

# Key Concepts of Media Literacy

## **Media messages are constructed.**

Media messages are created by producers, and everything that you see in a media message — the size, shape, and color of the actors, the camera angles, the sounds, the fonts — have been selected by the producers to achieve a desired effect. And those same producers are bringing their own views and personal histories into that message, whether they do it deliberately or not.

## **Media messages are created with a purpose.**

- A. To express an opinion or point of view
- B. To educate through factual content and information
- C. To persuade viewers and listeners to buy a product or think a certain way
- D. To entertain an audience, through media such as video games or Hollywood movies

## **Media messages are constructed using a unique language.**

Very specific techniques are used in the creation of media. These techniques (lighting, sound, talent, editing choices, camera angle, design, etc.) are used to relay the intention (or purpose) of the creator/producer of the message. For example, if you are watching a love story and the heartthrob enters the room, special lights, slow dissolves, or music will be used during the scene to show how this person is special. Or, if you are watching a horror movie and the defenseless woman is walking down the street and the attacker is about to leap out of a bush, chances are the lighting will be dark and gloomy and the music will be suspenseful. Variables like music, cuts, dissolves, or lighting are used in any media message to help create a mood, set a scene, or comment on a character.

## **Media messages are representations.**

It is impossible to represent an experience, perspective or any part of reality in its totality. As a result, media messages are generalizations of an experience or point of view. Often times this leads to misinformation, over-generalizations, and stereotypes.

## **Different people experience the same media messages in different ways.**

You get out of a media message what you bring to it. Who you are (your age, race, class, experience) greatly affects your point of view and how you will interpret any given media. If a Vietnam war veteran goes to see a Vietnam war movie, for example, he is likely to interpret and experience the film much differently than someone who was protesting the war at that time.

## **Media have embedded values and perspective.**

No media message is completely objective. The author or producer of any message is influenced by his/her own point of view, beliefs, and value system. For this reason, journalists can aspire to true objectivity but will never be able to achieve it.

*(created by Just Think)*