

# Teaching and Reaching the Millennial Generation Through Media Literacy

**Students today live in an environment in which reading and writing, through digital media as well as traditional texts, are pervasive. The challenge for teachers is to connect the literacy skills that students develop in their social environment with the literacy environment of the school.**

David Considine | Julie Horton | Gary Moorman

From Gutenberg to Gates, from the invention of the printing press to the emergence of digital communication, technology has transformed the way we produce, distribute, and receive information. In turn, new technology challenges our understanding of what it means to be literate. During the Gutenberg era, only a small number of clergy, scholars, and scribes were literate. In the Gates era, universal literacy is the goal, with the expectation of the ability to read and write complex text at critical and interpretive levels. In addition, the concept of text has changed from traditional printed materials to a variety of media, including the Internet, film, and television.

In times of rapid technological change, it has been typical for adults to criticize the academic achievement and work ethic of their own children. Because the Greek philosopher Socrates was a vocal critic of the youth of Athens, Berliner and Biddle (1995) dubbed this phenomenon the Socrates Legacy. In this tradition, there is currently a high level of concern about the literacy and academic achievement of today's adolescents. For example, in *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence*, the National Endowment for the Arts (2007) argued that "Americans in almost every demographic group were reading fiction, poetry and drama—and books in general—at significantly lower rates than 10 or 20 years ago" (p. 7).

While we agree that there is reason for concern regarding the literacy of today's students, we believe that the problem is more complex than what is portrayed by the National Assessment for Education Progress and other reports (e.g., National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). We will argue in this article that because of the availability of digital technologies, today's teenagers bring to school a rich and different set of literacy practices and background that is often unacknowledged or underused by educators. As always, it is the responsibility of today's educators to build a bridge between the knowledge students already have and the content that they need to learn to be successful inside and outside of school.

Multiple forms of literacy have been named in the literature including information literacy, visual literacy, computer or digital literacy, and media

Note: The print edition of the March 2009 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* mistakenly titled this article "Teaching and Reading the Millennial Generation Through Media Literacy." This updated PDF file has been adjusted to reflect the correct title. The International Reading Association regrets the error.

literacy, but there is considerable overlap between these forms. In *Literacy in a Digital World*, Tyner (1998) reminded us that “the overlap between the competencies and purposes of various multiliteracies is so close, that their differences have more to do with constituencies than anything else” (p. 104). *Media literacy*, an umbrella term, will be addressed in this article.

Media literacy has been broadly defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and effectively communicate in a variety of forms including print and nonprint texts (Considine & Haley, 1999). In the United States and Canada, professional groups such as the Alliance for a Media Literate America and the Association for Media Literacy advocate integrating media literacy across the curriculum, emphasizing its importance in developing informed and responsible citizens. A commonly recognized core of media literacy principles informs classroom pedagogy that focuses on media texts and popular culture. These principles have been articulated by leading scholars in the field, particularly Masterman (1985) and Buckingham (2003; Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). Considine and Haley (1999) recapitulated these principles:

- Media are constructions.
- Media representations construct reality.
- Media have commercial purposes.
- Audiences negotiate meaning.
- Each medium has its own forms, conventions, and language.
- Media contain values and ideology.
- Media messages may have social consequences or effects.

The pedagogy that accompanies this approach helps students interrogate media texts along with the context in which they are both created and consumed.

We live in an era surrounded by media that bombard us with messages through text, images, and sound. But simply being surrounded by media does not necessarily mean we recognize or understand its content or intent. To prepare today’s students to succeed in the 21st century, educators must begin to

address the complex, high-tech media environments that are part of everyday life. This involves understanding what media and technology do *to* today’s young people along with the equally intriguing issue of what they do *with* it. An excellent data bank for exploring these questions can be found at The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth & Media ([www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse](http://www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse)).

In this article we will provide a description of today’s adolescents in the United States, labeled the *Millennial Generation*, develop an argument for weaving media literacy into the curriculum, and provide specific instructional strategies. Readers should note that most of our references and our primary framework are with youth in the United States. However, as Friedman (2007) pointed out, the world is flat, and what is happening in terms of technology, economics, and education is a worldwide phenomenon and not restricted to countries or regions.

## Exploring the Millennial Generation

Children who have grown up since the emergence of the World Wide Web and the assortment of related digital technologies (e.g., cell phones, text messaging, video games, and instant messaging) are now being referred to as the Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This generation is different from previous generations in important ways. For an excellent primer see the Howe and Strauss website *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* ([www.millennialsrising.com](http://www.millennialsrising.com)).

In this section, we will review what is known about the Millennials, particularly in terms of their use of Information Communication Technology (ICT). A theme of this review is the paradox that this generation presents to educators. Because of ICT, Millennials have access to more information, than any generation in history (Foehr, 2006; Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008; Lenhart & Madden, 2005; Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005; Rideout, Roberts, & Foehr, 2005). These technologies have created an increasingly complex environment that Millennials must navigate. In addition, their extensive use of ICT often creates a false sense of competency, as well as the misperception among many adults that contemporary youth are “media savvy.” Hands on is not the same as heads on.

The problem affects both girls and boys. For example, when 9- to 17-year-old girls encounter advertising about weight-loss products they are “cognitively vulnerable” with limited ability to recognize “persuasive construction strategies, including message purpose, target audience and subtext” (Hobbs, Broder, Pope, & Rowe, 2006, p. 1). As for boys, the media typically portrays male characters as stereotypically aggressive and violent. Commenting on the report *Boys to Men: Media Messages About Masculinity*, Lois Salisbury, president of Children Now, stated, “our study shows that boys are exposed relentlessly to a narrow, confining picture of masculinity in America, one that reinforces anger and violence as the way to solve problems” (Children Now, 1999, para. 2).

The defining factor that leads to the Millennials distinctive character is that they are the first generation to be immersed in ICT for their entire lives. Because computers and the Internet have generally been part of today’s adolescents’ home and school lives, Prensky (2005/2006) termed them *digital natives*. Digital natives are fluent in the language and culture of ICT, adjusting easily to changes in technology and using ICT in creative and innovative ways. Digital immigrants, those born before the rapid infusion of digital technology, always speak with an accent and struggle to learn and apply new ICT.

Digital natives seem to have boundless interest and curiosity about emerging technologies. As part of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, Lenhart et al. (2005) interviewed a representative sample of 1,100 American 12- to 17-year-olds and a parent or guardian. They found that 84% of the teenagers reported owning one or more personal media device, and 87% use the Internet; 51% reported going online daily. These data portray Millennials as highly engaged in ICT and provide convincing evidence that their use of telecommunications exceeds every other generation. The report makes the case that Millennials are more likely to use the new technology as a means of communicating with their friends and peers, contrary to commonly held attitudes of their elders. Teens reported regular social contact with an average of 20 friends, and 83% belong to some sort of social group. In a second report, Lenhart and Madden (2005) commented that teens are not just consumers of Internet content

but are now actively engaged as Internet content creators. This includes sharing creations such as artwork, photographs, stories, and videos; working on webpages or blogs for others; and creating and maintaining their own websites, online journals, or blogs.

Most Millennials enter formal educational environments that are ill prepared to take advantage of the literacy and ICT skills that they bring. Public schools typically place heavy restrictions on the use of the Internet. Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube are often blocked in libraries and computer labs. The result is a failure to build a bridge between the technological world Millennials live in and the classrooms we expect them to learn in. Such restrictions are almost always justified by claiming that they are intended to protect students. Such protection, however well-intentioned, actually fails to prepare young people by not providing the adult supervision and guidance that many of them would benefit from during their online encounters.

If there is a crisis in today’s schools, it probably has more to do with students’ perceptions that school is boring and largely irrelevant to preparation for life outside school (Howe & Strauss, 2006; National School Boards Association, 2007; Prensky, 2008). The challenge for today’s teachers, largely digital immigrants, is to continue to provide students with the legacy content of the old curriculum while providing future content to prepare students for life in the 21st century (Prensky, 2001). What will today’s students face as adults? We encourage our readers to view the video *Did You Know*, available both on YouTube and at the Shift Happens wikispace ([shiftohappens.wikispaces.com/](http://shiftohappens.wikispaces.com/)). This brief video provides an interesting perspective on the rapidly changing economic, technological, and social environment, and the challenges it presents to Millennials and their teachers. For

**If there is a crisis in today’s schools, it probably has more to do with students’ perceptions that school is boring and largely irrelevant to preparation for life outside school.**

example, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, 1 of 4 current workers has been at their current job less than one year, 1 of 2 for less than five years, and it is predicted that today's students will have 10 to 14 jobs in their lifetimes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). For specific references and additional statistics see [shifthappens.wikispaces.com/space/showimage/DidYouKnow20Sources.pdf](http://shifthappens.wikispaces.com/space/showimage/DidYouKnow20Sources.pdf).

Clearly, educators today are confronted with a daunting task. In our next section, we will propose a modest beginning: engaging students in media literacy activities and instruction.

### The Imperative for Media Literacy

As television penetrated American living rooms in the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan warned us that television constituted much more than mere entertainment. Societies, he argued, are always shaped more by the nature of their communication technology than by the content it carries and conveys. Television represented a sensory revolution, a world of "allatonce-ness," the era of the "global village" (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, p. 63). McLuhan saw the writing on the wall for education; though perhaps he would be happier with the metaphor of the image on the screen. The rapidly expanding electronic environment of the 1960s challenged the very relevance of education. McLuhan and Fiore called school a "rear-view-mirror" (p. 75), suggesting that children reared on television technology interrupted their education by going to school. By privileging print, schools were failing to prepare students for tomorrow as well as for the day-to-day reality that surrounded the first generation of television students.

The emergence of ICT has intensified the impact of media on culture and schooling. Ravitch and Finn (1987) observed that "This generation as well as their younger siblings, has been weaned on television and films. It takes more than a textbook and lecture to awaken their interest and grab their attention" (p. 241). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) also acknowledged the powerful role media played in the lives of young people. The world of the adolescent cannot be understood without understanding the media landscape they live in. They concluded that electronic media have the potential

to negatively influence impressionable children and teens, but more importantly, they can be harnessed for good. Developing media literacy skills, they wrote, "deserved widespread consideration in schools and community organizations as an essential part of becoming a well-educated citizen" (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995, p. 118).

It should be noted that media literacy is not merely teaching with or through media or technology. Using an overhead projector, the Internet, a SMART board, a DVD, or a VCR is not, in and of itself, media literacy. Media literacy requires teaching about media—the language it uses along with its narrative, codes, and conventions. Explicit instruction in media is good practice for at least two reasons. First, students who can easily comprehend and master the meaning of printed texts may not be equally adept at comprehending images, sound, or multimedia texts. And second, students have different strengths, so that the use of both sounds and images enriches instruction, enabling us to reach beyond students whose comfort zone is the printed page.

Strategies for engaging students in media literacy activities are becoming more available as instructional frameworks or templates have been identified for analyzing different types of media. Caldecott Medal winner Gail Haley has developed templates for identifying the "look of the book" (Haley, 2003, p. 26). This helps children appreciate and understand the relationship between illustration, text, and layout in picture books. Thus a balance exists between information carried in words and information addressed only in the illustrations. For additional suggestions see [www.gailehaley.com](http://www.gailehaley.com) (Haley, 2007). Templates have also been identified to assist teachers and students to critically analyze and evaluate broadcast news, advertising, and films (Considine & Haley, 1999).

Film and television texts are routinely used in Australian high schools where one can find students studying the film *Gattaca* or the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Although some undoubtedly lament the pop culture intrusion and long for literary classics, thumbing through the study guides for these units quickly reveals literary merit. The *Gattaca* guide includes studying genre, narrative structure, themes, editing, and transitions (Simmons, 2003). The *Buffy*

guide (Turnbull & Stranieri, 2003) addresses plot, digression, story arcs, and audience engagement. Some exemplary resources from publishers in the United States include the Media Focus and Media Smart series from McDougal Littell; both include effective instructional strategies based on clips from film, television, news, advertising, and other media.

In addition to analyzing and evaluating media text, media literacy focuses attention on media audiences, viewing young people as both consumers and creators of media messages. This is crucial when working with Millennials who are accustomed to living in a multimedia landscape. Media literacy recognizes the pleasure they derive from media texts beyond the classroom and values their exposure to popular culture texts as an important part of who they are as individuals. As such it is completely consistent with scholarship that addresses adolescent literacy and the need to provide young people with opportunities to examine, explore, critique, and defend their media tastes and preferences (Brozo, 2002; Newkirk, 2002; Pitcher et al., 2007). Descriptions of energetic student engagement with media literacy in classrooms, libraries, and theaters in the United States and Canada can be found in the film section of [www.media-literacy.net](http://www.media-literacy.net).

One organization that has recently advocated the integration of multimedia texts into the curriculum is the National School Boards Association (2007). The Association argued that students use words, music, photographs, and videos to creatively express themselves in online environments. Evidence suggests that the use of ICT such as wikis, blogs, chat rooms, and instant messaging appeals to students more than traditional school work and academics. The report recommends that “school districts may want to re-examine their policies and practices and explore ways in which they could use social networking for educational purposes”(p. 1).

In regard to media and technology, it can be said that Millennials are self-taught but not well-taught. How can we as educators help students develop the critical and academic literacy skills that are the foundation for success both in and out of school? We believe that media literacy instruction is a powerful vehicle for addressing this challenge.

## Getting Explicit With Media Literacy Instruction

Exposing students to multiple texts that evoke emotional responses and tap into popular culture is not dumbing down the curriculum. Wade and Moje (2001) noted the importance of expanding our concept of

text beyond traditional printed materials. Film clips, websites, photographs, graphic novels, music, editorial cartoons, lyrics, and advertisements can be both informational and motivational. Poor response to reading, and schooling generally, especially among boys, is often the result of unsuitable and unengaging texts. Brozo (2002) and Smith and Wilhelm (2002, 2006) believed that if students are given choice and control over the texts they read, their level of engagement and competency increases. Stone (2007) documented the “disconnect between the reading performances of young people in school and online” (p. 14), noting that websites recommended by so-called poor readers contained complicated vocabulary and syntactical structures. These “poor readers” gravitated to them because of their interest in the content.

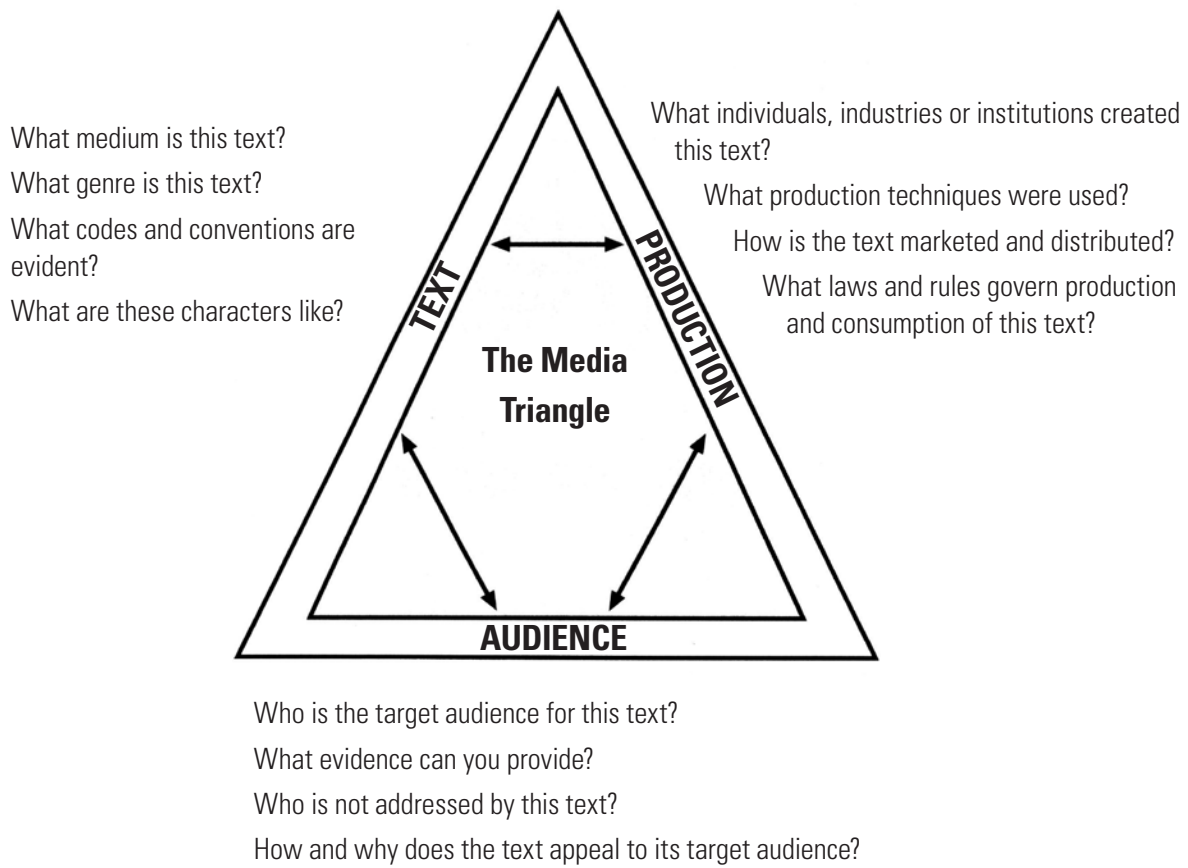
The ability to access information obviously does not guarantee comprehension of that content. A report commissioned by the British Library (Joint Information Systems Committee, 2008) found that while the “Google generation” could access materials, their ability to process those texts was somewhat limited. Online search strategies of this age group are characterized as “skimming and squirreling behavior” (p. 10). They concluded that modern youth “have a poor understanding of their information needs,” “find it difficult to develop effective search strategies,” and spend little time “evaluating information either for relevance, accuracy or authority” (p. 12).

### ***T.A.P.: A Media Literacy Model***

Without the ability to question, analyze, and authenticate information found online, in print, or any

How can we as educators help students develop the critical and academic literacy skills that are the foundation for success both in and out of school?

**Figure 1 T.A.P. Model**



*Note.* From Duncan. *Mass media and popular culture*, version 2 grades 10–12 student edition © 1996 Nelson Education Limited. Reproduced by permission. [www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions).

media format, Millennials are open to manipulation and misinformation. They need supportive comprehension strategies to help them compare, contrast, critique, and analyze such texts. One media literacy strategy is the T.A.P. model (Figure 1), which stands for *Text*, *Audience*, and *Production* (Duncan, D'Ippolito, Macpherson, & Wilson, 1998).

Text questions examine the type of text (e.g., novel, poem, photograph, film) as well as the genre of the text. As in traditional literature, genre in media literacy refers to specific categories of text. Categories in the case of television include sitcom, reality, and soap opera, and in the case of films include fantasy, western, science fiction, gangster, and comedy. Media literacy also addresses questions related to the struc-

ture of the text, including setting, characters, conflict, plot, and resolution.

Audience questions focus on the nature and needs of the target audience and attempt to analyze how the text might tap into interests, tastes, preferences, and lifestyles. A foundational assumption of media literacy is that meaning does not reside in the text but rather is constructed by the individual. Therefore, this category recognizes that the same texts can and should be read and responded to in significantly different ways. It suggests a shift away from correct interpretations, to richer readings in which audiences unpack, explain, and justify their interpretation. Consistent with multicultural literacy, it acknowledges that gender, class, and ethnicity are likely to shape the interpretation of texts, recognizing dominant as well as resistant

readings. Anecdotal accounts of resistant readings in the classroom can be found in the Richer Readings PDF section at [www.media-literacy.net](http://www.media-literacy.net).

Production questions enable students to critically analyze the creative process and institutional context in which the text is created, distributed, marketed, and consumed. Opportunities are provided to understand these messages from both an individual and an institutional context. Watching an anchor or reporter on Fox News may involve understanding what that individual is saying, their personal point of view or political philosophy. A deeper understanding would recognize that the individual has been hired by a large international corporation headed by Rupert Murdoch, with holdings in publishing, newspapers, film, and television. Murdoch has both economic and ideological agendas that are reflected in the texts created by individuals and institutions within his empire.

No matter which side of the model we are most interested in, employing the categories of the T.A.P. model enables teachers and students to engage in the process of deconstructing media messages, exploring dominant as well as resistant readings, and recognizing the context in which such texts are both created and consumed. The T.A.P. model provides teachers with a structure to engage students in analyzing interesting and immediately relevant text. Some teachable moments from current events in 2007 include the following:

- Ken Burns's release of a new television documentary simply called *The War*. Acclaimed by most critics, the documentary was criticized by Hispanic groups for underrepresenting their service in World War II.
- The firing of radio shock jock Don Imus in April 2007 after his remarks were deemed sexist and racist.
- During the Public Broadcasting Service's broadcast of *Bill Moyers Journal*, the host raised serious questions about the demeaning and misogynistic language of image and words on numerous internet sites attacking Senator Hillary Clinton and her presidential campaign.
- Description by broadcast news reporting during Hurricane Katrina where light-skinned people

were described as "finding bread and soda from a local grocery store..." while dark-skinned people were viewed as "looting a grocery store."

- Television personality and icon Oprah Winfrey's highly public endorsement of presidential candidate Barack Obama.

### ***An Instructional Example: A Multimedia Exploration of the Titanic***

In the final section of this article we describe a multimedia lesson exploring the *Titanic*, the ill-fated ocean liner that sank on its maiden voyage in 1912. The focus of the exercise and activities promotes greater student engagement and richer readings of the diverse type of texts available to them, including still images, sound, music, video, and print. The skills being developed are consistent with state and national standards of both English Language Arts and Social Studies. Table 1 provides a list of the media resources for this lesson.

The elements of this *Titanic* activity have been used with students and teachers and school administrators. It addresses a topic students are familiar with and engages different learning styles across multiple texts. It can be used as an individual activity, but we believe richer readings are derived from group work and social constructivist pedagogy. Crump, Durand, Hooke, and Kelliher (2002) described the process in this way:

To discover the meaning of a text, you need to uncover various layers of meaning...these layers can change their meaning overtime—and from one place to another—and so change the meaning of the text for new audiences.... A written or visual text has layers of meaning, such as the time in which it was produced, the medium available for its production and the attitudes of its audiences over time and place. (p. 6)

Using the T, or Text, side of the T.A.P. model, we can classify the *Titanic* resources by type of text. In this case they include a song, an editorial cartoon, a documentary clip, a film clip, a newspaper account, and a pop-up book. The song may be from a genre described as folk, traditional, or ballad. But how would we classify the blockbuster Hollywood film? As a genre is it romance, historical fiction, epic? Thus, after categorizing and classifying this information, students must

**Table 1 Media Resources for the *Titanic* Lesson**

Medium	Resource	Description
Song	<i>The Great Titanic</i>	This traditional song is not from the film of the same name. It is actually on the soundtrack of <i>Coal Miner's Daughter</i> . It can be used with or without a lyric sheet. It contains claims not made in the other artifacts and sets up compare/contrast activities.
Editorial cartoon	<i>Adrift in an Open Boat</i>	Critical of the White Star Company, this is a primary document that ran in <i>The San Francisco Examiner</i> , April 19th, 1912. What point of view is expressed? Access cartoon at <a href="http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/titoon.html">www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/titoon.html</a> .
Survivor's account	<i>Dr. Dodge's Story of His Rescue</i>	Eyewitness newspaper story. Access at <a href="http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/dodge6.html">www.sfmuseum.org/hist5/dodge6.html</a> .
Video clip	<i>Titanic</i> (motion picture)	A five-minute clip: Begin with Rose as an old woman as she watches a forensics analysis of how the ship sank, and then begins to tell her own story. Finish at "They called Titanic the ship of dreams..." When you stop at this point expect your students to be disappointed, but the work is about to begin. Compare and contrast the technical and personal versions of the incident.
Video clip	<i>Anatomy of a Disaster</i> documentary from Discovery Channel (VHS #25173)	Again, using only five minutes, this time right at the start when the team of researchers are heading out in the Atlantic to where the ship went down. What different professions are on board, and what different questions do they have about what happened?
Book	<i>Titanic</i> (Pipe, 2007)	This pop-up style book is excellent for hands-on activity for middle grade students and is full of artifacts and primary documents including photographs, letters, menus, news stories, and ads.
Internet resources	A search using the term <i>Titanic</i> on any of the common search engines (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Dogpile) will give you several million resources.	This is an opportunity to help students learn to select Internet resources from the huge number of available websites. For example, excellent photographs of the <i>Titanic</i> , including the building of the ship, can be accessed at <a href="http://www.maritimequest.com/liners/titanic_page_1.htm">www.maritimequest.com/liners/titanic_page_1.htm</a> .
Obituary	Barbara West Dainton, <i>The New York Times</i> , November 9th, 2007	The 96-year-old is believed to be one of the last survivors.

then justify their answers. The richer readings that result should create more than one potentially correct or plausible response. These various texts also contain inconsistent values and ideology. The film *Titanic* clearly is sympathetic to working class characters below deck. It could also be argued that ideologically the film is more sympathetic to art and creativity than to business and materialism. The Discovery Channel documentary clip focuses on science, logic, research, and debunking myths about the ship's sinking. The song, from earlier in the century, seems to point the finger of blame at the captain, which is not the view of the editorial cartoon from the *The San Francisco Examiner* at the time of the sinking.

Exploring these texts from the A, or Audience, side of the T.A.P. model might begin by attempting

to identify the intended or target audience of each text. One may compare the clips from the film and the documentary. Although both deal with the subject of the *Titanic*, they clearly have different audiences in mind. Questions to ask include In what way would the Discovery Channel's audience be similar to or different from the film's audience? How would these audiences be different from the readers of the 1912 edition of *The San Francisco Examiner*? What do you think critics meant when they referred to the fans that went to see the film time and time again as "Titaniacs"? What was the appeal of the film? Were Titaniacs more likely to be males or females, young or old? Why?



On the P, or Production, side of the T.A.P. model one can ask questions that range from the simple to the complex. The song has no author attributed and is merely noted as public domain. How do students understand this term? The newspaper resources include both an eyewitness account and an editorial cartoon. Are authors identified? When a modern media text is created (the film, the documentary) what are the institutional and corporate mechanisms for distributing it? What are the rules and laws that govern and protect these texts, both nationally and internationally? What different techniques are used in their creation?

As you explore the resources we have identified, remember that there is no fixed sequence in which they must be used. Teachers can modify which texts are used and add resources of their own. Activities related to the unit are described in greater detail on pages 10 and 11 at [www.media-literacy.net/pdfs/LinkingtheLiteracies.pdf](http://www.media-literacy.net/pdfs/LinkingtheLiteracies.pdf).

This exercise is simply an example of the type of topic that can be approached by using a variety of different texts. Both the book and the film version of *Flags of Our Fathers* constitute another example of how an era (World War II) and an incident (the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima) can be examined through primary and secondary resources, including journals, books, photographs, letters, and newspaper accounts.

We're sure you can create your own topic that lends itself to a multimedia approach. We have found that once you start studying a particular topic this way, students and other teachers will contribute to the resources available in a kind of "pebble in the pond" pedagogy.

Though some readers may worry about how time-consuming this multimedia activity is, in reality most of the instructional time with the *Titanic* exercise is focused on students responding to these texts, rather than simply reading, listening, or watching them. When we have used these in classes and workshops, time spent reading, viewing, and listening is typically 15–25 minutes, leaving plenty of time in a standard period to engage students with the texts. The *Titanic* resources could be used in a single lesson or developed throughout several lessons.

## Connecting Millennials and Instruction

In this article we have identified a paradox that all educators must address. For Millennials, technology and media are intricately interwoven in their lives. This generation lives in an environment where reading and writing, through digital media as well as traditional texts, are pervasive. Thus, we have argued that reading and writing are a pervasive part of Millennials' everyday life, and that they have immediate access to more information than any generation in history.

The ensuing contradiction is the disconnect between the literacy skills that they develop in their social environment and the literacy environment of the school. Evidence suggests that Millennials are still lacking in the academic literacy skills that are the foundation of further success in school and in adult life. To develop a curriculum that is relevant to this generation, educators need to acknowledge and respect the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that students bring with them to school and build on those to ensure success in the academic disciplines. Thus, students will become engaged and connected to the traditional curriculum while developing crucial technological skills. But beyond this, educators must recognize the increasingly complex environment that Millennials navigate outside of school. Success in 21st century economic and political environments depends on sophisticated understandings of technology and media.

One avenue for dealing with this contradiction is through media literacy instruction. Millennials are inundated with information from the Internet, television, advertisements, and film. Helping them construct meaning from these messages must become a central goal of schooling. Instruction must be developed to address this phenomena. Media literacy develops students' abilities to analyze and evaluate every text, both print and nonprint. Teachers and schools must also address the social and commercial context of media messages as well as the potential effects or consequences of those messages. These life lessons can come only with multiple opportunities to cultivate skills in comprehending and creating media.

Developing media literacy is a necessary and critical component of schooling in an increasingly multicultural society. Different voices, visions,

and experiences must be recognized and respected. Teachers should assist Millennials' understanding of how media representations of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect our society.

Throughout this article we have focused on access Millennials have to emerging technologies. We encourage our readers to recognize that while the digital divide seems to be decreasing (Jones, 2008), we need to remain vigilant to issues of equity and access. As teachers, we must help all students to analyze and evaluate each media message for text, context, and impact to produce more knowledgeable, creative, and cooperative citizens for the Global Village.

## References

- Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Higher Education.
- Brozo, W. (2002). *To be a boy, to be a reader: Engaging teen and pre-teen boys in active literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education: Literacy, learning, and contemporary culture*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Buckingham, D., & Sefton-Green, J. (1994). *Cultural studies goes to school: Reading and teaching popular media*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2008). *Number of jobs held, labor market activity, and earning growth among the youngest baby boomers: Results from a longitudinal study*. Retrieved June 30, 2008, from [www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf)
- Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1995). *Great transitions: Preparing adolescents for a new century*. New York: Author.
- Children Now. (1999). *Boys to men: Media messages about masculinity*. Retrieved June 20, 2008, from [www.mediate.com/articles/children.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/children.cfm)
- Considine, D.M., & Haley, G. (1999). *Visual messages: Integrating imagery into instruction*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Crump, C., Durand, P., Hooke, C., & Kelliher, D. (2002). *Viewing and representing in context 1*. Melbourne, Australia: Thomas Learning.
- Duncan, B., D'Ippolito, J., Macpherson, C., & Wilson, C. (1998). *Mass media and popular culture*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt.
- Foehr, U. (2006). *Media multitasking among American youth: Prevalence, predictors and pairings*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.
- Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Haley, G.E. (2003). The art of the picture book: A personal perspective. *Telemedium: The Journal of Media Literacy*, 49-50(1), 25-29.
- Haley, G.E. (2007). *Gail Haley home page*. Retrieved February 1, 2008, from [www.gailehaley.com](http://www.gailehaley.com)
- Hobbs, R., Broder, S., Pope, H., & Rowe, J. (2006). How adolescent girls interpret weight-loss advertising. *Health Education Research*, 21(5), 719-730. doi:10.1093/her/cyl077
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials rising: The next great generation*. New York: Vantage.
- Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2006). *Millennials and the pop culture*. Great Falls, VA: Life Course Associates.
- Joint Information Systems Committee. (2008). *Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*. Retrieved June 23, 2008, from [www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/gg\\_final\\_keynote\\_11012008.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/gg_final_keynote_11012008.pdf)
- Jones, C. (2008, June 27). Sweeping study finds blacks in U.S. diverse, optimistic. *USA Today*, p. 1A.
- Lenhart, A., Arafeh, S., Smith, A., & Macgill, A. (2008). *Writing, technology and teens*. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved June 20, 2008, from [www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Writing\\_Report\\_FINAL3.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Writing_Report_FINAL3.pdf)
- Lenhart, A., & Madden, M. (2005). *Teen content creators and consumers*. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved June 20, 2008, from [www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Teens\\_Content\\_Creation.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Content_Creation.pdf)
- Lenhart, A., Madden, M., & Hitlin, P. (2005). *Teens and technology: Youth are leading the transition to a fully wired and mobile nation*. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Retrieved July 3, 2006, from [www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Teens\\_Tech\\_July2005web.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Teens_Tech_July2005web.pdf)
- Masterman, L. (1985). *Teaching the media*. London: Routledge.
- McLuhan, M., & Fiore, Q. (1967). *The medium is the message*. New York: Bantam.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2005). *The nation's report card: Reading 2005*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved October 20, 2006, from [nces.edu.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006451](http://nces.edu.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006451)
- National Endowment for the Arts. (2007). *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence*. Retrieved June 23, 2008, from [www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.PDF](http://www.nea.gov/research/ToRead.PDF)
- National School Boards Association. (2007). *Creating and connecting: Research and guidelines on online social and educational networking*. Retrieved June 23, 2008, from [www.nsb.org/SecondaryMenu/TLN/CreatingandConnecting.aspx](http://www.nsb.org/SecondaryMenu/TLN/CreatingandConnecting.aspx)
- Newkirk, T. (2002). *Misreading masculinity: Boys, literacy, and popular culture*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Pitcher, S., Albright, L., DeLaney, C., Walker, N., Seunarinasingh, K., Mogge, S., et al. (2007). Assessing adolescents' motivation to read. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(5), 378-397. doi:10.1598/JAAL.50.5.5
- Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital natives, digital immigrants*. Retrieved July 5, 2006, from [www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf](http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf)
- Prensky, M. (2005/2006). Listen to the natives. *Educational Leadership*, 63(4), 8-13.
- Prensky, M. (2008). *Young minds, fast times: The twenty-first-century digital learner*. Retrieved June 22, 2008, from [www.edutopia.org/ikid-digital-learner-technology-2008](http://www.edutopia.org/ikid-digital-learner-technology-2008)
- Ravitch, D., & Finn, C. (1987). *What do our 17-year-olds know? A report on the first national assessment of history and literature*. New York: Harper & Row.

Rideout, V.D., Roberts, F., & Foehr, U. (2005). *Generation M: Media in the lives of 8–18-year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Simmons, G. (2003). *Gattaca: Is the sky the limit?* Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Smith, M., & Wilhelm, J. (2002). *Reading don't fix no Chevys: Literacy in the lives of young men*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Smith, M., & Wilhelm, J. (2006). *Going with the flow: How to engage boys (and girls) in their literacy learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Stone, J. (2007). Popular websites in adolescents' out-of-school lives: Critical lessons on literacy. In M. Knobel & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *A new literacies sampler* (pp. 49–66). New York: Peter Lang.

Turnbull, S., & Stranieri, V. (2003). *Bite me: Narrative structures and Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Victoria,: Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Tyner, K. (1998). *Literacy in a digital world: Teaching and learning in the age of information*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Wade, S.E., & Moje, E.B. (2001). The role of text in classroom learning: Beginning an online dialogue. *Reading Online*, 5(4). Available [www.readingonline.org/articles/art\\_index.asp?HREF=handbook/wade/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/articles/art_index.asp?HREF=handbook/wade/index.html)

### Literature Cited

Pipe, J. (2007). *Titanic*. Richmond Hill, ON: Firefly.

---

Considine teaches at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, USA; e-mail [considinedm@appstate.edu](mailto:considinedm@appstate.edu). Horton teaches at Argosy University, Arlington, Virginia, USA; e-mail [jkhorton@argosy.edu](mailto:jkhorton@argosy.edu). Moorman also teaches at Appalachian State University; e-mail [moormangb@appstate.edu](mailto:moormangb@appstate.edu).

**1/2 page**

**#656 ad**