# Unit 1: Media in a Participatory Culture

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 1**
Length: **9 week cycle class (40-45 days)**
Status: **Published**

## Course Description

Students will understand a variety of mass media platforms, including social media, that appeal to different audiences, serve different purposes, and use unique features to communicate effectively. Students will become thoughtful and critical consumers of digital media as they explore the dynamic world of social media and participatory culture, examining how these platforms have transformed the ways people create, share, and consume content. They will analyze the role of social media in fostering community, amplifying voices, and influencing public discourse. Students will also explore podcasting as a powerful medium for documenting information, storytelling, and advocacy. Through hands-on experiences, students will develop skills in research, scripting, recording, editing, and publishing podcasts while learning how audience, purpose, and message influence effective communication. By the end of the course, students will understand the impact of participatory culture and be equipped to make informed choices as both consumers and creators of digital media.

## Brief Summary of Unit

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Students will examine the evolution of communication and the role of mass media in shaping the way information is created, shared, and consumed. Through the study of media messages, students will learn to analyze audience, purpose, perspective, and influence while exploring how social media and participatory culture foster collaboration, community engagement, and public discourse. By the end of the unit, students will be better equipped to think critically about the media they encounter and the messages they create.

Interdisciplinary Connections: This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers. When completing this course, students can make informed choices about how to and what to participate in today's dynamic world of social media.

Revision: July 2026

## Standards

**Information Literacy**: This unit challenges students to locate, analyze, evaluate, and use information effectively. Information literacy includes, but is not limited to digital, visual, media, textual, and technological

literacy. Lessons will include the learning and understanding how information is created and produced, critical and analytical thinking, evaluating and use of information resources, research processes and methodologies including identifying the difference between primary and secondary sources, discerning the difference between facts, points of view, perspectives and opinions, accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources, and the economic, legal, social, and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/ levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

## Reading

- RI.CR.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what an informational text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI.CI.7.2 Determine a central idea in an informational text and explain how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- RI.IT.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a text interact, including how a text makes connections and distinctions among individuals, events, and ideas.
- RI.TS.7.4 Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text and how it contributes to the text as a whole.
- RI.PP.7.5 Determine how an author conveys or develops perspective or purpose in a text through distinguishing their position from that of others using evidence.
- RI.MF.7.6 Compare and contrast texts to analyze the unique qualities of different mediums, including the integration of information from multiple formats and sources.
- RI.CT.7.8 Analyze and reflect on how two or more authors writing informational texts about the same topic shape their presentations of key information.

## Writing

- W.IW.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information.
- W.WR.7.5 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources.
- W.SE.7.6 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess credibility and accuracy; and avoid plagiarism.
- W.RW.7.7 Write routinely over extended and shorter time frames for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## Language

- L.SS.7.1 Demonstrate command of the system and structure of the English language when writing or speaking.
- L.KL.7.2 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- L.VL.7.3 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases.

### Speaking & Listening

- SL.PE.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- SL.II.7.2 Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats.
- SL.ES.7.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the reasoning and evidence.
- SL.PI.7.4 Present claims and findings in a focused, coherent manner with relevant details and appropriate presentation skills.

### Career Readiness & Technology

- Standard 9.2 Career Awareness, Exploration, Preparation and Training
- Standard 9.3 Career and Technical Education
- Standard 9.4 Life Literacies and Key Skills
- CRP.K-12.CRP7 Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
- CRP.K-12.CRP8 Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- CRP.K-12.CRP11 Use technology to enhance productivity.
- TECH.8.1.12 Use digital tools to access, manage, evaluate, synthesize, create, and communicate knowledge.
- TECH.8.1.12.F.1 Evaluate the strengths and limitations of emerging technologies and their impact.
- TECH.9.4.2.DC.3 Explain how to be safe online and follow safe internet practices.
- TECH.9.4.2.TL.7 Describe the benefits of collaborating with others to complete digital tasks or develop digital artifacts.

## Essential Questions

- How has communication evolved, and how has technology changed the way people create, share, and consume information?
- How do media messages influence the way people think, feel, and act?
- How do audience, purpose, and perspective shape the construction of media messages?
- How has social media transformed the ways individuals and communities participate in and influence public discourse?
- What are the ethical considerations and potential consequences of participatory culture, including privacy, misinformation, and digital identity?
- How can people become thoughtful and critical consumers of media?

## Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

### Students Will Know

- How communication has evolved and how technology has transformed the creation, distribution, and

consumption of information.
- The characteristics and purposes of different forms of mass media, including print, broadcast, and social media.
- The Five Media Principles and how media messages are intentionally constructed.
- How audience, purpose, perspective, and context influence media messages.
- The characteristics of participatory culture and the ways social media platforms foster collaboration, user-generated content, community engagement, and public discourse.
- The ethical responsibilities of digital media users, including responsible digital citizenship, privacy, misinformation, and digital identity.

### Students Will Be Skilled At

- Identifying and analyzing the audience, purpose, perspective, and message of a variety of media texts.
- Applying the Five Media Principles to analyze and deconstruct print, broadcast, digital, and social media.
- Evaluating the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of media messages.
- Distinguishing between explicit and implicit messages and analyzing how media communicates ideas and values.
- Comparing how different media platforms communicate information and influence audiences.
- Researching and evaluating social media platforms to determine how they encourage participation, collaboration, and the sharing of ideas.
- Presenting findings using evidence to explain how participatory culture shapes communication and public discourse.
- Participating in collaborative discussions that demonstrate curiosity, empathy, perspective-taking, and respectful communication.
- Applying responsible digital citizenship when evaluating, creating, and sharing information.

## Evidence/Performance Tasks

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

**Formative Assessments**

- Teacher observations
- Class discussions and accountable talk
- Analysis of media messages and mentor podcasts
- Analysis of print, broadcast, social media, and podcast examples
- Quick writes, brainstorming activities, and podcast planning documents
- Individual and small-group conferences
- Research notes and source evaluations

- Script drafts and storyboarding/planning activities
- Peer review and self-assessment
- Reflective journals and learning reflections
- Entrance and exit tickets
- Presentations on participatory culture and social media platforms
- Podcast practice recordings and teacher feedback
- Collaborative discussions and peer critique

**Summative Assessments, Including Alternative Assessments**

- Analysis and deconstruction of media messages using the Five Media Principles
- Research and presentation on a social media platform and its role in participatory culture
- Annotated portfolio of mentor podcasts aligned to a selected audience and purpose
- Evaluation of mentor podcasts based on audience, purpose, organization, voice, and production techniques
- Original podcast proposal, planning documents, and script
- Production, editing, and publication of an original podcast
- Podcast reflection evaluating the effectiveness of communication, production choices, and audience engagement
- Digital portfolio documenting the podcast development process, including planning, revisions, peer feedback, and final product.

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

Benchmark:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a claim and use evidence as support
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics

## Learning Plan

Instructional time will be dedicated to whole-class instruction, collaborative learning, discussion, inquiry, and media analysis. Students will examine the evolution of communication and the role of mass media in shaping how information is created, shared, and consumed. Through the analysis of print, broadcast, and digital media, students will develop media literacy skills by evaluating audience, purpose, perspective, credibility, and influence. Teachers will model analytical thinking, facilitate collaborative discussions, and provide opportunities for students to research, evaluate, and present their understanding of media and participatory culture.

Instruction will generally follow the progression below, though pacing may vary based on student readiness and instructional needs.

Please review this scope and sequence and these sample lessons for more detail.

## Instructional Progression

Module 1: Foundations of Communication

- Types of communication
- Evolution of communication technologies
- The progression of mass media
- The role and influence of mass media
- How media shapes communication and culture

Module 2: Understanding Media Messages

- Five Media Principles—Constructing Messages
- Media's Purpose
- Analyzing audience, purpose, perspective, and influence
- Distinguishing between explicit and implicit messages
- Deconstructing media messages across a variety of formats

Module 3: Participatory Culture

- What Is Participatory Culture?
- Curiosity, empathy, and perspective
- User-generated content and online communities
- Researching a social media platform
- Presenting findings and evaluating how social media fosters participation and shapes public discourse

## Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

## Instructional Materials

Students will utilize a variety of district-approved digital technologies to create, edit, publish, and evaluate original podcast content. Tools may include, but are not be limited to, Audacity, SoundCloud, microphones, headphones, recording devices, cloud-based collaboration and storage platforms, digital script-writing tools, and other teacher-selected technologies that support audio production, communication, creativity, and responsible digital citizenship.

## Teacher Resources

- Assessing Students' Digital Writing: Protocols for Looking Closely by Troy Hicks
- Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide for Creating Ridiculously Good Content by Ann Handley
- Writing Tools: Fifty Essential Strategies for Every Writer by Roy Peter Clark
- How to Write Short: Word Craft for Fast Times by Roy Peter Clark
- Writing for Digital Media by Brian Carroll
- http://www.edutopia.org/podcasting-student-broadcasts
  http://edtechteacher.org/tools/multimedia/podcasting/
  http://americanart.si.edu/education/resources/guides/podcasting_guide.pdf

## Suggested Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

Possible accommodations include:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing/reading
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques
- Offer oral assessments
- Supply study guide questions and access to class notes
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts
- Individualize reading choices based on ability and level
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Small group and one on one assessment
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments

- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed
- Use art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan