

# Respect

This week, we look at respect through the lens of the news media. Students will think about the messages they receive from the media and evaluate ads and other news sources for how they communicate a message, show respect (or disrespect), and evaluate how to be savvy media consumers.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

### Whole Class Lesson

30 minutes



### Assessing Media Messages for Respect

This lesson offers students an opportunity to evaluate the types of messages they hear in the media or through advertising and determine if the messages are respectful. This lesson also teaches them a little bit about media bias and how the media uses different strategies to send messages and sway consumers. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

## Mini Lessons

### For Small Groups

15 minutes



### Fake News: What is it and Why is it a Problem?

Have students discuss the term “fake news.” Ask them what they have heard about it and what they think it is. Ask students, by show of hands, if they think they could recognize the difference between a real news story and a fake news story. Then, listen to the following interview or have them read the article: [Stanford Study Finds Most Students Vulnerable To Fake News](#) (about 4 minutes long)

Use the following questions as discussion starters:

- So, if what we heard is true (and it does come from a very reliable source!), about 80% of students surveyed could not tell the difference between fake news and real news. Do you think people sharing false stories and information is a problem and why?
- How can you tell if something is real or made-up when you see it in the media or online? (Think about the different biases you learned about in the primary lesson.)
- How does writing and sharing truthful information tie into respect?

If you have time, you can have students take the [“Can you spot the fake news headline” quiz](#) from Channel One News. (You could even do this as a class.)

**For Partners**  
15 minutes



### **Kindness in the News**

Not every news story is one of disrespect and half-truth! There are many news stories that reflect kindness and respect. In partners, spend some time today on computers, tablets, or phones exploring kindness in the news stories that you can share with the larger class. Visit the [Global News Random Acts of Kindness webpage](#) and read or watch a news story that interests you. Take notes and then be prepared to, together, share the story you read/watched with the larger group. (Students can also use newspapers or preprinted articles if using online articles is not an option.)

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### **Journal Prompt: Where Do I Get My Information?**

Where do I get my information? How can I know if the messages I am hearing are true? How does seeking truth in information tie into respect?

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### **Kindness in Social Media**

Show the following 5 1/2-minute video clip about how digital social media shapes how we get our news: [We the Voters- Mediaocracy](#)

Have a large or small group discussion using the following discussion starters:

- How can social media both expand our world view and opinions and shrink them?
- Social media platforms, like Facebook, use algorithms to keep you on their site. Did you know you might be being manipulated by algorithms? What do you think of that?
- What should you do before you believe something you read online or share it with others?

# Assessing Media Messages for Respect

This lesson offers students an opportunity to evaluate the types of messages they hear in the media or through advertising, and determine if the messages are respectful. This lesson also teaches them a little bit about media bias and how the media uses different strategies to send messages and sway consumers.

**Lesson Timeframe**

30 minutes

**Required Materials**

- ☐ Smartboard for projecting the images or printed handouts of the images

**Standards Map**

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

**Lesson Objective**

Students will:

- Evaluate media messages through the lens of respect
- Identify elements of bias in media messages

**Teacher Connection/Self-Care**

Ultimately, how we show respect for ourselves and others is up to us. But, our ability to do this can be influenced by many things, including culture, policy, the media, and our own biases about who we are and what we respect. This week, take time to notice what is influencing your ability to respect yourself and others, and then ask yourself, “Is this true?” and “Who is behind this message?” If you are reading a school policy about respect, then likely it is true and written with everyone’s best interest in mind. Plus, the source behind the message, the staff, administration, school board, and/or school families, is a reliable authority. But, if the messages you are receiving influence how you view and respect yourself or others are from the media or personal biases, ask yourself if they are true and where they came from. You may discover something false that is negatively impacting your ability to show respect. If that is the case, hit the reset button and evaluate how you can improve your ability to ignore the noise and instead give and receive respect.



## Share

5-7 minutes

So far in the respect unit we have been talking about respectful communication. We've talked about how to be respectful in the way we send messages and in the way we listen and receive messages. This week we'll talk about how the media sends messages.



## Inspire

15 minutes

Have you ever noticed how different news stations or outlets will cover the same stories or issues but in very different ways? Or, how some headlines, pictures, or captions seem misleading or disrespectful compared to others? Invite students to share if they have specific examples.

Good! This is called **media bias**. This is when a media outlet tries to influence us through word choice, through images, through placement of the story (think front page news vs. buried on page 8), and through what is included and excluded.

Here is an example: Show the "[Dove Evolution](#)" clip that shows a model being photoshopped for a billboard. If you cannot show the clip in school, find before and after photoshopped images online and print them out. Or, show a picture you have taken both in its original form and then an edited version (even a filter application on a smartphone can dramatically alter the way an image looks).

So, what did they do in the clip (or image) we just saw? Why do you think they did this? Invite students to respond. In the Dove example, the answers will likely center on selling products, influencing what people perceive as "beautiful," etc.

How often do we do this ourselves? How many of you have ever edited a picture? Or, how many of you have, when you want something from your parents or guardians, picked your words carefully, or maybe left some information out, or waited until a particular time to make your request (when you knew your parents were tired or distracted and wouldn't ask many questions)? There are times when we all use some kind of bias to communicate a message so that we can get what we want. Think a little bit, though: is this a respectful, honest way to communicate?



## Empower

15 minutes | Two Options

### Option A:

Today we are going to examine advertising and other media messages for the words, images, and taglines that help create meaning and then determine if the message is respectful of us as consumers, of the company, and of the product. A way a message might be disrespectful is if it uses negativity to sell or promote the product, place, service, or idea. Or, if it depicts people in negative or degrading ways (using women's bodies to sell products, for example).

Spend some time going through [*magazines, newspapers, online headlines, etc. Select the medium you have access to; bringing in newspapers or magazines from the library is an option, or perhaps there is a stockpile of magazines you have at home you can bring or the staff workroom may have some you can borrow*]. Find an ad, a headline, an image that catches your eye and then evaluate it. What is the message? Is it respectful of the subject? Respectful of you the reader? What is the tone behind the words they use? What are the words themselves and is there a hidden message? What images or other visual display helps send a message and do they show respect?

Write down what you observe about the ad, headline, or image you selected and be prepared to share the media and your observations with the class.

### Option B:

*This option might be most appropriate if conducting this unit during an election year when students are likely to see a number of political ads, many of them disrespectful. Ideally, the ads you evaluate will be ads you see right in your community.*

Today we are going to examine the political messages we see, particularly during an election year. You have likely noticed that during an election year when people vote for members of government you may receive many pieces of mail that either support a candidate or disregard a candidate. The same is true for TV commercials and billboards. The messages are everywhere! And many of them are disrespectful, untrue, or distorted.

We are going to evaluate a few political ads and determine if they send a respectful message or a disrespectful message and why or how.

*It is best if you can project these on the board for everyone to see; if this is not possible, printing and handing out the examples to groups will work, too. This can be a large-group activity or a small group activity. If there is time, you could have students recreate the ad with a positive spin (if originally negative) or negative spin (if originally positive) to experience how easy it is to do!*

Ad #1:

**STEVE YATES**  
**LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM**

**MYTH:** According to Yates' own propaganda, he "will use his business experience to create good-paying jobs..." and "bring the creativity and discipline of business to make government run more efficiently..."

**REALITY:** The true status of Steve's failed business, according to his wife, Diana

Steve and I need help  
He lost his last paying client  
I am starting to worry that we will lose our house

Steve's business has failed.  
we have been trading water ever since.  
Steve desperately needs a regular job.  
things don't look good

\* Multiple sources confirm.

**WHAT ELSE IS STEVE HIDING?**  
On May 15, say **NO** to Steve Yates!

PSRST STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Idaho Falls, ID  
Permit No. 209

IDAHOANS FIGHTING  
CORRUPTION  
www.IDAHOANSFIGHTINGCORRUPTION.org

(Source: Clayton Cramer, "[A New Low in Idaho Political Ads](#)")

Ask the students to evaluate the following:

- Respectful or Disrespectful?
- Why?
- What words are used that tell you it's respectful/disrespectful?
- What images or information is used that tell you it's respectful/disrespectful?
- Where did this information come from?
- What information are you missing?
- Would you trust this message? Why or why not?

Ad #2:

**DISRESPECTFUL**

**John Doe will protect taxpayer dollars.**

**VOTE JOHN DOE on Nov 8**

Paid for by Federal Election Committee PAC. Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. [www.fec.web](http://www.fec.web)

(Source: NPR, "[As Secret Money Surges In Elections, The FEC Considers A Small Step For Transparency](#)")

Ask the students to evaluate the following:

- Respectful or Disrespectful?
- Why?
- What words are used that tell you it's respectful/disrespectful?
- What images or information is used that tell you it's respectful/disrespectful?
- Where did this information come from?
- What information are you missing?
- Would you trust this message? Why or why not?



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

As a class, have students evaluate the messages they observed and discussed. Were they largely respectful? Disrespectful? Was there enough information presented to fully understand the message? If not, why do you think we use this type of advertising to send messages? What are we hoping consumers will do (or not do)?

Remember, the messages we receive from the media are usually only half true. It isn't that they are lying, specifically, but they are using different strategies (images, words, tone, excluding information, distraction) to leave information out. That information is needed to make a fully informed decision. Work hard to ignore the disrespectful messaging in our media and be critical thinkers about all media, even when it seems respectful. There are always two sides to consider and, if the ad is selling a product, there are usually more questions you can ask to understand what it is they want you to buy into. Sometimes, when you learn everything there is to learn about the product or service, it's actually not worth your time and money.