ANALYSING MEDIA

Screens & visual communication permeate our lives. These forms of visual communication usually strike a chord for the receiving audience. This can be done intuitively or be highly calculated. When constructing or deconstructing media, consider the following:

1. Initial Reaction & Description

What do you see?
What is your first impression?
What is happening in the work?
What is the story and what significance does it have?

2. Analysis, Interpretation & Evaluation

What is the purpose? Is there an intended audience for the work?
What is the general ambience of the work?
What mood does it create? How does it do this?
What signs and symbols do we find? What role do they play in the mediums' impact?
What is the ideology of the piece (what is the idea behind it)?
What is the agenda of the producer?
If figures are included, what can be said about their appearance, relations or emotions?
Is the background significant?
Are any themes evident (jealousy, ambition, passion etc.)?
How is language used? Does it provide information or generate emotional response? Were any techniques such as humour, alliteration or innuendo used?
What typefaces were used and what do they convey?
What sociological, political, economic or cultural attitudes are indirectly reflected in the work (sexism, alienation, conformism etc.)?

3. What aesthetic decisions were made?

Artwork (Fine art, comic books etc.)

•How are the basic components or elements arranged? Framing?
•Balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial), Colour (light, tone, hue, warm/cool), Composition, Contrast, Direction, Emphasis, Form, Line, Movement, Repetition, Rhythm, Scale, Space, Shape, Size, Symmetry, Texture, Value
•Does the medium influence or impact the message/meaning etc?

Photography

•What kind of a shot is it?
•What significance do long shots, medium shots, close-up shots have?
•What about the lighting, use of color, angle of the shot?
•Framing: rule of thirds etc.
•Focus/Depth of field/Lens
•Colour vs. BW

Design (Advertising: print, commercial, websites)

•How are the basic components or elements arranged?
•How are the following elements/principles used? (Alignment, Colour, Contrast, Direction, Dominance, Emphasis, Font, Harmony, Proximity, Repetition, Scale, Space, Layout, Type, Size, Texture, Value, Variety, Unity)
•What is the relationship between pictorial elements and written material and what does this tell us?
•How is space used? (positive/negative? empty/full?)
•Does the item being advertised play a role in culture and society?

Film, Video & Video Games

•Mise-en-scene: costumes, props, lighting, characters (as represented by actors or models), special effects, sound effects and anything else which is "put into the frame".
•Framing: rule of thirds etc.
•Camera placement
•Editing/montage, camera angle, soundtrack, atmosphere, lighting, contrast, stillness vs. movement (to move the camera or not?), metaphor, perspective, titles
•Focus/Depth of field/Lens
•Colour

Resources:

How to Analyze an Advertisement http://tinyurl.com/78of9sh

Celebrating the Art of Cinematography http://tinyurl.com/73sp5fp

Image Analysis (via Mediknowall) http://tinyurl.com/6qfkouj

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Think! How does the use of media influence culture? How can the use of media influence what we do in the classroom and how we learn? How can we learn to evaluate and create our own media?