

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?

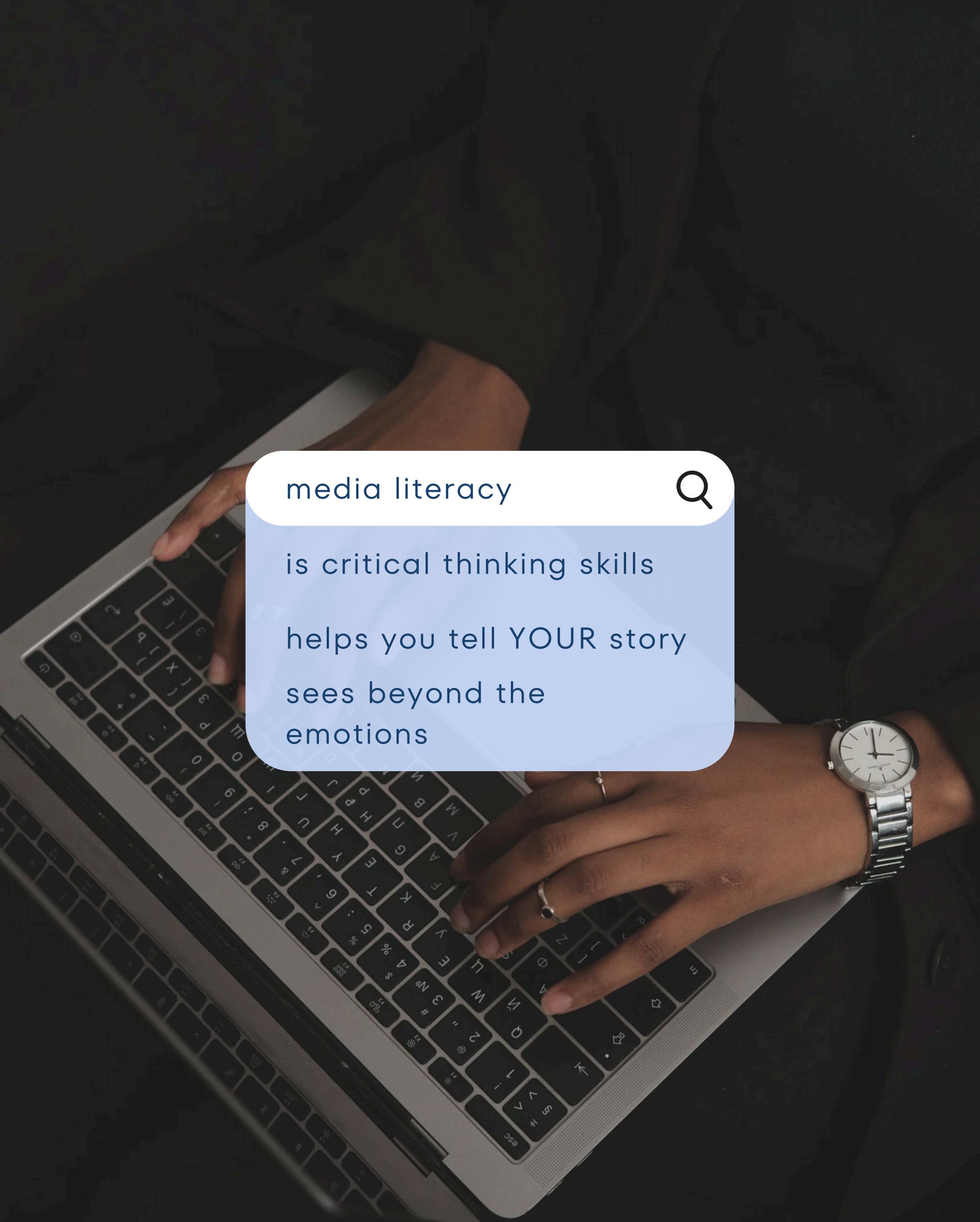


Quick Practice Activity

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**