



The National Association for Media Literacy Education's
Journal of Media Literacy Education 5:2 (2013) 395-396

Professional Resource:

Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom (2012)

Jonathan Friesem

Harrington School of Communication and Media, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA

Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom. Frank W. Baker. (2012). Washington, DC: International Society for Technology in Education.

When I started teaching media literacy fifteen years ago, I wished there was a media literacy teachers' guide like *Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom*, by Frank W. Baker. Although today there are a number of diverse media literacy teachers' guides (Hart 2008, Hobbs 2011, Potter 2012, Scheibe and Rogow 2011), Baker's book is unique in its rich references that are incorporated in each of the six chapters. The book describes Baker's way to apply media literacy in any K-12 classroom using mostly online resources. The different activities in the book introduce the reader to how the core concepts of media literacy can be integrated in any educational setting. While the book is an important resource in supporting the initial knowledge for teachers who are not familiar with media literacy, it does not provide coherent lessons plans or suggest a curriculum. For experienced teachers and practitioners who do not need lesson plans or curriculum, Baker's method and his rich references can be a great resource for teaching media literacy in the K-12 classroom.

Baker's volume can be positioned between Hart's series, *Media Literacy for 5th, 6th and 7th-8th Grades* (2008) that consists of only lesson plans without other resources or theoretical background, and Potter's *Media Literacy* (2012), which explains media literacy and gives many academic resources without reference to implementation and educational practice. Baker's book is much closer to Hobbs' *Digital and Media Literacy* (2011) and Scheibe and Rogow's *A Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy* (2011). However, unlike both books, Baker puts more emphasis on the theory and resources than on the practice. He provides information for topics (including visual literacy, advertising, moving

pictures, bias, and stereotypes) but does not talk about pedagogy, as does Hobbs, or how to foster an inquiry-based curriculum, as do Scheibe and Rogow.

The six chapters introduce Baker's method of teaching media literacy. The first two chapters review historically the Australian, Canadian, British, and American approaches to media literacy. In order to advocate for the importance of media literacy, Baker aligns different state standards with media literacy core concepts. He provides research and examples to show not only the importance of media literacy education but also the effortlessness of its application. Each chapter describes a topic and provides a short activity. For example, in the chapter on moving images, Baker suggests an activity to analyze a toy commercial using a worksheet to describe and analyze how ads are constructed using different persuasive techniques. In the closing chapter, Baker offers an overview and reflection of media literacy education by addressing the issue of representation, bias, and stereotypes in the media.

Within each chapter, there are many references and links to different materials and examples that can be used in the K-12 classroom. The book aims to help bring media literacy into various courses such as English, social studies, health, or any other subject in order to "teach students skills that enable them to become knowledgeable media consumers and producers" (Baker 2012, back cover). Baker addresses the theory and practice of media literacy education that teachers, librarians, tech coordinators, and parents need to teach children and adolescents. Whereas the first two chapters explain why it is important to become aware of media effects and why kids and teens need to be more conscious as consumers and producers of media, the following chapters show how each one of us should use media literacy in the classroom, the library, the community center, and even at home.

These easy-to-implement activities combined with the first two chapters emphasize how important this volume is for new teachers who are looking for guidance in media literacy education. Baker acknowledges in the beginning of his book those school librarians who answered his question on their listserv: “What do you need in order to teach media literacy?” (2012, iv). Indeed, Baker’s prime audience might be school librarians, because the book puts more emphasis on resources than on educational practices. The focus on diverse sources enables Baker to argue for the value of media literacy education, its connection to Common Core standards, how easy it is to use it in the classroom, and how many resources are available.

Nonetheless, the resources and the theory do not prepare the new teacher for the challenges he or she is going to face in class. Topics like advertising and moving images may lead to controversial and unpredictable reactions by students. These are challenges that an experienced media literacy teacher knows how to deal with, but student reactions are not referenced in this book.

It seems that the author structured the text in order to help as many different readers as possible. I wonder whether its broad target audience (educators, tech coordinators, library media specialists, and parents) will find value in these activities. The book gives to its readers the foundation of media literacy in theory and practice. By doing so, it provides the diverse audience only a starting point to create an activity or a lesson plan.

This starting point for lesson plans is not an entire curriculum, even though Baker explains the logic of his sequence (beginning with visual literacy, moving to analyze advertisements, motion images, and finally, representation, bias, and stereotypes in the media). He gives a clear rationale, an immense number of learning resources, and many short activities. The flexibility of the activities to target different populations in a large scale from K-12 of many different classes, such as English, History, Art, social science, and health, entrusts the reader to contemplate how and when to use these activities. On the one hand, the book is rich and resourceful, but on the other hand, it does not address pedagogy and class climate.

In the current educational atmosphere, where teachers and administrators need to have activities in the classroom that are aligned with Common Core standards, the accessible activities in this volume provide an opportunity to reach a broader audience. For

experienced media teachers and librarians, the resources and the short theoretical explanation are an enormous service for updating lesson plans. Our field needs more works like *Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom* to advocate for media literacy education to those who are entering the field and to those who are looking for new resources.

References

- Hart, Melissa. 2008. *Media Literacy Grade 5*. Westminster, CA: Teacher Created Resources.
- Hobbs, Renee. 2011. *Digital and Media Literacy in the Classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Potter, W. James. 2012. *Media Literacy*, 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scheibe, Cyndy, and Faith Rogow. 2011. *The Teacher’s Guide to Media Literacy: Critical Thinking in a Multimedia World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.