



## Media Messages

### Lesson Summary

During this lesson, students will build media literacy, exploring how images and text in advertising, cinema, and social media are often manipulations of the truth. They will learn that it is harmful to compare themselves to images in media because the images often promote appearance ideals in order to sell us products and services. Students will generate strategies they can use to challenge and reject media images and messages that promote appearance ideals.

### Teacher Message

Images of people in media such as advertising, entertainment, and social media are often manipulated and sometimes drastically altered to reflect current appearance ideals. Appearance ideals are based on opinion, not fact, and are changing all the time. This makes them unrealistic and impossible for most people to live up to. We can challenge media messages by changing the media (including words, pictures, and films) that we consume and create. It is important for students to remember to be true to themselves and their friends and to promote and publish what is real.

### Materials

LCD Projector  
Whiteboard  
Pens  
Spare paper  
Chart paper and markers

Advertisement examples (It is important to select examples of ads that will resonate with your class, both boys and girls. Choose at least two examples, one ad depicting a celebrity promoting a product aimed at the students' age range, and another ad that advertises different products. It can be useful to search online for popular celebrities or influencers with the following search term: [insert celebrity/influencer name] Advertisement.)

### Dove® *Confident Me*: School Workshops for Body Confidence

Session 2: "Media Messages" (available at <https://beyondimagesca.files.wordpress.com/2022/06/confident-me-02-media-messages.zip>)

- Workshop guide for teachers
- Workshop interactive
- Student activity sheets

### Media Clips

*A Selfie*, Dove. (Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQS9pymkLiU>)

*Reverse Selfie*, Dove. (Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2T-Rh838GA>)

### Learning Organizers

Learning Organizer 1-1 Decoding Media Messages  
Learning Organizer 1-2 Going Further

### Assessment Tools

Assessment Tool Lesson 1 Observational Checklist

## Supporting Curriculum Outcomes

Available at <https://beyondimages.ca/6th-grade>

## Lesson Outline

### Inspiration: How will I engage the students?

1. **Explain that students will be examining media, image manipulation, appearance ideals, and the impact of media messages.** Ensure that students understand that the term 'media' refers to images, messages, and films that are shared in different ways.
2. **Ask students to call out different types of media.** Record their responses on a board.
3. **Explain that these types of media fall into broad categories and provide the definitions below.** Ask students to provide examples of each of these types of media.
 

*Professional media:* images and messages produced and paid for by businesses and communicated through channels such as TV shows, magazines, advertisements, films, and music videos.

*Personal and social media:* images and messages produced by you and other people you interact with in person or online.

*Influencers:* influencers and emerging trends on social media create a gray area between personal and professional media, where ordinary people and public figures may take part in paid or unpaid advertisements and campaigns that influence viewers. 'Followers' might not recognize that they are being influenced as easily as if the ad was created professionally.
4. **Explain that students will start by exploring how interacting with images they see can be a source of appearance pressures.** Ask students if they can think of a time when they or someone they know compared themselves and their life to someone else, such as their friend or an influencer on social media.
5. **Play Dove's film *A Selfie* (linked on slide 5).** Ask students to pay attention to the different ways that the image was created or manipulated (changed from real life).
6. **After viewing the film, ask for volunteers to describe in their own words what it is about.** Ask: *Is it always obvious if and how an image or video posted to social media has been manipulated?* Explain that influencers (and other people) often invest a considerable amount of time and money into creating images and other content for social media. For example, they may purchase expensive lighting equipment to bounce the light or ring lights to create an even and soft lighting effect. They may have paid for an expensive photo editing app or have hired a professional to edit their photos. Mention that this is another way that the line between professional and personal media is blurred.
7. **Play Dove's film *Reverse Selfie* (linked on slide 6).** Tell students to pay attention to the different ways that the image was created or manipulated (changed from real life).
8. **Split the class into small groups of 3-4 students and assign each group one of the questions on slide 7, "Discussion".** Replay *Reverse Selfie*. Give each group time to discuss their question.
9. **Ask for volunteers from one or more groups to share what they discussed with the class.** Ask students to consider any similarities or differences between the *Selfie* and *Reverse Selfie* films (e.g., types of manipulation techniques used, impacts of the image to viewers).

10. **Facilitate a class discussion**, about the following questions:

- *Why do you think it is unrealistic, unfair, and even harmful to ourselves and others to compare the way you look to manipulated images of people you see on social media and in mass media (e.g., movies, TV shows, etc.)?*
- *These films are only two examples of one person's experience with posting a selfie on social media. How might the experiences of youth who are non-binary, Black, Indigenous, or from a different country/culture be similar to or different from these examples?*
- *Why do you think it is unrealistic or unfair to compare the way you or your friends look to manipulated images of people you see on social media and in professional media?*
- *Optional follow-up prompts: Do all youth feel the desire to edit parts of themselves? Would all youth edit photos in the same way? What might they do differently?*

Explain to students that this film provides an example of the “appearance ideals” that we see in the media. It is important to remember that these videos only show two people, but these are the kind of people who are often portrayed in advertisements/ professional media that are depicting a beauty standard (e.g., the beauty standard of ‘thinness,’ or ‘blondness’).

**Facilitation: How will students learn the concepts?**

11. **Emphasize to students that they have just discussed that it is unrealistic, unfair, and even harmful to ourselves and others to compare the way we look to images of people we see in the media.** Tell students that now that they have seen how images on social media can be manipulated, they are going to look at professional advertising media.

12. **Show the class your first advertisement.** Using slide 8, “How Are Appearance Ideals Used in Advertising/Marketing?” guide the class in discussing the three questions.

- *What is being sold in this ad?*
- *Why is the advertiser using a person who looks like this?*
- *Why would the advertiser manipulate a picture of this person to make them look more “ideal”?*

Repeat with the second advertisement.

13. **Ask the class: What effect do you think marketed images like the ones we just saw have on the viewer's body confidence?** After students have shared their thoughts, summarize that both images on social media and images used in advertising and marketing are often manipulated and can negatively impact viewers' body confidence in similar ways. Make the point that these images tend to represent one type of appearance (white, thin/muscular, feminine/masculine, etc.) and that viewing these images impacts people differently based on things like skin colour, gender identity, and body size.

14. **Explain that students are going to explore the messages behind messages behind different media and the reasons why it is harmful to compare themselves to such images.** Instruct them to fill out **Learning Organizer 1-1 Decoding Media Messages**. For each of the scenarios, ask for one or two volunteers to share their answers.

**Application: How will students demonstrate their learning?**

15. **Initiate a class discussion.** Ask the following questions:

- *How many times a day are you confronted with these messages?*

(It may help to prompt them to consider how many times a day they look at social media apps, watch TV, see ads in magazines, on the side of a bus, or when they are walking down the street. They don't need to provide a specific number; rather the purpose is to get them to recognize that they are exposed to media messages regularly throughout the day.)

- *The next time you are confronted with one of these messages, how will you think differently about it?*

(Possible responses: recognize that the image has likely been manipulated, be aware that the ad uses models that meet appearance ideals, often through image manipulation, as a strategy to get you to buy the product/service; be aware that these messages negatively impact body confidence; it is unfair and harmful to compare myself and others to these images/messages.)

**Reflection: How will students reflect on their learning?**

16. **Take some time to have students reflect on the learning in this lesson,** in order to prepare them for the rest of this unit. Students will use what they have learned in this lesson to make a commitment to challenge or resist images or messages in the media that promote appearance ideals. Ask one or two students to share their ideas about each of the following questions:

- *What have you learned about images in the media?*
- *How will you personally challenge or resist images promoting appearance ideals in the media?*

Possible responses: start a petition or write to your local politicians to change advertising laws, start a #hashtag to ask your favourite clothing store to stop retouching their models, avoid sharing edited images and videos on social media, talk to friends and family about the impacts of image manipulation to body confidence.

Encourage students to make a pledge to commit to a small, specific action, and to write it down on paper or in their agenda/day planner.

17. **Have students complete Learning Organizer 1-4 Going Further.**

**Assessment**

The focus for this lesson is to launch into the unit by providing students with building blocks they will need to think, reflect, listen, and share their ideas about the role of media in their lives. **Assessment Tool Lesson 1 Observational Checklist** allows you to assess the listening and speaking skills students will need to use in this unit.

**Related Resources to Extend Learning**

**Best Bets for Teachers:**

*Dove Self-Esteem Project:* <https://www.dove.com/ca/en/dove-self-esteem-project.html>

This website includes a wealth of information about instilling body confidence in students and promoting positive body-image.

**Best Bets for Students:**

*Kids Help Phone: What is Body Image and Why is it Important?*

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/what-body-image-and-why-it-important/>

A great website for students to navigate and learn more about body image and self-esteem, and the development of confidence in oneself.

## Decoding Media Messages\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Is it fair to compare?

Choose one or two examples. For each example:

- What message is the media trying to convey about appearance ideals?
- Why is it harmful to compare yourself with the appearance ideal that is being portrayed?
- How do you think someone who sees this advertisement might feel?

a) You pass by an ad of very fit models posing for a gym.

*This message trying to convey* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*It's harmful to compare because* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Someone who sees this might feel* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Decoding Media Messages *(continued)*

b) Your friend posts a selfie that is highly edited.

*This message trying to convey* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*It's harmful to compare because* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Someone who sees this might feel* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c) You see a headline about a celebrity.

*This message trying to convey* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*It's harmful to compare because* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Someone who sees this might feel* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Decoding Media Messages *(continued)*

d) You start a new video game that allows you to create your "perfect" character.

*This message trying to convey* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*It's harmful to compare because* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Someone who sees this might feel* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Going Further\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Media Messages: main messages to remember

Images of people in the media, such as in advertising, entertainment, and social media, are often manipulated and drastically altered to reflect current appearance ideals.

Appearance ideals are based on opinion, not fact, and are changing all the time. This makes them unrealistic and actually impossible for most people to live up to.

You can challenge media messages by changing the media (like words, pictures, and films) you consume and create. Be true to yourself and your friends and publish what is real.

In what ways could you take action to challenge the messages and images in media that promote appearance ideals? Record your answers below.

### Taking action for yourself

What I did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How I felt: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Taking action for others

What I did: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How I felt: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Things you could do:

Choose one brand or media outlet (magazine, website) that promotes appearance ideals and email or tweet them to challenge how they use manipulated images in their advertising or editorial.

Look carefully at your own recent posts on social media and reflect on the person you are "creating" through your self-publishing. Is it a true reflection of you and your life? Or are you reflecting the media messages that are found in professional media?

Celebrate your individuality and the diversity of the people you know.  
Aim to be the best you can be — you are one of a kind!

\* From Dove Confident Me Session 2: "Media Messages" Used with permission.



## Observational Checklist

Oral Language Skills: Listening, Speaking, and Collaborating

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Listening Skills The student:	Most of the time	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
• looks at the speaker.				
• thinks about what is being said.				
• tries to figure out how other people's ideas will connect with their own.				
• knows what they are listening for (listens with a purpose).				
• asks when they don't understand something.				
• uses body language that shows they are listening.				

Active Listening Skills

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Observational Checklist** *(continued)*

<b>Speaking Skills</b> <b>The student:</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Usually</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>
• looks at the speaker.				
• thinks about what is being said.				
• tries to figure out how other people’s ideas will connect with their own.				
• knows what they are listening for (listens with a purpose).				
• asks when they don’t understand something.				
• uses body language that shows they are listening.				