

How to Deconstruct a Media Example

A basic media literacy skill is “deconstruction.” This is the careful and close analysis of a piece of media, looking beneath the surface – the characters, plot, language, etc. – to understand its deeper meanings. Any piece of media – a magazine ad, a sitcom, a conversation, a feature film, a TV commercial, or whatever – can be analyzed in this way.

There is no one “correct” way to deconstruct a media example. One of the basic concepts of media literacy is that individuals construct their own meanings from media. This applies to the deconstruction process as well.

You can use the following questions to quickly deconstruct a media example:

- *Who paid for the media? Why?*
- *Who is being targeted?*
- *What text, images or sounds lead you to this conclusion?*
- *What is the text (literal meaning) of the message?*
- *What is the subtext (unstated or underlying message)?*
- *What kind of lifestyle is presented? Is it glamorized? How?*
- *What values are expressed?*
- *What tools or techniques of persuasion are used?*
- *What story is not being told?*
- *In what ways is this a healthy and/or unhealthy media message?*