

# Media Literacy Project – Student Analysis & Creation of Public Service Announcements



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# N A M L E

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

## KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN ANALYZING MEDIA MESSAGES

*formerly AMLA (www.NAMLE.net)*

<b>AUDIENCE &amp; AUTHORSHIP</b>	<b>AUTHORSHIP</b>	Who made this message?
	<b>PURPOSE</b>	Why was this made?
		Who is the target audience (and how do you know)?
	<b>ECONOMICS</b>	Who paid for this?
	<b>IMPACT</b>	Who might benefit from this message? Who might be harmed by it? Why might this message matter to me?
<b>RESPONSE</b>	What kinds of actions might I take in response to this message?	
<b>MESSAGES &amp; MEANINGS</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>	What is this about (and what makes you think that)? What ideas, values, information, and/or points of view are overt? Implied? What is left out of this message that might be important to know?
	<b>TECHNIQUES</b>	What techniques are used? Why were those techniques used? How do they communicate the message?
	<b>INTER- PRETATIONS</b>	How might different people understand this message differently? What is my interpretation of this and what do I learn about myself from my reaction or interpretation?
<b>REPRESENTATIONS &amp; REALITY</b>	<b>CONTEXT</b>	When was this made? Where or how was it shared with the public?
	<b>CREDIBILITY</b>	Is this fact, opinion, or something else? How credible is this (and what makes you think that)? What are the sources of the information, ideas, or assertions?

## **CML's Five Key Questions** ***Deconstruction***

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

## **CML's 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.



[www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)



# Argument, Persuasion, or Propaganda?

	Argument	Persuasion	Propaganda
<b>Goal</b>	Discover the "truth"	Promote an opinion on a particular position that is rooted in truth	Offer "political advertising" for a particular position that may distort the truth or include false information
<b>General Technique</b>	Offers good reasoning and evidence to persuade an audience to accept a "truth"	Uses personal, emotional, or moral appeal to convince an audience to adopt a particular point of view	Relies on emotions and values to persuade an audience to accept a particular position
<b>Methods</b>	<p>Considers other perspectives on the issue</p> <p>Offers facts that support the reasons (in other words, provides evidence)</p> <p>Predicts and evaluates the consequences of accepting the argument</p>	<p>May consider other perspectives on the issue</p> <p>Blends facts and emotion to make its case, relying often on opinion</p> <p>May predict the results of accepting the position, especially if the information will help convince the reader to adopt the opinion</p>	<p>Focuses on its own message, without considering other positions</p> <p>Relies on biases and assumptions and may distort or alter evidence to make the case</p> <p>Ignores the consequence of accepting a particular position</p>

# A Brief History of Public Service Announcements

In the United States a public service announcement (PSA) is defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in a formal and detailed manner. A PSA is "any announcement (including network) for which no charge is made and which promotes programs, activities, or services of federal, state, or local governments (e.g., recruiting, sale of bonds, etc.) or the programs, activities or services of non-profit organizations (e.g., United Way, Red Cross blood donations, etc.) and other announcements regarded as serving community interests, excluding time signals, routine weather announcements and promotional announcements."

PSAs came into being with the entry of the United States into World War II. Radio broadcasters and advertising agencies offered their skills and facilities toward the war effort and established the War Advertising Council which became the official homefront propaganda arm of the Office of War Information. Print, outdoor advertising and especially radio became the carriers of such messages as "Loose lips sink ships," "Keep 'em Rolling" and a variety of exhortations to buy War Bonds.

By the end of the war, the practice of volunteering free air time had become institutionalized as had the renamed Advertising Council, which now served as a facilitating agency and clearing house for nationwide campaigns which soon became a familiar part of daily life. "Smokey the Bear" was invented by the Ad Council to personify its "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" campaign; "A Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Waste" raised millions for the United Negro College Fund; the American Cancer Society's "Fight Cancer with a Checkup and a Check" raised public awareness as well as funds for research and patient services.

The ultimate demonstration of the effectiveness of public service announcements came in 1969. Two years earlier, a federal court upheld the FCC's application of the Fairness Doctrine to cigarette advertising on radio and television, and ordered stations to broadcast "a significant amount of time" for anti-smoking messages.



U.S. Department of Transportation PSA  
Photo courtesy of the Advertising Council

This effectively meant one PSA for every three tobacco commercials. The PSAs proved so effective that smoking rates began to decline for the first time in history, the tobacco industry withdrew all cigarette advertising, and Congress made such advertising illegal after 1971. Paradoxically, yet in further support of the success of the PSAs, with the passage of that law the bulk of the anti-smoking messages disappeared and cigarette consumption rose again for a while. On balance, however, public health professionals credit the PSAs with having saved many millions of lives by initiating the decline in American smoking.

During the 1960s and 1970s, as media access became an issue, the Advertising Council, and to some extent the very concept of public service announcements, came under criticism as being too narrow in focus. David Paletz points out in *Politics in Public Service Advertising on Television* that campaigns such as "Only You Can Stop Pollution" were seen as distracting attention from the role of industry in creating demands for excessive energy and in creating dangerous waste products. Other campaigns struck critics as too eager to build consensus around seemingly inconsequential but carefully non-partisan concerns. The networks sought to distance themselves from the Ad Council, and to set their own agenda by dealing directly with the organizations themselves. Local stations were under additional pressure from innumerable new community-based organizations seeking airtime; many stations created and produced announcements in an effort to meet local needs especially since the FCC had come to require that stations report how many PSAs they presented and at what hour.

In the 1980s, a number of stations long closely held by their founders' families, went public or changed hands. The resulting debt load, mounting costs, as well as increased competition from the new media, all resulted in demands for greater profitability. Most unsold airtime was devoted to promoting the station or network. Moreover, deregulation saw government relinquishing the model of trusteeship of a scarce national resource in favor of a marketplace model. To some extent offsetting this trend, were growing concerns about the illicit drug problem. The Advertising Media Partnership for a Drug-free America ("This is your brain..." over a shot of an egg: "This is your brain on drugs. Any questions?" over a shot of an egg frying), was set up by a group of media and advertising agency executives, spearheaded by Capital Cities Broadcasting Company, then completing the take-over of ABC.

Rallying unprecedented support, the organization mounted the largest public service campaign ever. Indeed, at its height, with more than \$365 million a year worth of print lineage and airtime, it rivaled the largest advertising campaign. Consistent with contemporary thinking about the nature of social marketing, the campaign was solidly grounded in McGuire's paradigm of behavioral change: awareness of a problem by a number of people will result in a smaller number who undergo a change of attitude toward the problem; an even smaller number from this second group will actually change their behavior. During the first years of the campaign, its research team documented considerable difference in attitudinal and behavioral change among young people. Later results were less hopeful as a number of societal factors changed and media time and space became less readily available.

Other recent developments included two distinctive strategies. The Entertainment Industries Council combined high-profile film, television and recording stars doing network PSAs with depiction efforts: producers, writers and directors incorporated seat belt use, designated drivers, and AIDS warnings and anti-drug references in story lines. The other major development, championed and often carried out by consultants, was the appearance of the Total Station Project. Stations would adopt a public service theme, and, often after months of planning and preparation, coordinate PSAs with station editorials, heavily promoted public affairs programs and features in the local news broadcasts. Total Station Projects most frequently are aired during sweep periods, the months when the station's ratings determine the next year's commercial time prices.

-George Dessart

## FURTHER READING

Atkin, Charles, and Lawrence Wallack editors. *Mass Communication and Public Health: Complexities and Conflicts*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1990.

Dessart, George. *More Than You Want to Know About PSA's: A Guide to Production and Placement of Effective Public Service Announcements on Radio and Television*. Boston, Massachusetts: National Broadcast Association for Public Affairs, 1982.

Fritschler, A. Lee. *Smoking and Politics: Policy Making and the Federal Bureaucracy*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969; 4th edition, 1989.

Ginsburg, Douglas H., Michael H. Botein and Mark K. Director. *Regulation of the Electronic Mass Media: Law and Policy for Radio, Television, Cable and the New Technologies*. 2nd ed. St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing, 1979; 2nd edition, 1991.

Gunther, Albert C. "Perceived Persuasive Effects of Product Commercials and Public Service Announcements: Third-person Effects in New Domains." *Communication Research* (Newbury Park, California), October 1992.

Lorch, Elizabeth Puzles. "Program Context, Sensation Seeking, and Attention to Televised Anti-drug Public Service Announcements." *Human Communication Research* (New Brunswick, New Jersey), March 1994.

Paletz, David L., Roberta E. Pearson, and Donald L. Willis. *Politics in Public Service Advertising on Television*. New York: Praeger, 1977.

This article from - <http://tinyurl.com/briefhistoryofPSAs>

## **Vocabulary -**

**Recruiting** - to seek out, especially to hire for employment.

**Excluding** - antonym of including

**Promotional** - materials or actions to advance the interests of a group, idea or product.

**Facilities** - abilities, power or capacity to act

**Institutionalized** - with an institution such as a school, hospital or business.

**Decline** - go down / decrease in frequency

**Paradoxically** - an opinion or statement contrary to commonly accepted opinion.

**Consumption** - (economics) the utilization of economic goods to satisfy needs or in manufacturing; "the consumption of energy has increased steadily"

**Initially** - at first

**Excessive** - extreme

**Consensus** - general agreement between parties

**Inconsequential** - without importance, causing little impact.

**Partisan** - one sided, biased in favor of one side

**Agenda** - goals

**Innumerable** - too many to count

## **Glossary**

**Federal Communications Commission** - an independent government agency that regulates interstate and international communications by radio and television and wire and cable and satellite

**Non-profit organization** - An organization which exists for purposes other than making a profit (Heiffer International for example)

**Broadcasters** - People or companies which control the information on TV or the radio.

**Propaganda** - information in print, TV or radio which attempts to persuade the viewer, often by providing biased information.

**Advertising agencies** - Businesses which are paid to create advertisements for other companies.







## A Brief History of Public Service Announcements

Read the article located at -

<http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=publicservic>

Use the information from the article to answer the following....

Discuss how various different pieces of informational writing can be organized. What is the organizational structure of this article?

Some pieces of nonfiction have titles for each new section or topic. This article does not have titles for each paragraph. Using the space below, write a title (in correct title format) for each section / paragraph.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

What are 5 questions which could be answered by this article? Avoid questions which would generate answers of one or two words. Include the answers

Question	Answer

Create a new title for the article, write it below.

In your opinion, what are the three to five most important pieces of information shared in the article?

Information	Reason it is MOST important

What are three PSA campaigns that the article identifies as being important?

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- 

What are two PSA topics you have seen on TV

In the space below, create a timeline of the history of the PSA according to this article. Include at least 7 events.



Name of Clip	Purpose / Audience	PSA or AD?	What was effective? Technique Used

Which PSA do you think was most effective? Explain what made it effective.

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If you could make a PSA, what topic would you choose? List as many as you can.

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Group \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_\_

### PSA Planning Guide

In 15 words or less, what idea do you want your viewer understand after viewing your PSA?

A sound bite is a catchy phrase or statement that a viewer or listener would remember. They are usually short, and memorable. What are three 'catchy' or creative ways you could express this idea in as few words as possible?

Complete the table below to explain three different ways to share your ideas. Use 3 different settings and three different situations. **One must not include actors.**

Location & Story Outline	Reason this would work / Why?	Music, visual effects, text

Which do you like best and why?

Using your best idea from the table above, begin planning for your production.

1. Make a story board

This will be a draft, and can change.

Drawings on your draft should be quick & simple - do not spend too much time on the draft of your story board - the purpose of the board is to help you begin to visualize and revise your ideas

2. What materials will you need? Make a list below

3. Will you need additional people / help from adults? What is your plan for these if needed?

4. You will need to get a media release from everyone in your video. These may be printed from the website.

5. If you use a public location, you must have a release signed by anyone who appears in your video & must have written permission of the property owner to use their site.





# Storyboard

Shot:	Shot:	Shot:
Audio:	Audio:	Audio:
Shot:	Shot:	Shot:
Audio:	Audio:	Audio:
Shot:	Shot:	Shot:
Audio:	Audio:	Audio:

Your sketches must match your shot descriptions. Under 'Shot' identify the shot, any camera movements and screen directions left-right. Note transitions such as 'cut' 'fade' 'dissolve' and any important details. Under Audio include narrative and/or sound track.





# Project Daily Log Sheet

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

Briefly meet with your group at the beginning of class. Discuss what needs to be done today, and divide this into tasks which can be completed by each group member. Be sure you **fully understand** what your tasks / goals are for today.

My goals / tasks for today

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If I complete my task early I will

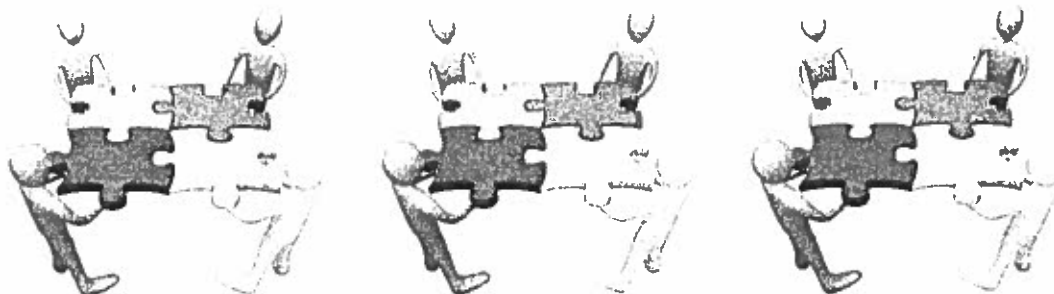
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Self assessment - complete this chart as accurately as possible at the end of the period

Target Behaviors	4	3	2	1
I remained <b>on task</b> and away from other groups (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher needed to remind me)				
I <b>worked effectively</b> with my group (listened to others, offered ideas respectfully, took responsibility without dominating) (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher or group member needed to remind me)				
My efforts today represent the <b>best I can do</b> in terms of quality and quantity of work produced. (4=completely, 3=mostly, 2=I could have done better/more, 1= I rushed to complete my task/didn't budget time effectively)				
I was able to <b>problem-solve and self-advocate</b> when I experienced difficulty (4=yes/does not apply, 3=yes, but not immediately, 2=I got stuck and didn't know what to do, 1=I got stuck and was unable to complete my tasks)				
I was <b>respectful</b> of the needs of others (used a quiet voice & appropriate behavior) (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher or group member needed to remind me)				

I experienced technical difficulty today (explain what you did promptly to resolve the problem)

What are you most proud of from your efforts today?



Target Behaviors (Group Evaluation) Write names in boxes to right.				
He / she remained <b>on task</b> and away from other groups (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher needed to remind him / her)				
He/she <b>worked effectively</b> with our group (listened to others, offered ideas respectfully, took responsibility without dominating) (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher or group member needed to remind him/her)				
His/her efforts today represent the <b>best he/she can do</b> in terms of quality and quantity of work produced. (4=completely, 3=mostly, 2= could have done better/more, 1= rushed to complete task/didn't budget time effectively)				
He/she was able to <b>problem-solve and self-advocate</b> when experiencing difficulty (4=yes/does not apply, 3=yes, but not immediately, 2= got stuck and didn't know what to do, 1= got stuck and was unable to complete his/her tasks)				
He/she was <b>respectful</b> of the needs of others (used a quiet voice & appropriate behavior) (4=at all times, 3=most of the time, 2=some of the time, 1= the teacher or group member needed to remind him/her)				

What would improve your group's efforts for next time?

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Concerns or questions / need for assistance from teacher?

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Which group member do you believe deserves the MVP today, and why?

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Project Guest Book

Name of Project \_\_\_\_\_

Project created by \_\_\_\_\_

Comment -

Comment -

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