

## HOW TO BE A CRITICAL MEDIA VIEWER

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1. Remember that all media images and messages are constructions. Ads and other media messages have been carefully crafted with the intent to send a very specific message.
2. Question why certain messages are consistently present in mainstream media and why others are absent.
3. Look closely at the appearance of media images: the colors, the editing, the camera angles, the appearance of the people (*are they young and happy?*), the location, and the sound or type of text.
4. Compare media images and portrayals of your surrounding environment with your reality. Make a list of the differences so that you are more aware of them.
5. Investigate the source of the media images you encounter. Who owns the network that your favorite television show is on? What else does that corporation own? How does the ownership structure of media affect the news and entertainment we receive?  
(**Media Ownership Chart** <http://www.thenation.com/special/bigten.html>)
6. What other stories about the world exist than those you see in the media?  
(*About relationships, health, peace & war, materialism, gender, finances, violence, globalization, sex, love, etc.*)

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## CRITICAL VIEWING ACTIVITIES

» Play the 'press pause' game with your class or family.
■ Use a tape of your favorite TV program or movie.
■ Watch the tape and pause it each time you see a product logo displayed.
■ Make a list of how many times you paused the tape and which products you identified.
■ Research product placement. How much do companies pay on average for product placement? How do you think product placement affects the story lines of movies and television programs?
■ For more information, see <i>Behind the Screens: Hollywood Goes Hypercommercial</i> .
» Make a guess about how many advertisements you see during your favorite television program. Then count the number of ads you actually see. Compare your number with the actual number.
» Count the number of commercials you view when watching your favorite television show and ask yourself:
■ What products/services are being sold?
■ What are the ads saying to you?
■ Do you or would you actually use the advertised products or services? Why or why not?
■ How many times did you see the same commercial?
» Count the number of ads that appear on your favorite homepage, and ask yourself:
■ What products/services are being sold?
■ What are the ads saying to you?
■ Do you or would you actually use the advertised products or services? Why or why not?
» Count the number of pop-up ads you encounter during one hour of internet use:
■ What products/services are being offered?
■ Do you or would you actually use the products or services being offered? Why or why not?
» Think of all the places that you see advertisements. Compare your list with someone else's.

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For more critical media viewing activities, see MEF video study guides, available at

[HTTP://WWW.MEDIAED.ORG/STUDYGUIDES](http://www.mediaed.org/studyguides)