

In-CREDIBLY INFORMED



EAST KOOTENAY
INVASIVE SPECIES
COUNCIL

About this lesson

In-CREDIBLY INFORMED is a two-part activity series created by the East Kootenay Invasive Species Council (EKISC) to help encourage students to be smart, inquisitive, and well-informed when engaging with environmental (invasive species) media.

Lessons summary

Media, in a broad sense, includes any communication content that we interact with. We are exposed to media on a daily basis; from the minute we wake up to the moment we go to sleep, media surrounds us.

Media is a representation of our lives and the lives of others around us, yet rarely do we pause to question where it comes from and who constructed it – and to evaluate its point of view, even when it's our own.

In these lessons we explore media that is both consumed and created, often finding media sources including video games, music, news updates, mobile apps, print materials, and more. Get more personal by including media created by your students including Facebook posts, photo uploading, tweets, blog entries, videos posted to YouTube, twitter, and more.

These lessons will give students an opportunity to exercise and develop critical thinking relating to media, use problem solving skills to deconstruct media production, and interpret media according to their own values and bias.

Learning objectives

Students will:

- Identify various types of media
- Gain awareness of how they interact with the media
- Critically analyse how different perspectives lead to media bias; understand how to identify media bias
- Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources, including mass media

BIG IDEA

Media sources can both positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues

SUBJECT

Social Studies grade 6

TIME REQUIRED

Two 40 - 50 minute periods

SUPPLIES

Computers or tablets; or
Media clippings and photocopies,
pictures, video, or promotional
material to analyze

LEARNING STANDARDS

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Develop a plan of action to address a selected problem or issue
- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)
- Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)

**See last pages for a complete list as prescribed by BC's Ministry of Education*

Background

Whether it's media that reaches your students for consumption or whether they are creating it themselves, all media is constructed. That means that someone had to create it – a process that required many choices along the way that impact the meaning and message of the final product.

Media that we consume – and create – surrounds us. We check our phones, read and answer texts, monitor and post on Facebook, tweet our thoughts, capture our days on Instagram, download and listen to music and videos, play games, watch or read the news, spend our days consuming and creating more media, buy products... yet, very rarely do we pause to think about or question where media comes from.

Prerequisites. Students should have a background in, and an awareness of, their own media habits. They should know how to critically evaluate media for themselves with a dose of healthy skepticism. You may need to review a few key concepts and ideas of media literacy to provide an effective foundation for these activities. More information and media literacy information can be found on [Media Smart's website](#).

Quick recap: What is media? Give students a few minutes to list as many things they can think that fall into the "media" category. Invite them to share and list their answers on the board.

Activity 1: Busting Bias [40 min]

As with many environmental issues, there are always skeptics. This activity is designed to assist students to recognize the author or editor's perspectives and how they are built on the experiences, gender, age, class, organization, and values of a person. In this information age participants are experiencing a wide range of written and visual texts and they need good information literacy and thinking skills to help consider different points of view and make judgements and deal with contentious and complex issues.

INVASIVE VOCABULARY

Invasive: an organism (plant, animal, fungus, or bacterium) that is not native and has negative effects on our economy, our environment, or our health. Invasive species can spread rapidly to new areas and will often out-compete native species as there are no native predators or diseases to keep them under control.

Non-native: Species from other areas of the world that do not occur naturally in an area, and were likely brought by humans, either accidentally or intentionally. Also known as: alien, introduced, exotic.

Noxious: A term used by the BC Weed Control Act and Regulations: an invasive species that has been designated by provincial authorities as one that is injurious to agricultural and/or horticultural crops, natural habitats and/or ecosystems, and/or humans or livestock.

WORDS TO KNOW

Media: Any means of communication that reaches or influences people. For example; television, radio, social media, the Internet, video, newspapers, magazines, advertising. Media is a representation of reality – it is constructed. The word media, comes from "medium," meaning something intermediate, or in the middle.

Deconstruction: To take something apart, give a thorough examination of something (an idea, an object, a piece of text), and study of all its constituent parts.

Literacy: The ability to read, understand, or have the knowledge of a subject or field.

Media Share. First, give students 5 minutes online* to find 1 article, image, or other media related to **invasive species** to share with the class. Explain that it can be any form of source of media (from news to advertising to entertainment), but must be relevant to **invasive species**. Ask: *How did you find it? What grabbed your attention?* Prompt your students to dig and think a bit deeper by asking: *Was it the design, wording, format, visuals? Or was it the topic itself that drew you in? Who is this media intended for? What is the message? Who wrote the article or took the photo?*

**Note: If getting your students online is not possible, provide newspapers and magazines for them to look through.*

Break It Down. Does evaluating the purpose and message behind the media change how students interpret their media? Does the media they chose interpret invasive species as being "harmful" or "harmless"; "positive" or "negative"?

Group It Together. With the articles, images, or other media have the students break into two groups: articles which relate invasive species as “harmful” and “harmless.” Each group will be looking for bias in their media. **Note:* if your students feel they have a “neutral” article, you can create a third group and have them decide later if they fit into one of the other categories.

Recognize Bias. Prompt the students to find a bias: The words we use and how we interpret images and statistics are an insight into our perspective or bias – our view of the world. All information is biased as it represents the perspective of the author or editor. A bias for the protection of the environment is a positive way of building a sustainable worldview and enacting stewardship in our local and global community. People who are passionate about an issue will be quite overt about their bias, generally acknowledging their perspective and using words and selecting facts and images to support their bias. People who want to manipulate others to a

particular point of view will be more subtle in their use of words and images. Students should ask: *What is your message? Was there a message you didn't agree with? What made you question the message?*

MEDIA DECONSTRUCTION TIPS*

Key Questions about Media

When interpreting media and evaluating media, always ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who created this message? How do you know? Is he/she, are they credible?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? How did they use colors, images, motion, text, design, lighting, or sound to create a mood or feeling?
3. How might different people understand this message differently? Who is the target audience? How would someone else interpret it? (For example, a child versus an adult; a first nation versus an immigrant.)
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or left out from, this message? What kind of people and points of view are included or left out? Is this biased towards one side or another?
5. Why is this message being sent; what is its purpose? Was this created to inform, persuade, or entertain? How can you tell?

Core Concepts about Media

When creating your own media, whether it's a short film, collage, flyer, song, or Facebook post, think about:

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values, opinions, and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

*Source: Adapted from the [Center for Media Literacy \(CML\)](#)

What would you like to say instead? Have the students consult the chart below to help them identify their message, audience, and evaluate its purpose and perspective.

Discussion and Comparison. Have each group summarize their media to the other groups. List the main issues or responses stated in the articles and compare these lists with the other groups. Ask: *How has the perspective been influenced by the source? Is there an article that is more “right” than another? Why?*

Extensions. Students can create individual media reports of an invasive species event they have experienced. **Note:* If they haven't had experiences with invasive species, they can make something up.

Compare their descriptions to show how different perspectives are evident in the use of words and amount of emphasis to different parts of the event.

Research a specific species or issue to find out about different perspectives then rewrite a biased article or create piece of advertising to present an alternative perspective or a more balanced perspective.

Organize a debate about the perspectives the students found when researching bias. Create a list of rules so you can determine who the clear winner is.

Activity 2: 1000 Words [40 min]

Photos, drawings, and other images are an immediate and powerful means of capturing the diversity of our world and its people, and of expanding and challenging our thinking about both. They help us answer questions and tell a stories. These images often represent different points of view and notions about the way that our world functions. We can assist students to think deeply about how photos communicate information and ideas about invasive species and their interaction with the environment, society, and the economy. This activity is designed to enhance students' skills to critically examine images, including questioning stereotypes and the bias of the photographer and editor.

Photo Search. Give students 5 minutes online* to find 1 still image (photo or cartoon) related to **invasive species** to share with the class. Explain that it can be any form of source of media (from news to advertising to entertainment), but must be relevant to **invasive species**. Ask: *How did you find it? What grabbed your attention?* Prompt your students to dig and think a bit deeper by asking: *Was it the colour, design, format, aspect? Or was it the topic itself that drew you in? Who is this image intended for? What is the message? Who took the photo or drew the cartoon?* **Note: If getting your students online is not possible, provide newspapers and magazines for them to look through.*

ImPLY Meaning. Get students to describe what the image means to them. For example:

- Describe how each image affects you.
- What does it make you think?
- How and why does it do this?
- Does the image affect others in the same way?

Ask: *How was this image composed? How does framing make a difference to a photo? What might be outside the frame? Is the photo manipulated in some way?*

Create A Caption: Have students write captions, conversations in speech bubbles, descriptions, stories, questions, or poems describing their photo. **Note:* there are no right or wrong answers.

Share Stories. Have the students post their photos and captions to an online album, or print them and tack them up on the wall. **Note:* Did some students find the same images? If so, have them compare their text with those of others to gain insight into different ways of viewing the same image. Choose 4 or 5 images from the group that stand out in one way or another. Ask: *Were there any surprises as to what was captioned to the image? Is there something about the photo that makes you think it has been altered in some way?*

A PHOTO IS WORTH 1000 WORDS

In the age of camera phones, Instagram, Photoshop, iPhoto, and other camera and photo editing apps and software, everyone becomes a photographer, as well as a photo editor or retoucher. It is important for everyone to consider how edits can change an image, for better or worse. Some edits enhance, repair, or correct the image. While other edits can change the meaning or interpretation of what the viewer will see. Ask your students to consider ways to positively alter an image, then think of ways that image edits can have negative implications



Discussion. It is important to be critical of images just as we are of other media sources. In some ways, a photo is even more powerful than a statement (ever heard the saying, “a photo is worth a thousand words”) – they can be interpreted in many different ways. Think about different ways to add to the photo or image: *Is a photo always truthful? What would happen if we added sounds or music? How do different sounds change the feel of an image?*

Alternatives and Extensions. Create a slideshow of 8 – 10 images of **invasive species** that portray aspects of being altered, or that may have more than one meaning. Divide the class into teams of 4 to 5 students. The objective of this game is for teams to evaluate if an image is real or not, and bonus points for guessing meaning of the image. Start the game by projecting the first image for the whole class to see. Give each team 2 to 3 minutes to study the image, discuss their reasoning, before they decide and give their answer. Once all teams have shared their answers and explanation, reveal the truth – is it a real photo or altered image? Play through all images.

BIG IDEA

Media sources can both positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies	Content
<p><i>Students are expected to be able to do the following:</i></p> <p><i>*Note: competencies not related to this activity have been removed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions• Develop a plan of action to address a selected problem or issue• Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)• Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources, including mass media (evidence)• Differentiate between short- and long-term causes, and intended and unintended consequences, of events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence)• Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective)• Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)	<p><i>Students are expected to know the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roles of individuals, governmental organizations, and NGOs, including groups representing indigenous peoples• Economic policies and resource management, including effects on indigenous peoples• international co-operation and responses to global issues• regional and international conflict• media technologies and coverage of current events

Curricular Competencies – Elaborations

Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions:

Key skills:

- With teacher and peer support, select a relevant problem or issue for inquiry (Environmental issues – specifically invasive species).
- Use comparing, classifying, inferring, imagining, verifying, identifying relationships, and summarizing to clarify and define a problem or issue.
- Select ways to clarify a specific problem or issue (e.g., discussion, debate, research).
- Identify opportunities for civic participation at the school, community, provincial, national, and global levels.

Develop a plan of action to address a selected problem or issue:

- Collect and organize information to support a course of action.
- Individually, or in groups, implement a plan of action to address a problem or issue (e.g., weed pull, restoration event, letter writing to a politician, editorial in the school or community newspaper, petition).

Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources, including mass media (evidence):

Sample activities:

- Compare a range of points of view on a problem or issue.
- Compare and contrast media coverage of a controversial issue (e.g., invasive species, climate change, resource management).
- With peer and teacher support, determine criteria for evaluating information sources for credibility and reliability (e.g., context, authentic voice, source, objectivity, evidence, authorship).
- Apply criteria to evaluate selected sources for credibility and reliability.
- Distinguish between primary sources and secondary sources.

Differentiate between short- and long-term causes, and intended and unintended consequences, of events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence):

Sample activities:

- Give examples of how your actions may have consequences for others locally or globally (e.g., effect of consumer choices).

Take stakeholders' perspectives on issues, developments, or events by making inferences about their beliefs, values, and motivations (perspective):

Sample activities:

- Compare and assess two or more perspectives on a local or global problem or issue.
- Consider reasons for differing perspectives (e.g., personal experiences, perceived benefits, beliefs, and values).

Key questions:

- Should individuals be willing to give up some personal freedoms for the sake of collective well-being?

Make ethical judgments about events, decisions, or actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment):

Key question:

- What are the rights and responsibilities of a global citizen?

Content – Elaborations

Economic policies and resource management, including effects on indigenous peoples:

Sample topics:

- Deforestation
- Biodiversity loss
- Infrastructure development (problems with using contaminated fill, soil, etc)

Key questions:

- How should decisions about economic policy and resource management be made?
- How should societies balance economic development with the protection of the environment?

international co-operation and responses to global issues:

Sample topics:

- environmental issues

media technologies and coverage of current events:

Sample topics:

- ownership of media
- propaganda
- editorial bias
- sensationalism
- freedom of the press
- social media uses and abuses

Key questions:

- How does the media influence public perception of major events?
- Are some media sources more trustworthy than others? Explain your answer.