



# **MEDIA LITERACY**



in the F–12 Classroom  
Second Edition

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## Preface to the Revised Edition

These days it seems anyone is ready, willing and able to alter an image and post it immediately, in the hope unsuspecting readers will believe what they see and share it with their friends. And many of us, and our students, have been victims.

Consider these recent news headlines – all of which demonstrate why strong media literacy education in schools is paramount.

### **“Tween Online Habits, Revealed”**

A survey of fourth and fifth-year students found students had more difficulty using the internet (to find information) than books. A researcher said “kids find it easier to learn from books rather than (from) the internet because online reading is more complex than print reading.” (Geddes, 2016)

### **“Facebook, Facing Bias Claims, Shows How Editors and Algorithms Guide News”**

*The New York Times* referenced the tech site Gizmodo which reported that Facebook editors had intentionally “suppressed” news topics from conservative publications trending across the network. No bias had been proven, but the blogosphere went wild with speculation about decisions regarding the selection of news distributed on the world’s largest social media website. (Isaac, 2016)

### **“Americans Don’t Have Much Trust in Social Media as a Source of News”**

The Media Insight Project poll found that just 12% of respondents said they trusted news they found on Facebook while 18% said they trusted news on Twitter. (Lichterman, 2016)

### **“Health Misinformation Abounds on Pinterest, Instagram and Visual Social Media”**

Apparently many young people are using social media platforms as their health encyclopedia and thus receiving misinformation in the process. (Lee, 2016)

### **“Teens Can’t Tell the Difference Between Google Ads and Search Results”**

Researchers in the U.K. reported that only a third of young people aged 12 to 15 knew which search results on Google were ads, while the numbers were even lower – less than one in five – for children aged 8 to 11. (Vincent, 2015)

**“25% of Consumers Favour Entertaining Content Over Accuracy”**

The Adobe survey of millennials revealed “Checking content for factual issues is not a concern for those who share, especially for Millennials. Nearly one in four (25%) do not regularly check facts before they post content.” (Friedman, 2015)

**“Most people think native ads are real articles – and they later feel duped”**

Native ads (aka branded/sponsored content or promoted posts) are thinly disguised and frequently appear in news feeds and other websites. Sometimes these “ads” are labelled but despite that, many people were fooled according to the study by the marketing firm Contently. (James, 2015)

**“2016 SATs Will Put Stronger Emphasis on Graphic Literacy”**

The article acknowledges that more information is being conveyed visually and it’s vital that today’s students know how to interpret it. It also notes that American students who take the standardised college admissions test will be exposed to graphic literacy questions not only in maths, but also in the reading and writing portions of the test. An executive of the College Board, which owns and publishes the Scholastic Aptitude Test, says “being a literate consumer of that (kind of visual) information is valuable regardless of your career.” (Nuwer, 2015) The College Board is not alone: dozens of educational organisations around the world now acknowledge the importance and relevance of media literacy in today’s educational system.

I am a media literacy education consultant. For over 20 years, I’ve taken media literacy into hundreds of classrooms, to professional development workshops at schools and school systems, and to curriculum conferences. Over that period of time, I have learned much about how the media work so I have been anxious to share the “behind-the-scenes” details with my audiences. Having worked previously in television news production, which included writing and producing newscasts, I realised that I had knowledge and background that those not working in news would never get a chance to learn. I was anxious to “pull back the curtain” to show how media works.

I jumped at the chance to leave TV news in the mid-1990s and join the education world. One of my major responsibilities was to purchase the media (videos and films) teachers would use in the classroom. But after sitting in a few of those classrooms, I was quite surprised when I discovered many teachers were not engaging their

students in any “critical viewing” activities. I began exploring critical viewing skills as part of what I learned to think of as “media literacy”. It was here that I conducted my first workshop for teachers.

I always ask my audiences to share what they think media literacy means. Media literacy – it’s a phrase that many find perplexing. It might be confusing because there are so many literacies today: information literacy, technology literacy, digital literacy and so on. In fact, many of these new literacies incorporate elements of traditional media literacy.

By having students and teachers understand what media literacy does mean (and what it doesn’t), I’m making sure that we’re all on the same page. Part of answering that question (what is media literacy?) is why I wrote this book.

How do you, the teacher/educator, begin to understand the importance of teaching media literacy? How do I, a long-time media educator, help you feel more comfortable approaching this subject, when many of you have not had one minute of media literacy instruction? Where can you find appropriate resources – lessons, activities, videos and books? Read on.

## **New in the Second Edition**

Understanding and helping our students understand media literacy has never been more important. Since the first edition of this book was released there have been changes to the landscape and further insight into how media literacy should be taught.

In November 2015, National Media Literacy Week was held for the first time in the United States. It was designed to showcase the many activities and projects in educational settings as well as after-school programs. At the same time, there was a move to have media literacy recognised by the legislatures of all 50 states.

During the development of this edition, The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) released the 2016 ISTE Standards for Students. The revised standards feature both analysis and creation of media – another strong endorsement of the importance of media literacy.

Recently a new Bloom's Taxonomy was unveiled. The revised version, retitled the "Bloom's Digital Taxonomy", positions "Creating" at the top of the higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). This version, authored by Andrew Churches, offers examples of creating activities including, but not limited to, blogging, filming, animating and broadcasting.

### ***Big Ideas***

In the new introduction to this edition I share what I am calling the "big ideas" in media literacy, examining concepts such as bias, representation and symbolism. Understanding these topics is a prerequisite for any discussion of media literacy and all of them present learning opportunities worthy of exploring with your students.

### ***Voices from the Field***

It is satisfying to know that so many other educators also value media literacy in education. In this revised version, I approached several of my colleagues whose expertise I not only value, but also wished to share with my readers. At the end of each chapter I introduce a different expert and share their responses to two questions:

1. Why do you think media literacy education is important?
2. What resources would you recommend to learn more?

I would like to thank each one of the contributors. Their work is important and worthy of further exploration by both teachers and students alike.

### ***Lesson Plans***

New in this edition are two full lesson plans shared by educators. The first examines teaching argument writing through the use of commercials. The second, entitled Teaching The Hero's Journey Through Film, examines a traditional story arc through the lens of a Star Wars movie.



## ***Comprehensive Resources***

This new edition contains an appendix with over 80 resources recommended by the author. If you haven't already noticed, I have recommended many of the resources on The Media Literacy Clearinghouse ([www.frankwbaker.com/mlc](http://www.frankwbaker.com/mlc)). I developed the website almost 20 years ago as a place where educators could go in order to learn more about a particular topic and to locate appropriate lesson plans or to consider a resource for their personal or professional library. I am proud that the website has garnered both national and international recognition. I hope that you will bookmark it or save it as one of your favourites as you move forward in your own media literacy education. It will provide you with a plethora of ideas for consideration.

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Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank my wife, Melanie, for her untiring patience while I worked on this revision. And I dedicate the book to my granddaughter, Sadie, who enters the world at an exciting time. I look forward to helping you learn to read the media.