

Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Experiences

Media literacy requires us to actively consider all our media experiences, from scrolling social media to watching news at the dentist’s office. The term media experiences accounts for both the media text (what many think of as “the message”) and the environment—both physical and technological— in which we encounter the text.

The key questions below can help us to think critically about the messages we encounter, the platforms and technologies that help shape those messages, and our own personal contexts that we bring to each media experience. Not all questions may apply to every media experience, and there may be others you find yourself asking in addition to these. Some questions will have more than one answer, but for all questions, we should also be sure to probe for evidence, asking ourselves, How do I know that? What makes me say that?

Authors and Audiences

Authorship	Who made this? Who was and was not involved in the creation of this? When was this made?
Purposes	Why was this made? What does this want me to do? Who is the target audience?
Economics	Who paid for this? Who makes money from this?

Messages and Meanings

Content	What does this want me to think (or think about)? What could someone learn from this? What meanings, values and perspectives are obvious, and what are implied? What is left out that might be important to know?
Techniques and Format	How does the format or method of communication impact my experience with the media? Where or how was it shared with the public? What techniques are used to communicate meaning, and why? How do those techniques communicate this message?

Reflections and Evaluations

Interpretation	What is my interpretation? What can I learn about myself by reflecting on my interpretation? How might different people understand this message differently?
Responses	How does this make me feel? How do my emotions influence my interpretation of this? If I feel the need to respond, what actions could I take that would feel productive?
Credibility	Is this fact, opinion, or something else? What are the sources of the information, ideas, or assertions? How credible is this (and how do you know)? How do I know I can trust this source to give me credible information about this topic?