

# Mastering the media

## An introduction for educators With tips and extra information

*Text in italics are taken from the online learning tool*

*Information comes at us every day from many directions: from the opinions of a friend to the media (broadcasting, publishing and the internet – even the adverts). Every day we make choices about the media we ‘listen to’, which influence how we see the world around us. But sometimes they close us off, too. Let’s look at the ‘bubbles’ we create. How can we filter messages and be critical?*

### Aims

In this learning path learners:

- Consider which media they and their fellow learners use and how this might influence them.
- Explore the concept of stereotypes and consider the relationship between stereotypes and prejudices.
- Explore the concept of stereotypes in relation to advertising.
- Use active reading and listening skills to challenge their preconceptions about groups of people represented in adverts.
- Learn which techniques are used in propaganda.

### Structure

This learning path consists of three tracks (lessons) each with a number of steps.

Track 1: Learners analyse their own media usage and compare their media consumption with other learners.

Track 2: Learners explore how stereotypes are used in the media and how they affect how we see the world and the people around us.

Track 3: Learners consider historical and contemporary examples to explore the mechanisms used in propaganda and consider how they themselves might be influenced.

Learners require approximately 100 minutes for tracks 1 and 2, and about 50 minutes for track 3.



### Flow of work: Icons

Learners will often work in pairs, small groups or discuss a topic with the whole class. The flow for each step is easily recognised with the help of the following icons:



Answering questions individually allows time to formulate a personal response.



Discussing topics in pairs gives everyone the chance to voice an opinion and discuss in a simple format, with one person.



Discussing in small groups allows for more opinions to be shared and also creates a comfortable space to voice ideas. Not all learners are keen to express themselves in a larger group.



Class discussions give the opportunity to bring the group together to review the work being done and also give you as the educator a moment to summarise some main outcomes.

# Track 1 – Media and me

Time: about 100 minutes

*We are bombarded by many types of media. But which do we actually choose to use and how do they influence us? Let's become critical thinkers!*

## Outline

In this track learners look at the diverse and complex world of media. Learners will look first at their own media 'bubble' and analyse their media usage. Then they will share and compare the media consumption of other learners.



### Step 1 What do I see?

*Write down the first five things you see in the next picture. You have just 30 seconds.*

*Be fast with your answers. Discuss in pairs what you saw. What functions do images have in societies? Discuss in the class.*

This quick-fire exercise shows the learners that different people see different things even when looking at the same picture. The discussion in pairs is a short warm-up that should not take more than a couple of minutes.

The question on the function of images in societies is more philosophical. Decide how much time you want to spend on this, depending how likely your learners are to be interested. It is only the start of the track, so keep the exchanges brief. The question should make learners consider the many ways images are used.



### Step 2 Types of media

*Everyone looks at or listens to different media. And everyone defines the media differently.*

*What does 'the media' mean to you?*

*Look at all the answers. Why do you think your group has used so many different words? Can we now define 'the media'? Discuss the tag cloud with your class.*

There are no right or wrong answers. If learners come up with very different words, consider grouping the answers to help the learners realise that 'the media' is a complex term used in many ways. They will look in more detail at the media they themselves use in the next step, so avoid talking in detail about specific examples.

## Before starting

• Make sure learners know that their answers will be shared within the group. Exchange and discussion is central to the learning process. Each time your students login they will see the following pop-up:

*Please be aware: the answers you give during assignments will be shared with your teacher and classmates in group work.*

• As the topics discussed are personal, consider whether the atmosphere in the class feels safe and whether you can be sure that the learners will treat each other respectfully. Discuss this point with the class if you think this might be necessary.

• Often learners will only be able to continue if they have submitted one or more answers. At some points when working online learners will only be able to continue if the rest of the class has also submitted answers. They need to be aware of this.

• Learners will need guidance on how much time to spend on each step. Taking the level of your learners into account, and the amount of time available it will be useful to indicate the available time. Tracks start with brief questions that serve as a 'warming up'. Keep the time spent on the first steps brief, so that there is more time for discussion later on.

• Consider giving some assignments as homework (as indicated). Research and preparing presentations can be done individually or in small groups as home work.

## Blended learning

Blended learning mixes online and offline work, allowing students to benefit from both learning environments in the most effective way. The learning process is centred on individual assignments and intense exchanges, and should be carefully monitored.

Learners should not run ahead of the group. It can be useful to read some of the texts collectively, with one learner reading out loud and to watch some of the video clips collectively. Take time for the group work and class discussion.



### Step 3 What's in your bubble?

*What types of media play a role in your life? Give examples for the press, audio-visual and digital media.  
What magazines or newspapers do you read?  
What games, apps or website do you use?  
Which TV or radio programmes – shows or news – do you watch or listen to?*

There is room for five examples for each category, but you may prefer to ask for just one or two examples. If learners are not familiar with the concept of a 'bubble' let them discuss briefly what they think it might mean and then explain that the bubble represents both the comfort of what is known and a limitation of world view for the person inside the bubble (who cannot see out).



### Step 4 On the bubble

*Look at all the answers. Consider the similarities and differences in your examples.  
Discuss the three tag clouds. Click on each picture in turn.*

Make sure learners wait until the whole class has submitted answers, then either discuss each tag cloud in turn or choose one to discuss in more detail. Ask the learners to consider what surprises or interests them in the tag cloud.



### Step 5 Media consumption

*What media do you spend most hours on? Give several examples. Drag and drop your answers into the graph.*

In this step learners look more closely at their media consumption. Learners will only be able to continue if they have placed all their examples on the graph. Limit them to just a few minutes to consider what they spend most and least time on.



### Step 6 Credibility

*Which of the media that you use do you consider most credible and which less trustworthy? Drop the media you trust most in the bullseye. Why do you consider one media source more trustworthy than another?*

Learners will only be able to continue to the next page if they have placed all their examples on the graph. Working in pairs, learners are then asked discuss why they consider some media more credible or trustworthy than others. You might consider letting this lead into a class exchange.

### Navigation

Most learning paths have several tracks. You as the educator will choose which path and track learners work with. Each track consists of several steps. Most steps include several screen pages – usually with a question, some information, and an assignment to work on in pairs or as a group. Learners can only go back a page if it is part of the same step, perhaps to look again at the question or to reread a text. The back arrow will not take learners back to previous steps. If this is necessary, the dropdown menu in the top left hand corner opens navigation through the whole track.

### Tag clouds

There are two types of tag clouds that collect the individual answers submitted by learners. The 'word cloud' collects words submitted by the learners. All answers are treated equally. However, the 'cloud' shows a random collection of answers. This means that not everyone sees the same answers. Usually there will be more words than fit on one screen. A useful way to discuss the tag cloud is to ask if anyone is surprised or interested in a particular word. As the moderator you might also group words that belong together.

Sometimes the tag cloud collects the opinions of learners statistically and displays them in a graph or with numbers. This illustrates the differences of opinion in the class. Suggestions for discussion are given.

Learners who are the first to submit answers will find the tag cloud relatively empty. Let all learners refresh their screen if the last learners have submitted their answers.

### Glossary

Word highlighted in the text are explained in the glossary. It will depend on the level and interest of the learners, and the time available if they use the glossary extensively or not. In some cases the learners will be required to use the glossary. Consider which words you want to discuss with the whole class to make sure they have been understood.



### Step 7 Influence

Listen to what Shirel says about the influence of the media. Give one example of how you think you are influenced by the media. Discuss your answers in a small group. Consider what similarities and differences you see between your examples and how the media shape our view of ourselves and the world.

Shirel:

Many people are influenced by the media. For example, girls need to have a particular figure. They need to be a size 32 and they can't eat carbohydrates. They need to look like a Victoria's Secret model. I think it's a shame if people can't live how they want to. To look however they want. Why is our society bothered by this? You should be able to live life the way you like. To live the way you prefer, as long as you don't harm your environment.

As a girl, I'm heavily influenced by the media. Particularly in our present times. We are told so much by the media and we hear so many things that we're supposed to do. Of course, I want to walk around looking like a Barbie doll sometimes. Or like the people you come across in magazines. But sometimes you simply have to reach the point ... often you reach this point where you think: this simply isn't possible. I like myself and nobody should tell me what I should look like, or how I should live, regardless of whether I'm a size 50 or a size 34. Or whatever.

Shirel is talking about the influence of media on women's self-image. We suggest you let your learners discuss their answers in small groups, giving everyone more chance to talk and hopefully making them feel safe enough to share personal examples. You should be aware of the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed.



### Step 8 Your bubble

Every day we filter media messages that influence how we see the world around us. We create a bubble in which we feel comfortable and in which we know our way around. Fill in examples of media that play a role in your life.

This step and the next one should be taken together.

### Information and instruction (i)

Extra information and instructions are sometimes provided in the top right hand corner of the screen. Make sure that learners are aware of this. They will sometimes need this information to complete an assignment.

### Subtitles

Make sure to turn on the subtitles (click on the icon at the bottom right corner of the video screen to select the language) before learners start watching the film clip.



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### Step 9 Reflection

Look at all the bubbles. Find three examples in other bubbles that surprise you and click on them.

Discuss in pairs.

What surprised you about other people's bubbles?

Why are all the bubbles different?

What can you learn from other people's bubbles?

The different interests and backgrounds of the learners will be reflected in the media they use. If the examples they give are diverse or conversely not diverse, it will be interesting to discuss how the media influence the learners' world view. Avoid a class discussion at this point, as it will be the next step.

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### Step 10 Bursting the bubbles

What are the challenges if we all live in a similar bubble?

Or if we all live in different bubbles?

What do you think would happen if you spent a week in a different media bubble?

Discuss with the class.

To round off the learning path, perhaps choose one question to discuss with the class.

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## Track 2 – Analysing the adverts

Time: about 100 minutes

*Adverts are everywhere, online and offline. Do they affect how we see the world and the people around us, and if so - how?*

### Outline

Learners explore how stereotypes are used in the media and how those stereotypes influence how they think about the world around them. Learners will be shown different adverts and choose one to learn more about. The adverts all use stereotypes.

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### Step 1 The natural type

Listen to Hilga talking about the impact of the media. Discuss in pairs. Hilga is bothered by the way some media present women. Do you agree with her?

Hilga's examples are a good starting point for thinking about how stereotypes are used in adverts.

*Hilga: My name is Hilga. I'm from Berlin. I'm 16 and I grew up in Berlin. I've noticed that particularly in movies they look for the natural type. Usually this means long hair, small breasts and skinny. Often they're very feminine.*

*And very often they're fairly conventional characters. Most of the female leads are gorgeous. I think our society follows particular beauty standards. We all try to be 'perfect', although nobody can be perfect. You see skinny girls in fashion magazines with long hair and big eyes. We all know the pictures have been touched up, but we still want to look like that. I think we're influenced a lot by the media. Through movies and pictures of attractive women, if nothing else. We always strive to be like them.*

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### Step 2 The date

Watch this commercial about a Dutch couple on a date in McDonald's.

*Music: I do not know much ... but I know I love you. And let me be all I need to know.*

*Man: Hey! You still owe me money. For the burger. Look!*

*Voiceover: Go Dutch with our new "Dutch deluxe" - cheese lettuce and tomato on a tasty brown bun.*

*Man: Perfect!*

*Voiceover: It's as Dutch as it gets.*

What stereotype have the makers of the advert used?

If your learners are not familiar with the belief that the Dutch are 'tight' or frugal or over-careful with money, explore what they come up with. Several English expressions are linked to this idea: going Dutch, a Dutch treat or a Dutch date all indicate that everyone will pay for themselves. Similarly, at a Dutch party everyone is expected to bring their own drink.

This light introduction shows how commercials 'play' with national stereotypes.

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### Step 3 The advertiser

In the following clip the makers of the commercial explain their approach.

*Voiceover: No one has to tell the Dutch that they're careful with money. Nor anyone outside the Netherlands. We used that as a starting point to introduce a new McDonald's burger, the Dutch Deluxe.*



Voiceover: We produced the commercial in English and Dutch, then launched it on the internet and pretended it was American. The reactions and emotions ran high. After a few days we revealed the truth. The commercial wasn't American but Dutch.

Man: You still owe me. For the burger. Proper Dutch...

Voiceover: The reactions immediately flipped. A simple move netted hundreds of thousands of views and lots of extra publicity. But the best result, as far as we were concerned – it cost us almost nothing. You can't get much Dutch.



#### Step 4 The viewer

The advertisers say attitudes to their advert changed when viewers discovered that the commercial was made by Dutch people. An 'outsider' using a stereotype is a sensitive issue.

Discuss in pairs

Why does it affect people more if stereotypes are used by 'outsiders'?

Why is it different if the stereotyped group uses it themselves?

Keep the classroom discussion for the next step. The point made by the second clip is that stereotypes touch on sensitive topics and that the circumstances in which they are used, and by whom, make a difference.



#### Step 5 Spotting the stereotype

Discuss with the whole group.

People everywhere use stereotypes. Using stereotypical scenes, clothing or behaviour is a popular shorthand to identify a country quickly. Think of an example.

Before the discussion, ask each learner to think of an example. At this point it is useful to limit the examples to nationalities/countries rather than minority groups.

Stereotypes make use of oversimplified images. It is difficult to say when a stereotype becomes a prejudice. Discuss what it is that makes a stereotype offensive or harmful.

The learning path focuses on stereotypes. Experts have trouble defining exactly what differentiates a stereotype from a prejudice. Use the glossary to explore the terms. The main point to make is that stereotypes are often considered offensive, but that opinions differ greatly on what is or is not offensive.



#### Step 6 Accept, or not?

In small groups, take a detailed look at different adverts. Some are recent and others are historical. As a group choose one advert.

The adverts use sexist, antisemitic, racist, anti-Roma and anti-LGBT+ images. Some images are more offensive than others. It is important to acknowledge that some of these images can be hurtful, but also that opinions on this may differ. The following questions help the learner consider the images carefully.

Which stereotype is used in this image?

How is the stereotype portrayed? Describe the picture.

A play on Words - A US chamber of commerce plays with the link between trade and Jews in the slogan Business as Jewsual.

Counting money - A Polish shop owner uses the image of a wealthy Jew as a symbol for his success.

Dressed up - Advert for the British TV series Big Fat Gypsy Weddings in 2012.

Big smile - Czech toothpaste slogan: "White teeth and curly hair are what make a gypsy beautiful."

Resources - A 2007 Intel advert reading "maximize the power of your employees" shows a manager and staff.

Cleaning up - Soap and skin colour are central to this 19th-century French advert.

Boys and girls - German supermarkets gives you a choice: soup for a princess or a fireman?

Picking up - 1996 car advert: "Picks up five times more women than a Lamborghini".

High heels - An advert for a US karate school in 2011 implying the boy needs karate classes to be a real man.

Men overboard - The advert makes fun of the sailing term "man overboard".



### Step 7 Share and compare

Form a group with one person from each of the previous groups to discuss all the images.

Who were your adverts aimed at?

What similarities and differences do you see?

What does this tell you?

Each group should have at least three people who looked at different examples. They should use the questions to compare the adverts.



### Step 8 The makers

Think of three reasons why advertisers use stereotypes?

Discuss with the class.

After learners answer the question individually, the tag cloud allows for a closing discussion with the whole class. Consider discussing the role of institutions (commercial and public) in perpetuating stereotypes in the adverts they send off into the world.

## Track 3 – Media and manipulation

Time: about 45 minutes

*Facts, techniques and emotions are central to each story in the media. They help us to reflect on reality. But the stories and images from different media are often linked to an ideology or commercial intention. So, when are we being informed and when are we being manipulated? Let's look closely at some propaganda and the techniques used to influence our views of reality.*

### Outline

Using historical and contemporary examples learners explore mechanisms used in propaganda and consider how they might themselves be influenced.



### Step 1 What do you know?

What do you know about propaganda?

After answering the question individually the tag cloud

allows for a brief class exchange. The question will be revisited at the end of the track, allowing the learners to consider the new information and insights they have gained.



### Step 2 Propaganda past and present

Select a propaganda picture.

Learners select a picture they find interesting. The examples deal with antisemitism, racism and antigypsyism.



### Step 3 See – Think – Wonder

Look carefully at the picture and write down a few words for each of the three questions.

What do you see?

I think that ...

What questions do you have?

This visual thinking routine helps learners to look carefully and to think about the image they see. After answering the questions they are given background information about the picture.

The following five images are used.

#### Anti-Ottoman pamphlet

*In the 15th and 16th centuries several European states had military conflicts with the Ottoman empire as it expanded west and occupied parts of Europe. Many anti-Ottoman notices were put up in public places. This German pamphlet shows an Ottoman soldier killing children. Such publications spread the image of the "bloodthirsty Turk". The Ottomans were portrayed as arch-enemies of Christianity.*

#### Not for Sinti and Roma

*This German poster reads: "Money for Granny, not for Sinti and Roma." The picture of a needy old lady suggests money is spent on Sinti and Roma instead of on pensioners. It was used in a campaign by the far-right National Democratic Party of Germany. Roma and Sinti are blamed for social problems, with the aim of creating resentment.*

*The authorities in one city removed the posters, but a court decided they were permissible freedom of speech and had to be put back up.*

#### Life under Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Ban

*This image was published in the New York Times in response to a national ban imposed by Russia on "propaganda for non-traditional sexual relations". This made it a crime to mention*

homosexuality around minors. The image appeared just before the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. The lighter flame shows the Kremlin, symbol of the Russian state, burning a rainbow, symbol of the diverse LGBT+ community.

#### 'Behind the enemy powers: the Jew'

This German poster circulated in 1945 to cast blame for the misery German citizens were facing because of the war. The man half hiding behind the British, American and Soviet flags represents a Jew, wearing a chain with the Star of David. The bowler hat and suit indicate his connection to power. He looks cunning. The poster suggests the Jews – working with enemy powers – are responsible for the downfall of Germany.

#### Terrorist attacks in Paris

The cartoon shows an Islamic State terrorist and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, near the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Netanyahu is guiding the terrorist's gun. The cartoon suggests Israel was behind the terrorist attacks in Paris that started on 13 November 2015. Such imagery, in which one group or country is blamed for an atrocity, is a common way of demonising a perceived enemy. The cartoon appeared on the official Facebook page of the Palestinian Fatah Movement just days after the attacks.

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### Step 4 Techniques and tools (pair/class)

Propaganda appears in many forms and shapes and similar techniques are used to influence people. More information on some of these techniques.

Under (i):

Propaganda makes use of various techniques.

#### Emotionally stirring

Propaganda plays on emotions to steer people. Successful propagandists understand how to psychologically tailor messages to create a sense of excitement and arousal that suppresses critical thinking in listeners.

#### Responsive

Effective propaganda conveys messages that appeal directly to targeted groups within a population. Propagandists may appeal to your racial or ethnic identity, your family or community, your hobbies, your beliefs and values, or even your dreams for the future.

#### Simplified

Propaganda may use facts, but also half-truths, opinions and lies. Successful propaganda tells simple stories that are familiar and trusted, often using imagery and repetition to

make them seem natural or true.

#### Attacking

Propaganda can be a way to insult or belittle political or social opponents, casting doubt on the legitimacy, credibility and accuracy of their ideas, or even their character.

These notes are an edited extract from:

<http://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/techniques/>

Work as a pair and select one picture.

What emotions are depicted here?

Who is the target audience?

What makes people receptive to the message of this picture?

Discuss with the class when you consider something to be propaganda.

After pairs have looked in detail at their chosen example collect ideas on the nature of propaganda. Make a connection to the techniques presented to the learners.

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### Step 5 Propaganda today

Choose a contemporary image from the media that you would call propaganda.

Print out something online or take a photo in the street.

Discuss in pairs

Explain the example and why you chose it. Explain why you consider this to be propaganda.

Consider making this a homework assignment. Learners can discuss their examples in pairs or small groups and prepare to present their examples to the rest of the class.

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### Gallery walk

In what forms can propaganda nowadays be used? What is the purpose of propaganda? Is propaganda always successful? Explain why.

Student instruction:

#### Gallery walk

Make an exhibition of all the images. Take turns in presenting your images to each other. Consider making groups that belong together.

Make sure the learners understand that they will be presenting their chosen example to each other. Gallery walks are a discussion technique that gets learners into a mode of active engagement. There are many forms. They



can also be conducted online (a computer run). Consider what is possible in the available space and time.



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**Step 6 What do you know NOW?**

*Look at the tag cloud from the start.*

*What do you know now about propaganda?*

*Discuss with the class.*

After the learners have added their new thoughts, discuss with the class if they think they have gained a deeper understanding of what propaganda is, what techniques are used and why people are receptive to it.