

Analyze Media Texts

Analyze & Evaluate · 30–40 minutes · Grades K–12 · Any subject

The practice: Students compare and contrast two different media artifacts to identify similarities and differences in authorship, audience, content, format, and point of view.

Media artifact: Two short texts on the same topic that differ in creator, format, or audience.

Why it matters

This lesson demonstrates:

- **The value of comparison for deeper understanding.** Side by side, two texts reveal creative choices students miss in one text alone.
- **How the same topic can be told in different ways.** Students see that purpose, audience, and format shape what gets told and what gets left out.
- **How to strengthen analytical reasoning.** Compare-and-contrast thinking is a core skill in every subject.
- **How to prepare students for a world of multiple sources.** Comparing versions of the same story helps students weigh sources instead of accepting the first one they see.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the **author** and **target audience** of each artifact.
2. Compare the **content** of each: the information, ideas, and values included or left out.
3. Explain how **format** (words, images, sound, length, platform) shapes each message.
4. Contrast the **point of view** each artifact takes on the topic.
5. Use **evidence** from both texts to explain why the creators made different choices.

Choosing a media artifact

A good pair shares a topic but differs in an important way. Check both artifacts against these criteria:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Short: together, no more than 5 minutes of video or audio, or two pages, images, or posts | ☐ Same topic: both address the same event, issue, product, or story |
| ☐ Connected: both relate to content you are teaching this week | ☐ Contrasting: they differ in creator, format, audience, or point of view |
| ☐ Traceable: students can find clues about who made each one | ☐ Relevant: connects to students' life experience |
| | ☐ Appropriate and accessible: suitable for the age group, with captions or a transcript |

 **PRO-TIP:** Pair texts that differ in one big way, like an ad and a customer review of the same product.

Classroom process (35–40 minutes)

Step	Min.	What the teacher does	What students do
1. Set the purpose	3	Introduce the topic. Post a chart with five rows: <i>author, audience, content, format, point of view</i>	Predict how two messages on the same topic might differ
2. View both texts	10	Show Text A, then Text B, once each without stopping	Take notes in the Text A and Text B columns of the chart

Step	Min.	What the teacher does	What students do
3. Guided comparison	10	Go row by row: <i>"How are these alike and different? Why did the creators make different choices?"</i>	Point to specific details from both texts as evidence
4. Small-group synthesis	7	Ask each group: <i>"Which text would work better for which audience, and why?"</i>	Agree on an answer, with evidence from both texts
5. Share and connect	4	Chart group answers. Link the differences back to the unit content	Compare conclusions; note where groups disagree
6. Exit ticket	3	Hand out the exit prompt (see Assessment)	Answer individually

Teacher stance: neither text is the “right” one. Help students see how each creator’s choices fit a purpose and an audience, and reward careful reasoning and original interpretations.

Customizing for grade level and subject

By grade band

Grades	How to phrase the questions	Adjustments
K–2	How are these the same? How are they different? Who is each one for?	Whole class; pair a cereal box with its commercial; use a T-chart with drawings
3–5	Who made each one? Who is each one for? What is the same and different about the message?	Pairs instead of groups; Venn diagram; starter: “Both... but only...”
6–8	How do the texts compare on all five rows? Why did each creator make these choices?	Use the full five-row comparison chart
9–12	Same as 6–8, plus: which text is more credible or effective, for whom, and why?	Students find their own pair and write a comparative analysis

By subject

Subject	Example pairs	Subject	Example pairs
English language arts	A novel excerpt and its film scene	Health	A food ad and the nutrition label for the same product
History & social science	Two news reports on the same event	Arts	Two covers of the same song
Science & engineering	A press release and a news story on the same study	World languages	The same ad in English and the target language
Mathematics	Two charts of the same data with different scales	Digital literacy & CS	An app’s ad and its privacy policy

Assessment

Exit ticket: “Both texts ____, but Text A ____ while Text B _____. I think this difference matters because _____.” (K–2: draw one way they are the same and one way they are different.)

Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Extending
Describes each text separately without comparing them	Names similarities or differences in one or two areas, with general evidence	Compares at least three areas, each tied to specific details from both texts	Explains why creators chose differently and how that shapes audience understanding

Next step (optional)

How Media Messages Influence: students pick the more persuasive text and name the choices that shape people’s feelings, beliefs, or behaviors.