

Lesson 24. Cultural Questions and Media Literacy

HAND OUT

We live in a prosumer society, in which we consume information and produce it. We need to be critical readers of the world around us. We will explore a relevant question, information about this topic, and our responses in print and visual texts.

Activity 1: KQED Do Now

On the KQED Do Now website, one discussion considers the question, “Is Celebrity Obsession Bad for Us?” (see <http://blogs.kqed.org/education/2014/05/20/is-celebrity-obsession-bad-for-us/>) and includes the video “Why We Worship Celebrities” (also available from www.youtube.com/watch?v=9l76OX0b2fo&feature=youtu.be). While this weekly conversation has passed, it remains relevant to our lives today.

Write your initial thoughts on the following:

- Given the context of income inequality and changing demographics across the country, is the American obsession with celebrities good or bad for our culture?
 - Consider this question in a few different ways. For instance, how does it impact people’s thinking if they idolize a celebrity who later turns up in the news for criminal behavior? Or, as we think about the role of income, are celebrity bank-rolls reasonable for the average American?
 - A few other considerations:
 - Name a celebrity who is involved with charity work. How does this model help support our culture?
 - Name a celebrity whose various homes or other forms of economic wealth are represented in the media (or even think about which celebrities are shown attending the Super Bowl). How does the representation of their wealth impact our view of culture?
- Share and discuss responses.

Activity 2: Exploring the KQED Do Now Question With a Media Response

One tool that we can use to explore the concept of media literacy—and repurpose existing media with a critical lens—comes from the Mozilla Foundation, the makers of the Firefox web browser and advocates for understanding how the Internet functions. Mozilla’s X-Ray Goggles allow a user to “see” the component parts of a website such as links, image file storage, and formatting tags for text such as those for bold print, emphasis (italics), and various levels of headings.

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- Visit <https://webmaker.org/en-US/goggles/install> and install the X-Ray Goggles in your web browser. Steps in this process are on this website.
- Choose a website about your topic and create a remixed version of that site using the X-Ray Goggles. For instance, if your project is about the role of beauty in culture, perhaps you can find a website devoted to beauty products and then change the images, film, or text to show the Dove “Evolution” video, or images of everyday people enjoying normal activities rather than models at a fashion shoot.
- After visiting a website and making a plan for adjusting an image, you can use the X-Ray Goggles to make changes. It will appear as though you’ve changed the actual website; however, only the specific page on your screen has been changed, as you are actually altering materials on a website that is only on your computer. To share your changes, you will need to take a screenshot of the image on your screen.
- Share your image and a written reflection of your image in our online class space.
- Share your work with the class.
- Discuss:
 - How do the X-Ray Goggles allow you to understand the way that a web page is structured? What do they allow you to do?