of beauty.

Look closely at the face of the photo-graphic model on any such typical magazine cover (whether of *Femina, Bona* or *Sarie*). What kind of experience is it for a woman who looks at this face? Its expression is the expression a woman wears **when she looks at a man**. It is a face fully expressive of its power and significance as the object of a man's gaze. For this

Saide

reason, it is essentially erotic and seductive. And yet there is a contradiction, for it is a women's magazine, and it is a woman, not a man, that the image is directed at. So the woman confronted by this picture, and the hundreds of thousands almost identical to it in so many magazines, is in fact being asked to do an extraordinary thing. She is being asked to look at every picture of a woman – face and body (for they all express the same intention) – **as though through the eyes of a man**. She is asked to temporarily assume a man's identity and to interpret and judge other women not firstly as expressive of emotions and attitudes, but as visual spectacles (primarily sexual) as they would appear to a man. Simply because of the way the picture is arranged, she internal-izes in her response to it the imagined response of a man.

And because she simultaneously identifies with these women, she comes to see herself first and foremost in terms of the approval or disapproval (primarily sexual) that she imag-ines she would find in a man's eyes. She learns to envisage herself not as she would like to be, but as **someone else** would like her to appear, and because her relationship with herself draws first and foremost on the comparison of her own physical appearance with the unach-ievable and constantly fluctuating beauty of the photographic model, her self-esteem is constantly threatened.

– Anne McClintock

Using collages to teach media literacy

A well-tried activity that gives learners an opportunity to 'make meaning' themselves of abstract concepts is collage-making. Learners cut pictures and text, such as headlines or advertising copy, out of magazines and newspapers, and glue them on a blank sheet of paper (A3 or larger) in order to construct a visual expression of some aspect of their experience, or their idea of a particular concept. This can be done by individual learners (best done at home), but when produced as a group activity in class, the collage provides a rich source of purposeful interaction and discussion. The teacher should also allow time for the whole class to discuss the different collages when they have been completed. Here are two collages, produced for the previous activity:

For this activity, all that is needed is plenty of pairs of scissors, glue, blank sheets of paper (size would depend on whether the collage is to be produced by individuals or groups), and an abundant supply of old magazines and newspapers. An option is coloured pens, crayons or other materials to provide increased scope for learners to express themselves on the collage. These do not in fact usually add to the quality of the finished product, but it is important to keep in mind that, in this sort of activity, the *process* of production and discussion are far more impor-tant than the completed product. For this reason, it is not advisable to leave group collages on display for more than a week or two, unless the learners request this (individual collages should be returned to their producers).

'Junk sculptures', using all sorts of 'waste materials' from polystyrene foam to egg-boxes, are a three- dimen-sional form of collage which may be worth considering for exploring certain concepts. (The learners may need to provide an explanation, written or otherwise, of what some of the elements of their 'sculptures' represent.) You could, for instance, instruct groups of learners to construct junk sculptures to express their experience or idea of the family or local government.

Reading photographs critically

It is commonly thought that 'the camera does not lie', but do photographs always tell the truth? The activities that follow illustrate how images can be manipulated and edited to change their 'meaning'.

ACTIVITY 38

> Do this activity yourself before you do it with learners. Discuss your experience with fellow teachers.
> Spend 30 minutes on this activity. This is an award-winning photo by Kevin Carter.

  a Describe fully what you can see in the picture.
  b Where do you think the photograph was taken?

  c Describe what you see in this photograph.
  d What does the photograph make you feel?

Do not turn over the page until you have answered these questions.

Saide

e   Describe what you can see now.
f   What do you feel now?
g   What 'story' do you think the photographer is trying to tell with this picture? (What is the photograph's message?)

What did we think?

When the teacher showed a learner the different framings of Kevin Carter's photograph, this is what the learner said:

> 'At first I thought this was a wildlife photograph. I thought the vulture was quite ugly but interesting. I thought it could have been taken in the Kruger Park. I thought the second photograph was very sad. I thought it was probably taken in a township, or in the rural areas where there is a lot of poverty. But then I was very surprised when I realized that these were two parts of the same photograph. When they were put together, I felt sick. Clearly the vulture wanted to eat the boy. It seemed as if the world was upside down: animals aren't supposed to eat human beings.'

Kevin Carter's photograph completely changes when we see the vulture and the starving child pictured together. The image is shocking because we know that vultures eat dead flesh – and the child looks close to death. If the vulture and the child were not pictured together, the photograph would not have the same impact.

Photographers choose the subject matter of their photographs, then they consider the best way to show the people and objects in the scene. This may involve grouping them in a certain way, dressing people in a certain way, deciding on the angle of the camera, choosing close up or wide views, considering lighting and special effects. When this is done, the photographer clicks the button on the camera and 'freezes' this scene on film.

The teacher *framed* Kevin Carter's photograph in different ways simply by focusing on particular parts of it. All people who take pictures *frame* the scenes they want to take as they look through the camera lens. What the photographer chooses to frame, changes the meaning of the photograph.

Changing the meaning by changing the framing

Here is another activity to do with learners to impress on them the need to 'read' photos carefully.

ACTIVITY 39

Photo by Clint Zasman

Do this activity with a group of teachers before you do it with learners. Discuss *why you* interpret the photo in the way you do.

Spend about 30 minutes on this activity.

a What do you see in this photo (reproduced from the *Natal Witness* news-paper, 8 October 1997)?
b What do you think the relationship is between the man and the woman?
c Why do you think this?

What did we think?

Our teachers interpreted the picture as telling a story about a distraught woman and a sympathetic man. This was particularly true among teachers who hadn't lived in one of South Africa's black townships. Interestingly, one African teacher asked, 'Is the man in the picture a policeman? If he is, then maybe he isn't sympathetic.' This caused the class to look at the man's body language. 'He seems to have an arrogant and uncaring posture,' said another teacher.

At this point, we moved to the second part of the activity. We gave the teachers a second photograph:

Saide
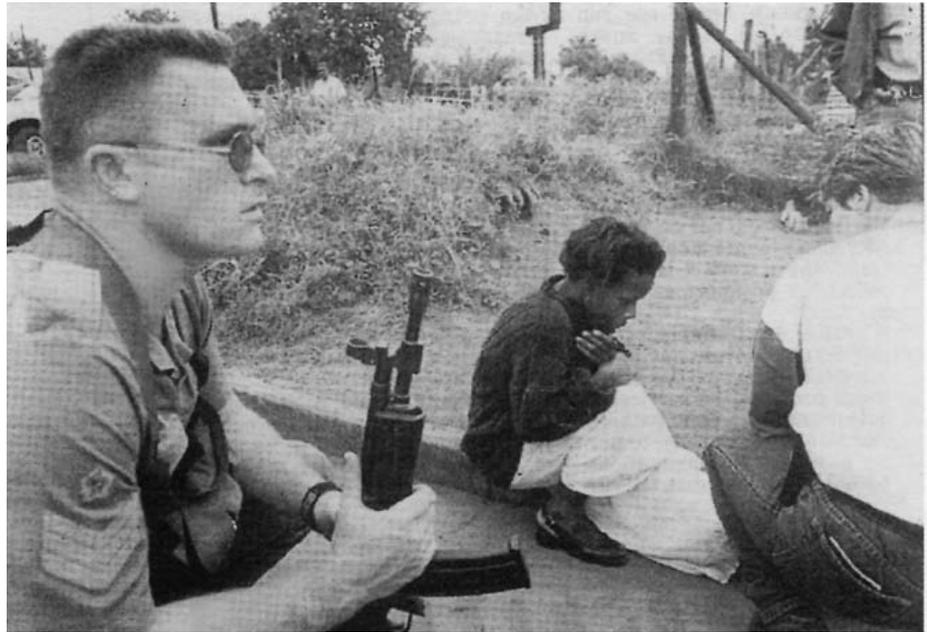
d What do you see in this photo (reproduced from *Echo*, 9 October 1997)?
e   What do you think the relationship is between the two men and the woman?
f Why do you think this?

What did we think now?

Clearly these two photographs were taken of the same incident, but from different angles. The 'framing out' of the uniformed policeman with the gun from the first photo would probably lead some learners to suggest that the man was comforting the woman. In the second, it is likely that they would see the man as part of the cause of the woman's misery. While different framing changes the meaning of what is depicted, it is also true that the audience's perception would influence their inter-pretation. As we pointed out on page 141, *audiences contribute* to the construction of meaning in media. In a society where white people are not often seen consoling black people, the idea of the white man comforting the woman might seem less likely than if the man were black, for instance. We noticed how white and black teachers even differed on the interpretation of the first photograph *because* of their different *histories*.

Framing is what you do when you look through the lens and decide what you want to include in the picture before clicking the button. If you don't like what comes out in your picture, you can *crop* it afterwards to make the picture more inter-esting or pleasing. The point to remember about *cropping* and framing is that these are deliberate activities that change the meaning of the images we see in the media. Being aware of these elements helps us to remember that all the images we experi-ence are *constructed by people*. This means that, to some extent, the meanings of these images are controlled by the producers of the images.

This point is crucial because it highlights the fact that media are *not neutral*. They do not simply reflect reality, as we mentioned in Section 5.l. The media present a 'constructed' version of reality. We have seen how news stories and images can present things in different ways. And we know that advertisers manipulate words and images to sell their products through the media (see Section 5.3). These 'angles' on the 'real world' may reflect the ideology or political position of the 'media maker', or deliberately convey a message aimed at arousing a desire to possess certain consumer goods.

If we are not aware of this tendency of media and media makers to construct

particular versions of reality, they will also influence the picture of the world that we – the viewers – hold, reinforcing (or sometimes disturbing) the assumptions that we have built up through being exposed to many media every day of our lives.

Fortunately, because audiences do not simply receive media messages passively, but themselves contribute to the construction of these messages' meaning, there is also scope for *aware viewers* to *'deconstruct'* such messages and meanings when they threaten to 'swamp' our ability to think for ourselves. Let's try to employ this idea of 'deconstructing' a media message in the case of photographs and words used together to construct a particular meaning.

Changing meaning by putting words and photographs together

Most photographs in newspapers and magazines have a caption (a short phrase or sentence) written under or next to them. These captions can completely change the meaning of a picture. Look at the photograph below. To many people, this is a familiar rural African scene. A German tourist brochure chose the following caption to go with the photograph:

This is another example of how *juxtaposition* tells a story. Earlier we looked at the *juxtaposition* of images; now we look at the juxtaposition of words and images.

Photo: David Goldblatt, from 'Reconstruct', 16 August 1998

Bringing home the water – a common sight in the rustic splendour of KwaZulu-Natal.

Saide

A local development agency had another idea for a caption to the same photograph:

Photo: David Goldblatt, from 'Reconstruct', 16 August 1998

Rural women waste up to four hours a day collecting water because there is no piped water in their area.

Do you see how the two captions encourage the viewer to look at the photograph in very different ways? This will affect the meaning that the viewer attributes to the picture. Now imagine how differently you would interpret these photos if the first photo was in colour (beautiful greens and browns), while the second photo was in black and white. *Colour* also influences how we *interpret* photographs.

ACTIVITY 40

Look at the photograph below.
a Think of a caption to go with the photograph. Your caption should inform the viewer about the meaning of the photograph.
b Give the photograph with the caption to another learner. Ask the learners how he or she *felt* about the photo. Compare how different combinations of the photograph and caption caused learners to feel differently about the photo.

Do this activity with your learners. Use any photograph. It is the discussion that follows from the captioning that is important.
 Spend about 15 minutes on this activity.

The captions below were written by a group of students who did this activity. How do these captions compare with yours?

- *One of these people has AIDS. Guess who?*
- *Tobacco is addictive – so much more to enjoy!*

Activities like those above help learners to question the different ways in which images can be manipulated by simply adding a caption. This kind of activity encourages them to question media images, and to look for *interpretations* that are not necessarily the obvious or only meanings. It is not difficult to develop your own caption activities based on images from various print media.

Saide

5.3 Using popular electronic media to develop critical thinking

Using television and other advertisements

In advertising today, huge resources compete to persuade us to spend our money on this or that commodity. As we saw in the *Using Media* video, a lot of ingenuity, expertise and effort go into the making of many adverts – especially expensive television adverts. Advertising agencies and film producers make use of images, words, music and stereotypes with great skill and care to put forward a single idea that they hope will have the necessary impact to sell a particular product or service better than its competitors.

For these reasons, teachers find adverts both a necessary and a rich subject for learners to analyse. They are also a readily available resource for the development of critical thinking, media literacy and values.

On the video, Caroline Greer makes use of three concepts which are valuable in helping learners to understand how today's advertisements often exert their influence on people's behaviour. These are *denotation, connotation* and *stereotypes*.

Denotation, connotation and stereotypes

Denotation refers to the most obvious basic meaning that a word or image presents to us, for instance, the simple connection we make between the word 'refrigerator', or a picture of a refrigerator, and the device that keeps food from going off. In thinking about what a word or picture denotes, we use a minimum of interpretation. Thus, a picture of a woman standing next to a dishwashing machine denotes just that: a woman next to a dishwasher. However, as we have seen in the discussion of photographs in Section 5.2, *combining* (or separating) different elements of a picture can convey a great deal of meaning.

Unlike the denotation of a picture or word, its **connotations** will require a fair amount of interpretation as they refer to the various meanings that can be *associated* with words or images, usually as a matter of *convention*. For example, in certain contexts, refrigerators can come to *stand for* middle-class domestic comfort, and be widely recognized as such. In addition to being a useful appliance, they were at one time – before many people came to own them – a 'symbol' of the owner's status (they still are among people who cannot afford to own them). They can even be a symbol of modern 'consumer culture' – as in the song 'Money for nothing' by the band Dire Straits, in which 'refrigerators, microwave ovens and colour TVs' are commodities that the home-appliance salesman has 'gotta *move*' (i.e. sell in large numbers).

Placing a woman next to a dishwasher in the context of an advertisement is also an example of an advertisement making use of the third concept we have mentioned – a **stereotype**. Stereotypes are conventional representations of people or things by associating them with characteristics that make them *completely predictable* to the viewer or listener. Thus, a stereotyped villain in a soap opera will always tend to *look* villainous (or the actor will be chosen for his or her appearance as someone untrustworthy), and will always act in a devious or evil way (even his or her' good' actions will always have an ulterior motive). Stereotypes have a negative moral effect when they are linked to a particular social group. For instance, this happens when women are depicted as a matter of course as home-makers and housewives, or when, as in years gone by in South Africa, black people were almost always depicted on TV in the roles of servants, labourers or criminals.

The image of a woman next to a dishwasher is thus associated with a 'housewife' role for women, but a late-twentieth century, middle-class role in which women are

'freed from drudgery' by a string of household appliances, although still in the conventional role. An image that positioned the same woman at the head of a boardroom table, for instance, would have very different connotations.

Analysing an advert

Caroline Greer wants to help the learners in her class move beyond their possibly superficial (surface) understandings of the *denotative* meaning of advertisements, and their possibly stereotyped assumptions. (One learner, for instance, seems to assume that the role of women is essentially a domestic one.) Thus she discusses an advert depicting a woman together with a dishwasher, and then she asks her class to analyse an advert for Tommy Hilfiger, a 'fragrance' (i.e. a perfume, in this case for the young male/female market).

tommy
the real american fragrance
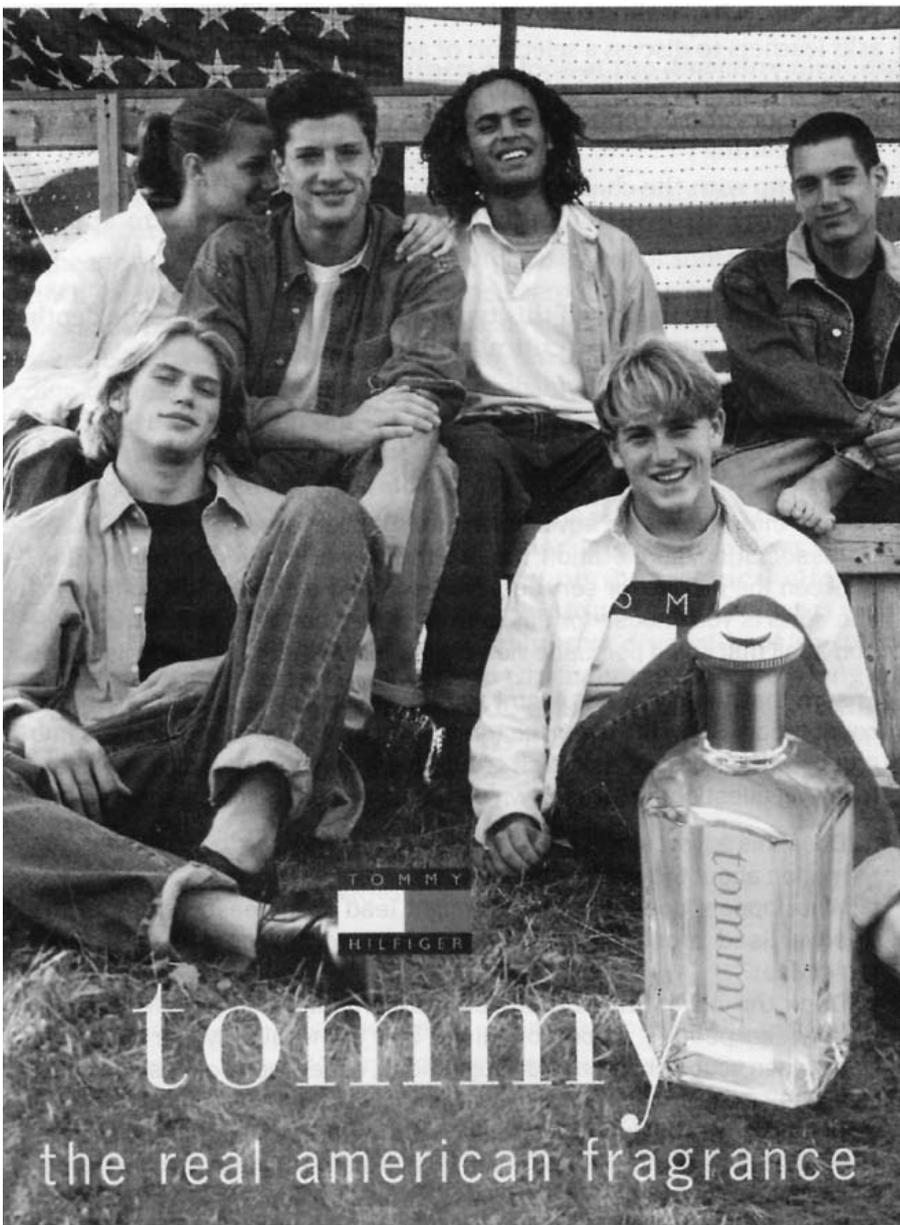
Teachers can use denotation, connotation and stereotype in this way.

1. Give learners an advert or picture. Ask them what it says.
2. Learners will automatically connote. In other words, they will 'tell a story' based on an interpretation of the picture.
3. Make them aware of this by forcing them *only* to describe what's in the picture (i.e. denote).
4. Then contrast what they *denote* and *connote*. Ask what caused them to interpret the picture in a particular way.
5. Finally, show how their interpretation (connotation) is based on their beliefs (often *stereotypes*) about society, about the place women have in that society, etc.
6. This should indicate to learners that most of what we see in photos is actually what we believe in our heads, that is, we *construct* meaning; photos don't *reveal* meaning.

Try this with a Tommy Hilfiger advert.

Saide

Tommy Hilfiger adverts are interesting in that they 'say' very little in words; instead, they rely on a subtle combination of visual images to get their message across. She points out that the Hilfiger advert leads the male reader to make the connection in his mind: wearing this fragrance will make you the guy that girls will want to 'be all over'. But there are other subtle elements in this advert – after all, the underlying message is not a new one. Notice how the United States of America flag in the background is 'picked up' in the Tommy Hilfiger brand colours. The fact that the flag appears in many Hilfiger adverts is interesting. It does not simply appeal to an old-fashioned patriotism (no young reader or likely buyer of this product would be 'persuaded' by the adverts to buy it out of a sense of simple patriotism). But it conveys to American youth, or those who like to adopt American styles, a feeling of' *'us-ness'*. As one of Caroline's students aptly says, 'If you use the product, you'll feel part of the whole culture' (18'20").

As an advertising executive once said (more or less): 'You're not selling a product; you're selling an *"image"*'. The image here is one of responsible young people from the comfortable middle class who enjoy the good things the 'consumer society' (especially American society) offers them, without wanting to 'rock any boats'. These young people aren't rebels.

The approach Caroline follows is an effective one. She:

- asks learners to discuss a selection of adverts in groups;
- gives them concepts (denotation, connotation, stereotypes) with which to move beyond accepting what the adverts depict on the surface as their only 'meaning';
- follows up with the challenge to produce their own adverts for products which work against stereotypes, such as a car designed to appeal to 'grannies'.

Here is an activity to extend this type of lesson, and increase the depth of learners' media literacy and critical thinking.

ACTIVITY 41

Record three television advertisements. Choose adverts that rely purely on association/connotation, i.e. on the viewer making a 'connection' between the product or service advertised and an 'image' of some sort. The adverts you choose for this activity should convey *no* useful inforrnation at all that could persuade viewers to believe that the product is good.

Ensure that the class has learnt to distinguish between denotation and connotation. Show the class the three adverts and divide the learners into groups of four or five. Ask each group to choose one advert, discuss the following questions, and jot down their answers on their worksheets:

a Does this advert aim to persuade potential customers by providing information about the product or service?

b What appeal does it have that might lead to increased sales of the advertised product (or to more people relying on the advertised service)?

c Does the advert rely on any *conventional* links in people's minds between people, places or things and some quality (for example, between schoolchildren and naughtiness, or between bosses and being stern)?

d Does the advert try to *create* a connection between people, places or things on the one hand, and some quality on the other that is *not* usually associated in people's minds? If so, what connection?

e What does the *viewer* have to contribute to the advert's effectiveness?

f What other challenges must the makers of this advert have faced in putting it together? (The learners will be able to gain more from this question ifthey have watched the sequence about making TV adverts on the *Using Media* video.)

g No-one seriously thinks of adverts as presenting a reliable picture of the world as it is (for instance, compared with an account in an encyclopae-

Tackle the questions below (for one advertisement) yourself. Allow 40 minutes for this. (Of course, this does not include actually *recording* the advertisements.)

dia). Yet together, the many adverts that we see undoubtedly have some impact on our way of seeing the world. 'Step back' from the advert for a minute and think about the world it presents – imagine, and describe, what our world would be like if it *really* resembled the world in the advert.

Let the groups present their findings. Discuss as a whole class how different groups saw the same adverts, and compare the findings on the three different adverts. For instance, some might rely on *humour* rather than an 'image' such as sexiness, success, power, 'the good wife/mother', and so on. Very often, the underlying 'connection' in humorous adverts (especially if the humour is subtle) is the following: 'If you, the viewer, are intelligent enough to appreciate what makes this advert funny, then this is the sort of product that will appeal to you as the advert did.'

Our comments

The first question should lead learners to look at the *denotative* meanings present in the advert they are studying. If it *denotes* young people having fun while offering a brand of cigarettes around, the advert will be providing no information about the product at all.

Questions a, b and *c* lead the learners to delve into the advert's real appeal– through its *connotations*, i.e. through making *associations* or 'connections' between the product and 'good times' or some other 'image'.

It will be interesting to hear how learners respond to *question e*, but a point to be made here – by the teacher if necessary – is that viewers have to actually *'make the connection' for themselves* between image and product by *re-interpreting* the images and/or the product, probably in new ways. For instance, in the advert depicted on our video, the viewer has to grasp the connection between the car's appeal and the appeal of good-looking members of the opposite sex, between the car and youth, and between the car and the athletic performance track. These are suggested by the skill with which the advert is designed and made, but the final connection is up to the viewer.

Question f will focus learners' attention on the technical effort and expertise that goes into the making of sophisticated advertisements today. The final question should lead into an interesting discussion of 'the world according to advertisements' – a world in which most people are young and good-looking, life is lived at a rapid pace, things usually go right without hitches (and if they go wrong it's always funny), and in which 'what we have is how we're judged'.

Further activities with advertisements

Here are five follow-up activities that we recommend:

ACTIVITY 42

a Design an advert in which nothing at all is said about the product. In other words, tell your 'story' entirely through
   • the images you use;
   • the feeling 'connoted' by your juxtaposition of images.
b Design an 'anti-ad' or 'subvertisement'. Show the following mock- advertisements to the class, and get the learners to design their own 'anti-ad' that satirizes the lure oftoday's well-known adverts.

We recommend that you tackle at least one of the first three activities yourself. Spend about 60 minutes on this.

Saide
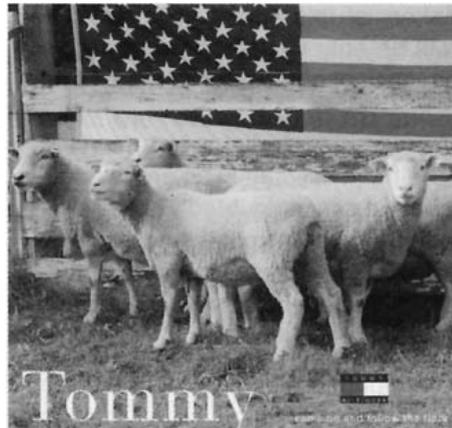
c Show your class the *Using Media* video sequence on the making of a television advert (24'50"), and set questions relating to it, such as:

- What is the connection the audience is meant to make as a result of seeing the advert in which good-looking young men and women are distracted from good-looking members of the opposite sex by a car?
- What does this video tell us about the *inappropriateness* of the phrase 'What you see is what you get' in talking about television advertisements? (Listen to what the producers have to say.)
- Do you think this *matters*? Do modern viewers believe that adverts say important things about products? (For instance, that cars drive around athletics tracks?)

d Design a storyboard for a one-minute television advert. This, again, is an exercise where learners learn that messages are *constructed* through the juxtaposition of images, and of images and words. An example is given below:
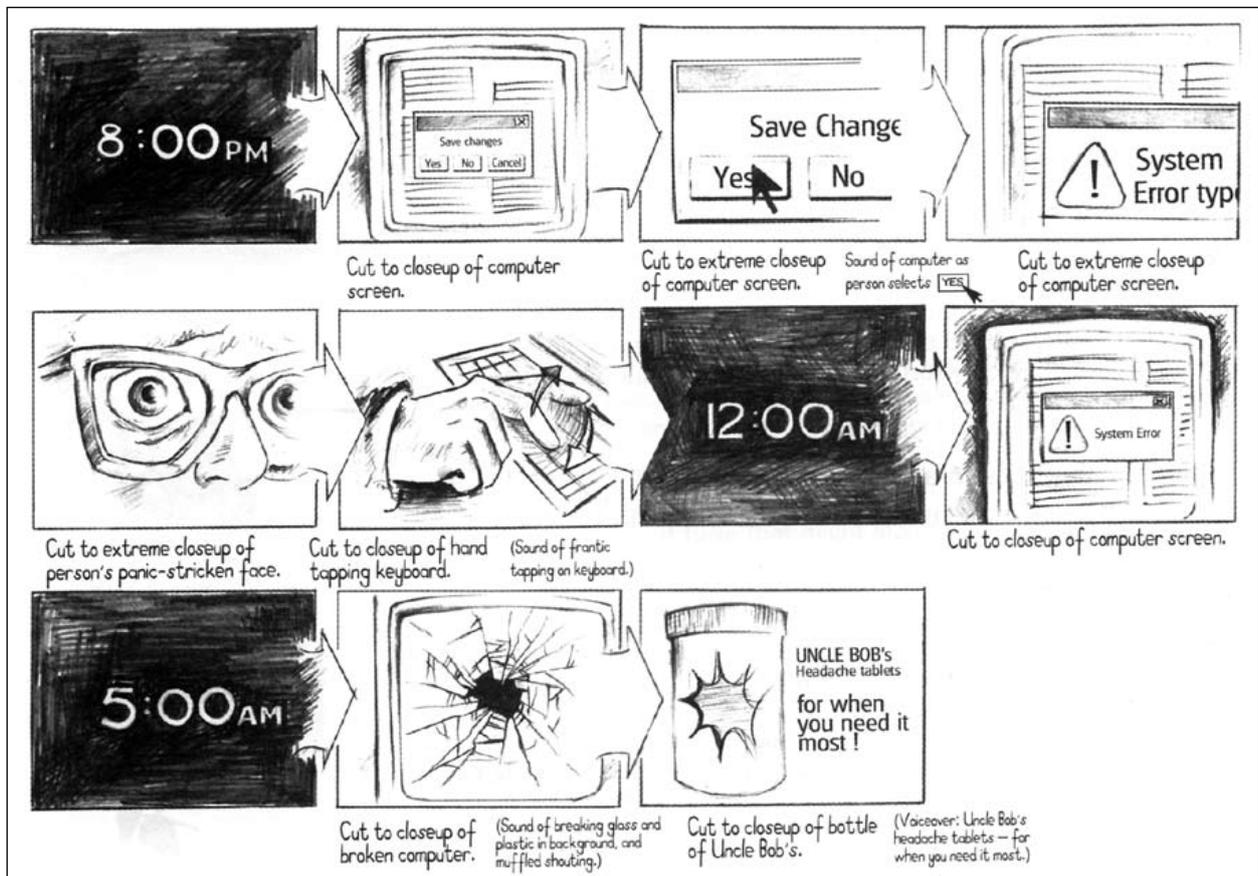
e Hold a discussion about whether, and how much, we might be influenced by the *values* conveyed by today's advertising. We suggest you make this a panel discussion rather than a debate, since the latter form may prevent speakers from changing their minds during the course of the discussion. You may need to provide topics that will help learners identify some of the possible values:
  - Do we weigh up the acceptability of other people in the urban crowd according to whether they are wearing in-fashion designer label clothes?
  - Is it true today that *getting* and *having* are more important than who we are?
  - How does today's advertising make us feel about age and older people?
  - What do advertisements tell us about the nature of adventure?

Using soap operas and game shows to teach critical thinking

Soap operas

As with violence on television (see pages 115-117) I the question of whether the hugely popular soap opera format influences the values of young viewers requires more than a simple answer. Substantial numbers of adolescents and even younger children in South Africa certainly watch this type of series, which was originally designed for the so-called 'housewife' audience (hence the name, derived from the product typically advertised during such programmes).

Soap operas vary from the 'grand' soaps in which the main characters are extremely wealthy, powerful, and impeccably dressed at all times, to the 'neighbourhood' soaps in which viewers can more easily identify with characters like themselves.

You should have spent about 81 hours on this module so far.

South Africa's most popular 'grand' soap is *Generations*. This is so popular that a divorce among characters becomes newspaper news! A 'neighbourhood' soap such as *Isidingo* reflects a mix of people, but also attempts to comment on social issues. *Soul City* is a version of a soap opera designed to educate people about health issues through an ongoing drama.

Reproduced from *The Star*, 'Tonight' section

Reproduced from *The Sowetan*

At one level, virtually every regular viewer can tell you that they know the stories and characters are completely fictitious. However, no other television or radio programme earns the kind of loyalty among viewers, and the concern for what happens to the characters, that soap operas command. Regular viewers seem to get caught up in the lives of the characters in their favourite soaps, and to discuss them with friends almost as if they were 'members of the family' (here 'they' and 'the family' could refer to *either* the viewers and the soap opera families or the characters and the *viewers'* families). This is explicitly reinforced by the voice that introduces one afternoon soap: ' … these are the days of *our* lives'.

There are probably several reasons for this. There is the inevitable rambling plot which unfolds very slowly but ends every day on a note of suspense; the fact that the characters enter the viewer's life every weekday; the emphasis on the family as the core unit of the story (and of society); and the heavily-emphasized, meaning-laden looks (in close-up or in medium shot) which invite the viewer to think of the reason *why* this character is so angry, or why another character slammed the door.

But the fact remains that, although regular soap viewers may criticize characters whom they dislike, and never seriously envy the extremely wealthy lifestyles associated with some soaps, their lives are probably more closely touched by these series than by any other media format. Years ago, the 'Who shot JR (Ewing)?' episode of *Dallas* became an international event and a talking point in homes all over the globe – helped along, of course, by media publicity outside of the series itself.

It would be surprising if this kind of close, daily personal identification with the lives of the fictitious characters did not exert a subtle influence on viewers' values. For this reason alone, but also because of the strong *presence* of soap operas in our everyday world, they provide a fertile ground for planting 'seeds' of media literacy which will enable learners to be aware of the *connotations* of these slowly-unfolding stories – the *assumptions* and *values* that are just beneath the surface.

Here is an activity designed to do exactly that. It is suitable for group work in Grades 11 or 12.

We strongly recommend that you tackle this activity yourself, either in your tutorial group or on your own, *before* presenting it to learners. Spend about 90 minutes on this activity.

ACTIVITY 43

a Record a selection of brief scenes from a selection of soap operas of both South African and overseas origin.

b Start the lesson by asking the class whether they (or members of their families) watch any soap operas. Get them to talk informally about what their favourite soap operas are (if any), why they like them, and so on.

c Play the recorded selection to the class, and ask them to identify which soaps they come from while the worksheet is handed out.

Here is one way to set out the worksheet:

'BRAINWASHED'?

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO TELEVISION SOAP OPERAS

Discuss the following questions in your groups before writing down your own answers in the blocks provided:

Questions	Soap opera 1 Name *e.g. The Bold and the Beautiful*	Soap opera 2 Name	Soap opera 3 Name
1 What soap opera does this extract come from?			
2 What are the *relationships* between the characters in this scene?			
3 What is their *social class* status? Are they wealthy (or apparently wealthy) or working class, for instance?			
4 How many *children* appear in this scene? Do children appear elsewhere in this soap?			
5 Are the characters at *work* in this scene? How are work and the workplace generally depicted in this soap?			
6 Briefly, what gave rise to the situation depicted in this scene? If you don't know, can you work it out?			
7 What *drives* the main characters in this soap to act as they do? Towards what are their energies generally directed?			
8 If aliens out in space were to pick up our television signals while soap operas were being screened, describe the impression they would get of earthlings.			

With activities of this nature, it is Important that teachers playa *mediating* role, both in selecting 'typical' rather than atypical scenes for recording, and in helping learners to move from simple observation of a scene's 'denotative message' (the story as such) to a discussion of the scene's *connotations* (the assumptions and values that underlie the story). The questions above will help sortie of these connotative meanings to emerge.

What should emerge from a discussion of these questions?

• Most soap operas are centred around a family or a few families. Even work- based soaps tend to depict the main characters as a sort of 'family'. However, except for

Saide

some 'neighbourhood' soaps, this does not mean they are characterized by homely 'family values' – the family is often divided by conflicting loyalties, jealousy and struggles for power or money .

· Many soaps depict a somewhat unreal world of wealth in which the working class, if they appear at all, are generally at odds with the wealthy main characters. The first TV soap screened in South Africa – *Rich Man, Poor Man* – typified this. One evil working class character, Falconetti, who is motivated by revenge and jealousy, makes life difficult for everyone in the story. In some South African soaps, such as Isidingo: the Need, a much wider social spectrum is depicted, with characters displaying a mixture of good and bad qualities. These seem to be aimed at a wider audience (in terms of age, gender, colour, language and social class) that wants to identify more closely with the characters on a more realistic level. Here alliances and personal influence regularly cross barriers of colour, language group, gender and social class, and no social 'group' is seen as being automatically the 'underdog'. The underlying 'message' in Isidingo seems to be one of 'normalizing' social relations and relationships in a newly-democratic South Africa.

· The relative unreality of most soaps is underlined by the general absence of children (especially children younger than adolescents). If a child is introduced into the plot, it is generally to serve the purpose of providing an object for adults to fight over, or some similar 'trigger' for plot action. Likewise, because the emphasis in all soaps is on interpersonal drama, work is generally not depicted as a situation in which things are produced and work is done (though the work-based soaps, such as those set in hospitals or high-powered businesses, are sometimes an exception to this).

· Thus, the world as it is presented in many soap operas is one in which adults are free from the demands of work and bringing up young children – free to pursue goals and relationships that are often characterized by family solidarity against the outside world at all costs, the lust for power or wealth, jealousy, revenge, or the (often misguided) desire to 'save' somebody from their own wrong-headedness – these are the typical 'plot-motivators' of most soap operas.

· All of these, when woven together in a series involving many characters and plots, create a 'world' in which the values may be quite severely skewed towards materialism and treating other people purely as a means to achieving one's own desires. And some of the worst 'carriers' of these values - the most manipulative and destructive characters, because they are the ones 'we love to hate' and are thus important to the commercial success of the series - are allowed by the plot to go on and on, month after month, destroying lives without much apparent suffering themselves.

Soaps tend to reflect a world filled with simplistic 'good' and 'bad'. This has strengths and weaknesses. It clarifies value positions clearly. However, it points to the need for teachers to get learners to think beyond this simplistic 'right or wrong' view of the world.

As with all education involving a strong element of values, avoid 'sermonizing' when dealing with such issues (it is always counter-productive in a democratic situation). But create the sort of situation in which the learners discover for themselves the often negative and one-sided assumptions that we come to take for granted in the 'world according to soap'.

Game shows

Game shows are very popular with South African audiences. There are long waiting lists for people to appear on local game show programmes. Cynthia Mniki, from Umtata, decided to get her Grade 9 learners to look a little more closely at some of the game shows currently showing on South African TV channels. Here is the exercise she devised:

ACTIVITY 44

a During the following week, watch three game shows which are broad-cast on television.

b Complete the table below using information from the programme and a TV guide.

Questions	Game show 1 Name *e.g. Win 'n Spin*	Game show 2 Name	Game show 3 Name
1 TV channel, day and time			
2 How would you describe the *audience* at which the show is aimed?			
3 How would you describe the role taken by the presenters?			
4 Describe the relationship between the presenters and the contestants			
5 Were the contestants embarrassed in any way?			
6 Apart from displaying enthusiasm, how does the presenter generate excitement?			
7 What part does *luck* play in the game or contest, and how much scope is there for contestants' skill or other abilities?			
8 What does the *audience* (both the 'studio audience' and viewers at home) contribute to the show's effectiveness?			

Do this activity yourself before you try it with learners. Discuss your findings with other teachers. Spend about one hour *completing the table*. Think about how you would use it with your class.

An alternative to horne viewing and research would be for the teacher to pre-record a selection of game show excerpts, as for the soap opera activity above. The fact-finding should be followed by discussion, either in groups or in the class as a whole. The following questions could shape this discussion:

1 Why do you think people volunteer to go on game shows?
2 Would you ever go on a game show? Why or why not?
3 Do you think game shows have an influence on our values?
4 What do you think ofthe following ideas?

What did we think?

Game shows, like lotteries, scratch cards and slot machines in casinos, have become more popular and numerous as unemployment has increased and many people battle to make ends meet. Competitions and game shows with prizes most people would have found unthinkable became popular during the Great Depression, early in the 20th century. This was especially the case in the United States, where their promise of sudden wealth helped to sustain the 'American Dream', despite chronic unemployment. (The 'American Dream' was that anyone could become prosperous and happy in the United States if they just *worked hard* and used their initiative.)

Not only during the Great Depression, but even now, we find that initiative and hard work are not always enough, and are no guarantee of prosperity or happiness. Even if it were true that anyone can achieve prosperity, it is not possible for *everyone* to achieve prosperity. In a capitalist society like ours, everyone cannot be a company owner, or even an employed and well-paid worker.

Saide

Game shows and gambles always involve a high level of risk ('The money, or the box?'). This emphasis on r*isk for the sake of a prize of cash or consumer goods* strongly reflects (and reinforces) the values of free-market capitalism. Free-market capitalism holds that those who are rewarded in life (with money, and an abundance of desirable consumer goods) are the ones who are willing to undertake risk in the 'marketplace'. It also tends to imply that those who remain *without* wealth and consumer goods are those of us who do not take entrepreneurial risks.

Game shows and gambles are also built on, and sustain, the myth that, if hard work is *not* in fact enough, all we need in life is a 'lucky break' for our 'dreams to come true' (even if the 'lucky break' involves some skill or other quality on our part). The 'dreams' may vary from a 'dream date and holiday with the partner of our dreams' to (more commonly) enough money to set us up for life, or at least for the next month. The fact is, of course, that the world doesn't work that way for the vast majority of people.

What have we learnt about media literacy?

Key learning points

- All media:
  - communicate *messages*;
  - are aimed at specific *audiences*;
  - are *produced* in a particular way, often with considerable planning and effort, to achieve these two ends.

Thus, there is usually a lot more to media messages than 'meets the eye'.

- Therefore, as media educators, we need to show learners:
  - how each medium reports the same event in a different way, and how form and content are closely related in media, so that the overall 'look' of a media product is in the end *part of its message*;
  - how to recognize the *hidden messages* that are carried by the popular media: both the *intended* manipulations and the underlying (often *unconscious*) assumptions and values that are carried by popular media – for instance, the 'news values' that govern the selection and presentation of news;
  - how to distinguish between the *denotation* of media messages, and their *connotations* – the meanings, sometimes stereotyped and sometimes 'engineered' by media producers – that we come to *associate* with the words, sounds and images in those messages;
  - that media messages are *not* direct representations of reality – they are *constructed* by the media makers who 'mediate' reality for the audience, but this is done in such a way that they will seem as natural as possible;
  - that partly because they seem so real and *natural*, and partly because their words and images often perpetuate stereotypes, media messages have considerable power to dull our thinking, and to shape our attitudes and values;
  - that audiences, however, are not entirely passive viewers or listeners – for media messages to 'work', viewers and listeners have to contribute to the construction of their meaning and, knowing this, media makers 'target' us in designing the messages they construct;
  - that the need to make a *profit*, and to influence audiences to buy consumer goods, influences the content and form of media messages-media companies essentially 'sell' an *audience* to advertisers;
  - that media contain *implicit* ideological and value messages, and that they can shape our social and political attitudes.

You should now start Week 15. You should have spent at least 84 hours on this module.

A summative assessment activity

Design a lesson or learning unit that develops learners' critical media literacy by focusing on a media format that we have not analysed in this module, for instance:

- men's magazines;
- the fashion or 'social' pages of lifestyle magazines;

This, again, is a time-consuming but important practical activity. It will help you revise what you have done in Section Five. Spend about six hours on it.

Saide

- television sitcoms;
- popular music programmes;
- police or crime series;
- religious programmes;
- music videos.

a Clearly explain what learning outcomes you intend to achieve. Link these to at least two of the following:
- the MAP framework with which we introduced this section (message, audience, production);
- the set of Key Media Education concepts which added conceptual depth to the basic MAP idea; or
- the distinction between denotation and connotation which we introduced on pages 164-167.

b Ensure that the unit is one that would:
- arouse the interest of learners;
- develop learners' *knowledge* (of critical and media concepts), *skills* (in analysing or 'deconstructing' media messages), and *values* (an awareness of the values underlying the media messages).

c Think of one further criterion – in addition to those mentioned in question b- by which you could judge the success of your lesson. *Either:*
- teach the lesson or unit, and invite a colleague to observe it and help you assess it afterwards; *or*
- assess your own plans for the lesson or unit, and discuss their likely effectiveness with a fellow learner.

d Write up the lesson or unit, and your assessment of it.