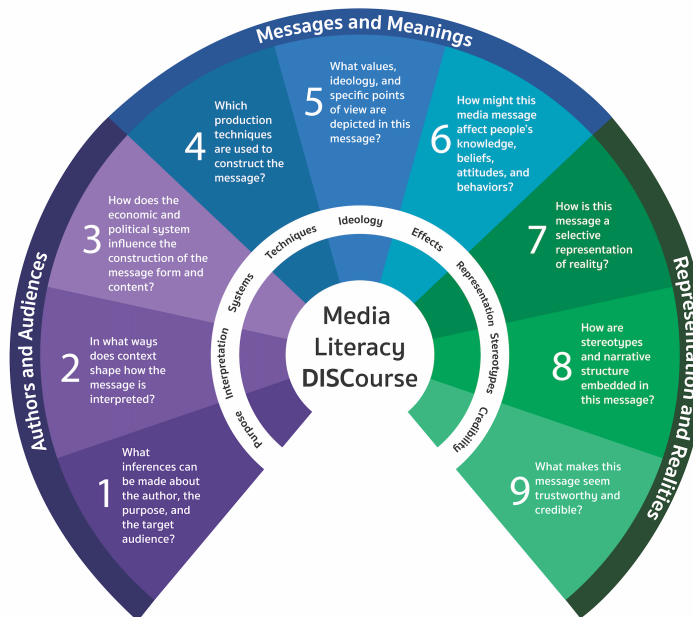


The Media Literacy DISCourse Wheel

A spin-the-wheel discussion tool puts nine critical questions in front of students and asks them to answer one, in writing, about media they actually use.



THREE FAMILIES, NINE QUESTIONS

Authors & Audiences
Purpose · Interpretation · Systems

Messages & Meanings
Techniques · Ideology · Effects

Representations & Realities
Representation · Stereotypes · Realities

THE TOOL

mldisc-wheel-mel.netlify.app

SOURCE

Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*, 2nd edition

01 • WHERE THE MODEL COMES FROM

The Media Literacy DISCourse Model is new to the second edition of *Media Literacy in Action* by Renee Hobbs. It gathers the book's theoretical foundations into nine questions that a student can ask of any media text — a post, an ad, a news story, a game clip, a song, a meme or anything with a URL.

The nine questions sit in the book's three-part structure — **Authors and Audiences, Messages and Meanings, Representations and Realities.**

The ML DISCourse Wheel helps students demonstrate their developing media literacy competencies and it also supports rich dialogue and discussion. The conceptual language gives your class a shared vocabulary for talking about media in a way that will sharpen their critical thinking in responding to all sorts of media artifacts.

#	CONCEPT	THE QUESTION STUDENTS ANSWER
1	Purpose AUTHORS & AUDIENCES	What can we infer about the author, purpose, and target audience?
2	Interpretation AUTHORS & AUDIENCES	How does context shape how the message is interpreted?
3	Systems AUTHORS & AUDIENCES	How do economic and political systems influence the message form and content?
4	Techniques MESSAGES & MEANINGS	Which production techniques are used to construct the message?
5	Ideology MESSAGES & MEANINGS	What values, ideology, and points of view are depicted in this message?
6	Effects MESSAGES & MEANINGS	How does this message affect knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors?
7	Representation REPRESENTATIONS & REALITIES	How is this message a selective representation of reality?
8	Stereotypes REPRESENTATIONS & REALITIES	How are stereotypes and narrative structure embedded in this message?
9	Realities REPRESENTATIONS & REALITIES	What makes this message seem trustworthy and credible?

Table 1. The nine questions of the Media Literacy DISCourse Model, grouped by the three parts of *Media Literacy in Action*, 2nd ed.

02 • HOW THE ONLINE WHEEL WORKS

Every class gets its own board, identified by a six-character class code. Students describe a media artifact, spin for a question, answer it, and then read and rate each other's answers on a shared bulletin board. There is no student account and no login — a pseudonym and the class code are enough.


SPIN THE ML DISCOURSE WHEEL
HOBBS MEDIA LITERACY DISCOURSE WHEEL · NINE CRITICAL QUESTIONS

COM 250
TDM2BG Play

Describe your media first — then spin for your question.

Share your interpretations of the many different kinds of media in your life. Choose an artifact and describe it briefly, then spin the wheel to see what question from the Media Literacy DISCourse Model you must answer. See how critical questions activate critical thinking and discover the new insights that emerge.

01 YOUR ARTIFACT

02 THE SPIN

03 YOUR ANSWER

YOUR PSEUDONYM

WHAT IS THE ARTIFACT CALLED?

LINK TO IT

A post, ad, news story, video, meme, game clip, song — anything you can point at.

SCREENSHOT OR IMAGE URL optional
 Upload

KIND OF MEDIA

VIDEO
AD
SOCIAL POST
NEWS STORY
MEME
IMAGE
PODCAST
GAME

DESCRIBE IT BRIEFLY

HOW DOES THIS MAKE YOU FEEL?

AMUSED
ANNOYED
MOVED
SUSPICIOUS
EXCITED
BORED
UNEASY

SEEN
MANIPULATED
CURIOUS



Wheel locked
Fill in the link, name, kind, description and a feeling — then the wheel unlocks.

WHAT COUNTS AS A GOOD ARTIFACT
Something you actually found this week in your own feed is best. The stranger the better; responding to strange media with insights from critical questions can

Figure 1. Step 01 of the student view. The wheel stays locked until the artifact is described — a link, a name, a kind of media, a description and a feeling.

STEP 01

Describe the artifact

A pseudonym, a title, a link or screenshot, the kind of media, a short description, and how it made them feel. Feelings matter here — the answer comes back to them later.

STEP 02

Spin the wheel

The wheel lands on one of the nine questions. If needed, students get one re-spin, which keeps the assignment honest.

STEP 03

Answer in writing

The question and a supporting prompt sit above the answer box. The post goes to the class bulletin board under their pseudonym.

STEP 04

Read and rate

Everyone reads others' answers, rates them, and can flag anything inappropriate. You moderate with your manage key.

03 · THE ON-RAMP: YOUR FIRST CLASS SESSION

Plan on 45 minutes. Everything below assumes students bring their own phones or laptops and that you have opened a board before class. Nothing needs to be installed. You can also assign this as homework.

BEFORE CLASS — FIVE MINUTES

1. Open the wheel and choose **Instructors — open a new board**.
2. Write down the **class code** and the **manage key**. The manage key is shown once and unlocks moderation; keep it private.
3. Paste the board link into your LMS. The code travels in the link, so students land on the right board.
4. Spin once yourself and post a model answer. One good example does more than five minutes of instruction.

CLASS CODE

— — — — —

MANAGE KEY

0–5 min **Show the wheel, not the theory**

Project the wheel and spin it once. Read the question it lands on out loud. Say nothing about media literacy theory yet.

5–12 min **Hand out the code and ask students to pick artifacts**

Students join with the class code and choose something they actually saw this week in their own feed. Strange beats important. Anything with a URL works well.

12–25 min **Spin and write**

Silence is fine here. Encourage students to take the time to summarize the artifact and reflect on their feelings before answering the question they landed on.

25–38 min **Read three, rate three**

Send everyone to the bulletin board. Students click on the title to see the artifact for themselves and then read the response. Ratings enable students to judge the quality of an answer.

38–45 min Name the concept

Pull two posts on the screen and name which part of the model each question belongs to. How do “Authors and Audiences,” “Messages and Meanings” and “Representation and Reality” hang together?

WHAT TO SAY WHEN A STUDENT IS STUCK

“I don't have anything to analyze” — open the last app they used and take the third thing in the feed.

They summarize instead of analyze — ask them to quote or describe one exact moment.

“I got a hard question” — encourage students to notice something they cannot tell from the artifact alone.

They finish in four minutes — send them to rate three answers and defend their rating of one artifact out loud.

04 • WHAT A STRONG ANSWER LOOKS LIKE

Before students rate each other's posts, it can be useful to make these three criteria public before they write. Strong responses will:

Point at the evidence

Quote or describe the exact moment in the artifact they are talking about — a frame, a line, a caption.

Name the limit

Say what cannot be known from the artifact alone. Naming the gap is analysis, not failure.

Close the loop on feeling

Connect the answer back to the emotion they recorded in step one. Why did the artifact work on them?

In the instructor panel you can watch how many of the nine questions your class has covered, review flagged or hidden posts, and export the whole class set as a CSV — a ready-made corpus for a follow-up discussion or even a graded reflection. Use this activity over time and see how their responses improve!

05 • FOUR WAYS TO KEEP USING IT

One question per week

Assign a single concept for the week, have students re-spin until they land on it, and build a term-long board that maps the whole model.

Same artifact, nine questions

Put one artifact in front of the whole class and let the wheel distribute the questions. The board becomes a nine-angle reading of one text.

Cross-section comparison

Run two boards for two sections, export both CSVs, and have students compare how the same question was answered by strangers.

Write from the board

Use the exported class set as the source material for a graded analytic essay — students cite their classmates' posts.

The Media Literacy DISCourse Model and its nine questions are from Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*, 2nd edition, and are used with permission. © 2026 Media Education Lab.

