

Unit IV: 9/11, A Case Study in Contemporary Terrorism

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time: 3-4 block schedule periods (80 min.) or 5-6 standard instructional periods (40 min.);
total time estimated to be 240 minutes

Lesson HIV-12: Challenges in Enhancing Media Literacy Regarding Global Terrorism

Objectives:

Through participation in this lesson, students will be able to identify and practice selected skills necessary for the critical analysis and evaluation of mass media content related to global terrorism.

Apply core concepts (terrorism, media literacy) to case studies on terrorism and related topics (wars in the Middle East) to deepen student understanding of the complexities of local, national and international decision-making related to global terrorism.

Analyze the impact of media content on public responses to terrorism and how mass media corporate and public entities (broadcast, cable and satellite television; internet sources; cell phone and other portable electronic device providers) influence patterns of decision-making by governments and others related to global terrorist activity.

Key Terms:

Media Literacy

Terrorism

Skills to be Practiced (Based on NCSS Position Statement on Media Literacy, NCSS 2009)

1. Accessing messages (media content)
2. Analyzing the content of messages
3. Creating media content (messages)
4. Distributing media content (messages)
5. Interpersonal skills of collaboration and networking

Materials:

1. NCSS Position Statement on Media Literacy: accessible at <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/medialiteracy1> (Position Statements) (primarily a teacher resource, but parts can be used by students as well)
2. Content of Images of War and War Reporting sections of website of Frank Baker, accessed at http://www.frankwbaker.com/images_of_war.htm
3. Links to mass media content on Iraq war available at the website of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, accessible at <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=13>
4. Questions for media analysis from A Media Education Approach to Teaching/Talking about the War authored by Chris Workshop, accessible at http://www.frankwbaker.com/war_reporting.htm in the War Reporting resources section of the website.
5. Townshend, Charles. Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002

Activities/Procedures:

Day One

1. Invite students to offer their own definitions of the phrase "media literacy." Initially have students brainstorm what they consider to be characteristics of a "media literate individual" (keep in mind that brainstorming does

not involve judgments of contributions, just listing of them). After the brainstorming has occurred, set up small groups of 4-5 students so they can develop a definition using the list of characteristics prepared by the class. Each group should have these roles: moderator, recorder, summarizer, and 2 researchers (these individuals can access additional content for the task if needed using computers).

2. Once each group has developed a definition, the summarizer in the group should read it to the class. As each group's definition is read aloud, students should note areas of agreement and disagreement. The teacher should then ask students to examine their definitions in light of the definition prepared by the NCSS (see above under Key Concepts and Terms), and then identify how they compare. It is important at this point to encourage students to explore what skills a person would need to become "media literate," along with the types of messages and communication devices a person should use and understand to meet the definitions being utilized.
3. If the class develops agreement or consensus on a definition, the lesson can move forward with that in hand, or if more than one is acceptable to the class when judged against the criteria of clarity, comprehensiveness, and applicability to multiple situations and contexts, then the teacher should move on to the next step in the lesson.
4. With a definition or definitions now solidified, the teacher should pose this essential question: What Challenges Does the Public Face in Using Media Content to Understand Global Terrorism?
 - Ask students to list subsidiary questions that come to mind which are prompted by this essential question. Similar to the opening brainstorming activity, the teacher should not judge or comment on the questions posed by the class, but simply list them. If students need time to list the questions, given them 3-5 minutes and insist that students actually state questions, not just words, phrases, or declarative sentences.
 - The teacher or a recorder should collect all the questions posed by the class, and then assign a student to cluster them within categories that appear to have common content or ideas. Once this is completed, then the lesson can move forward (this may be done as a homework assignment if time is in short supply).
 - With the clustered list now available (if done on a computer with an overhead display, have the document projected so the full class can see it). If not, then prepare the document in Word and have it photocopied for the class.
 - The teacher should now assign the homework for the next day: students will be asked to identify relevant sources of information they would use to investigate the competing perspectives on the Iraq War, which will be used as a case study for examining the role of the media (and as a prelude for the culminating assessment of student understanding for this lesson). Students are required in this assignment to identify 4 print resources, 4 broadcast sources, and 4 electronic sources (not broadcast). At least 2 of the sources in each category must be from outside of the U.S., and of those 2, at least 1 must be from the Middle East.

Day Two

1. Students will now post their list of sources (either on a bulletin board, or electronically on a class website, Wikispaces or discussion board) from their homework and the full class will spend 15 minutes reviewing the findings. Once the full class "walk-around" or website/Wikispaces review has occurred, students will categorize the resources in each of the three classifications (print, broadcast, electronic) into subgroups by areas of origin (North America, Europe, Middle East). In the case of businesses, students may want to create subgroups that reflect other characteristics (i. e., multinational corporations), and in the case of websites, other subgroups may be needed (non-governmental organizations, individuals, and so forth).
2. If the students have not found sufficiently broad resources in their homework assignment, utilize the links from FAIR (noted above under Learning Materials and Resources) to complement their findings.
3. Return to the essential question and the subsidiary questions raised by the students. Ask students these two questions—(1) If you were to prepare a recommendation for people who had never heard of the Iraq War about

what sources they should consult in order to get a comprehensive and balanced perspective on the conflict, what would you say? (2) What criteria would you employ to make thoughtful judgments about the sources you are recommending? Facilitate the discussion by asking students to examine their subsidiary question list, and to identify key questions that might contribute to answering these two inquiries. The goal of the discussion is to have students generate a set of criteria and possible resources that would inform this member of the public about the Iraq War so that person could reach a thoughtful, independent decision about it.

4. As you facilitate the discussion, keep these ideas in mind, which are extracted from Chris Workshop's suggested approach to media education about war. The teacher should introduce these ideas if student questions and comments do not bring them forward.
 - Audience—Who is asking, and on whose behalf?
 - Audience/ideology/values/politics—Whose content is included, and whose is excluded?
 - Versions of reality—How reliable and fair are the presentations of media content?
 - Audience positioning/politics—How does the content make us feel, and is this part of our criteria?
 - Commercial interests/ownership—Is the question of audience share, ratings and profits being raised?
 - Values/ideology—Are we asking if our personal assumptions about the war are being reinforced, or are we open to alternative perspectives?
 - Audience/response/form and content/aesthetics—What is the style of presentation in the media content?
 - Diversity—How does the content relate to groups defined by race/ethnicity, gender, class, religious faith, nationality, sexual orientation, and others?
 - What other questions should we be asking?
 - How would we know what a "good" answer might look like?
5. Once the discussion has reached a point where a relatively common set of criteria have been generated, as well as a set of resources that reflect a range of perspectives and viewpoints, then the homework assignment should be provided. That homework assignment is noted here.
 - Ask students to answer this question by consulting at least 6 sources (2 from each category, 1 from North America or Europe, and 1 from the Middle East)—What has been the impact on daily life in Iraq of the Iraq War since 2003? The task is to identify a balanced set of sources that would fairly present an answer to the question to an uninformed individual.
 - Students should identify the sources and compose a list in preparation for the final lesson day's activity (Day three). The listing of links on the FAIR website on the Iraq war is a good starting point for students in need of support.

Day Three

1. Students will return to their Day one groups and share their findings from the assignment. Since most of the content will be available via the internet, or in some cases in video format (possibly on YouTube or in video archives of broadcasters or non-governmental organizations), it is important that the teacher provide sufficient time for each small group member to learn from his or her peers by reviewing the content of the recommended sources. Each student should receive the media analysis form (see final page of this lesson) and use it to critique the recommended resources (at least one in each of the three categories, but making sure that all sources in the group are being examined at least once by a group member using the form).
2. Once the media analysis forms are completed, the instructor poses the final question for the lesson: Based on your review of the sources in your group, what qualities did the best resources have that made them ideal for our

uninformed citizen? Provide 10-15 minutes for each small group to discuss and justify their list of qualities, and then have each group report out to the class. Facilitate the discussion of the multiple responses, and have one student record the results for future reference.

3. Return to the essential question, and pose the culminating assessment of student performance.
 - Based upon our activity using the Iraq War, prepare a two-page set of guidelines for how to better understand global terrorism through the media. Your final document should be in Word, and be double-spaced with one-inch margins all around. Review the list of subsidiary questions the class posed about our essential question and make sure you have addressed most, if not all of them. Also, keep in mind the contents of the discussions in small groups as well as the final listing of qualities which the class developed for making good choices about media content for the Iraq War.

Evidence of Understanding (Assessments of Student Performance)

Completion of two-page guidelines document by each class member reflecting the work of the prior 3 days, and adhering to the criteria of clarity, cogency, and comprehensiveness. As needed, the instructor can return to the Workshop questions and other resources listed on the Frank Baker site or links noted on the NCSS Position Statement on Media Literacy to inform final evaluations of student work.

Extension Activities: Taking Action and Giving Service:

1. Students can prepare their guidelines lists and a cover letter, and send their recommended guidelines to media outlets, elected officials, other faculty, and non-governmental organizations, as well as media analysis experts and groups to inform them about their work and invite critiques to assist them in further investigation of the topic.
2. An alternative approach to the culminating assessment would be for students to create a podcast or brief video that presents the guidelines with relevant audio and/or video content that illustrates the proposed guidelines.

Media Analysis Form

Student Name: _____

Date Completed: _____

Instructions: Using the checklist provided below, assess the quality of the resource being examined in light of the question being posed.

Question for Investigation: _____

	Rating/Explanation (4=excellent to 1=very poor)	
Criteria	Rating	Explanation
--Impartiality of presentation	_____	
--Creator is clearly recognizable or identifiable	_____	
--Topic of the content is clear	_____	
--Intended audience is clear	_____	
--Images/audio/text can be understood by a non-expert	_____	
--Narration is impartial and lacks bias	_____	
--Presentation is given sufficient time to deliver a clear, thorough message	_____	
--Presentation avoids editorializing about the topic from a single perspective	_____	
--Other (Elaborate) _____		
_____	_____	