

Fire and the Media 2

Objectives

Student will understand how media messages are constructed.

Skills

- Student will analyze how the media portrays fire and compare to the reality of fire science.
- Student will create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) with a positive message about fire safety.

The media literacy lessons are based on the framework presented in the CML MediaLit Kit™, produced by the Center for Media Literacy. For additional information, visit www.medialit.org.

Introduction

Inaccurate messages about fire are all around us in the media. In Unit 1 of this curriculum, students were introduced to the understanding that all media messages are constructed. They looked critically at sample media clips, analyzing how the production elements—visuals, sound, setting, timing, etc.—were composed to present a message.

The next four units of the curriculum focused on the reality of fire science, fire safety, fire prevention, and personal responsibility with fire. Now, using all that they have learned, the students will look again at sample media clips containing fire scenes. They will answer the question, “Based on what you know, could this happen in reality?”

Finally, they will develop their own Public Service Announcement (PSA) with a positive message about fire safety.

Vocabulary (detailed definitions provided in Unit 1)

Action

Camera Angles

Camera Person (Cinematographer)

Dialogue

Director

Editing

Editor

Image Framing

Lighting

Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Scene

Script

Shot

Sound Effects

Storyboard

Producer

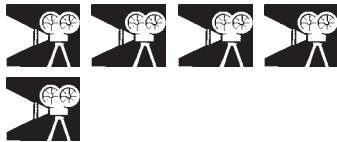
Writer



ACCURACY OF FIRE PORTRAYAL IN THE MEDIA

Materials provided:

- *Backdraft* video clip
- *The Patriot* video clip
- *Kindergarten Cop* video clip
- *Lethal Weapon 4* video clip
- TV commercial video clip
- Video Viewing List with discussion questions



Teacher preparation:

- Select the video clip(s) to be used for this lesson prior to class

an analysis activity

Teacher-led discussion

In the preceding lessons, students were introduced to facts about fire as they pertain to Fire Science, Fire Prevention, Survival Skills and Personal Responsibility.

- Review the main topics of this curriculum.
- Identify topic areas that students need additional time with and review as necessary.
- Use this lesson to build on the learning from the previous units.

Small group activity

- Divide class into small groups.
- Show a video clip.
- Rewind and replay the same clip and ask them to write down two to three points of fire safety awareness relating to the focus topic from the clip.
- Students will discuss the scene in their group for two minutes.
- While they are discussing, prepare the next video clip.
- Show one to three video clips (viewing each twice) and encourage discussion.
- Assign video clips to each group and ask them to identify a reporter who will share the group's discussion with the class.

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**ACCURACY OF FIRE
PORTRAYAL IN THE MEDIA (continued)**

- Ask the groups to list as many aspects of fire safety awareness as they can for the clip and identify the accuracy of each message in the clip, asking the question, “Based on what you know, could this happen in reality?”

Teachers may reference the discussion notes on the *Video Viewing List* to encourage group inquiry.

- Ask the reporter for each group to report their findings to the class. Groups may have analyzed the same clip but come to different conclusions. This can lead to further interesting discussion.



CREATING A FIRE SAFETY MESSAGE

Materials provided:

- *Storyboard Planning Work Sheet*
- *Storyboard Work Sheet*
- *Media Vocabulary Handout* (see Unit 1)



Teacher preparation:

- Multiple copies, two to three per student, of the *Storyboard Planning Work Sheet* and the *Storyboard Work Sheet*
- Copies of the *Media Vocabulary Handout* (for review)

Note: The target audience of the production activity for Lesson B is younger children or peers. For lesson C the target audience is adults.

Note: Live fire or fireworks should not be included in the productions!

a production activity

Teacher-led discussion

Class discussion of the definition of a Public Service Announcement (PSA).

- Ask students for examples of PSAs they may have seen on television.
- Identify the message in some of the examples given and consider who might have produced it and why.
- Ask students to brainstorm ideas for a PSA made up of four to six “shots” on the subject of fire safety awareness.
- Allow five minutes for class discussion on what messages might be appropriate.

Production activity

Students will plan and design their own positive fire safety message.

- As a class, decide on one message for the students to work with.
- Have students stop and watch the clock for fifteen seconds to demonstrate how long their PSA may be.
- Working on their own, students fill in their *Storyboard Planning Worksheet*.

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CREATING A FIRE SAFETY MESSAGE (continued)

- After organizing their thoughts around the message, they begin to complete the *Storyboard Work Sheet* by drawing the different shots for their PSA with consideration of camera angles, lighting, special effects, etc.
- Have students share their storyboards with the class.

Extension activities

Consider continuing this activity with additional writing, performance, production and communication applications. Students might create larger, more refined versions of their storyboards on individual pages and bind them into a book. Or, if video production equipment is available, organize students into small groups to produce some of the PSAs. Other production options include PowerPoint presentations or audio recordings (as for a radio PSA).

Video Viewing List with Discussion Notes

Identify video clips below that address topic areas to which your students need more exposure. Other sources to consider are recent movie releases, television cooking shows, and the local nightly news. Although the clips listed below are PG-13, note that some of these clips are from R-rated films. Be sure to evaluate the clips yourself before showing them to ensure appropriateness for your students. You may wish to send an explanatory note home to parents for their permission.

These videos are shown for their depiction of fire for the purpose of critically evaluating the reality. Don't get sidetracked into a discussion of the storyline in the film.

<u>Video Title</u>	<u>Lesson Reference</u>	<u>Scene Description</u>
TV Commercial	Fire Science	<p>This commercial features a famous basketball player running down the court with a flaming basketball, while the message is about a new hot sauce.</p> <p><i>Discussion Notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the advertiser's message?• What does the ball of fire symbolize?• Why would the advertiser want to use fire in this way?• What does this advertisement teach us about fire science?• Do you think he actually played with a blazing ball? If not, how was the effect created?

<u>Video Title</u>	<u>Lesson Reference</u>	<u>Scene Description</u>
The Patriot, 2000 (Rated R) Starring Mel Gibson, Heath Ledger	Fire and the Media 1 also Fire Science (smoke, visibility, heat, fire behavior)	<p>After British soldiers set fire to Capt. Benjamin Martin's (Mel Gibson) house, Martin runs into the burning house, goes upstairs, picks up weapons, and then goes down the stairs and exits the house.</p> <p><i>Discussion Notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compare smoke seen from the outside of the house to the amount of smoke inside when Martin goes into the burning building.• Can Martin see clearly inside? Would you expect that he would be able to based on the level of smoke on the outside of the building?• Does the structure seem sound? Compare the level of fire and smoke on the inside and outside of the building. Are they the same?• The level of fire inside the house seems to be the same inside – both upstairs and downstairs. Could that be possible? Consider also the smoke on the outside of the building.• Is it likely that ammunition stored in a box next to flames would not explode?• How hot is it in the burning house?

Scene contains no gratuitous violence or inappropriate language.

<u>Video Title</u>	<u>Lesson Reference</u>	<u>Scene Description</u>
<p>Backdraft, 1991 Starring Kurt Russell, William Baldwin</p> <p>Pre-screen for inappropriate language.</p>	<p>Fire Science (fire behavior, fire survival)</p>	<p>Lieutenant Stephen McCaffrey (Kurt Russell) and his rookie brother Brian McCaffrey (William Baldwin) go into an apartment building that is on fire. They proceed up the stairs in search of a child.</p> <p><i>Discussion Notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the experienced fire fighter (Russell) demonstrate expected use of firefighting gear? <i>Evidence: his jacket is flapping open, he does not use a SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus), he instructs his Rookie brother to “hold your breath” when they are walking up the stairs.</i> • Is the rescue of the child realistic? <i>Evidence: Lt. McCaffrey emerges from the apartment without smoke discoloration.</i> • What techniques are used to capture the child’s rescue? Is Lt. McCaffrey presented as a hero? <i>Evidence: slow motion, silhouetted figure, his “cowboy” approach results in a saved child and without any repercussions on his well-being.</i> • Would Lt. McCaffrey likely have been walking upright through the smoke and fire? <i>Evidence: The heat from the fire would have been unbearable for someone walking upright.</i>

<u>Video Title</u>	<u>Lesson Reference</u>	<u>Scene Description</u>
<p>Kindergarten Cop, 1991 (Rated PG-13) Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Penelope Ann Miller</p> <p>Earlier in the film, Det. Kimble is surprised by a routine fire drill. He reacts by practicing with his students to be prepared for a fire. Viewing this film for its overall fire awareness and safety should be considered, although there is violence at the end of the film that should be reviewed prior to classroom screening.</p>	<p>Fire Prevention (understanding sprinklers)</p>	<p>A fire begins in an elementary school. The fire alarm goes off and smoke begins to fill the hallway on the first floor. Detective John Kimble (Schwarzenegger) who is posing as a kindergarten teacher leads his students toward the exit. The hallway continues to fill with smoke; the sprinklers go off. Fire trucks arrive within 2 minutes. Det. Kimble goes up to the 2nd floor in search of someone. There is no smoke, fire damage or sprinkler evidence on the 2nd floor.</p> <p><i>Discussion Notes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the performance of the sprinkler system realistic? Consider whether there are flames visible when the sprinklers initially go off throughout the 1st floor. • Why might the sprinklers on the 2nd floor not have gone off? • Is the response time of the fire department realistic? • Is this a fire drill as stated by the teacher? • Who gets wet when the sprinklers go off?

Video Title

Lethal Weapon 4, 1998 (Rated R)

Starring Mel Gibson,
Danny Glover

Scene contains no
gratuitous violence or
inappropriate language.

Lesson Reference

Responsibility
(consequences of pulling
false alarms)

Fire Prevention
(understanding
sprinklers)

Scene Description

Detectives Riggs (Mel Gibson) and Murtaugh (Danny Glover) go to a Chinese restaurant in search of information on a Chinese crime syndicate. To get attention, Riggs pulls the red fire alarm lever which sets off the sprinkler system. Riggs and Murtaugh joke around as if this is something they have done before. Sprinklers throughout the restaurant go off.

Discussion Notes:

- Do sprinklers go off when you pull a fire alarm lever?
No.
- What makes a sprinkler head go off? When one sprinkler in a room goes off, do all in the room also go off? *Sprinkler systems detect heat and will go off when the temperature in the room reaches a certain temperature.*
- Are there any consequences to pulling a fire alarm when there is no fire? *Yes, pulling a false alarm has many consequences. First, it is illegal and punishable by law. Second, it is expensive to disrupt normal business and to activate fire professionals to respond to the alarm. And finally, it also puts others at risk because when the fire department is responding to the false alarm they are not available for other emergencies*

STORYBOARD PLANNING WORKSHEET

Your name: _____ Scene title: _____

Scene message: _____

Describe what will happen in your PSA (5-7 shots)

Identify different techniques you will use to get your message across and why

Dialogue

Why?

Special effects

Why?

Personalities of the characters

Why?

Camera angles

Why?

Lighting

Why?

Sound effects

Why?

Other

Why?

STORYBOARD WORK SHEET



Girl: "But I'm not supposed to."
Boy: "I dare you."

Boy places firecracker in the
ear of the pinata. Girl lights
the firecracker.

Firecracker explodes. Pinata's
ear catches on fire.





