

# 1

## UNIT 1: ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

### Unit Overview

When students begin asking questions about what they watch, see, and read in the media, they strengthen reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. The activities in this unit introduce students to basic concepts used to analyze messages, including purpose, target audience, and attention-getting techniques. By exploring how different types of media messages communicate, children become more aware of how messages are constructed to achieve different effects—to inform, to persuade, and to entertain.

Students create a poster that displays a print media message and answers five critical questions that help them consider audience, purpose, and point of view.

Activities 1.2 and 1.3 are especially useful for younger children and emerging readers.

The “essential questions” of this unit are:

- **What are the different purposes of media messages?**
- **What techniques are used to attract the attention of a reader, listener, or viewer?**
- **What clues suggest the target audience for different types of media messages?**
- **What questions are important when watching TV, listening, or reading to become an active media consumer?**



# 1

## UNIT 1: ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Learn how to apply basic concepts, including target audience, purpose, and attention-getting techniques used to create media messages—in books, newspapers, TV, video games, and more.

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

#### 1.1 Who's the Author and What's the Purpose?

Identify the author and the purpose of different types of messages.

#### 1.2 Analyzing Photos V1.2

Use still photos to analyze construction elements.

#### 1.3 What Grabs You?

Work in small groups to make a list of “What gets your attention?” in books, TV shows, music, video games, and magazines.

#### 1.4 Who's the Target Audience?

Identify target audience using short reading passages.

#### 1.5 Asking Critical Questions V1.5

Explore the five critical questions for analyzing the video clips provided.

### PRODUCTION ACTIVITY

#### Create a Poster

Create a poster to analyze a media message using the five critical questions.

# 1

## UNIT 1: ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

### CONNECTIONS TO MARYLAND STATE CONTENT STANDARDS

The *Assignment: Media Literacy* curriculum has been designed to align with Maryland State Content Standards. Many of the activities and lessons are modeled upon the structure and format used in the MSPAP tests for language arts and social studies.

For each unit, the Grade 3 standards are listed first for each subject area, followed by the Grade 5 standards. The numbers at the end of each line refer to specific instructional goals identified in the Maryland Content Standards.

Use the chart below to identify the specific instructional objectives developed in each unit of the program.

#### ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS

##### Grade 3 Content Standards

1.3.1	Concepts of Print and Structural Features of Text (#5)
1.3.5	Comprehension and Interpretation of Informational Text (#3,5,6,7,8)
2.3.1	Characteristics of Literary Genres (all)
2.3.4	Evaluation of Literary Works (all)
3.3.1	Organization and Focus (#1,3)
3.3.6	Informational Writing (#1,2)
3.3.7	Persuasive Writing (all)
4.3.2	Comprehension and Application of Standard English Language Conventions (#1,2,3)
5.3.1	Active Listening Strategies (all)
5.3.2	Comprehension and Analysis (#1,2,3)
6.3.1	Organization and Delivery Strategies (#1,2,3)

#### ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS

##### Grade 3 Content Standards

1.3.1	Read, write, and represent whole numbers and simple fractions using symbols, words, and models
1.3.2	Compare, order, and describe whole numbers using place value concepts

#### ELEMENTARY HEALTH

##### K-3 Content Standards

Outcome 2	Accessing Information (#3.2,3.3,3.1)
Outcome 3	Health Behaviors (#1.3,3.2,3.3)
Outcome 4	Communication Skills (#1.1,1.5,3.5)
Outcome 5	Goal Setting and Decision Making (#1.3)

**ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS****Grade 5 Content Standards**

1.5.1	Concepts of Print and Structural Features of Text (#1)
1.5.5	Comprehension and Interpretations of Informational Text (#1,2,5)
1.5.6	Evaluation of Informational Text (#1,3)
2.5.2	Comprehension, Interpretation, and Analysis of Text (#1,2,5)
3.5.1	Organization and Focus (#1,2,3)
3.5.3	Revision and Evaluation of Writing (#1,2,3,4)
3.5.6	Informational Writing (#1,2)
3.5.7	Persuasive Writing (all)
4.5.2	Comprehension and Application of Standard English Language Conventions (#1,2,3)
5.5.1	Active Listening Strategies (all)
5.5.2	Comprehension and Analysis (#1,3)
6.5.1	Organization and Delivery Strategies (#1,2,3)

**ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS****Grade 5 Content Standards**

8.0	Process of Communication (#1-7)
9.0	Process of Reasoning (make predictions, analyze statements, inductive and deductive thinking)
10.0	Process of Connections (relate and apply mathematics in other content areas and daily life)

**ELEMENTARY HEALTH****Grades 4 and 5 Content Standards**

Outcome 1	Health Content Concepts (all)
Outcome 2	Accessing Information (#3.2,3.3,3.6)
Outcome 3	Health Behaviors (#1.2,3.3,3.5)
Outcome 4	Communication Skills (#1.1,1.5)
Outcome 5	Goal Setting & Decision Making (#1.3)

**ELEMENTARY MUSIC****Content Standards**

Outcome IV	Aesthetic Criticism: Expectation A, Indicator 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
------------	--



# TEACHER NOTES

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.1 | WHO'S THE AUTHOR AND WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

*In this activity, students read selected paragraphs and look for clues about the purpose of the media messages. Students understand how messages can have different purposes—to inform, to entertain, or to persuade—and that an author's purpose shapes the choices they make in creating a media message.*

### Background

As an introductory activity, this classroom reading and discussion provides an opportunity to consider a basic question used to analyze media messages: “Who is the author and what is the purpose?”

### Getting Started

Review the concept of “author” with children. Make sure they understand that authors are people who create media messages. Sometimes we think of authors as only those people who write professionally published books, but students will value writing if you recognize that they are “authors,” too.

For young children, we can use the term “author” to refer to all those people who create messages designed to communicate. For example, you can explain to children that:

- A photographer is a type of “author” who composes a message using a camera.
- A film producer is a type of “author” who composes a message using actors, scripts, and a camera.
- A newspaper editor is a type of “author” who composes a message using words, headlines, and photos to tell about the day's events.

### Three Purposes of Communication

Next, introduce the concept of purpose. A purpose is a goal. Different authors have different purposes in communicating. You can introduce the three purposes of communication by putting each concept on the blackboard while explaining each of them:

- Some authors provide information or give you new ideas. Their purpose is **to inform**.
- Some authors take you to an imaginary world to make you laugh or cry or to meet new people who have adventures. Their purpose is **to entertain**.
- Some authors try to get you to do something or believe something or buy something. Their purpose is **to persuade**.

Use Activity Sheets 1.1 (A) and 1.1 (B). Ask children to read each passage and look for clues about the purpose.

You might ask students to imagine that they have written these passages—what is their goal in writing it down?

The concept “to persuade” is generally the most difficult for students to understand. Try using role playing to help make this concept clear—have students act out what they say to their mom when they want a special treat, for example. This may help the concept of persuasion to become clear to young children.

### Questions and Answers:

With all the responses, it’s more important to allow students to provide their reasons for selecting the purposes than getting the “correct” answer. Some of the answers have more than one plausible answer.

1. **Purpose = to entertain.** Students may recognize that Andy is a character in a story who is planning a party.
2. **Purpose = to inform.** Students will identify that this passage provides facts about the life of St. Patrick.
3. **Purpose = to entertain, to inform, and to persuade.** Students may recognize the repetition of “horribly unhealthy” as a clue to using something gross to entertain. They may also see the case of the woman as having an entertaining function. Some students may appreciate that the passage is providing a type of persuasive warning—don’t eat earth or small objects.
4. **Purpose = to persuade.** Students may recognize that this passage is providing information about a game, but its goal is to make the game seem attractive.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.1 (A)

### WHO'S THE AUTHOR AND WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the purpose that fits best.  
Give one reason for your choice.

1. "First," said Raggedy Andy, "I'll make a list of all the things that need to be done. That's the best way to start." "Let's see," he said. "We'll have the party outside in the backyard."



- ☐ to inform      Your reason \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to persuade      \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to entertain      \_\_\_\_\_

2. Patrick is Ireland's patron saint. He changed the history of Ireland and he is well loved. But Patrick was not born in Ireland. He was born in England between the years 372 and 390. His parents did not even name him Patrick. We think they named him "Maewyn."



- ☐ to inform      Your reason \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to persuade      \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to entertain      \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.1 (B)**

**WHO'S THE AUTHOR AND  
WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?**

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the purpose that fits best. Give one reason for your choice.

- 3.** Just look at the horribly unhealthy things that some people eat. Some people eat earth. This is horribly unhealthy because it's teeming with germs and tastes disgusting. In 1927, a woman complained of stomach pains. She was rushed to the hospital in Ontario, Canada. There, doctors found that she had swallowed 2,533 small metal objects—that's horribly unhealthy and could have killed her.

- ☐ to inform      Your reason \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to persuade      \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to entertain      \_\_\_\_\_

- 4.** Crime Stoppers needs your help! Put together the 60-piece puzzle, then find the magic crime tools and rub them to reveal hidden clues. Solve 14 crime cases and win the prize. It's the game for you if you think like a real detective. Only \$14.95.

- ☐ to inform      Your reason \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to persuade      \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ to entertain      \_\_\_\_\_





# TEACHER NOTES

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.2 | ANALYZING PHOTOS

*This activity provides an opportunity to encourage students' descriptive writing in response to still photographs. This activity explores how photos can attract attention and involve the viewer by both their content and their layout and design.*

### Getting Started

Pass out the activity sheet and ask children to look at the video. Show each of the still photos and use the pause button to freeze the image on screen.

For each photo ask children to write a descriptive sentence explaining which elements in the photo attract attention.

After each of the photos is shown, ask students to read their sentences aloud and provide supportive feedback.

You can also use this as an oral communication activity. Encourage students to notice a wide range of different elements within each photo. Don't rush the process of looking carefully at these images.

Invite children to notice the content—the specific objects, animals, and people that are shown. But encourage them to notice the colors, the way the characters are looking, their clothing and body position, and other elements of the design of these images.

### Extension

Children can be invited to think about the person who created the photograph. We don't often reflect on the person behind the camera, yet this is an essential element of becoming media literate.

Ask, "What is happening outside the frame?" Encourage children to use their imaginations to invent plausible objects and events that we have been left out of the photo at the time the image was made.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.2

### ANALYZING PHOTOS

**Instructions:** Look at each of the still photos and write down what attracts your attention.

Photo #1

---

---

Photo #2

---

---

Photo #3

---

---

Photo #4

---

---





# TEACHER NOTES

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.3 | WHAT GRABS YOU?

*This activity involves students in comparing and contrasting differences between mass media—books, newspapers, music, video games, magazines, TV, and the computer.*

### Getting Started

This is an excellent small group activity. Divide students into groups of three or four. Read aloud with students the instructions on the top of the activity sheet—it's best to give one student in each team a copy of the activity sheet plus an additional sheet of writing paper.

You may want to assign roles for team members—time keeper, note-taker, leader, and editor are good roles for elementary students.

- A **timekeeper** contributes by sharing ideas with the team and makes sure that the project is completed within the deadline given by the teacher by telling the team how many minutes are remaining.
- A **note-taker** contributes by sharing ideas with the team and writes down the ideas of all team members.
- A **leader** contributes by sharing ideas with the team and makes sure everyone is doing their jobs.
- An **editor** contributes by sharing ideas with the team and reads over and checks the spelling and word usage of the work of the note-taker.

Ask students to create a list by working together. Give them a specific, limited time to complete the activity.

### **Charting Student Responses**

Invite students to put their lists on chart paper or write them on the blackboard. There are no right or wrong answers to this activity—different students will find different elements to be effective in attracting and holding their attention.

Some examples of responses include:

- Book—picture on cover, colors on cover, size of book, spacing between words
- Music—beat and rhythm, sound of voice, instruments used, musician’s name and reputation
- Video game—colors and graphics, speed, music, and type of action
- Magazine—photographs, topics presented, celebrities featured, familiar ideas
- TV—appearance of actors, storyline and problem, familiarity with situation, action-adventure, music, colors
- Computer—graphics, colors, photos, interactivity

Discuss with students the similarities and differences between the lists. You might want to circle or mark the most commonly shared answers that are found in a number of different groups.

Reflect with students on how you might use this list if you were creating a book, a newspaper, a musical song, a video game, a magazine, a TV show, or an Internet website.

## WHAT GRABS YOU?

**Instructions:** When you create a media message, you must use specific techniques to attract and hold the attention of a reader, viewer, or listener. Pick one of the questions from the list below. With your team, figure out what techniques work best to attract and hold people's attention to different types of media. List five techniques on a separate sheet of paper. Then share your ideas with the class.



Examples:

What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **newspaper reader**? Answer: color photos, big headlines, stories about unusual events, sports news, ads with pictures.



1. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **book reader**?
2. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **music listener**?
3. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **video-game player**?
4. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **magazine reader**?
5. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **TV viewer**?
6. What techniques attract and hold the attention of a **computer user**?





# TEACHER NOTES

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.4 | WHO'S THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

*This activity introduces students to the concept of audience, showing how different kinds of writing are targeted to specific types of people. Audiences can be understood by identifying their age, their gender, their social class, and their interests.*

### Getting Started

Introduce the idea of **target audience** by asking children about their favorite TV shows and their parents' favorite TV shows. Share your own favorite TV shows with students and point out that people of different ages and genders have different ideas about what makes a show "good."

The same is true about books, newspapers, and other print media. Give students the four activity sheets and read the directions aloud. Students should read the paragraphs and identify the target audience for each. You may want to give out only one or two of the paragraphs or give different paragraphs to different students in the class. The activity sheets are numbered 1.4 (A) through (D). Each passage is targeted to a different type of reader.

You may want to read each paragraph one at a time and discuss students' responses. This will support the understanding that there are no right or wrong answers, but that all answers should be supported with reasoning.

When students give responses, you should ask, "Why did you give that answer?" and encourage students to provide a reason.

Some children will provide reasons by using their own life experience or their prior knowledge. Other children will answer by noticing features of the print text—pointing out specific facts or information from the passage, for example. Others will notice the words used. Encourage all of these different reasoning strategies and point them out to children.

When children think about the target audience for a media message, they begin to notice how it was constructed to appeal to the intended audience. This is an important literacy skill.

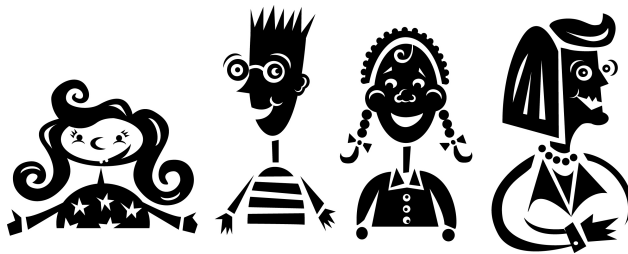
**UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.4 (A)**

**WHO'S THE TARGET AUDIENCE?**

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the type of people who would like this message most. Be prepared to share your choices and give reasons for your answers.

1. Suffering at a hot desk or workstation while others enjoy air-conditioned comfort? Does your spouse prefer the bedroom warmer than you? Introducing KoolZone, your personal air cooler. The KoolZone effectively spot-cools the area seven feet in front of it. It's compact and lightweight so it's great for the office, home, or anywhere you'd like to be a little cooler. \$119.95.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> small children 2–7 | <input type="radio"/> females             |
| <input type="radio"/> children 8–12      | <input type="radio"/> males               |
| <input type="radio"/> teens 13–17        |   |
| <input type="radio"/> young adults 18–25 | <input type="radio"/> poor people         |
| <input type="radio"/> adults 26–55       | <input type="radio"/> middle-class people |
| <input type="radio"/> older adults 56+   | <input type="radio"/> wealthy people      |



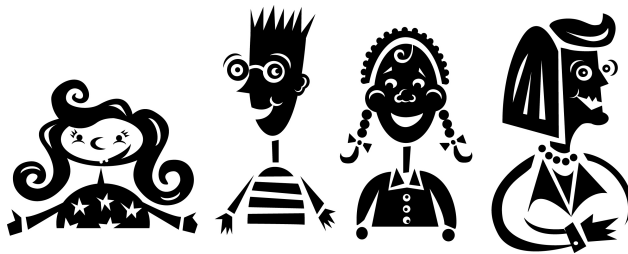
**UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.4 (B)**

**WHO'S THE TARGET AUDIENCE?**

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the type of people who would like this message most. Be prepared to share your choices and give reasons for your answers.

- 2.** Oh, no! An alien spaceship has kidnapped you! Don't be too afraid. You can survive if you have what it takes. Here are some things you'll definitely need—and some things you probably won't: food, water, slingshot, disguise, brains, blow dryer, money, translator, map, oxygen.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> small children 2–7 | <input type="radio"/> females             |
| <input type="radio"/> children 8–12      | <input type="radio"/> males               |
| <input type="radio"/> teens 13–17        |   |
| <input type="radio"/> young adults 18–25 | <input type="radio"/> poor people         |
| <input type="radio"/> adults 26–55       | <input type="radio"/> middle-class people |
| <input type="radio"/> older adults 56+   | <input type="radio"/> wealthy people      |





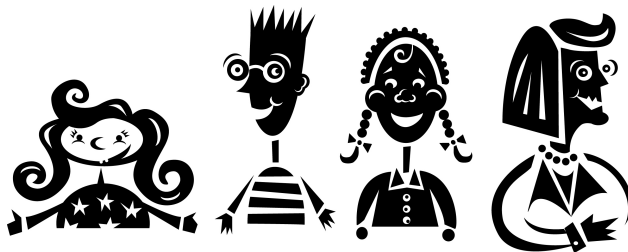
**UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.4 (C)**

**WHO'S THE TARGET AUDIENCE?**

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the type of people who would like this message most. Be prepared to share your choices and give reasons for your answers.

3. One evening, before she went to bed, Little Star walked out to pasture to say good-night to the horses. As usual, as soon as they spotted her, they trotted toward her eagerly, tossing their heads in greeting. But something was wrong. Swift Eagle was not among them!

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> small children 2–7 | <input type="radio"/> females             |
| <input type="radio"/> children 8–12      | <input type="radio"/> males               |
| <input type="radio"/> teens 13–17        |   |
| <input type="radio"/> young adults 18–25 | <input type="radio"/> poor people         |
| <input type="radio"/> adults 26–55       | <input type="radio"/> middle-class people |
| <input type="radio"/> older adults 56+   | <input type="radio"/> wealthy people      |



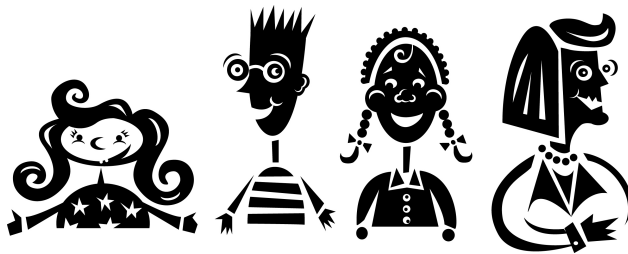
**UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.4 (D)**

**WHO'S THE TARGET AUDIENCE?**

**Instructions:** Read the passages and choose the type of people who would like this message most. Be prepared to share your choices and give reasons for your answers.

4. In 1983, the Pioneer space probe became the first man-made object to leave our solar system. It carried a message from people on Earth, in case any other form of life should ever find the probe. This communication was in the form of a pictogram, showing a man and a woman, the spacecraft, and the position of the sun's planets. Universal communication needs to remain simple.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> small children 2–7 | <input type="radio"/> females             |
| <input type="radio"/> children 7–12      | <input type="radio"/> males               |
| <input type="radio"/> teens 13–17        |   |
| <input type="radio"/> young adults 18–25 | <input type="radio"/> poor people         |
| <input type="radio"/> adults 25–55       | <input type="radio"/> middle-class people |
| <input type="radio"/> older adults 55+   | <input type="radio"/> wealthy people      |





# TEACHER NOTES

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.5 | ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

*This activity pulls together all the different ways of asking questions about media messages and provides an opportunity for students to use the critical questions with three different types of TV images: a commercial, a documentary, and a situation comedy.*

This activity is an ideal preparation for the production activity for this unit.

### Getting Started

Review the video for this unit before implementing this instructional activity.

Pass out copies of activity sheet 1.5 to students. Explain to children that these critical questions help you become an active viewer.

Show the opening sequence of the video segment that presents the voices of children analyzing a department store ad. Then review the critical questions by giving students a copy of the activity sheet.

Explain to students that you will be showing them a short segment of a video—not the whole thing, only a tiny part. Just by looking at the short video, children can make guesses about the possible answers to the questions.

There are three segments on the tape to analyze using activity sheet 1.5:

- animal documentary
- movie promo for *Stuart Little*
- situation comedy scene

It's important to point out to students that these questions are a type of guessing game and that there are no right and wrong answers.

### Analyzing Video Segments

Show the first part of the video and give students time to write their answers. If you like, you may also want to use this activity as a discussion-centered activity.

Share ideas as a large group and note the most creative or well-reasoned responses. Encourage students to listen carefully to each other's responses.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## UNIT 1 | ACTIVITY 1.5

### ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

**Instructions:** Study each media message carefully to answer these questions.

1. Who created this message? List the types of jobs of the people involved in the construction of the message.

---



---



---

2. What is the purpose of this message?

☐ to inform                      ☐ to persuade                      ☐ to entertain

Mark your choice and explain your reasons for your choice.

---

3. Who is the target audience for this message?

---

4. What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?

---

5. What has been left out of this message?

---



# TEACHER NOTES



## UNIT 1

### MAKE A POSTER

Create a visual display that analyzes a media message by using the five critical questions.

You may want to provide different types of media messages and give them to students to analyze. Or you may want to allow students to bring in samples of print media from home. Here are some examples of appropriate “texts” for students to analyze:

- A print ad
- A newspaper or magazine article
- A website
- A photo

#### **Review the Checklist**

Use the Production Activity Worksheet to introduce the project. Read aloud the steps involved in the production that are provided. Review the steps involved in selecting and creating a poster. With support from a Technology Coordinator, you may consider helping students to create their own simple web pages for this activity.

#### **Evaluation**

Review the Evaluation Rubric with students so they understand what criteria they are expected to fulfill in completing this assignment. You might want students to evaluate each other’s work using this evaluation sheet or you might want to use this as an evaluation tool yourself.

#### **Publishing Student Work on [www.AssignmentMediaLit.com](http://www.AssignmentMediaLit.com)**

See the Resources section on page 151 how you or your students can send completed posters to be published on the *Assignment: Media Literacy* website.

# ASSIGNMENT



## UNIT 1

### MAKE A POSTER

( **ASSIGNMENT:** *Create a poster using a media message and some of the critical questions to show what you notice about how the message was constructed.*

#### CHECKLIST TO COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY:

##### Select a media message and analyze using questions.

- ☐ Select a media message to analyze. Find a picture or draw a picture to represent that media message.
- ☐ Write your answers (in complete sentences) to the questions below. Give reasons and use description in your responses.

##### Create a presentation board or web page to display your answers.

- ☐ Arrange these sentences around your images. Write a headline for each one. Create your display as a poster or a web page.



- WHO MADE THIS MESSAGE?
- WHAT TECHNIQUES ARE USED TO ATTRACT AND HOLD ATTENTION?
- WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?
- WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?
- WHAT IS LEFT OUT OF THIS MESSAGE?

# EVALUATION



## UNIT 1

### MAKE A POSTER

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Sentences are well written.

4	The writer uses correct sentence structure with no spelling errors.
3	The writing has some spelling errors.
2	The writer has not edited the document to correct many spelling errors.
1	The writing is hard to understand and confusing to read.

#### Sentences use reasoning.

4	All sentences use details and description in answering the questions.
3	Some sentences use details and description.
2	Sentences lack details and description.
1	Sentences don't provide meaningful answers to the questions.

#### Poster is designed effectively.

4	Photo or artwork, sentences, and headlines are arranged in a pleasing way, using white space, color, and effective design.
3	Photo or artwork, sentences and headlines are placed on the page without effective use of white space and effective design.
2	Elements of the poster are placed on the page in a sloppy or careless fashion.
1	Elements of the poster (artwork, sentences, headlines) are missing.

Comments:

Grade:

