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*Say the phrase “gender and media,” and many educated listeners will think of roles assigned to women in the media. But what about men? What does our media culture tell us about the roles that men play in society, and what messages do media send boys about manhood?*

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*Masculinity in the Media - An overview of media representations*

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*Who do you think of as a model television father? Ward Cleaver? Heathcliff Huxtable? According to Kenneth Braswell, director of the New York State Fatherhood Initiative, “. . .our children see the same things in Homer Simpson that we see in other television fathers. They see that, as buffoonish as he can be, Homer still loves his family.” In this MediaLit Moment, your students will learn about the different audience expectations evoked by different media genres.*

## Theme: Media Literacy and Masculinity

Like a deck of cards, pictures of school-age boys appear on the screen and slowly turn over to fully face the audience. As they turn over, a newscaster reads, “But after ten school shootings in three years, there is more detail and a profile developing of kids who kill kids.” In the first minutes of the film *Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity*, anti-violence educator Jackson Katz uses this news excerpt to point out the obvious—all the “kids” in this segment are boys. And Katz notes that virtually all news media use the word “kids” in reporting youth violence when the vast majority are boys. Why would this be the case? As Katz argues, this omission reveals just how little we examine the nature of male violence in American society.

But there may be another reason why open discussion of masculinity and male violence is often avoided in American popular culture. As a society, we are anxious and uncertain about what constitutes masculine identity, according to Katz and others. And consequently, portrayals of masculinity have more breadth, with more options for framing what masculinity is. The lifestyles, values and points of view that are included in depictions of masculinity – or omitted – are more nuanced or perhaps driven by who the targeted audience is for the media product. If the target audience is women, perhaps a more stumbling image is apparent; if the audience is men, perhaps a more violent image is offered up. Regardless, these portrayals are worthy of examination, especially as youth struggle to better understand themselves and how they fit into society. With the skills of media literacy, youth gain the wherewithal to accept or reject the frame that masculinity (or femininity) is given on the screen.

In this issue of *Connections*, we explore media representations of masculinity, and contextualize our discussion with a survey of recent work by scholars and activists who offer their own solutions for the healthy development of boys and young men. In our resources article, we compare two recent books on the development of boys written from different theoretical perspectives and draw valuable teaching strategies from each. We also list several sources to help you make your own in-depth investigation of the topic; and in our MediaLit Moment, you and your students will discover what *The Simpsons* can teach us about fatherhood and parenting. Whether you’re browsing for DVDs, looking for expert advice, trying to come up with a “media diet” for your sons who love playing video games, or trying to plan a lesson which delivers a good hook for engaging students in a discussion of social expectations for boys and men, this issue has something to offer you.

## Research Highlights

### **Masculinity in the Media: Alphas Rule (and Betas, too)**

Media representations of masculinity have never been the same since John Wayne died in the 1970s. In the 1980s, steely, uber-masculine characters like Sylvester Stallone's Rambo didn't hesitate to shoot several rounds of automatic fire before uttering a word of dialogue. On the other hand, bungling, incompetent fathers like Al Bundy and Homer Simpson began to occupy a prominent place on television airwaves.

What happened? According to Michael Kimmel and other cultural historians, the media were responding to the anxieties of white American males who felt that they had lost dominance in American society and who were equally concerned about the loss of a masculine, dominant image of the United States on the world stage. According to this theory, the uncertain end of the Vietnam war left an indelible impression on the psyches of white American men, who also felt that they had lost their dominance in the workplace to women and ethnic minorities. The action heroes of the 80s validated the inmost feelings of men who felt humiliated and wanted to prove their masculinity once again.

If this is true, then the family comedy provided a venue in which the economic and cultural "downsizing" of men could be safely explored. Instead of returning fire with bullets, children and wives maintained a rapid fire of jokes which elevated their status at the expense of fathers. At the same time, the absurd antics of these fathers encouraged male viewers to think, "I'm definitely not that bad."

The double images of masculinity have shifted in the last two decades. African-American actors like Will Smith and Denzel Washington gained popularity as action heroes, and white comic actors like Ben Stiller, Steve Carrell and Seth Rogen played goofy slackers who not only gained the sympathy of audiences, but managed to show up their bosses or get the girl. These Betas don't look or act like Alpha males, but the stories in which they appear suggest that they deserve the same rewards that "real" men are able to collect in the end.

So what can we make of a media landscape populated by such characters? Now would be a good time to give male characters in children's animated features a second look, in particular the male protagonists in Pixar films. These characters accept lower, beta status at many points in their storylines, but unlike some of their live action slacker cousins, these characters do something to earn the recovery of their masculine status. For example, Lightning McQueen, from Cars, is forced to spend most of his time in Radiator Springs, far away from the scene of competition. Before he is able to race again, he learns to appreciate values of friendship and community—values rarely represented in the playbook of the individualistic American male.

The hyper-masculine characters of the 80s action films have maintained a consistent presence in violent video games, which remain a perennial favorite for boys and young men. The image

of masculinity upheld in violent video games should also remain a source of concern for parents. Does the violence in these games at least suggest a code of ethics or a concern with justice? Or does an ethos of dominant masculinity drive the action and rules of the game, one which dictates that weaker characters should be subordinated or killed? Your children or students might wonder why you're making such a distinction, and it may be helpful to point to more fully drawn cinematic characters who are aggressive, but also motivated by a sense of ethical responsibility. Denzel Washington's character in "Remember the Titans" or Don Cheadle's character in "Hotel Rwanda" are a couple of good examples.

In general, conversations about respect can also help boys understand the importance of these characters and their "feminine" traits to their own sense of masculinity. According to Janice Kelly, a professor of communications at Molloy College who specializes in media and family communications, "Talk to them about respect—not dominance. Ask them why they need it, and how they can get it." In time, your students and children will be able to separate their own masculine identity from the expectations of aggression common to the models of masculinity offered up in American media (and, as some scholars argue, common to the culture of American schools as well).

### **OfCom Publishes Child Media Literacy Audit**

In 2009, The British Office of Communications (OfCom) undertook a major study of children's media literacy to aid in the effective targeting of OfCom resources, and published the results in March of this year. OfCom's intentions for the promotion of media literacy include:

- To give people the opportunity and motivation to develop competence and confidence to participate in communications technology and digital society
- To inform and empower people to manage their own media activity (both consumption and creation).

The children's media literacy audit was designed to monitor:

- Access and use of media in the home
- Children's and parents' attitudes and guidance (or "mediation") strategies
- Children's understanding of the media they use, including privacy settings and checking information for reliability
- Learning about media

The audit was based on a quantitative survey that involved a total of 2,131 in-home interviews with children aged 5-15 and their parents or caregivers, and was also based on comparative data from similar audits from 2007 and 2008.

The comparative data indicate that some rates of media use remain stable. From 2007 onward, about two thirds of children acquired their first mobile phone by the age of 10. Games consoles are still found in the great majority of homes (89% for 2009), and boys aged 5-15 are

still more likely than girls to live in households with a game console. And television continues to have the highest level of consumption. The one prominent change in this survey is an increase of home internet use among children of all age brackets (5-7, 8-11, 12-15), with home use increasing to 75% of all children.

Other results suggest that increased home use of the internet by children may be leading to different guidance or control strategies on the part of parents. In addition to the fact that the great majority of parents still agree with the statement “I trust my child to use the internet safely” (now at 81%), internet controls are now less common since 2008 in households of children aged 5-7 (39% vs. 46%) and 12-15 (41% vs. 46%). Where concern about content may have decreased, parents of children aged 5-15 are now more likely than in 2008 to have a rule about not using the internet after a certain time (32% vs 24%). Also, while the proportion of children 8-12 with a social networking profile has increased to 25% (from 15% in 2008), 83% of parents of these children have been aware of the existence of these profiles, and 93% of these parents monitored their children’s activity.

By the same token, a “home alone” phenomenon may be occurring with regard to downloading of content. Children aged 8-11 who mostly use the internet on their own are more likely to watch You Tube videos and other user-generated content, and children age 12-15 who mostly use the internet alone are more likely to watch or download content of all kinds, including TV, film, music videos, and user-generated content. At the same time, parents of children aged 12-15 who mostly use the internet on their own are less likely to have rules about the internet in place and are less likely to monitor their children’s activity than parents whose children mainly use the internet in the presence of other people (65% vs. 77% and 32% vs. 47%, respectively).

The data yielded by this survey also reveal a clear need for media literacy education. With regard to downloaded content, two in five of all children aged 12-15 (44%) believe that downloading shared copies of music and films should not be illegal. And while it is encouraging that 49% of children aged 12-15 make some type of critical judgment about search engine results, one in four children aged 12-15 (27%) agree with the statement that the information returned must be truthful, and one in five (20%) say they don’t really think about the veracity of sites but just tend to use sites that are visually appealing.

Click here to download a [PDF](#) copy of the audit, or visit [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk), and search “UK Children’s Media Literacy.”

## Med!aLit moments

### Have you tried MediaLit Moments?

MediaLit Moments are classroom activities that provide teachable 'AHA' moments to illustrate one of the *Five Key Questions* for media literacy. Designed for ease of use, activities require limited preparation and are easily downloadable. All MediaLit Moments are available on our website.

This month's MediaLit Moment: *Homer Simpson: Playful Parenting or Living Dangerously?* can be found on page 11.

If you have experimented with MediaLit Moments in the classroom, please send us feedback. We'd like to know if the activities are easy to use, and how they are received by your students. Thank you.

## CONSORTIUM for MEDIA LITERACY

*Uniting for Development*

### About Us...

The Consortium for Media Literacy addresses the role of global media through the advocacy, research and design of media literacy education for youth, educators and parents.

The Consortium focuses on K-12 grade youth and their parents and communities. The research efforts include nutrition and health education, body image/sexuality, safety and responsibility in media by consumers and creators of products. The Consortium is building a body of research, interventions and communication that demonstrate scientifically that media literacy is an effective intervention strategy in addressing critical issues for youth.

<http://www.ConsortiumforMediaLiteracy.org>

## Media Literacy Resources

**Teaching Tip:** Establishing Norms for classroom discussions will create a safe, respectful environment for the exchange of ideas. Suggested Norms include:

*Be respectful of one another, the ideas shared and our learning community*

*Listen to understand*

*Be open to new ideas*

*Do not share inappropriate personal stories*

*Actively participate in all lessons and activities*

### **Whither Masculinity, and What to Do About It?**

American feminism, which has a history dating back a century, has been a more or less stable construct, evolving in distinct waves. Not so with theories of masculinity, which have been in a nearly constant state of flux ever since the second wave of feminism began to redefine cultural expectations for men. Two recent books vividly demonstrate the wide differences in contemporary approaches to masculinity: *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men* (Basic Books, 2007), by Leonard Sax; and *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (Harper, 2008), by Michael Kimmel.

Though Sax does not argue that masculinity is biologically determined, he cites several primate studies to suggest that male aggression can be biologically driven, and devotes portions of his book to the search for ways in which boys can safely channel aggressive impulses. Not surprisingly, Sax also tends to favor traditional roles and institutions—single-sex schools, marriage, fatherhood, work and economic provision-- that can make “gentlemen” out of boys.

For Kimmel, masculinity is constituted out of a historically relative code of gender expectations. He argues that young men adhere to a code of aggressive self-interest out of fear of ridicule by peers, and his book is devoted to the search for ways in which men and women together can alter the code to include more “feminine” qualities of compassion, nurturance, and personal responsibility to others.

Each book discusses an issue of grave personal concern to the author which also reveals the differences in their theoretical approaches. Sax laments the loss of rites of passage for boys, and especially the loss of gathering places where men of different generations feel free to share their experiences. Sax argues that the loss of these institutions is partly responsible for an epidemic of gang violence. Kimmel, who interviewed hundreds of college students for his book, is most deeply concerned with the “culture of silence” which allows young college women to be raped while other young men fail to even report these crimes.

Both authors agree that excessive video game play undermines the ambitions of many a

young man, and that the games are so attractive because they allow players to prove their masculinity in a venue which provokes less anxiety than some others. Their recommendations, on the other hand, seem to split along the lines of traditional versus alternative communities. Sax suggests that boys can be enticed to give up videos for the face-to-face competition of sports. Because schools are a primary site in which codes of masculinity are reinforced, Kimmel suggests that out-of-school activities can help boys develop friendships and a sense of competence that “make it easier for them to believe that their own high school cliques do not define the entire universe” (278).

While the theoretical approaches of the authors can lead them to offer widely divergent advice to parents, they also utilize their differing professional backgrounds to offer unique insights into the developmental trajectory of boys and young men. Sax, who is both a physician and a psychologist, conducts several literature reviews to show readers that environmental toxins and stimulant medications prescribed for young boys diagnosed with ADHD may be significant contributors to the loss of motivation among young men. Through his extensive interviews with high school and college students, Kimmel, a sociologist by training, makes the surprising discovery that many young people are developing a capacity for friendships with members of the opposite sex that parents might find hard to understand.

In conclusion, it’s helpful for readers to educate themselves about the implications of differing theoretical approaches to masculinity, but so many questions about the nature (or nurture) of masculinity remain unanswered that few of the recommendations issued by experts in different fields should be considered definitive. They could even be complementary.

See our “Resources for Media Literacy” article below for other books, films and articles on this important topic.

## **Resources: Boys, Masculinity, and Media**

### Books

*Packaging Boyhood: Saving Our Sons from Superheroes, Slackers and Other Media Stereotypes*, by Lyn Brown, Sharon Lamb and Mark Tappan, St. Martin’s Press, 2009  
Arguing that boys are besieged by images and messages from marketers and the media that encourage “slacking over studying, competition over teamwork, power over empowerment, and being cool over being oneself” ( <http://packagingboyhood.com>), the authors examine cartoons, videogames, movies and other media to reveal the stereotypes that marketers use to “sell” boys their masculine identities. The book offers advice for helping parents talk with sons about these stereotypes, and for helping boys resist them. The book is a sequel to Brown and Lamb’s *Packaging Girlhood* (2006), also published by St. Martin’s Press.

*Reaching up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America*, by Geoffrey Canada, Beacon Press, 1998

Canada's book is deceptively simple. It illustrates the difficulties that many boys face along the way from boyhood to maturity through narratives of the author's own coming of age in the South Bronx, and through the stories of the young men he mentors as head of afterschool programs at the Rheedlen family center in Harlem. The narratives are also rich in social and psychological detail. In 1990 Canada helped to expand the Rheedlen Center into the Harlem Children's Zone, which has been so successful that President Obama announced plans in 2009 to replicate the HCZ model in 20 cities across the nation.

*Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*, by Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, Ballantine Books, 2000

Through in-depth psychological case studies and research, Kindlon and Thompson argue that parents, peers and even schools steer boys away from their emotional lives by upholding impossible standards of masculinity, with frequently serious consequences for their later development. The authors also appeal to parents and schools to cultivate the "emotional literacy" of boys. A *New York Times* bestseller, *Raising Cain* was also the subject of a 2006 PBS documentary hosted by Thompson. The documentary is available at the PBS website, as well as Amazon and other online retailers.

### Videos

*Perceptions of Fathers in the Media: In Search of the Ideal Father*, produced/directed by Dr. Janice Kelley, CFLE and published by New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, 2009

In this video, scenes of fathers in television shows ranging from *The Cosby Show* to *The Simpsons* are interspersed with interviews with speakers including Kenneth Braswell, director of the New York State Fatherhood Initiative, and Georgetown sociology professor and radio personality Eric Michael Dyson. As the speakers analyze images of television fathers and offer thoughtful advice for discussing media with children, the excerpts stimulate the moral imagination of viewers, inviting them to reflect on these television fathers in relationship to their own experience as parents and children. This hour-long video is suitable for use in a wide variety of venues, including K-12 classrooms. To order this video, download an order form at: <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/fatherhood/DVD-Order-Form.pdf>, and mail or fax the form to:

New York State Fatherhood Initiative/ OTDA  
40 North Pearl Street, 13th Floor  
Albany, New York 12243; (Fax) 518-486-3127

*Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity*, Media Education Foundation, 1999  
Co-written and hosted by male anti-sexist activist Jackson Katz, *Tough Guise* uses media to illustrate traditional conventions of masculinity, and conducts a trenchant analysis of the way in which media continually re-construct masculine identity for audiences in the midst of an

ongoing crisis of masculinity in American culture. The film's creative tour of American masculinity is conducted through a wide variety of clips, from hip hop videos to *There's Something About Mary* to the *Howard Stern Show*. *Tough Guise* is available in both abridged and unabridged versions, and can be ordered at the Media Education Foundation website, [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)

*Game Over: Gender, Race & Violence in Video Games*, Media Education Foundation, 2000  
This film reveals the gendered nature of the video games industry, calls attention to the racial stereotyping within many games, and demonstrates how the majority of games encourage the performance of a violent, dominant masculinity. *Game Over* offers an engaging dialogue on the topic, and is designed to encourage high school and college students to think critically about the video games they play. Producer/Director Nina Huntemann is a renowned scholar and "girl gamer," and has been working on a possible update of this feature.

*Boys to Men?* Media Education Foundation, 2004

Filmmaker Frederic Marx interviewed 32 15 and 16 year-old boys from different racial, ethnic and class backgrounds for this follow-up to his critically-acclaimed *Hoop Dreams* (1994). The first section of the DVD, "Are You Listening?" is a group interview with several of the boys which captures remarkably genuine responses as they make meaning of their experience and struggle with the meaning of manhood in America. The DVD includes in-depth individual interviews with three teens who give insight into their lives as they navigate the challenges of school, family and American society.

### Articles

"The Monsters Next Door: Media Construction of Boys and Masculinity," Mia Consalvo, *Feminist Media Studies*, v.3, n. 1 (2003), 27-45.

This article examines media coverage of the Columbine school shootings massacre to provide a thorough, lucid analysis of how media outlets tended to focus on the deviant, mysterious motivations of Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris while overlooking the role which masculine identity played in their lives and in the culture of Columbine school.

"Post-Princess Models of Gender: The New Man in Disney/Pixar," Ken Gillam and Shannon R. Wooden, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, v.36, n.1 (Spring 2008).

Intelligent, readable discussion of Disney's role as a standard bearer for American popular culture and the changing role of masculinity in Disney/Pixar films.

## Med!aLit Moments

### **Homer Simpson: Playful Parenting or Living Dangerously?**

It's hard to find criticism that considers such shows as *The Simpsons* and *The Family Guy* as cultural artifacts worthy of serious study. And yet many children do pay attention to the social landscape of these shows. Here's a quote from one young viewer of *The Simpsons*: "Although TV fathers are unrealistic, my Dad is more like Homer Simpson—trying to understand me even if we're worlds apart. I love the fact that he tries" –Mia, Age 12 (from *Perceptions of Fathers in the Media: In Search of the Ideal Father*, companion DVD).

The focus of this MediaLit Moment is a scene from *The Simpsons Movie* which highlights the father-son relationship between Bart and Homer Simpson. Our appreciation of the relationship between these characters is complicated by the fact that they appear in an animated comedy—a cartoon. They're having a great deal of fun, but their rough play is so dangerous that no viewer in their right mind would ever "try this at home." If the scene is to be taken at all seriously, a viewer of any age might ask, "Is Homer a responsible Dad?"

In this MediaLit Moment, your students will have the chance to explore varied and even conflicting reactions to an animated sequence. They'll be able to more fully study the generic conventions of cartoons; and, of course, they'll have an opportunity to apply Key Questions and Core Concepts of media literacy to the characters they see on the small screen.

This lesson is adapted with permission from "The Error of Our Ways," a lesson by Dr. Janice Kelly from *Perceptions of Fathers in the Media: In Search of the Ideal Father*, a curriculum created by staff of the New York State Fatherhood Initiative and published by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

**Have students answer questions to stimulate their moral imagination about the family relationships in an animated feature, and relate their discussions to CC/KQ #2 – 3.**

**AHA!** It's not so easy to say if Homer Simpson is a positive portrayal of a Dad when he's a cartoon!

Key Question #3: How might different people understand this message differently?

Core Concept #3: Different people experience the same media message differently.

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Materials:** DVD of *The Simpsons Movie* and DVD player.

The sequence in question shows Homer and Bart on the roof of the family home. On a dare, Bart climbs up to the top of the TV antenna while Homer attempts to shake him down. Bart rolls down the roof and is left hanging onto the rain gutter when Flanders, the next door neighbor, asks Homer if Bart might become a “paraplegarino” if he falls.

**Activity:** Begin by asking students for their initial reactions. Next, ask if they think Homer is behaving in a fun or irresponsible manner. This discussion should last no more than a few minutes, but do draw attention to the differences in their reactions to “prime” them for a later discussion of audience and Core Concept #3.

In this activity, students will study this sequence from a few different angles. Ask the class to form groups of three to four students which will complete one of three tasks:

- 1) Ask students to compare other TV/Movie father-son relationships. Have them make a list of TV fathers (and sons) and poll members of their groups to find out which fathers are most appealing to them and why. What do they like or dislike about the father-son relationship of Homer and Bart Simpson? Is there any difference of opinion between group members as they answer these questions? If so, can they explain why they feel the way they do?

In addition to asking students to spend time evaluating what they like or dislike about the relationship between Homer and Bart, this task asks students to focus on Core Concept #3 (Different people experience the same media message differently). As they poll each other and discover differences of opinion, they may also become aware that they are attracted to different kinds of characters or relationships for different reasons.

- 2) Have students write a short scenario in which the elements of the sequence from the *Simpsons Movie* are played out as an action movie. Just like the *Simpsons* sequence, one character is shaken off of a TV antenna, and one character falls through the roof. Alternatively, students can write a real-life scenario utilizing the same basic elements.

The purpose of this task is for students to understand that audience expectations are different from genre to genre. In an action movie, people get hurt more easily, and a scene on a roof suggests a lot of tension. In a real-life scenario, falling through the roof would count as a tragedy. If students spend a little time thinking about the fact that animation is a genre to itself, they should have an easier time thinking about the combination of danger and play in the original scene. This task is most closely tied to Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

- 3) Ask students to discuss their reactions to Flanders, the next door neighbor. Is he right to be concerned? Do they think he's nosy? Are there any differences of opinion about Flanders within the group? Also, what reaction do they think that the creators of the movie hoped to generate from the audience by playing Bart and Homer against Flanders in this scene?

This task addresses Key Question #2 as well as Core Concept #3. As with the groups tackling the first task, students may discover that they react differently to different characters for different reasons. The question about creative choices hinges on Key Question #2, "What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?" While an animated feature automatically evokes certain expectations from the audience, the producers of this movie are also working actively to shape the response of the audience as well.

Allow students up to fifteen minutes to complete their tasks, as writing a complete scenario might take a little time.

Finally, lead a whole class discussion in which students draw from their new knowledge and perspectives to answer the question of whether Homer was having good, clean, fatherly fun with Bart or whether he really should have avoided putting his son's life in danger. While discussion should focus on the sequence, do allow them to draw on their knowledge of Homer from other *Simpsons* episodes that they may have viewed. In leading the discussion, look for opportunities to help students become aware of the interplay between their reactions to the scene and the reactions--most often the "laughs"--that the producers were hoping to draw out of them.

In some respects, the students who completed Task #1 are the moral arbiters for the rest of the class. You may want to ask them to lead a discussion of the general characteristics of what they consider to be good parenting as they talk about the relationship between Bart and Homer. As they note differences of opinion, they should keep in mind CC/KQ #3.

With students who have completed Task #2, discuss the fact that different genres (or types) of media often follow different rules in stories where dangerous situations are involved (KQ#2). You may also want to point out that cartoons often include incidents of "happy violence." Those incidents grab the attention of viewers, and the lack of serious consequences makes it possible for audiences to laugh "off" several incidents in a single sequence.

In discussing the sequence with the students who completed Task #3, you may want to ask students for their character assessments of Bart, Homer and Flanders together. Flanders is generally one of the "wimpier" characters on the show, so asking this question may trigger a discussion about masculinity. If that happens, continue to focus on Core Concept #2 by asking what reactions they think the creators of the show hope to generate from audiences by

creating different kinds of *male* characters.

**Extended Activity:** Start planning a longer term project on fathers as they appear in different media genres and ask students to take notes and/or collect short samples. Ask questions as students gather their collection of media Dads. Who are the advertisers for the shows on which they appear? What kind of audience do they think each show or movie appeals to? What patterns do they see in similar media genres? Do any of these things help them predict the kind of father character they're likely to encounter in each new media sample?

The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2010, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>