

Media Literacy Series Review

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Capstone Press introduced a media literacy series of 8 nonfiction picture books authored by a group of well-recognized media literacy advocates and educators in North America. This media literacy series is an excellent tool to help elementary and secondary school students learn to properly evaluate and critically question the barrage of media they counter in their everyday life. This series covers several types of media including internet websites, television, movies, video games, social network, and music. The basic premise of the series is to help students ask essential questions such as: *Who made the message, who is the message for, how might others view the message differently, what is left out of the message, and how does the message get to keep my attention?* While acknowledging the pervasiveness and entertainment value of media, this series strengthens students as the mature consumers of media, encouraging and fostering critical thought

and reflexivity so that they develop into active rather than passive consumers of media.

Examples of topics covered in this series include the value assumptions, the commercial basis of most types of media, the exorbitant cost of advertising, product placement on popular shows, and safe use of the Internet. In her book on television, “*TV Takeover*”, Wan points out that all programs are targeted at specific audiences and explains briefly the jobs of television workers, such as producers, writers, actors, camera operators, editors, and directors; sidebars urge students to plan TV shows and ads designed to attract specific customers. Capstone’s series is a good place for teachers to begin teaching media literacy in their classrooms, as it provides a systematic way to question popular culture and to recognize how influential media messages are in children’s life. This series is collected into “*Accelerated Reader*,” the world’s most widely used reading software for school children. Apart from learning to question media, students also learn to read and write English with this set (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Capstone Media Literacy Set



TV Takeover: Questioning Television (2007) by Guofang Wan, who is currently a Professor of Education at Ohio University. She was the 2009 recipient of the National Council of Teacher of English (NCTE) Media Literacy Education Award Winner. This mini book is an excellent source for students and teachers to investigate the process of television production, and to enjoy TV programs critically.

Coming Distractions: Questioning Movies (2007) by Frank Baker, a national “Leaders in Learning” honoree and a consultant for the NCTE and the South Carolina Writing Improvement Network. Baker has presided over a host of teacher workshops across the U.S. His contribution to the series is a thorough yet easily readable book for students to examine the film industry. The book encourages students to actively interpret the film industry’s messages and motivations.

Virtually True: Questioning Online Media (2007) by Guofang Wan provides young readers with the opportunity to analyze the all-pervasive world of online media, an essential tool for educators teaching media literacy.

Other Books in the Series include:

Your Space: Questioning New Media by Heather E. Schwartz
At The Controls: Questioning Video and Computer Games by Neil Anderson

Music Madness: Questioning Music and Music Videos by Neil Anderson

What’s Your Source: Questioning The News by Stergios Botzakis

Pretty In Print: Questioning Magazines by Stergios Botzakis

Arthur:

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