



Deconstructing Magazine Covers

The Reinvention of Arnold Schwarzenegger

STANDARDS Connection to state and national standards can be made to Social Studies, English/Language Arts and Art.

GRADE LEVEL Adaptable for grades 3-12. Use grade-level writing rubrics to assess the writing component.

TIME This activity takes between 30-45 minutes.

OBJECTIVES

- Students understand CML's MediaLit Kit™ Core Concept #2: "Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules," and Core Concept #4: "Media have embedded values and points of view."
- Students write reflective compositions on media construction techniques and their effects, applying grade-level appropriate writing strategies.

ACTIVITIES Students analyze magazine covers portrayal of the same person with varying effect. Students critique the individual covers and then compare and contrast them with regard to technique, content and impact.

1. Show the cover of *Muscle & Fitness* magazine with Arnold Schwarzenegger on the cover. Post questions to students such as:

- What do you think about this person based on the cover of the magazine?
- How does he look?

MediaLit Kit™ Key Question #4:
"What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented or omitted in this message?"

Chart the adjectives that come from the students in response to both questions.

2. Remove the *Muscle & Fitness* magazine cover from view.

3. Show the students the cover of *Esquire* magazine. Ask students the same questions, directed at the *Esquire* cover:

- What do you think about this person now based on the cover of this magazine?
- How does he look?

Chart the adjectives the students generate.



4. Next, show the two covers together. Ask students to identify differences between the two covers.

First, have students focus just on what is different about the two photographs. One discussion strategy is to group their responses into categories such as: body language, eye contact, facial expression, clothing, background, camera angle, lighting, make up, etc.

NOTE: This can be a good activity for students to separate connotation from denotation as they first explore the emotions they feel connoted in the message and then deconstruct the photographs and graphic elements they see denoted. For young children, ask them to distinguish between what they think and what they see.

MediaLit Kit™ Key Question #2:
“What techniques are used to attract my attention.”

Next, ask students to comment on the cover design and all the other graphic elements that are different between the two covers. Again you can help them with categories such as: color, font, other photos, composition, choice of words, etc.

5. After exploring feelings generated from the covers and the differences in the photographs and cover designs, have students write a reflection about how different construction techniques can convey different feelings.

EXTENSION

As a culminating activity, have students create different photographs of their peers using the same techniques that they identified in the Schwarzenegger covers. Have them photograph the same person to look positive in one picture and negative in the other.

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The Center for Media Literacy (CML) (<http://www.medialit.org/>) is a non-partisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational organization that provides leadership, public education, professional development and educational resources nationally. Dedicated to promoting and supporting media literacy education as a framework for accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating media and media arts content, CML works to help citizens, especially the young, develop critical thinking and media production skills needed to live fully in the 21st Century media culture. CML’s philosophy “empowerment through education” is embodied in the *MediaLit Kit™*, a framework for teaching and learning in a media age.

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