

Digital worlds revealed through critical media studies



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Five Key Questions of Media Literacy

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- 1. Who created this message?**
- 2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?**
- 3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?**
- 4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?**
- 5. Why is this message being sent?**

Five Core Concepts

- 1. All media messages are 'constructed.'**
- 2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.**
- 3. Different people experience the same media message differently.**
- 4. Media have embedded values and points of view.**
- 5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.**



20 Reasons to Study the Media

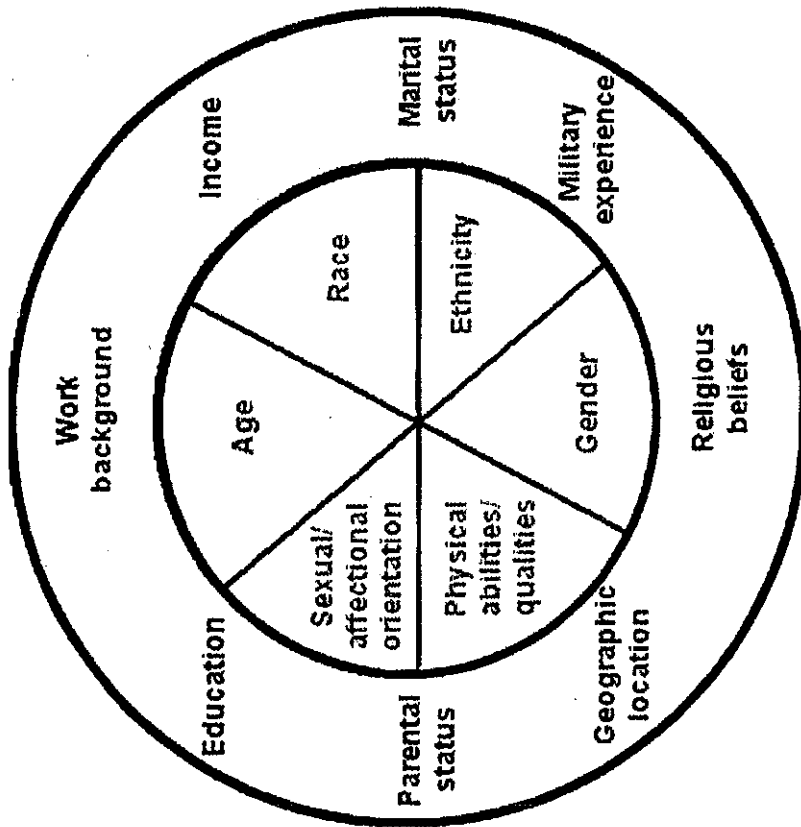
1. Like history, because the media interpret the past to us to show us what has gone into making us the way we are.
2. Like geography, because the media define for us our own place in the world.
3. Like civics, because the media help us to understand the workings of our immediate world, and our individual roles in it.
4. Like literature, because the media are our major sources of stories and entertainment.
5. Like literature, because the media require us to learn and use critical thinking skills.
6. Like business, because the media are major industries and are inextricably involved in commerce.
7. Like language, because the media help define how we communicate with each other.
8. Like science and technology, because the media always adopt the leading edge of modern technological innovation.
9. Like family studies, because the media determine much of our cultural diet and weave part of the fabric of our lives.
10. Like environmental studies, because the media are as big a part of our everyday environment as are trees, mountains, rivers, cities and oceans.
11. Like philosophy, because the media interpret our world, its values and ideas to us.
12. Like psychology, because the media help us (mis)understand ourselves and others.
13. Like science, because the media explain to us how things work.
14. Like industrial arts, because the media are carefully planned, designed and constructed products.
15. Like the arts, because the media bring us pleasure, and we experience all the arts through the media as no other age has ever done.
16. Like politics, because the media bring us political and ideological messages all the time - yes - all the time.
17. Like rhetoric, because the media use special codes and conventions of their own languages that we need to understand and control—or we stand in danger of being controlled by them.
18. Like drama, because the media help us understand life by presenting it as larger-than-life, and compel us to think in terms of the audience.
19. Like Everest, because they are there.
20. BECAUSE THE MEDIA GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO STUDY US.

"Instead of asking always for an essay, teachers could consider the following alternative formats for student reporting - almost 200 of them. The media are part of all learning."

abstract	diorama	interview	periodical	saying
ad campaign	directions	introduction	photo-montage	scenario
adaptation	directive	invitation	photograph	script
address	discussion	invoice	play	semantic
advertisement	display	job description	plot diagram	organizer
animation	docudrama	joke	poem	sign
announcement	drama	journal article	postcard	simulation
anthology	drawing	journal	poster	skit
autobiography	editorial	label	précis	slogan
bibliography	electronic mail	lecture	preface	sociogram
bill board	epigram	letter to the editor	problem solving	song
biography	epitaph	letter list	profile	speech
brainstorming	ESSAY	log	program	statement
brochure	eulogy	magazine	project	story board
calculation	executive	manual	prologue	story-telling
campaign	summary	map	proposal	story-writing
caption	ezone	memoir	prospectus	summary
cartoon	fashion design	memorandum	publishing	survey
cartoon strip	fiction	menu	puppetry	table
character	film	message	puzzle	tableau
sketch	filmography	mime	query	telegram
chart	foreword	minutes	quest	test
collage	game	model	question list	title
column	graffiti	monolog	question	transformation
commercial	graph	music	questionnaire	travelog
costume	greeting card	news report	quiz	treatment
crossword	guest speaker	news article	quotation	trip
cut-line	guidebook	newsletter	radio report	uniform
debate	guidelines	newspaper	receipt	video
dedication	handbill	note making	recipe	visit
definition	handbook	note taking	report	visitor
demonstration	headline	one-sheet	research paper	viva voce
design	horoscope	organizer	resource list	waybill
desk-top	how-to guide	painting	résumé	website
publishing	improvisation	pamphlet	review	word search
diagram	inscription	parable	riddle	word-we
dialog	instructions	paragraph	role-play	
diary	interpretation	paraphrase	routing slip	

Expression

Stereotypes



Personal Identity Wheel

(Adapted from "Voices of Discovery", Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University)

The Personal Identity Wheel is a circular diagram divided into 12 equal segments. The segments are labeled as follows, starting from the top and moving clockwise:

- Favorite Music
- One Skill you are Proud of
- Favorite Movie
- Favorite Book
- Favorite Food
- Favorite Hobby
- Favorite Color
- Personal Motto
- Number of Siblings
- Birth Order
- Favorite Music
- One Skill you are Proud of

In the center of the wheel, there is a section titled "Three Adjectives to Describe Yourself" with three numbered lines for writing:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

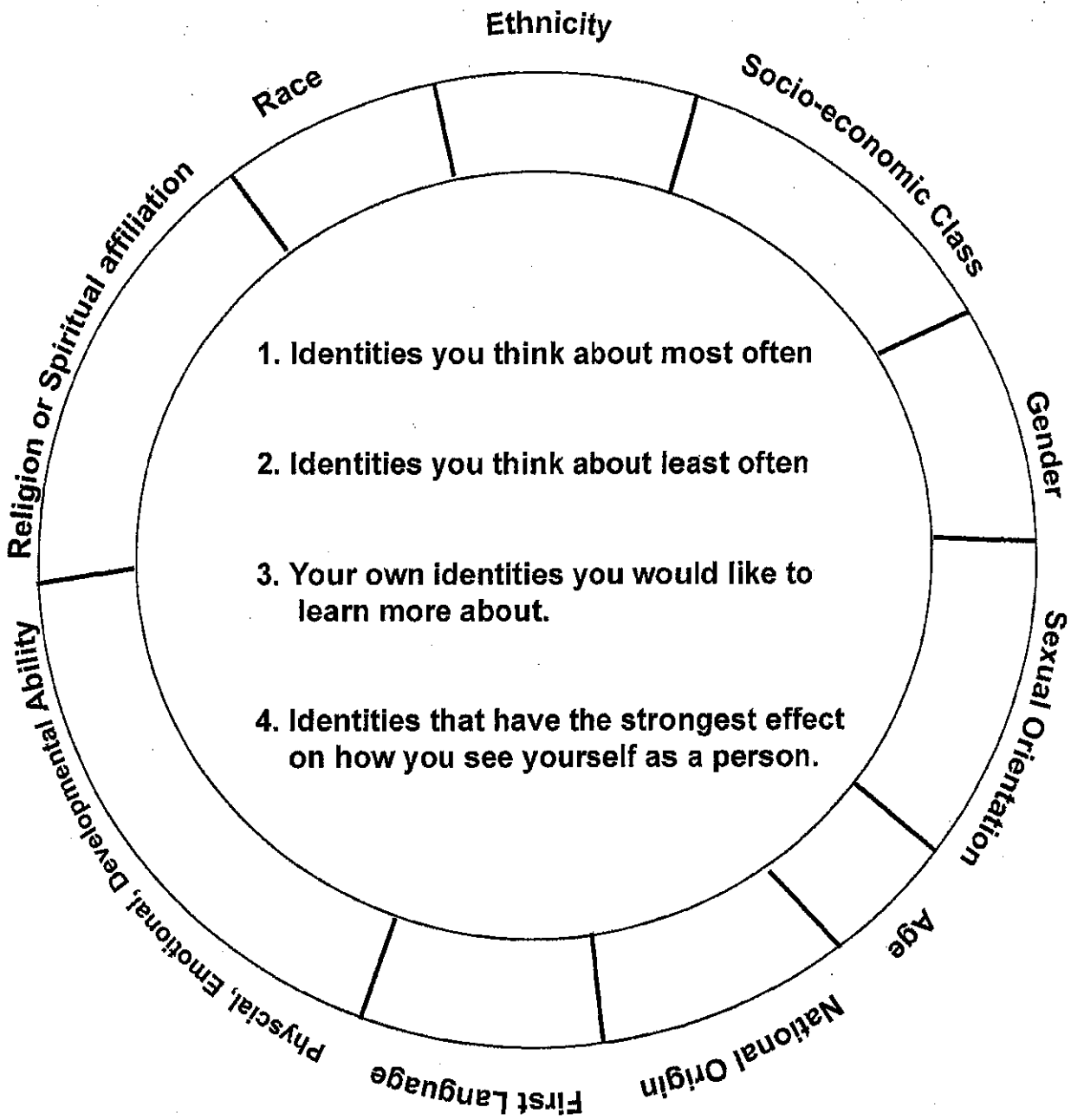
Below the adjectives section is a line for the name:

Name

[Handwritten mark]

Social Identity Wheel

(Adapted from "Voices of Discovery", Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University)



EXAMPLE #1 - Commercials

Authorship	1. Who created this message?
Format	2. What creative techniques are used to attract the viewer's attention?
Audience	3. How might different people understand this message?
Content	4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
Purpose	5. Why is this message being sent?

DECONSTRUCTING AN ADVERTISEMENT

» For a print advertisement

STEP 1: MAKE OBSERVATIONS

- » Think of five adjectives that describe the ad.
- » Look at the ad and evaluate its aesthetics:
 - Are there people depicted in the ad? What gender is represented? What race? What do the people look like (young, old, stylish, etc.)? What are their facial expressions?
 - Estimate what the camera angle was. Was it far from the subject or close to it? Was it above, eye-level, or below the subject?
 - Take note of the lighting used in the ad. Does it appear to be natural or artificial? Why or why not? Are certain parts of the ad highlighted while others are not? If so, why do you think this is? Are there shadows? If so, how big are they?
 - What colors are used? Are they bright? black and white? In sharp contrast to each other?
 - If the ad has text or copy, how does it look? What kind of font is used? Is more than one type of font used? How big is the text? What color is the text? Is there more than one color used? What does the text actually say? What does the large text say? The small text?

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AD

- » Remember that the purpose of an ad is always to sell a product!
- » What product is being sold?
- » Do you find the product appealing? Why or why not?
- » Who is the target audience for this product? Children? Teens? Adults? The elderly?
- » What feelings or emotions is the ad trying to associate with the product? Did it work? Why or why not?

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DECONSTRUCTING AN ADVERTISEMENT

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STEP 3: DETERMINE THE ASSUMPTIONS THE AD MAKES & THE MESSAGES IT SENDS

» Assumptions may not be contained directly in the ads themselves, but in the messages that are produced from them

- What assumptions does the ad make about gender? (i.e. *Women are powerful when they hold a hair dryer in their hands. Men like to drink beer. Women are primary caregivers, etc..*) Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about gender identity?
- What assumptions does the ad make about race (i.e. *African Americans are excellent athletes. Latinos are sensual and passionate. Etc.*)? Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about racial identity?
- What assumptions does the ad make about class (i.e. *Wealthy people are happy and trouble-free. Poor people are always looking for a handout, etc..*)? Are these assumptions realistic? Why or why not? Do these assumptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about class?

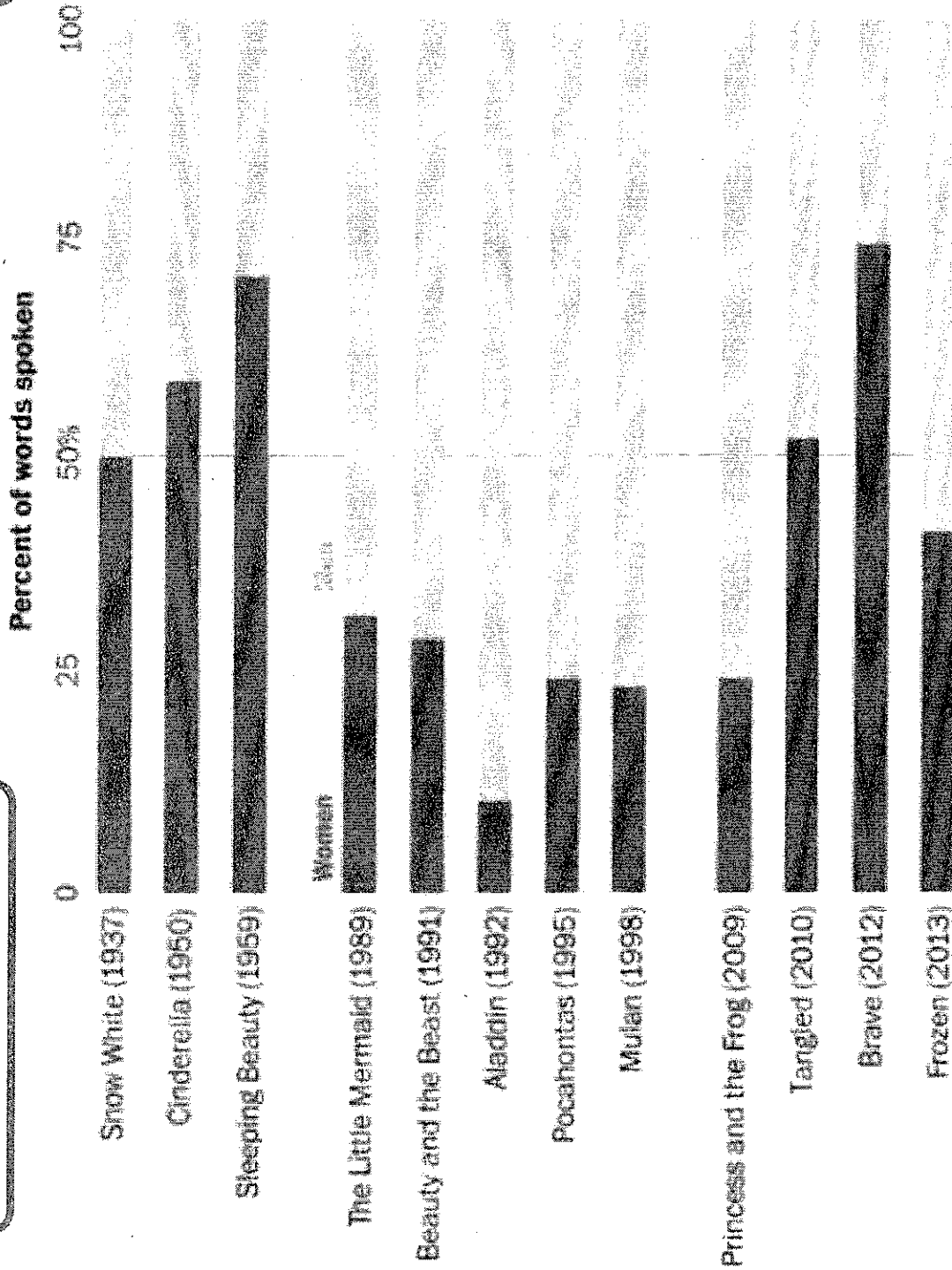
STEP 4: CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE MESSAGES

- » What are some possible consequences? (long-term and short-term)
- » Do the messages create unrealistic expectations for people? Why or why not?
- » How do the messages in this ad counter or undermine social change?
- » Is this ad socially responsible? How or how not? What does it mean for an ad or a company to be socially responsible?
- » In the closing comments of the video *Killing Us Softly 3*, Jean Kilbourne states that change will depend upon "an aware, active, educated public that thinks for itself primarily as citizens rather than primarily as consumers." What does it mean to think of oneself primarily as a citizen rather than primarily a consumer? Can one be both a citizen and a consumer? How? Reflect on this ad with the above statement in mind.

EXAMPLE #2 - Data

CONTINUITY/CHANGE

CONTEXTUALIZATION



One observation I have is...

One conclusion I can draw is...

One question I have is...

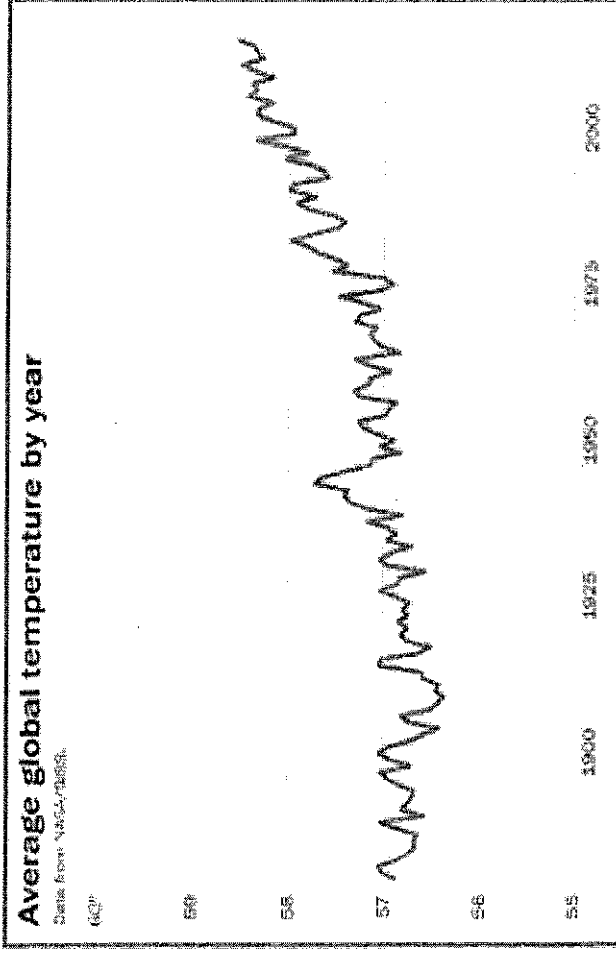
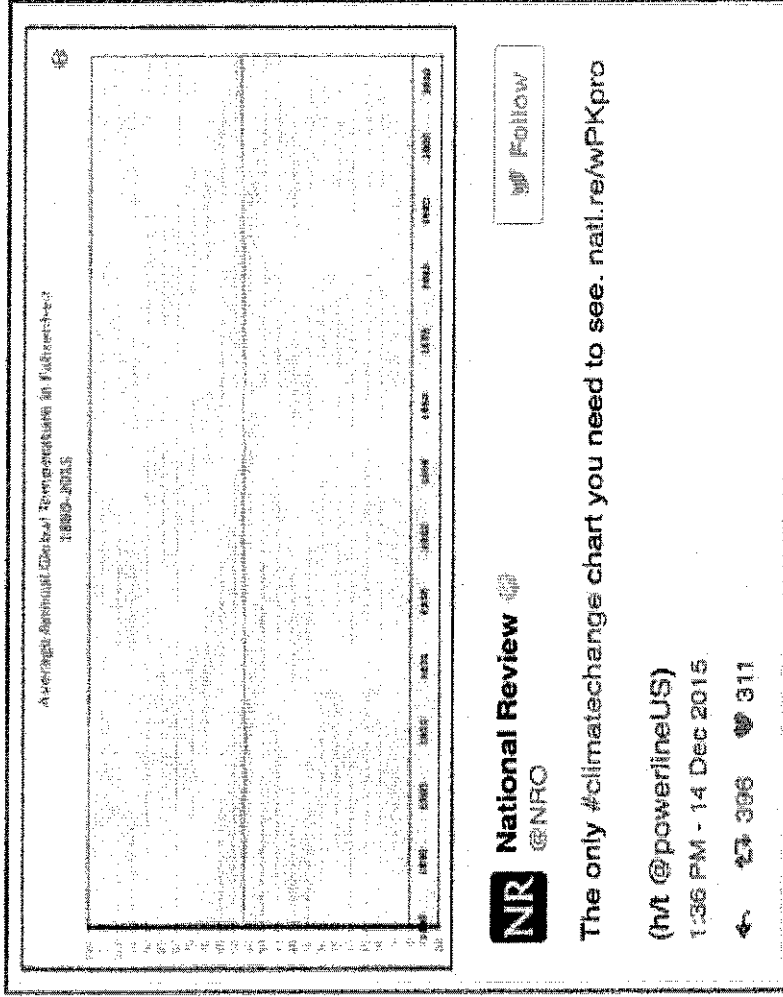


WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

Source: Carmen Fought and Karen Eisenhauer

COMPARISON

SYNTHESIS



1. What kind of data are represented?
2. Compare the x and y axis on each graph.
3. Who created each graph?
4. Why might the charts be so different? What conclusion does each creator want to you have? Why?

TEACHING TOLERANCE



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Critical Listening Guide

Context

1. Where is the speaker located?
2. When was this text composed?
3. What do you know about the speaker's identity? (family, gender, race, age, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, abilities, interests, language, etc.)
4. How does the speaker's context or identity influence the content of this text (i.e., what the speaker says)?
5. How does the speaker's context or identity influence the way the text is presented (i.e., how the speaker says it)?

Audience

1. Who is the speaker's intended or immediate audience?
2. Does the speaker make any assumption(s) make about the audience? Explain.
3. Who is the wider audience of this text? Who is listening or responding to this text?
4. What might a listener bring to this text that could influence the way she/he interprets the content?
5. How has the identity and context of the audience (the listener or responder) impacted what the speaker is saying and how she/he says it?

Purpose

1. Why was this text composed?
2. What is the speaker hoping to achieve?
3. How does the purpose of this text impact what the speaker says and how he or she says it?

Values

1. What values does the speaker communicate? How do you know?
2. How does the speaker's identity impact his or her values?
3. To what extent does the speaker help the listener understand his or her values?

Style

1. Connotation
2. Irony
3. Register (formal/informal)
4. Sarcasm
5. Tone

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Critical Listening Guide was adapted from *Perspectives for a Diverse America*, Teaching Tolerance's Common-Core aligned, literacy-based, anti-bias curriculum. teachperspectives.org.

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Immigrants (We Get the Job Done); K'naan featuring Residente, Riz MC, & Snow Tha Product

First, you'll be viewing the video for the song "Immigrants (We Get the Job Done)." The twist? You'll be listening to it with the volume off. As you watch, you will critically view and analyze the visual rhetoric. What is the argument that's being made? What purpose does each image and/or clip serve? The video effectively makes an argument on its own - without the accompaniment of a song; your task is to analyze that argument.

The Visual (brief description)	The Analysis (what purpose does this visual serve?)

Immigrants (We Get the Job Done): The Visual Argument

<p>1. The video begins with a group of people in a train. How would you describe them? Their emotions? Is there a change? What is the tone set up from the beginning and what purpose does it serve?</p>	<p>6. On the subway, some people have black stripes over their eyes. Eventually they remove them. Why do you think this occurs and what message is being sent?</p>
<p>2. Describe the space (e.g. living quarters, bunks, etc.) created in the video. How do you think it affects the people in the video? How does it affect the viewer?</p>	<p>7. Why are people riding on top of the train? What might this symbolize?</p>
<p>3. Given the title, what is the purpose of the people sewing the American flag? How the the symbol create meaning?</p>	<p>8. How does the mood and tone change when the police enter the train? How do you know?</p>
<p>4. There is a series of people working. What types of jobs are represented and what is their purpose?</p>	<p>9. Describe the final image shown with the trains. What is the message being created?</p>
<p>5. The camera reverses angles as the people stare at the camera. What effect does this have on the viewer? Why do you think the people are doing this?</p>	<p>10. Why do you think the entire video is based on modes of transportation? How does it relate to the title of the song?</p>

Immigrants (We Get the Job Done): Close Reading

You know, and it gets into this whole issue of border security
 You know, who's gonna say that the borders are secure?
 We've got the House and the Senate debating this issue
 And it's, it's really astonishing that in a country founded by immigrants
 "Immigrant" has somehow become a bad word
 So the debate rages on and we continue.

And just like that it's over, we tend to our wounded, we count our dead
 Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really means freedom
 Not yet

I got one job, two job, three when I need them
 I got five roommates in this one studio, but I never really see them
 And we all came America trying to get a lap dance from Lady Freedom
 But now Lady Liberty is acting like Hilary Banks with a pre-nup
 Man, I was brave, sailing on graves
 Don't think I didn't notice those tombstones disguised as waves
 I'm no dummy, here is something funny, you can be an immigrant without
 risking your lives

Or crossing these borders with thrifty supplies
 All you got to do is see the world with new eyes

Immigrants, we get the job done

Look how far I come
 Look how far I come
 Look how far I come
 We get the job done
 Look how far I come
 Look how far I come
 Look how far I come

Immigrants, we get the job done

It's a hard line when you're an import
 Baby boy, it's hard times
 When you ain't sent for
 Racists feed the belly of the beast
 With they pitchforks, rich chores
 Done by the people that get ignored
 Ya se armó (and it started)
 Ya se despertaron (and they awoke)

This line is from the musical lyrics and refers to the Battle of Yorktown during the American Revolution. George Washington helped the colonists defeat the British.

Why does the speaker have five roommates?

What is meant by "sailing on graves" and what effect does it have?

What do you think this speaker thinks about the topic of the song?

This line from Hamilton is said by Alexander Hamilton (an immigrant to the colonies) and the Marquis de Lafayette, a French general who helped win the battle of Yorktown.

Why is "look how far I've come" repeated? What meaning does it give?

What is an "import" and why do you think it was used instead of another word?

"Ya se armó" translates to "it has started." What has started?

It's a whole awakening
 La alarma ya sonó hace rato *(the alarm went off a while ago)*
 Los que quieren buscan *(those who want, search)*
 Pero nos apodan como vagos *(but they label us hoodlums)*
 We are the same ones
 Hustling on every level
 Ten los datos *(here's the details)*
 Walk a mile in our shoes
 Abrochense los zapatos *(better buckle your shoes)*

I been scoping ya dudes, ya'll ain't been working like I do
 I'll outwork you, it hurts you
 You claim I'm stealing jobs though
 Peter Piper claimed he picked them, he just underpaid Pablo
 But there ain't a paper trail when you living in the shadows
 We're America's ghost writers, the credit's only borrowed
 It's a matter of time before the checks all come
 But

Immigrants, we get the job done
 (repeat chorus)

The credit is only borrowed
 It's America's ghost writers, the credit's only borrowed
 It's America's ghost writers
 America's ghost writers
 America's ghost writers, the credit's only borrow-borrowed
 It's America's ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed
 It's America's ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed
 It's America's ghost writers, a credit is only borrowed
 It's

Immigrants, we get the job done
 Ay yo aye, immigrants we don't like that
 Na they don't play British empire strikes back
 They beating us like 808's and high hats
 At our own game of invasion, but this ain't Iraq
 Who these fugees what did they do for me
 But contribute new dreams
 Taxes and tools, swagger and food to eat
 Cool, they flee war zones, but the problem ain't ours
 Even if our bombs landed on them like the Mayflower
 Buckingham Palace or Capitol Hill
 Blood of my ancestors had that all built

Who do you think the speaker is talking to? What is her message? How is it different than the last speaker? Who does this speaker represent?

Do you know the Peter Piper story? How does the speaker change it and for what purpose?

What is meant by the line about "ghost writers"? Why is the "credit only borrowed"? What argument is being made?

Who do you think the speaker is talking to? What is his message? How is it different than the last speaker? Who does this speaker represent?

What is the purpose of mentioning taxes, tools, swagger, and food?

Why are Buckingham Palace and Capitol Hill referred to?

It's the ink you print on your dollar bill, oil you spill
Thin red lines on the flag you hoist when you kill
But still we just say "look how far I come"
Hindustan, Pakistan, to London
To a galaxy far from their ignorance
'Cause

Immigrants, we get the job done
Por tierra o por agua
Identidad falsa

Brincamos muros o flotamos en balsas
La peleamos como Sandino en Nicaragua
Somos como las plantas que crecen sin agua
Sin pasaporte americano
Porque la mitad de gringolandia es terreno mexicano
Hay que ser bien hijo de puta
Nosotros les sembramos el árbol y ellos se comen la frutas
Somos los que cruzaron

Aquí vinimos a buscar el oro que nos robaron
Tenemos mas trucos que la policía secreta
Metimos la casa completa en una maleta
Con un pico, una pala
Y un rastrillo

Te construimos un castillo

Como es que dice el coro cabrón?

Immigrants, we get the job done
(repeat chorus)

TRANSLATION

By land or by water

False identity

We jump walls or float by rafts

We fight it like Sandino in Nicaragua

We're like the plants that grow without water

Without American passports

Because half of "gringolandia" is Mexican territory

You would have to be a real son of a bitch*

We plant the trees and they are the ones that eat the fruit

We are the ones that crossed

We come here to look for the gold that they stole from us

We have more tricks than the secret police

We stuffed our whole house in a suitcase

With a pick, a shovel, and a rake we built you a castle

How does the chorus go cabrón*?

Immigrants we get the job done!

This section refers to *Star Wars* twice. Why do you think so? What is the "galaxy" the speaker refers to?

Who does this new speaker represent? How do you know?

What is meant by "gringolandia" and how does history help you understand the speaker's reference?

How does the speaker describe the life of this group of immigrants? What message is being sent?

Who do you think is the intended audience of this piece? What is the overall message being sent? How do you know?