

# 5 RESOURCE TOOLS TO BOOST YOUR MEDIA LITERACY



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## INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA LITERACY



# WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY

Media literacy means being able to **access, analyze, evaluate, create,** and **act** on information across different media forms.







It helps you think **critically, spot bias,** and **understand** how media shapes identity and beliefs — not just whether something is true or false.

### WHY IT MATTERS FOR BLACK STUDENTS

**Problem 1:** Harmful media portrayals can make it harder for Black students to define and affirm their identity.

**Problem 2:** Without strong media skills, students may internalize negative stereotypes and false messages.

### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

-  Recognize hidden messages
-  Build critical thinking skills
-  Protect cultural pride and identity
-  Share authentic stories





Who created  
this message?

Why was it  
created?



Who  
benefits —  
and who  
might be  
harmed?

What  
perspectives  
are missing?

How does  
this  
message  
make me  
feel about  
myself and  
others?

Media literacy  
teaches you to see  
the bigger picture —  
how media tries to  
influence what you  
believe, feel, and  
value.



TOOL #1

# SPOTTING HIDDEN MESSAGES

A **hidden message** is an unstated **idea**, **belief**, or **value** woven in media. It's not what's said outright, but what's implied, assumed, or suggested.

Hidden messages can shape how you see **yourself**, **others**, and the **world** — without you even **realizing it**.

## COMMON PLACES HIDDEN MESSAGES SHOW UP

**News Headlines:** **ex.**, focusing on crime when reporting on Black communities but success stories elsewhere

**Entertainment Shows:** **ex.**, showing one-dimensional characters or stereotypes

**Advertisements:** **ex.**, who is shown as beautiful, successful, powerful

**Social Media Posts and Memes:** **ex.**, jokes that rely on stereotypes



## QUICK QUESTIONS TO SPOT HIDDEN MESSAGES

- What is this media really saying about race, gender, culture, or power?
- What values or beliefs are being pushed — even if they aren't spoken?
- Who is included, and who is left out?
- If I believed everything in this message, how would I feel about myself or my community?

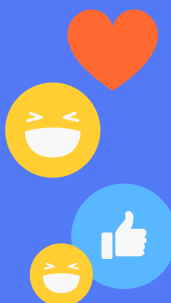


# QUICK PRACTICE ACTIVITY



**Pick a movie scene, ad, TikTok, or news clip.  
Answer these two questions:**

- 1. What hidden message(s) are being sent?**
- 2. How might these messages affect someone's identity or self-esteem?**



**Tip:** Trust your gut — if something feels off, dig deeper. Hidden messages are designed to feel normal.



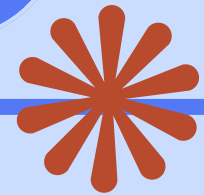
# HIDDEN MESSAGES

## CHECKLIST



*Use this when looking*

**at any media**



- ★ Who created this?
- ★ What's shown / left out?
- ★ What beliefs are pushed?
- ★ Who benefits / who's hurt?
- ★ How does it make me feel?
- ★ What's slipped in silently?





TOOL #2

# EMOTIONAL



## AWARENESS



Media doesn't just inform you — it tries to **move** you.

Before you think critically, media often triggers emotions like **fear**, **anger**, **pride**, **sadness**, or **excitement** to grab your attention and shape your reaction.

If you're feeling first and thinking second, it's easier to be manipulated.

### COMMON EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS IN MEDIA



- **Fear** – e.g., "threats" to safety or status
- **Anger** – e.g., injustice, outrage posts
- **Pride** – e.g., success stories tied to products or ideologies
- **Sadness** – e.g., emotional charity ads
- **Joy** – e.g., viral videos, feel-good memes





TOOL #2

# EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

## QUICK QUESTIONS TO BUILD EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

- What am I feeling right now **after** seeing this?
- Was this message designed to **make** me feel that way?
- Is my emotional reaction **clouding** my critical thinking?
- Would I **react** differently if I paused and reflected first?



### Quick Practice Activity

Pick a piece of media (TikTok, news clip, ad). After watching, pause and ask yourself:

1. What **emotion** did this trigger first?
2. How did that **emotion** affect the way you processed the information?

**Tip:** Emotions are powerful — but staying aware keeps **you** in control, not the media.





media literacy



is critical thinking skills


helps you tell YOUR story

sees beyond the  
emotions




## TOOL #3

# FACT CHECKING



Not everything you see online, on TV, or in print is **true** — or **complete**.

Bad information spreads fast — and if we don't **check it**, it shapes what we believe about ourselves, our communities, and the world.



### QUICK SIGNS TO FACT-CHECK

- It's **outrageous** - "Can you believe this?!"
- It plays heavily on emotions **without** evidence
- It's **missing** a source or cites a suspicious one
- It's too perfect — aligns **exactly** with what you already believe

### QUICK PRACTICE ACTIVITY

Pick a trending story or viral post.

1. Search for the story in 2–3 major news outlets.
2. Reverse image search any photos.
3. Check if fact-checkers have already addressed it.

### Ask yourself:

1. Was the original message accurate?
2. If not, what was missing or misleading?

**Tip:** Fact-checking protects not just your mind, but your community from being misled.





# HOW TO FACT-CHECK FAST



*Use this when looking*



## ★ Stop and Check

*Before sharing or reacting, pause. Ask: Where is this coming from?*

## ★ Cross-Verify

*Look for at least two other credible sources that report the same thing.*

## ★ Reverse Image Search

*For viral photos or videos, use tools like Google Reverse Image Search or TinEye to check if the image/video is real or old.*

## ★ Check the Source

*Is the source trustworthy? Reliable organizations cite evidence, use clear language, and correct mistakes.*

## ★ Snopes, FactCheck.org, or Politifact

*Use trusted fact-checking websites if you're unsure.*



## TOOL #4

# AUDIT OF REPRESENTATION

The media we consume helps **build** the mental images we have of people, places, and possibilities — including ourselves.

If only certain groups are shown in certain ways, it shapes how society — and you — see them.

Representation is not just about being visible — it's about **how** you're portrayed.

- Who is shown? **ex.**, race, gender, age, ability, background
- How are they shown? **ex.**, roles, behaviors, storylines
- Who's missing completely? invisibility is a message too
- Are characters or groups portrayed with complexity or **stereotypes**?
- What impact might these portrayals have on **self-esteem, career dreams, or identity**?



## QUICK QUESTIONS TO SPOT HIDDEN MESSAGES

Pick a TV show, ad, movie, or social media account you follow. Ask:

- Who do I see **most** often?
- Who do I **rarely** see — or only see in limited roles?
- How might this shape what I **believe** about different groups — including my own?

Tip: Diversity means more than numbers — it means telling full, real, human stories.





## TOOL #5

# CREATING MEDIA MESSAGES



Being media literate isn't just about spotting problems — it's about becoming a **builder**.

When you create your own messages, you **reclaim** power over your story, your voice, and how your community is seen.



You shift from just consuming media to **shaping** culture.



### Tell the fuller story

- Show complexity, **not** just stereotypes

### Think about impact

- How will your message make **others** feel — especially people like you?

### Highlight underrepresented voices

- Bring forward the stories that **rarely** get told

### Use facts — but also emotions

- Facts **inform**. Feelings **connect**

### Be intentional

- Every image, word, and post you share tells people something about you and your **values**



# QUICK PRACTICE ACTIVITY

## Create one small piece of media

- A short TikTok
- A graphic
- A quote post
- A mini blog post
- Or even a voice note



## ASK YOURSELF BEFORE POSTING:

1

### What story am I telling?

Every post sends a message — be sure it reflects the truth, values, and depth you want to share.



2

### Who might feel empowered by this?

Think about how your message could uplift, inspire, or positively represent others, especially those often overlooked.



3

### Am I adding something meaningful to the world?

Aim to create content that contributes value, builds understanding, or sparks positive change — not just noise.



Tip: Creating media is your chance to push back against harmful narratives — and plant better ones.



To see beyond  
the surface



To protect  
your identity



**MEDIA SHAPES  
HOW WE SEE  
THE WORLD —  
AND HOW WE  
SEE  
OURSELVES.**

**BY BUILDING  
YOUR MEDIA  
LITERACY  
SKILLS, YOU  
ARE  
RECLAIMING  
YOUR POWER:**

To challenge  
harmful  
narratives



To create  
messages  
that uplift  
and inspire





Every post you read,  
share, or create is a  
chance to either ***accept***  
the world as it is — or help  
shape the world as it  
should be.

**STAY CURIOUS**

**STAY  
CRITICAL**

**STAY  
POWERFUL**