CRITICAL LITERACY AND MEDIA VIOLENCE PROJECT

INTERMEDIATE UNIT

INTRODUCTION

This Intermediate Division Media Unit is designed to assist teachers in delivering a program that will help students develop their Critical Literacy skills for dealing with violence in the media. The students in Grades seven and eight are of an age where they have very strong opinions of their own. They have reached a level of maturity where their opinions may differ from those of their parents and teachers, and it is unlikely that lecturing them or setting down rules will change their minds. What is needed to influence or change their attitudes and behaviours is open dialogue and discussion, and further education about topics crucial to their healthy development. The Critical Literacy skills that are developed as a result of these discussions are essential if these young people are to recognize that violence is not acceptable, and that they have choices about how to behave.

The lessons in this unit begin with an exploration of the fact that different perspectives exist when discussing media violence. Students are encouraged to consider who might feel differently than they do, and why. In the process of this study, the students will clarify their own values and opinions, and perhaps gain insight into differing points of view. This topic recurs throughout the lessons that follow, as students frequently are asked to consider other people's points of view.

In order to become more sophisticated and knowledgeable consumers, students are led to examine the conventions used in various types of media. In lessons two and three, they explore comics and graphic novels. They look at how the writer and illustrator communicate with the audience, and the degree of violence used in these media forms. In lessons four and five, the conventions of television newscasts are examined. Students discuss the process behind each news story of selecting details, and the ways in which this might create an inaccurate view of reality. They then write their own

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

newscasts, and experience first-hand this selection process. Lessons six and seven look at public service announcements, and connect these to the topic of bullying. Students again explore the idea of "target audiences," and the methods used to appeal to a specific group. They then create their own PSAs. Lesson eight examines violence in sports, and asks how the attitudes and behaviours of the players and fans can affect the viewers. Lesson nine looks at the rating system used for video games, and asks students to discuss the ratings of games they know, and the appropriateness of these ratings.

The final lesson in this unit is a culminating activity that asks the students to use all the knowledge of media conventions and messages they have acquired. Media Violence is put on trial, and students take roles as defendants, prosecutors, judge, and jury members. They must consider a variety of perspectives and opinions when preparing their testimony, and must be thoughtful and insightful to render a verdict in the trial.

The lessons of this unit may be used individually, or in their entirety. Each one encourages the students to question what they think and accept, and to become more knowledgeable and critical consumers of media.

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Lesson 1

The Effects of Media Violence:
Examining Multiple Perspectives

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Audience Responses
Grade 7 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences (e.g., with respect to gender, age, nationality, ability/disability, income level) might have different responses to a variety of media texts (messages in chat rooms, television broadcasts of international news stories, music, documentaries, clothing).*
Grade 8 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences (e.g., with respect to gender, age, culture, race, income level) might have different responses to a variety of media texts (e.g. predict how a member of a particular age/gender/ethnocultural/socio-economic group might react to a controversial article in a print or online news magazine and give reasons for their prediction).*

Key Concept:
- *Audiences negotiate meaning in media messages.*

Grade 7-8 students are very particular about the media they use and are actively involved in determining what meaning or messages they will take away from media texts. Students' personal experiences and prior knowledge about the movies they watch, the video games they play or the music they listen to can affect their interpretation of the media.   Other factors, such as the family and cultural background and peer group influences, also may contribute to how students understand the violent content in the media they use.

A key question to consider:
- Based on their own and others' experiences and backgrounds, how might different people understand and react to the issue of media violence?

Introduction/Overview

In this introductory lesson, students critically examine and respond to a variety of perspectives on the effects of media violence. This lesson allows students to

understand how different people might react and respond to different media texts that contain violent content. This is a useful starting point with Grade 7-8 students since they most likely are having some of these same discussions at home with family and friends regarding the television they view, and the music and games they enjoy. Allowing students to examine other "audiences'" understandings, criticisms and possible actions towards media violence is a useful way for students to begin to understand their own ideas and opinions about media violence.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Write the definition of media violence (see Important Terminology/Background section below) on the board. Discuss the definition and have students share some examples of media texts that depict violent content. Have students discuss some of their personal experiences related to the violent media they use, and some of the objections their parents, guardians or teachers may have.

2. Hand out The Effects of Media Violence: Examining Multiple Perspectives (Student Handout 1.1). Divide the class into 5 groups and assign each group one of the five perspectives on the effects of media violence.

3. Each group will read and react to the perspective by answering the following questions: Who or what groups of people might agree with this perspective? Who would not agree with this? What media texts might people identify as examples of this perspective?

4. Have each group document their discussion on chart paper, and then present their "perspective" and their "analysis" to the rest of the class.

5. Each student will then pick one perspective that s/he disagrees with, and will develop a series of questions s/he might ask an individual or group of experts who represent that perspective. Have students document their thinking by answering the following questions in their journals:

   - What perspective did you pick?
   - Who or what groups of people would agree with the statement?
   - Who would disagree?
   - Why?
   - What are some examples of media texts that are related?
   - What questions might you ask a group of people who agree or disagree with the statement?

Activism

Students could write a letter to the group or individual represented in their journal response from Step 5. The goal of writing this letter would be for students to ask pertinent questions in order to gain further understanding of the many sides of the issue of media violence.

As a school-wide activity, have the students visit the other classrooms and grades to ask questions about the kinds of media violence these students might be exposed to.

The class could conduct surveys to share at the next parent council meeting. This may also help school parent councils decide on the kind of support parents might need in order to understand this issue.

Assessment Opportunities

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 1.2)
Rubric for Journal Response (Student Handout 1.3)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite members of the community to visit the class to share their experiences, concerns and ideas related to media violence (a victim of violence, police officer, health professional, film producer, magazine editor etc.). Visit advocacy websites that promote this perspective.

Cross Curricular Connections

Grade 7 Oral Language
Grade 7 History and Current Events
Grade 8 Oral Language
Grade 8 History and Current Events

Materials and Resources

- Chart paper (and markers – optional)
- Student Handout 1.1
- Student Handout 1.2
- Student Handout 1.3

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Definition of Media Violence: Violence is behaviour that is abusive, threatening or hurtful. It may take a variety of forms, including physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual or regulatory (restrictions, rules, laws) methods and abuses. Media images and messages, regardless of their sources, that contain this kind of content are examples of Media Violence.

The Effects of Media Violence:
Examining Multiple Perspectives

1) *Learning of aggressive behaviors and attitudes*

Media violence may not make children violent, but it may teach them that violence is a normal way of solving problems. Some people also may argue that some media violence is presented without exploring real-life consequences.

2) *Desensitization to violence*

Some media violence may shock viewers initially, but they eventually become used to it. Heavy viewers of media violence may be less shocked by real-life violence.

3) *Fear of being victimized by violence*

Constant exposure to violence in the media may lead people to believe that violence is everywhere and that they should be afraid.

4) *Media violence as storytelling*

Some people may argue that children can recognize the difference between real violence and the violence that is part of telling a story. They say it's not real; it's just a story.

5) *Media violence as play*

Some media forms may allow children to explore their feelings of power, loneliness, and fear through combat and destruction.

(Television and Children: WAC Watching, IAT Bad, WYC Do)

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Student Name:_____ Date:_____	
During Group Discussions:	Examples of my behaviour:
❑ I participate actively in the group.	
❑ I listen carefully.	
❑ I ask questions.	
❑ I connect my ideas to the comments of others.	
❑ I support opinions with evidence.	
I can improve my group discussion skills by doing the following things:	

(Adapted from: A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 2)

Rubric for Journal Response

Level	Criteria
4 (80-100%)	▪ Complete entry that addresses several questions related to the perspective ▪ Entry demonstrates a thorough understanding of the perspective and lists several examples of related media texts ▪ Expresses keen insight about the social implications and significance of the topic ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with no visible spelling, grammatical or structural errors.
3 (70-79%)	▪ Nearly complete entry that addresses most questions related to the perspective ▪ Entry demonstrates a good understanding of the perspective and lists a few examples of related media texts ▪ Expresses insight about the social implications and significance of the topic ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with limited errors.
2 (60-69%)	▪ Entry is only partially complete ▪ Some evidence of insight into the perspective and lists one media example ▪ Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary ▪ Opinions and ideas are at times unclear due to grammatical, spelling and/or structural errors.
1 (50-59%)	▪ Entry is barely complete ▪ Little evidence of insight into a perspective ▪ Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary ▪ Opinions and ideas are not expressed clearly or effectively.
NI (below 50%)	▪ Entry is incomplete ▪ Little or no effort has been made to respond or make connections to the text or ideas ▪ Insufficient details to demonstrate an understanding of the text/topic or media concepts.
Level	Comments:

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Lesson 2

The Representation of Violence in Comics and Graphic Novels:
Analysing the Codes and Conventions

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES
Audience Responses
Grade 7 and 8: 2.1
- *Explain how individual elements of various media forms combine to create, reinforce, and/or enhance meaning.*

Grade 7 and 8: 2.2
- *Identify the conventions and techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.*

Key Concept:
- *Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions and aesthetics.*

Introduction/Overview

Comics, and recently, graphic novels are very popular with Grade 7-8 students. Many students have a prior knowledge of comics and are easily drawn to the visual, cultural and narrative form of the graphic novel. These texts can help students build reading skills such as inferring, since readers must rely on pictures and limited text to understand the story being told. Predicting, making connections, asking questions and using text features are all reading strategies that proficient readers must use to decode both the dialogue and illustrations. Lines that indicate movement, shading, facial expressions and overall mood are the elements that students must read when trying to understand the visual elements of a comic or graphic novel. The speech bubble style, the size and style of font are the important conventions that readers also must integrate with the other visual elements in order to gain further understanding and appreciation of the form.

This lesson will focus on the text features of comics and graphic novels, and the techniques used to appeal to the audience.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. **What is a comic/graphic novel**? Display the comic books and graphic novels around the classroom and/or on the students' desks, which have been arranged in small groups or stations. Using the strategy *The Book Walk, have* students browse each selection in order to understand and track the codes and conventions used in these texts. Have groups of students read book selections at each station for approximately 10 minutes before they rotate to the next group of books.

   Note: Some students may benefit from the teacher giving examples of one or two codes and conventions from a graphic novel before the Book Walk begins.

2. Using Analysing the Conventions in Graphic Novels and Comics (Student Handout 2.1), have students document their observations.

3. Write the definition of a graphic novel on the board:
   - "*A book-length narrative that uses a combination of words and art, and often presented in comic book style*"

4. Invite students to provide examples from their graphic organizers that support the idea that it is the combination of words and art that help the reader understand the meaning of this text form.

5. Have students reflect on their learning by completing 3-2-1 Self-Reflection (Student Handout 2.2).

6. Using the responses from Analysing the Conventions in Graphic Novels and Comics (Student Handout 2.1), have students discuss how violence is represented in some of the graphic novels they investigated during the Book Walk.

7. Some of the following questions may help guide the discussion:

   - Evaluate the use of violence in this text. How important is violence in this story? How can you tell?
   - How is "good versus evil" represented in some of these texts? How do the codes and conventions work to create meaning? Provide examples.
   - What other values are represented?
   - How could graphic novels be used to promote fairness?

8. Return to the quotations sheet from the first lesson– The Effects of Media Violence: Examining Multiple Perspectives (Student Handout 1.1). Consider the statements made about media violence.

   - Do you think some people would be concerned about the violence depicted in comic books or graphic novels?
   - Why or why not?

- Do any of the statements support your answer?
- Explain.
- Do you think the comic book and graphic novel formats influence how people might feel about the violence depicted?

Activism

As a **school-wide activity**, invite the older students to read and discuss comics and graphic novels with students in a younger grade.

As reading buddies, younger students could discuss with an older student the themes of good versus evil in some of these texts.

Assessment Opportunities

Analysing the Conventions in Graphic Novels and Comics (Student Handout 2.1)
3-2-1 Self-Reflection (Student Handout 2.2)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Have students consider the following questions:
Who is the target audience for graphic novels?
Do some graphic novels appeal more to males than females? Why?
How are they different?
How is the visual representation of violence different?

Cross Curricular Connections

History
Geography
Art
Any subject area that might use comics to support the content and motivate all learners in the classroom

Materials and Resources

- A large selection of graphic novels/comics (from the school library, or students could bring their own copies)
- Student Handout 2.1
- Student Handout 2.2

Links/Resources

www.readwritethink.org/materials/comic/comicdefinitions-text.pdf

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, Scott McLeod, 1993.

Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels, Scott McLeod, 1993.

Analysing the Conventions in Graphic Novels and Comics

Browse through a selection of graphic novels/comics to investigate some of the conventions used by the creators to represent visually mood, characterization and action. Provide an example in the second column. Then in the third column, reflect how these conventions might represent violence.

Definition of the Convention	Example	How is this convention used to visually represent violence?
Balloons: These are objects that are used to contain the dialogue that the characters in the comic speak. Balloons are frequently rounded, but can take many shapes, including rectangular. They typically have smooth edges, but can also have jagged or irregular edges.	HELP!!	The jagged edges indicate a voice that is afraid and has confronted some danger.
Emanata: These are text or icons that represent what's going on in the character's head. Emanata are different from motion or speed lines, which indicate that a character is moving.		
Sound Effects: These are words that indicate a sound that accompanies the comic panel.		
Close-ups: These are images that are shown in a large view. Frequently, close-ups focus on a character's face, but they can be used to highlight anything. They provide a closer look.		

Definition of the Convention	Example	How is this convention used to visually represent violence?
Extreme Close-ups: These images are shown in very large view, often focusing on a small portion of a larger object or character. They provide a very close look at a key detail.		
Longshots: These are images that show objects fully, from top to bottom. When a longshot focuses on a character, the panel shows the character from head to toe. Readers can see the character's full body.		
Fonts: These are the styles of print used. They appear in the balloons, emanata, sound effects, and the texts or stories that appear in the panels.		
Lines that show movement: These appear around characters and objects.		
Other: Add any other details you notice, that are not included in this list.		

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3-2-1 Self-Reflection

Student Name:_____ Date:_____

List **three** aspects of these graphic novels/comic books you find enjoyable.

Describe **two** strategies that helped you read a graphic novel/comic book.

What **one** question do you still have about graphic novels and comic books?

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Lesson 3

The Representation of Violence in Comics and Graphic Novels:
A Critical Analysis

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES
Audience Responses
Grade 7 and 8: 2.2
- *Identify the conventions and techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS
Purpose and Audience
Grade 7 and 8: 3.1
- *Explain why they have chosen the topic for a media text they plan to create, and identify challenges they may face in engaging and/or influencing their audience.*

Key Concept:
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Introduction/Overview

The reading of graphic novels is a complex and interactive process and the reader must use a variety of skills, strategies and roles in order to make meaning. This lesson will focus on an approach offered by Peter Freebody and Allan Luke in their "four resources model" (2003). This model allows students to focus their discussion on questions that relate to the roles of the literate learner. To be literate, students must learn to make meaning from texts, to break the "code" of texts, to use texts functionally, and to analyse and critically evaluate them. Students will be encouraged to engage in a "deep" reading of a short text in order to understand the violent content contained within the narrative structure of a graphic novel.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. **Small Group Work**: Organize the students into groups of four. Using Role Cards for Group Discussion (Student Handout 3.1), assign each group member a different role from the four roles described.

2. Assign each group a different graphic novel or comic book to analyse. Members of each group will be analysing the same text in order to discuss the questions from each of their role cards. Each group also will focus the analysis on a small section of the text (no more than a few pages). Students will need a few minutes to decide on a section of the text that might be suitable for their group to analyse.

3. Allow time for individual students to reflect and jot down some examples that might answer some of the questions from their role cards.

4. Each group member discusses, in turn, the questions from the role card. Two examples that connect to two questions from each role card should be documented on chart paper.

5. Each group presents their text and analyses to the rest of the class.

Activism

Using the responses generated from Role Cards: For Group Discussion (Student Handout 3.1), have students discuss how violence is represented in some of the graphic novels they investigated during their discussion groups.

Have students arrange a visit, a telephone conversation or e-mail inquiry to a bookstore that specializes in and/or sells a wide range of graphic novels and comic books, in order to research how this kind of text might be used to promote such issues as fairness, anti-bullying, or inclusion. As a class, or small group, brainstorm a list of questions that could be asked of the professionals who sell and have a high degree of knowledge about this media form.

As a **school-wide activity**, have students display their graphic novel and comic book reviews in the library or hallway. Have students recommend titles to others (i.e. "If you like xxx video game, then you will really enjoy this book!").

Assessment Opportunities

3-2-1 Reflection Strategy (Student Handout 3.2)
Teacher Observation of Group Work skills or presentations

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Have students consider the following options to complete and present:
Select one event from a graphic novel of choice. Write and/or perform an alternative version of the event depicted in the novel.

Create two illustrations. One will illustrate the setting from a graphic novel of your choice and the other will illustrate an alternative setting. Write a paragraph describing how this change might affect the plot.

Suggest a published story that might work well as a graphic novel or comic book. Write a paragraph that describes the reasons why this story might be effective in an alternative form.

Cross Curricular Connections

History
Geography
Art
Any subject area that might use graphic novels and/or comics to support the content and motivate all learners in the classroom

Materials and Resources

- A large selection of graphic novels/comics (from the school library, or students could bring their own copies)
- Student Handout 3.1
- Student Handout 3.2

Links/Resources

Freebody, P. and Luke, A. (2003). Literacy as engaging with new forms of Life: The "four roles" model. In G. Bull and M. Anstey (eds.), *The Literacy Lexicon* (2nd Ed., pp. 52-57). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.

Literacy for Learning: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario.

Role Cards

For Group Discussion

CODE BREAKER *How do I read this text?*	TEXT USER *What do I do with this text?*
- How do I read a graphic novel? - What words are interesting, difficult or tricky? How did I work them out? - What different reading strategies did I use to decode this text? - Are the pictures close ups, mid or long shots? What effect do these shots have? - Are the pictures high angle or low angle? What effect do these angles have? - Were there any word pictures, e.g. similes and metaphors? How did I work them out? - How do the illustrations help me understand the story? - How is violence illustrated or inferred in this short selection of text?	- What are the characteristics of a graphic novel? - What is the purpose of this text? - Who would read a text like this? Why? - How is the language and form the same/ different from other similar texts I have read? - Could the text help solve a real life problem? Why/why not? - If I were going to put this graphic novel on a web page, how would it be different to the print version? - How could I use these ideas from a graphic novel in a poem, story, play, advertisement, report, brochure or poster? - How would the language and structure change?
MEANING MAKER *What does this text mean to me?*	TEXT ANALYST *What is this text trying to make me believe and do?*
- What does the title/cover suggest that the text is about? - What might happen next? What words or phrases give this idea? - What are the characters thinking and feeling? How do I know? - What message is the author presenting? - What are the main ideas presented? - What do the pictures (captions, illustrations) tell me? - Do they fit in with the text and do they provide more information? - What did I feel as I read this part? - How is violence represented (i.e., facial expressions, weaponry, physical stance)?	- Why do I think the author chose this title? - Suggest why the author chose particular words and phrases. - Are there stereotypes in this graphic novel? - Who does this graphic novel represent? - Who does the text reject or silence? - Who has power? How do I know? - What would the story be like if the main characters were girls rather than boys, and vice versa? Consider different race and cultural backgrounds too. - How would the text be different if told from another point of view? - How would the text be different if told in another time or place, e.g., 1900 or 2100?

(Based on the Four Roles/Resources of the Reader) adapted from:
Literacy for Learning: the Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy in Grades 4 to 6 in Ontario)

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

3-2-1 Self-Reflection

Student Name:_____ Date:_____

List **three** aspects of these graphic novels/comic books you find enjoyable.

Describe **two** strategies that helped you read a graphic novel/comic book.

What **one** question do you still have about graphic novels and comic books?

Lesson 4

Violence in Television News:
The Reporting of Crime

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Purpose and Audience
Grade 7 and 8 1.2
- *Interpret increasingly complex or difficult media texts, using overt and implied messages as evidence for their interpretations.*

Audience Responses
Grade 7 and 8 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences might have different responses to a variety of media texts.*

Key Concepts:
- *Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions, and aesthetics.*
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Television news reporting is a medium, which, like other television programs, must compete for viewers. Time limitations make it necessary for news stories and events to be simplified, without a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the event. Many news stories related to crime are episodic, and rarely are reflective of the local community; therefore, they offer an inaccurate picture of reality.

Key question to consider:
- *What information about violence does television news present?*

Introduction/Overview

This lesson involves students in a critical examination of the construction of a television newscast, in order to understand the constraints and the challenges related to the reporting of crime. Students will be asked to view and respond to a number of newscasts in order to identify the characteristics of a newscast, as well as to analyse how language and visuals are used to influence the audience's interpretation of messages.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Show a selection of television news programs and have students focus their viewing on the following questions: Based on the news programs viewed, what kinds of stories are presented? How is the newscast designed or "constructed"? What are the key ingredients that go into a news program? What kinds of events or stories are considered "news" on television? How is conflict represented or depicted in the news? Describe the techniques used to report on conflict or violence. Discuss these questions as a class.

2. Have the class work in small groups to review the Group Tracking Sheet: Television Newscast (Student Handout 4.1). Discuss any viewing strategies they might use to track the required information.

3. After viewing the newscasts, ensure the groups have time to discuss their observations, and to complete their Group Tracking Sheet. Offer students the opportunity to read and then to discuss their ideas related to the prompts on Journal Response (Student Handout 4.2). Instruct students to respond in writing to one of the question prompts.

Activism

Students could generate a list of ideas that might help television viewers consider an alternative perspective on one of the crime stories reported (i.e. a doctor who shares recent statistics on the actual number of deaths related to the crime, or a police officer sharing statistics on the type of crime depicted).

What community resources are available for violence prevention? Research this.

In their reports, how could a television newscast include information on ways the viewer could help reduce and prevent violence in their community?   Are these kinds of stories currently making the news?

As a **school-wide activity,** invite a member of the police department into your school or parent council meeting. How can members of the school and community help in crime prevention?

Assessment Opportunities

Group Tracking Sheet: Television Newscast (Student Handout 4.1)
Journal Response (Student Handout 4.2)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

How is television journalism different than other forms (i.e., print, radio, on-line)?
What are the differences in the ways these sources cover an event? What do the
differences tell you about each news source? Do the newspaper and the television
newscast use the same lead story? Why or why not? Do the different news sources
provide different information on the same topic? Do they take a different position or
perspective?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language and Writing
Current Events
Grade 8 History

Materials and Resources

- Pre-recorded local news television programs (in accordance with copyright
  regulations)
- Student Handout 4.1
- Student Handout 4.2

Group Tracking Sheet

Television Newscast

Newscast: _____   Date: _____

Length of clip/segment: _____   Total number of stories: _____   Total number of stories relating to crime: _____

Story Event/Issue Order in newscast	Length	People Represented (age, gender, race, etc.)	Description of visuals: Who or what is shown? How are they shown? (camera angles, types of shots, etc.)	Was violence part of this story? If so, what kind of violence? Other notes…..

What is the overall impact of the story on the viewer? What is the impact of the total newscast? What parts of the story and newscast contribute to this?

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Journal Response

Choose one or two of the following questions to consider for a written journal response:

1. What does it mean to be objective? Can television news be objective? Use information from your tracking sheet to support your answer.

2. What effect do violence and graphic images in the news have on you?

3. Based on the information from your tracking sheet and the news reports in today's newspaper, predict the top six stories that might appear during this evening's television newscast. Explain your reasons for these choices.

4. What might be some of the challenges that news reporters and news producers encounter when reporting on violent incidents or events?

5. What are some of the similarities between a newscast and other television programs?

6. Based on the information from your tracking sheet above, how could you explain to someone that news stories – like all media texts – are "constructed"?

Lesson 5

Violence in Television News: Writing the Script

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations
CREATING MEDIA TEXTS
Audience Responses
Grade 7 And 8 3.4
 ▪ *Produce a variety of media texts of some technical complexity for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.*

REFLECTING ON MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS AND STRATEGIES
Metacognition
Grade 7 and 8 1.4
 ▪ *Identify what strategies they found most helpful in making sense of and creating media texts, and explain how these and other strategies can help them improve as media viewers/listeners/producers.*

Key Concept:
 ▪ *All media are constructions.*
 ▪ *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*

Television news reporting is a construction of reality and reflective of many decisions and determining factors. News reports also reflect the biases, beliefs and value messages of their producers.

Key questions to consider:
 ▪ *How well have we constructed this news report and how well does it represent reality?*
 ▪ *What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in our news report? Who or what is omitted?*
 ▪ *What techniques are used in the construction of the news report and what are their effects?*

Introduction/Overview

This lesson builds on the ideas and concepts presented in Lesson 4 by providing the opportunity for students to produce the script for a television news report, based on available information, including interviews with witnesses and family members. Students will be challenged to make some important decisions around the selection of

facts and film footage, in order to present a very short and balanced news report about a violent crime in the community.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Discuss the following question: How do the time constraints in television newscasts affect the news we watch? Student responses could be documented on the board, using a web organizer.

2. Have students reflect on the content of the television newscast viewed in the previous lesson by discussing the following questions:

   What are the key ingredients—or the codes and conventions—in the television news report? How do these ingredients affect the impression we receive of the story? (Consider sound, visuals, camera work, and editing.)

   What perspectives or voices are missing from some of the news reports? It may be useful to isolate one particular news report in order for students to generate specific examples.

   How can a 30 second news report that involves violent content be representative of many perspectives and be fair, informative and balanced? Students could start brainstorming their ideas in small groups.

3. Have students write the script for a television news report based on the available information provided on Writing the Script for a Television News Report (Student Handout 5.1). Students will use Using a Storyboard to Write the Script for a Television news Report (Student Handout 5.2) to organize their material. The challenge for students will be to keep their script within a 30 second time frame.

Activism

Invite a television journalist to visit your classroom and have the students prepare a list of questions related to the challenges and constraints of news reporting. If a class visit cannot be arranged, the class could generate an e-mail that could be forwarded to a local news station for feedback.

News is an account of events that interest and concern the public. What are some of the events that might be considered news in your school?

As a *school-wide activity*, challenge the classes to use what they have learned about television news reporting, by providing a 15 second news report about an event in their own classrooms that could be reported during the morning announcements.

Assessment Opportunities

Small group brainstorming report
Group news report scripts
Peer evaluation of news report scripts and storyboards

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could re-write/format/present their television news reports into a different medium (i.e., newspaper article, on-line news story, a blog, a radio news story). A key question for students to consider: How does a different form affect the way the news report is written? Why? What biases exist within the different forms?   Which news medium do you prefer? Why?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language and Writing
History and Current Events

Materials and Resources

- Pre-recorded local news television programs (in accordance with copyright regulations)
- Student Handout 5.1
- Student Handout 5.2

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Television news reports are brief, compelling and dramatic. Since these reports are seldom over 30 seconds, this allows a 15 minute broadcast to report about 25 stories in about 1800 words. The camera becomes the window to much information about our world, and therefore it becomes important for students to examine critically the construction and constraints in news reporting.

Writing the Script for a Television News Report

You are asked to write the script for a television news report on an event at a local high school. You have available the interviews and film footage described below. You and your partner must decide what to include, and how to use these sources of information to complete a 30 second news report.

1. An interview with Principal Stubitsch:

    I was supervising a basketball game when a student rushed in to tell me that a fight had started on the playground. When I got to the playground, I found several injured students, and some who were yelling at each other and throwing bottles and rocks at each other. I recognized the students, and called them by name, but they ran away. I cannot reveal their names.

2. Film footage:

    - an ambulance leaving the scene

    - angry students yelling at the police officers

    - students standing around in groups talking

    - blood stains on tarmac

    - broken glass

3. Interviews with:

    ❑ A very distraught mother who is crying. She is too overcome to talk.

    ❑ A father who says, "This has been brewing for a long time! The school should have done something about it a long time ago!"

    ❑ A teacher who says, "I don't understand. These are good kids."

    ❑ A caretaker who says, "I clean up this playground twice a week, but there are always more bottles lying around. I can't do any more."

    ❑ A dog walker who says, "I've seen this happen before. This is gang-related. There's graffiti all over the neighborhood. When is the city going to do something about that?"

Using a Storyboard to Write the Script for a
Television News Report

Using the information provided on "Writing the Script for a Television News Report," write a script and draw up a 6-frame storyboard for a television news report.

- Remember in your news report to cover the questions of – Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?

- Think about what images you will focus on in your news footage for this event (you can use stick-figure drawings). What effect do your choices have on the meaning of the story?

- You may like to start with a shot of the anchor desk and broadcaster.

- Include the dialogue below each visual.

Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3

Frame 4	Frame 5	Frame 6

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Lesson 6

Gender Differences in the Representation of Bullying

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Purpose and Audience
Grade 7/ 8 1.2
- *Interpret increasingly complex or difficult media texts, using overt and implied messages as evidence for their interpretations.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES
Form
Grade 7 / 8 2.1
- *Explain how individual elements of various media forms combine to create, reinforce, and/or enhance meaning.*

Key Concepts
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*
- *Each medium has its own language, style, form, techniques, conventions, and aesthetics.*

Bullying can take many forms, including physical, social and emotional abuse. Some of the information available to our Grade 7-8 students about this issue is through Public Service Announcements both on television and radio. Since these messages are aired to a large audience, the social and political implications can be significant.

Key questions to consider:
- *What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in these PSAs about bullying?*
- *Who or what point of view is omitted?*
- *What techniques are used to explore the issue and how effective are the techniques in supporting the message of the PSA?*

Introduction/Overview

The focus of this lesson is the viewing of two public service announcements produced by the Concerned Children's Advertisers. These PSAs are aimed at youth and deal with youth issues. Both PSAs, "Words Hurt" and " Walk Away," deal with the issue of

bullying. They provide the opportunity for students to examine critically the differences between how boys and girls bully, and how these differences also are represented in media texts. Students also will consider the multiple perspectives in understanding the issue of bullying, and will examine critically this question: Does this PSA convey an effective message regarding physical/social/emotional violence?

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. **Before Viewing**: Discuss with the students their responses to the following questions: What are public service announcements? How are they different from commercials? Who makes them? Why? How do PSAs help the community? How might PSAs directed at boys be different than those directed at girls?

2. **During Viewing**: "Words Hurt"
   As the class watches this PSA, have the students track the different ways that the girl is bullied by others, and how it makes her feel. Have students also track how non-verbal communication is represented. Consider these other questions while viewing:
   - Who is the leader in the group of girls, and how do you know?
   - Whose perspective does this PSA represent?
   - What special effects were used in the production of this PSA? Suggest some ways that these were achieved.
   - What effect did they have on the message of the PSA?

3. **During Viewing**: "Walk Away"
   As the class watches this PSA, have the students watch the boy's facial expressions. How do these change, and how does this enhance the message of the PSA? Consider these other questions while viewing:
   - How does the boy show the viewer he is a bully?
   - How does the setting and use of camera angles enhance the impact of the PSA?
   - Who has power and how does that change?
   - How does camera distance enhance the message of the PSA?
   - Whose perspective does this PSA represent?

4. **After Viewing**:
   The following discussion prompts may be used to deconstruct each PSA individually, or as a combined discussion that might focus on the similarities and differences between the two PSAs:
   - Who is the target audience for each PSA?
   - Are the bullying issues presented in "Words Hurt" relevant to boys?
   - Are the bullying issues presented in "Walk Away" relevant to girls? Why or why not?

- How are the two PSAs different in terms of the point of view or perspective they represent?
- Are there perspectives missing from each of the PSAs? If so, whose?

5. **Journal Reflection**: Students complete Viewing Skills Reflection (Student Handout 6.1)

Activism

Students could review slowly the PSAs, and choose stills that would make effective posters. Students also could write slogans to enhance the message of their selected images.

As a school-wide activity, posters could be displayed around the school, local community centres and medical centres. If posters are created electronically (i.e. -in the form of an e-card), these could be posted in the "gallery" section of a school's website.

Assessment Opportunities

Viewing Skills Reflection (Student Handout 6.1)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students could re-write the copy of each PSA for a younger audience. What does bullying look like for younger children? How could you find out? Are there gender differences? Students also could write the copy of a PSA that deals with the issue of cyber-bullying. Are there gender differences with cyber-bullying?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language and Writing
Health and Current Events

Materials and Resources

- CCA's anti-bullying commercials, "Walk Away" and "Words Hurt", aim to empower bully bystanders or the "silent majority" who might stand and watch bullying. These commercials provide the viewers with practical tools and information to start making a difference. Visit the website for the viewing of the two PSAs and for further lesson plans and instructional support for the use of these PSAs in the elementary classroom.
  http://www.cca-kids.ca/tvandme/english/educators/intermed_bully.html
- Student Handout 6.1 – Viewing Skills Reflection

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Bullying can take many forms:

- *Physical* – hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property

- *Verbal* – name calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist, or homophobic comments

- *Social* – excluding others from a group or spreading gossip or rumours about them

- *Electronic (cyber-bullying)* – spreading rumours and hurtful comments through the use of e-mail, cell phones, and text messaging

For additional information visit the Ministry of Education website at
www.edu.gov.on.ca

Viewing Skills Reflection

Student Name:_____ Date:_____

Codes and Conventions that helped me understand the PSAs	Examples from the PSA and the effect
❑ Camera angles	
❑ Camera distance	
❑ A powerful image	
❑ Sound	
❑ Editing ❑ Special Effects	

One connection I made…

One question I have…

How will these codes and conventions help me produce my own PSA?

Lesson 7

The Representation of Bullying: Planning a PSA

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Production Perspectives
Grade 7/ 8 1.6
- *Identify who produces various media texts and determine the commercial, ideological, political, cultural, and/or artistic interests or perspectives that the texts may involve.*

CREATING MEDIA TEXTS
Form
Grade 7 / 8 3.2
- *Identify an appropriate form to suit the specific purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create.*
Producing Media Texts
Grade 7/8 3.4
- *Produce a variety of media texts of some technical complexity for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.*

Key Concept
- *All media are constructions.*
- *The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).*

The issue of bullying can be a personal issue with some Grade 7-8 students. While it is important to offer opportunities for our students to examine critically a variety of media texts that educate students on the effects of bullying, it is equally important to engage students in the production of anti-bullying messages. When students become producers of their own media messages, then they become aware of the many decisions that are required to construct a message for a specific target audience.

Key questions to consider:
What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in these PSAs about bullying? Who or what is omitted?
What is the message of this PSA and how well does it represent reality?
Who is the audience?
How effectively does the PSA target its audience?

Introduction/Overview

This lesson focuses on the production of a Public Service Announcement that deals with the issue of bullying. Students will be required to use their knowledge from the previous lesson about the codes and conventions of PSAs to address from multiple perspectives a similar bullying issue. Once students have chosen a message, they then will decide on the form and the audience. Another goal for this lesson is to explore the thinking and collaboration needed to address the following question: What will our next steps be to reduce the incidents of bullying? Consider what is needed from individuals, the school and the members of this community.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Discuss as a class: Were the PSAs "Words Hurt" and "Walk Away" violent? What do these PSAs illustrate about the uses of violence? Are the PSAs effective? Do you think they would influence the intended audience?

2. Re-view the two PSAs: What other perspectives could these PSAs represent? For example "Words Hurt" is told from the victim's perspective. How would the content have to change if it were from the bully's point of view, or from the point of view of one of the bystanders? Review the "Walk Away" PSA, and discuss how it might be different if it were represented from the perspective of the bully himself.

3. Ask students to develop a message about a bullying issue that they believe is important for a particular audience, and decide on the perspective they wish to present. Will it represent the victim, the bully or the bystander's point of view? Who else might be included? Individually, or in small groups, have students brainstorm their ideas for this 30 second PSA.

4. Have students complete a script for their message, and a list of technical strategies that would enhance the meaning of the PSA (e.g. camera angles, types of shots, use of graphics, music). Students could use Technical Terms for Television (Student Handout 7.1), to guide their discussion of the use of techniques.

5. Students will edit their scripts to fit the storyboard format found in Storyboard Template (Student Handout 7.2), matching the script with the appropriate frames. Students also will include the camera shots and angles they wish to use in order to convey a certain meaning, mood or message. Next, students need to decide on the audio components that will enhance the message (e.g. dialogue, sound effects and music).

6. Students will complete and review their storyboards to ensure that the message is clear and directed to the intended audience.

Activism

Students could be involved in the actual production of a public service announcement. Using a camcorder and in-camera editing would be a simple way for a small group of students to produce one of their storyboard ideas.

These PSAs then could be shared with the rest of the school, or at a parent night, as a school-wide activity. A film festival would be an effective way to showcase the finished products.

Assessment Opportunities

Completed storyboard (Student Handout 7.2)
Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 7.3)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Students should reflect on the next steps for dealing with the bullying issue in their school and community. What have they learned from their analyses of PSAs directed to boys and to girls? What kind of PSAs might be effective in reaching an audience of Grade 7-8 students? Should the people represented in the PSAs be older? What kinds of bullying issues should be targeted for this group?
Students could re-write their television PSAs for radio. How would they have to be altered? What radio station would air this PSA?

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language and Writing
Health and Current Events

Materials and Resources

This lesson is based on the use of the sample public service announcements from the Concerned Children's Advertisers.
- http://www.cca-kids.ca/tvandme/english/educators/intermed_bully.html
- Student Handout 7.1 - Technical Terms for Television
- Student Handout 7.2 - Storyboard Template
- Student Handout 7.3 - Group Skills Checklist for Discussion
- *Think Literacy: Cross-Curricular Approaches Grades 7-12, Media, 2005*

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Film Terms:

- **Cut** – stop one shot and abruptly start the next, creating the impression of different places at the same time

- **Fade out/in** – go to black/ go from black to picture; suggests passage of time or change of place

- **Frame** – a single still picture or image

- **Pan** – camera moves from left to right or right to left across the scene, and can be used to create suspense

- **Shot** – the images that are filmed from the time the camera starts to the time it stops, without any cuts

- **Sequence** – a series of shots on the same subject

- **Tilt** – camera moves vertically, up or down

- **Zoom** – camera moves in or out

Other terms:

- **Storyboard** – a sequence of images used to plan a film, video, or television program. These images are drawings that communicate the director's vision. Each individual sketch represents one shot, ranging from 3 to 10 seconds, and depicts what is seen through the camera lens.

In the creation of the storyboard on Student Handout 7.2, instruct students to use the larger spaces to sketch the main elements of each shot. In the video section, students should include information about camera direction, setting, lighting, special effects and shot length. The audio section should include the script for that shot, as well as a description of the music or sound effects.

Technical Terms for Television

| Types of Shots			
Abbreviation	Meaning	Description	Effect
ECU	Extreme close up	Eye/face	Aggression or discomfort
CU	Close up	Head/head and shoulders	Reaction; intimacy 2-3 people
MS	Medium shot	To waist	2-3 people
MLS	Medium long shot	Full body	Normal view
LS	Long shot	Room	Normal view
ELS	Extreme long shot	House	Establishing setting
ES	Establishing shot	City	Establishing locale

Camera Angles

Low angle - the camera is looking up, and creates the impression of power since the subject looks large

Normal or straight angle - the camera is looking from eye-level at the subject, and creates the impression that the subject is equal to the viewer

High angle - the camera is looking up and the subject appears small, which creates the impression of the weakness or unimportance of the subject

(from *Think Literacy Cross-Curricular Approaches, Media, Grades 7-9*)

Storyboard Template

Video   *Audio*   *Video*   *Audio*

Video   *Audio*   *Video*   *Audio*
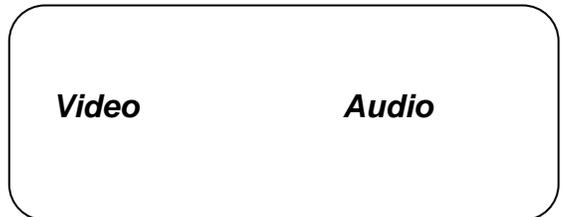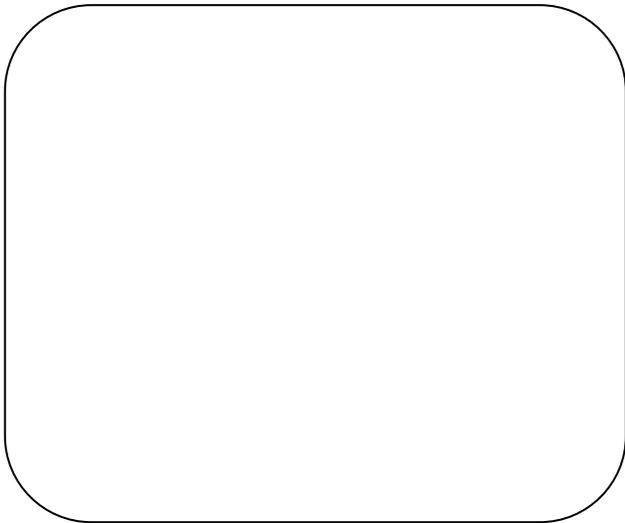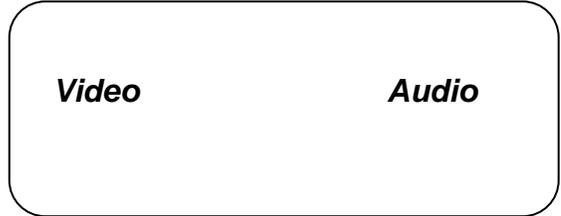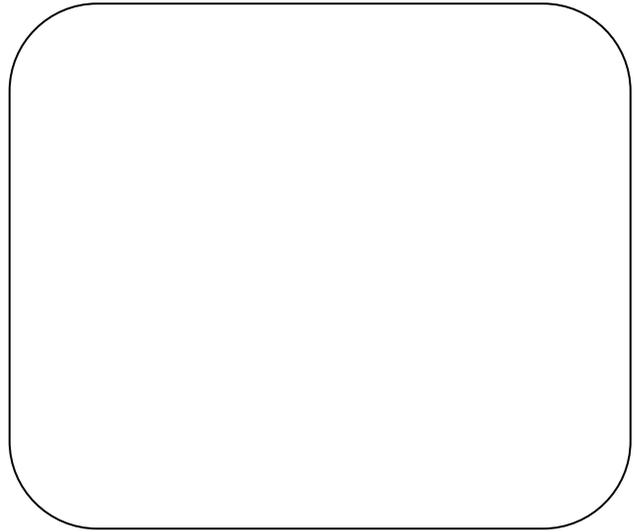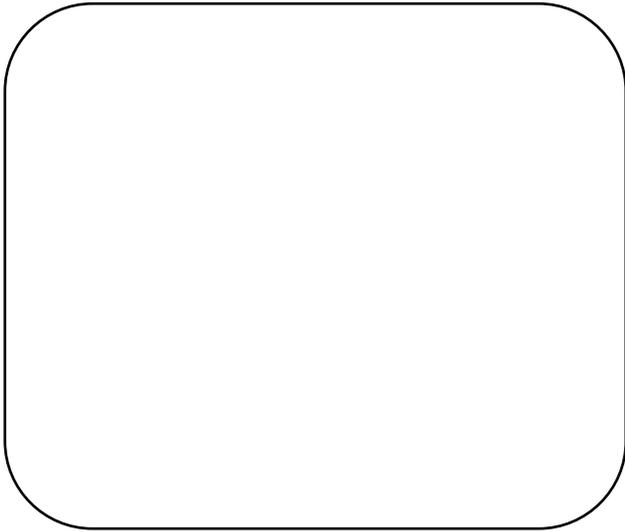
(Adapted from: *Mass Media and Popular Culture Resource Binder.* Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company Canada.)

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Student Name:_____ Date:_____	
During Group Discussions:	Examples of my behaviour:
❏ I participate actively in the group.	
❏ I listen carefully.	
❏ I ask questions.	
❏ I connect my ideas to the comments of others.	
❏ I support opinions with evidence.	
I can improve my group discussion skills by doing the following things:	

Adapted from *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 2*

Lesson 8

The Effects of Media Violence and Sport

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Audience Responses
Grade 7/8 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences (e.g., with respect to gender, age, nationality, ability/disability income level) might have different responses to a variety of media texts.*

Grade 7/8 1.6
- *Identify who produces various media texts and determine the commercial, ideological, political, cultural, and/or artistic interests or perspectives that the texts may involve.*

Key Concept:
- *The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).*
- *Each person interprets messages differently.*

Grade 7-8 students often are very involved in curricular and extra-curricular sports. They also are sports fans, attending games, watching them on TV, visiting sports-themed websites and/or playing electronic versions of favourite games. They inevitably compare the attitudes and behaviours of players and fans to their own behaviours.

Key questions to consider:
- *How might violence in sport be used to attract, entertain and influence fans?*
- *How might the violence in sport influence fans' attitudes and behaviours?*

Introduction/Overview

Violence in sport is sometimes accidental and sometimes intentional. This lesson invites students to examine the roles that violence plays in sport, and to consider how that violence might influence different audience members.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Ask students, working in pairs or trios, to rank the following sports from most to least violent: basketball, soccer, hockey, football, baseball. Ask them to explain their rankings. Identify the sport most commonly identified as the most violent. Identify the reasons why this sport has been ranked as most violent.

2. Ask students to describe the kinds of violence that might occur in each sport. Ask students to consider hockey specifically. Ask them to explain the roles of fighting in hockey, Use the following questions:
   - Why might some hockey fans be attracted by fights?
   - Why might some fans be turned off by fights?
   - How might fights influence a team's playing?
   - How might fights cause some players to give less than their best efforts?

3. Explain to students that fighting results in expulsion from hockey games in school, minor and European hockey leagues, yet results in a mere five-minute penalty in the NHL. Ask them to explain why the NHL might penalize fighting differently. Is fighting important to attracting and keeping an audience? Why is it especially important for the NHL to attract and keep an audience? How might the nature of the audience influence the penalties (i.e., the largest audience portion of an NHL game is a television audience, whereas most other games are played for attending fans).

4. Ask students to consider how youth hockey players might be influenced by the fighting they see in NHL games. To what degree do television broadcasts make NHL fighters heroic? How do television commentators and television editing and camera techniques add to their heroism? When have students seen commentators DISAPPROVE of fighting in hockey? What values might fans take from the messages they get from commentators and television editing and camera techniques?

5. Hand out Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 8.1). Instruct students to examine their performance in the discussion that just took place.

6. There are several websites that concentrate on hockey fights (e.g., Hockeyfights.com, Goonblog, Wimp.com, Hockey-fighters.com, Hockeyfighters.com, Crashingthenet.com). Many of these websites excerpt and replay the fights from recent games, or present a long string of hockey fights.

   Divide the class into groups of 3. Ask the groups to visit some of these websites. Use the following questions as prompts for students as they analyse the sites:

   - How do the sites represent fighting in hockey?
   - What values or messages are these websites sending to sports fans?
   - What kinds of fans might visit these sites often?

- Why might some fans NEVER visit these sites?
- What messages might players take from these sites?

7. Instruct students to write a Reflective Journal in which they share their thoughts about violence in hockey, or a sport of their choice. To do this, they will describe one incident of violence that they have experienced or seen, suggest what actions they think ought to be taken in a situation like they describe, and give reasons for their opinions.

Activism

Ask students to consider the roles that violence plays in hockey, or in a sport of their choosing. Ask them to consider ways that they might advocate for a healthier approach to violence in their chosen sport. Their advocacy might take the form of a petition, emails to league officials, speaking at a players' meeting, or phone calls to coaches or officiating organizations.

Assessment Opportunities

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 8.1)
Rubric for Journal response (Student Handout 8.2)
Teacher Created Oral Discussion Checklist

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite athletes, coaches or officials to speak about their perspectives on violence in sport. Ask them how they try to promote and maintain a healthy attitude.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language
Current Events

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 8.1 – Group Skills Checklist
- Student Handout 8.2 – Rubric for Journal Response

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

Sometimes violence is part of the game play, as in American football, where players can intentionally knock each other down. Sometimes it is accidental, as in a soccer collision. While fighting in hockey is always an infraction, and therefore may seem not to be a

legitimate part of the game, most players, fans and officials will maintain that fighting is essential to hockey. This will make for a compelling discussion.

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Student Name:_____ Date:_____	
During Group Discussions:	Examples of my behaviour:
❑ I participate actively in the group.	
❑ I listen carefully.	
❑ I ask questions.	
❑ I connect my ideas to the comments of others.	
❑ I support opinions with evidence.	
I can improve my group discussion skills by doing the following things:	

Adapted from *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 2*

Rubric for Journal Response

Level	Criteria
4 (80-100%)	- Complete entry that addresses several questions related to the issues - Entry demonstrates a thorough understanding of the issues and lists several examples - Expresses keen insight about the social implications and significance of the topic - Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with no visible spelling, grammatical or structural errors.
3 (70-79%)	- Nearly complete entry that addresses most questions related to the issues - Entry demonstrates a good understanding of the issues and lists a few examples - Expresses insight about the social implications and significance of the topic - Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with limited errors.
2 (60-69%)	- Entry is only partially complete - Some evidence of insight into the issues and lists one example - Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary - Opinions and ideas are at times unclear due to grammatical, spelling and/or structural errors.
1 (50-59%)	- Entry is barely complete - Little evidence of insight into the issues - Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary - Opinions and ideas are not expressed clearly or effectively.
NI (below 50%)	- Entry is incomplete - Little or no effort has been made to respond or make connections to the issues - Insufficient details to demonstrate an understanding of the topic.
Level:	Comments:

Lesson 9

The Effects of Media Violence and Games

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Audience Responses
Grade 7/8 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences (e.g., with respect to gender, age, nationality, ability/disability income level) might have different responses to a variety of media texts.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES
Audience Responses
Grade 7/8 2.1
- *Explain how individual elements of various media forms combine to create, reinforce, and/or enhance meaning.*

Key Concepts:
- *Each person interprets messages differently.*
  The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).
- *Each medium has its own language, style, forms, techniques, conventions and aesthetics.*

Introduction/Overview

Most people underestimate the size and nature of the gaming industry and gamers. Game sales compromise a greater dollar value than most other media products combined. Although many games contain no violence, four of the five best-selling rated video games in Canada do contain violence or intense violence (*Brendan Sinclair, GameSpot 2007; www.gamespot.com/news/6166203.html*). Many gamers do not play violent games, and violent games often use more than violence to entertain and attract audiences. Many gamers who play violent games do not exhibit violent behaviours.

Key questions to consider:
- *What kinds of electronic games violence are appropriate, and for what ages of players? Why might some people be attracted to the violence in games while other people are not?*

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. The Electronic Entertainment Rating Board (ESRB) is an industry-run organization that rates games according to potentially negative qualities. The ratings indicate the ages of players for whom the game is appropriate. "Industry-run organization" means that the gaming industry is self-regulated, or the people determining the ratings are working indirectly for the game producers. By contrast, movie ratings are determined by independent ratings organizations.
   - Read the ESRB ratings. < http://www.esrb.org/ratings/ratings_guide.jsp> or use "ESRB ratings" in a search engine.
   - Identify the violence-specific ratings statements.
   - Notice which rating(s) to which the violence references apply.

2. Choose an electronic game that includes some violence. The game must be one that someone in your group owns or can describe first-hand.

   Discover the rating that the game you selected was given by the Electronic Entertainment Rating Board. You might look on the game package or on the internet.

3. Describe the kinds of violence that occur in the game.

4. Consult the ESRB ratings. The ESRB Ratings Table (Student Handout 9.1) will help students organize their thinking and discussions.

5. Have each group member, working ALONE, select the rating that she/he thinks is most appropriate for the game, providing reasons.

6. Have the group members compare their personally-determined ratings.
   - If the group members have all selected the same rating, ask the group to discuss if they all rated the game for the same reasons.
   - If there are different ratings, ask the group to discuss why some people rated the game differently.
   - Note whether or not some group members changed their rating, and why.
   - Note whether your group's ratings agree with the ERSB rating.

   Ask the group to describe reasons why different people might arrive at different ratings for the same game. Ask the group to consider how ratings might affect the sale of games.

7. Have students write a brief report or journal of the research they completed, and the conclusions they have drawn. Instruct them to include references to the opinions of others in their group, whether they had consensus or dissent in the group.

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Activism

Ask students to consider the roles that violence plays in games. Ask them to consider ways that violence might influence players, and why some players might be more easily influenced by game violence. Ask students whether an age-based ratings system is the best one for rating games. What other ways might people be sorted for appropriate game play? Is age a reliable indicator of maturity, or can they suggest another measure?

Assessment Opportunities

ESRB Ratings Table (Student Handout 9.1)
Group Skills Checklist for Discussion (Student Handout 9.2)
Rubric for Journal Response (Student Handout 9.3)

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Invite parents and/or serious gamers to class. Ask them why they agree or disagree with the ratings that the ESRB has given to the games they know about or play. Ask them how the ratings influenced their choices of games and game-play.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language
Current Events

Materials and Resources

- Student Handout 9.1 – ESRB Ratings Table
- Student Handout 9.2 – Group Skills Checklist for Discussion
- Student Handout 9.3 – Rubric for Journal Response

ESRB Ratings Table

ESRB Ratings: Early Childhood, Everyone, Everyone 10+, Teen, Mature, Adults Only

Game Title: _____	ESRB Rating: _____
My personal rating and reasons:	My revised rating and reasons after group discussion:
Kinds of violence:	
My group's rating(s) and reasons	My group's revised rating(s) and reasons
Why some people need to be protected from the violence in this game:	Why the ESRB rating might help to promote this game:

Media Literacy: *Grade 7-8*

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Student Name:_____ Date:_____	
During Group Discussions:	Examples of my behaviour:
❑ I participate actively in the group.	
❑ I listen carefully.	
❑ I ask questions.	
❑ I connect my ideas to the comments of others.	
❑ I support opinions with evidence.	
I can improve my group discussion skills by doing the following things:	

(Adapted from: *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6, Volume 2)*

Rubric for Journal Response

Level	Criteria
4 (80-100%)	▪ Complete entry that addresses several questions related to the issues ▪ Entry demonstrates a thorough understanding of the issues and lists several examples ▪ Expresses keen insight about the social implications and significance of the topic ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with no visible spelling, grammatical or structural errors.
3 (70-79%	▪ Nearly complete entry that addresses most questions related to the issues ▪ Entry demonstrates a good understanding of the issues and lists a few examples ▪ Expresses insight about the social implications and significance of the topic ▪ Opinions and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively with limited errors.
2 (60-69%)	▪ Entry is only partially complete ▪ Some evidence of insight into the issues and lists one example ▪ Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary ▪ Opinions and ideas are at times unclear due to grammatical, spelling and/or structural errors.
1 (50-59%	▪ Entry is barely complete ▪ Little evidence of insight into the issues ▪ Further investigation into the social implications and significance of the topic is necessary ▪ Opinions and ideas are not expressed clearly or effectively.
NI (below 50%)	▪ Entry is incomplete ▪ Little or no effort has been made to respond or make connections to the issues ▪ Insufficient details to demonstrate an understanding of the topic.
Level	Comments:

Lesson 10

Media Violence on Trial

Grade 7 and 8 Language Arts

Curriculum Expectations

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA TEXTS
Audience Responses
Grade 7/8 1.1
- *Explain how various media texts address their intended purpose and audience.*

Grade 7/8 1.2
- *Interpret increasingly complex or difficult media texts, using overt and implied messages as evidence for their interpretations.*

Grade 7/8 1.4
- *Explain why different audiences might have different responses to a variety.*

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA FORMS, CONVENTIONS, AND TECHNIQUES
Audience Responses
Grade 7/8 2.1
- *Explain how individual elements of various media forms combine to create, reinforce, and/or enhance meaning.*

Grade 7/8 2.2
- *Identify the conventions and techniques used in a variety of media forms and explain how they help convey meaning and influence or engage the audience.*

Key Concepts:
- *The media contain beliefs and value messages.*
- *Each person interprets messages differently.*
- *The media have special interests (commercial, ideological, political).*

Grade 7-8 students are trying hard to make sense of the adult world for which they are preparing. They need opportunities to sift, sort and examine the many values messages that come their way.

Key question to consider:
- *How and why might different people react to the issue of media violence in different ways?*

Introduction/Overview

This final lesson involves a critical examination of some effects of media violence. It puts media violence on trial, a process that forces students to explore, examine, analyse and understand a media violence issue of their choosing, possibly selected from lessons 1 - 9. Because it is a trial, it involves research, group work and speaking and listening skills in trial preparation and in the courtroom. Because a trial has a verdict, students must consider conclusions, and explain why they agree or disagree with them (supported opinion).

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Distribute the handout Media Violence on Trial (Student Handout 10.1). Read over the details with the students, answering any questions that arise. Below is an outline of the discussion materials found on the handout, with a few extra suggestions for teachers that do not appear in the student handout

   Media Violence on Trial: When a crime is committed, people or companies who are suspected of the crime are charged. A court date is set. Judges and juries are selected. Prosecutors and defenders are asked to speak for the plaintiffs (accusers) and the defendants (charged). Witnesses are interviewed and research reports are presented to prove or disprove the charges.

   Put media violence on trial. That means that media violence will be the defendant, charged with a crime of your own invention. The judge, jury, prosecuting team, defense team and the witnesses will be role-played by students in the class. You might invite others—parents, advocates, administrators—to play some of the roles.

   - **Charges against the defendant**: You will have to describe the charges, or the crimes that the defendant (media violence) has committed. There might be one charge, or there could be many charges, depending on how complicated and lengthy you want the trial to be. Charges might range from 'media violence causes children to feel anxious and have nightmares, which in turn prevents them from learning effectively at school' to 'media violence causes some people to behave violently, which in turn prevents them from working well with others.' Whatever charge(s) you create, be certain that they are clear enough that a jury can understand them and that the prosecution and defense teams can argue for and against them.

   - **The defendant**: Media violence is a broad term. You might decide to narrow the definition so that the trial is easier to understand and manage. You might create a defendant that is only violence in news reporting, violence in sports, violence in games, or violence in graphic novels.

   - **The prosecuting team**: The prosecutors can call witnesses, who will be students role-playing children, parents, teachers, legislators, experts, etc. If they

role-play experts, their expert testimony should be authentic, i.e., based on real research completed by the prosecuting team. The preparation for the trial could involve a large group of students, all of whom can prepare the case, and some of whom who will become prosecutors, while others are witnesses for the prosecution.

- **The defense team**: The defense team can be a mirror of the prosecuting team. In criminal law, the prosecution must disclose its case to the defense team before the trial begins. The defense does not have to disclose to the prosecution. This might be accomplished in one of two ways: the defense team can assign a student to work along with the prosecuting team, making reports back to the defense team; or, the prosecuting team can present its prepared case to the defense team all at once during pre-trail preparations.

- **Witnesses**: Witnesses might be people who are 'victims' of media violence, such as children or parents. These people might be victims for different reasons: the violence has made them fearful, the violence has outraged them, the violence has caused someone to violently hurt them, etc. They might be experts in psychology or law. They might be researchers who have published reports on the effects of media violence.

- **The jury**: Jurors will be students, but might also be parents, administrators, etc. They should be reminded that they need to ignore their personal prejudices and decide on the guilt or innocence of media violence based solely on the charges and proceedings of the trial.

- **The trial**: Trials begin with opening statements. The judge describes the processes of the trial to the jurors, and tells them to have open minds as they listen and watch and to be rational and fair in their judgments. The prosecuting team describes how it will prove its case. The defense team does likewise.

The prosecuting team calls witnesses or provides evidence. The evidence might be in the form of research reports, video reports, website reports, or even samples of games, newscasts or movies. The defense team cross-examines the witnesses for the prosecution. The defense team can also call its own witnesses or present its own samples, and the prosecuting team can cross-examine them.

- **The verdict**: The judge will ask the jury to meet and determine a verdict. Even though real trials provide privacy for the jury's deliberations, this might be a good time for the jury's public discussion of the trial, so that all students might hear and understand the reasons for the jury's verdict.

Students also might be asked to provide responses to the trial experience. One response might be a journal describing the student's role in the trial process and how their thinking changed as the trial proceeded. Another response might be a news report detailing the main issues raised in the trial and explaining the verdict.

2. Provide the Media Violence on Trial Plans worksheets (Student Handout 10.2) for the students. Show that the categories on these worksheets match the outline they have been discussing on the Media Violence on Trial handout (Student Handout 10.1).

3. Allow time for the students to plan, research, and organize their materials. They will need to share ideas with each other, take roles, and practise their presentation techniques. Class time for presentation also will need to be scheduled, including time for the jury deliberations and rendering of the verdict.

4. Debriefing, or final discussions, of the process and the end product should follow the conclusion of the trial.

Activism

Students might perform their trial for other classes to help them understand the issues.

They might write emails to legislators or regulatory agencies (CRTC, Canadian Association of Broadcasters, Entertainment Software Ratings Board) explaining their positions on the effects of media violence.

Assessment Opportunities

Media Violence on Trial Plans (Student Handout 10.2)
Group Skills Checklist (Student Handout 10.3)
Teacher supplied checklists or rubrics for Research Skills and/or Oral Speaking

Implications for Future Lessons/Homework

Members of the community might be included in the trial process as witnesses or jurors. Students might do further research on the effects of media violence. Students might research actual trials that included references to media violence.

Cross Curricular Connections

Oral Language
History and Current Events

Materials and Resources

- Library and internet research
- Samples of games, TV programs, movies
- Student Handout 10.1 – Media Violence On Trial
- Student Handout 10.2 – Media Violence On Trial Plans
- Student Handout 10.3 - Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Important Terminology/Background for Teachers

There are many legal terms used in trials. Many are defined in the teaching/learning strategies. Others can be added as needed.

Media Violence on Trial

When a crime is committed, people or companies who are suspected of the crime are charged. A court date is set. Judges and juries are selected. Prosecutors and defenders are asked to speak for the plaintiffs (accusers) and the defendants (charged). Witnesses are interviewed and research reports are presented to prove or disprove the charges.

Put media violence on trial. That means that media violence will be the defendant, charged with a crime that you will determine. The judge, jury, prosecuting team, defense team and the witnesses will be role-played by students in the class.

Charges against the defendant:
- Describe the charges, or the crimes that the defendant (media violence) has committed. There might be one charge, or there could be many charges. Charges might range from 'media violence causes children to feel anxious and have nightmares, which in turn prevents them from learning effectively at school' to 'media violence causes some people to behave violently, which in turn prevents them from working well with others.' Whatever charge(s) you create, be certain that they are clear enough that a jury can understand them and that the prosecution and defense teams can argue for and against them.

The defendant:
- Media violence is a broad term. You might decide to narrow the definition so that the trial is easier to understand and manage. You might create a defendant that is only violence in news reporting, violence in sports, violence in games, or violence in graphic novels.

The prosecuting team:
- The prosecutors can call witnesses, who will be students role-playing children, parents, teachers, legislators, experts, etc. If you role-play an expert, your expert testimony should be authentic, i.e., based on real research completed by the prosecuting team. The preparation for the trial will involve a large group of students, all of whom will prepare the case, and some of whom who will become prosecutors, while others are witnesses for the prosecution.

The defense team:
- The defense team can be a mirror of the prosecuting team. In criminal law, the prosecution must disclose its case to the defense team before the trial begins. The defense does not have to disclose to the prosecution. This might be accomplished in one of two ways: the defense team can assign a student to work along with the prosecuting team, making reports back to the defense team; or, the prosecuting team can present its prepared case to the defense team all at once during pre-trail preparations.

Witnesses:
- Witnesses will be people who are 'victims' of media violence, such as children or parents. You might be victims for different reasons: the violence has made you fearful, the violence has outraged you, the violence has caused someone to violently hurt you, etc. You might be an expert in psychology or law. You might be a researcher who has published reports on the effects of media violence.

The jury:
- Jurors will be students. You need to ignore your personal prejudices and decide on the guilt or innocence of media violence based solely on the charges and proceedings of the trial.

The trial:
- Trials begin with opening statements. The judge describes the processes of the trial to the jurors, and tells them to have open minds as they listen and watch and to be rational and fair in their judgments. The prosecuting team describes how it will prove its case. The defense team does likewise.

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Media Violence on Trial Plans

Use this chart to plan the defense AND prosecution of media violence.
The prosecution must anticipate the defense's actions and be prepared to refute or discredit them.
The defense must do likewise.

Charge(s)	
State the charge(s).	
Break the charges down into parts that can be addressed one at a time.	
Identify the key words in the charges. Research and record the meanings of the key words.	
Defendant	
Research the defendant to discover its ENTIRE involvement in people media experiences, INCLUDING its non-violent involvement.	

Identify socially-redeeming qualities in the defendant.	
Opening Statements	
Identify why the defendant is or is not guilty.	
List all the reasons that show the defendant's innocence AND guilt.	
List all the examples that will support the reasons.	
Witnesses	
Identify expert and lay/civilian witnesses that can be used to support the guilt AND innocence of the defendant.	
Identify HOW those witnesses' testimony might support the guilt AND innocence of the defendant.	

Imagine and list how each witness's testimony might be contradicted or weakened.	

Evidence

Research and identify evidence (news reports, research reports) that can be used to support the guilt AND innocence of the defendant.	
Imagine how each piece of evidence might be contradicted or weakened.	

Closing Statements

List the major points of the defense and prosecution's case.	
Explain, by summarizing the testimony and evidence presented, why your position is the correct one.	

Group Skills Checklist for Discussion

Student Name:_____ Date:_____	
During Group Discussions:	Examples of my behaviour:
❑ I participate actively in the group.	
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