



CANADA'S CENTRE  
FOR DIGITAL AND  
MEDIA LITERACY



## LESSON PLAN

**Level:** Grades 9-12

**Duration:** 1 hour, plus time for assessment/evaluation activity

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## Art Exchange



This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools:  
<http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

### Overview

The purpose of the lesson is to facilitate and develop youth art as a form of community engagement and give students the opportunity to explore their experiences with privacy and equality in networked spaces. Students will be presented with several scenarios related to experiences of privacy and (in)equality in networked spaces and how young people have used art to advocate for change. Students will be asked to develop an art project (mural, collage, recorded performances, face/body art, etc.) that they believe best reflects the issues that are important to them. Since the expertise and support to implement an art project vary from classroom to classroom, there are three options for completing this lesson: (i) students design and create their art projects; (ii) students develop a plan to produce an art project without actually creating it; and (iii) students are mentored by professional artists who help them design and implement their art projects.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand key concepts of privacy and equality
- Reflect on art as a form of community engagement
- Create or design a work of art that promotes community engagement in relation to one of the topics discussed

### Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following handouts:

- *Concepts of Privacy and Equality*
- *Imagination Primers*
- *Fighting Back With Art*



Additional suggested materials:

- Overhead or digital projector
- Paper (chart/scrap/coloured/magazine)
- Paints (face/body/acrylic)
- Brushes
- Fabric
- Tablets or similar digital devices

Prepare to project the video *Media Have Social and Political Implications*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZi6s22yktw>

Read the *Unpacking Privilege* backgrounder in the *Unpacking Privilege* lesson plan: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/unpacking-privilege>

## Procedure

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### Art in Action

Start by showing the video [Media Have Social and Political Implications](#) and then discuss the prompt at the end of the video: Think about ads, articles, or websites that influence positive (or negative) social or political change.

Discuss some of the examples in the video: what are some differences between these examples? Some are *explicit* (PSAs promoting environmentalism or physical exercise) and some are *implicit* (media telling us celebrities are important); some are *intentional* on the part of the creators (the PSAs, or the “oil spill disaster” movie) while some are *unintentional*, based on creators’ assumptions or things they didn’t think to question (gender roles).

Point out that *all* media texts have at least an implicit social or political meaning, even if that meaning only reinforces the status quo by having a story and characters that follow existing tropes and patterns (such as having a male hero who “gets the girl” as a reward at the end, for example). Distribute the handout *Concepts of Privacy and Equality* and go through it with the class. Ask students if they can think of any media texts that address any of these aspects of privacy or equality.

Now tell students that some media creators *intentionally* choose to include either implicit or explicit social/political meaning in their text. Distribute the handout *Fighting Back With Art* and have students answer the questions, then take them up in class. (Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers for questions 3 through 5; discuss each of them long enough to ensure students have thought through the topic.)

1. What are the purposes of the two art projects? (*The first one is intended to respond to harassment against women. The second is intended to promote positive attitudes towards LGBTQ people.*)
2. How are the two art projects similar? How are they different? (*The first is a personal, independent project and is more confrontational; the second is a collective project, organized by a corporation, and framed more positively.*)



3. Which of the projects do you think is likely to be most effective? Why? *(Some students may feel the first is likely to be more effective because it's more focused, because it's more personal, or because it's more aggressive; others may feel the positive message of the second one is likely to provoke less backlash.)*
4. Are there certain topics that you think would be more or less suited for public art? Why? *(You can encourage students to approach this question by comparing billboard ads with other types of advertising. Some students may feel that very personal, very specific or more complex issues are more suitable for public art, while issues with a clearer message or a specific call to action may be more successful.)*
5. Is public art an effective means of community engagement? Why or why not? *(Reasons to think that it is might include that it reaches a wide audience and can reach you at unexpected times and places; reasons that it might not be effective include the idea that it's "preaching to the choir" or might be perceived as vandalism.)*

### Priming Your Imagination

Now tell students that they will be designing their own public art project and distribute the handout *Imagination Primers*.

Using chart paper, a blackboard or digital whiteboard, write *Racism* and *Surveillance* at the top of a list, to get the list started, and then have students brainstorm other issues that they are concerned about.

Depending on what issues students suggest, you may wish to take a few minutes to do the *Unpacking Privilege* (<http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/unpacking-privilege>) mini-lesson to help them understand ways in which they may not be aware of their own privilege.

### Art in Action

Have each student select three possible issues from the brainstorming list and then design a simple concept for an art project addressing each issue.

Consult with students to help them select one of the projects to focus on.

Depending on the available time, materials and facilities, you may choose to have students create a *prototype* or a full work.

For the prototype option, students will create a detailed design for an art project that would address their chosen issue, and describe how and why it promotes community engagement in relation to their chosen topic.

For the full work, you may have students do either of the following:

- Present their art work and explain how and why it promotes community engagement in relation to their topic.
- Submit their art work with a written description of how and why it promotes community engagement in relation to their topic.
- Display their work in a public location in your school (e.g. hallway, auditorium).



**Extension Activity: Media Mentors**

If possible, connect students with professional artists who will help them develop, conceive and/or implement an art project in response to an issue related to privacy and (in)equality in networked spaces.

The mentors themselves can be involved in explaining their own work, as guides and resources during the prototyping/creation state, or both. This option may involve numerous meetings on more than one day in order to see the projects through to fruition.



## Concepts of Privacy and Equality

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### Privacy

Privacy has been defined and described in many ways, including:

- The right to be left alone
- The right to decide who gets to have access to information about you (e.g. a photo of you or something that you've written)
- The right to make important decisions without the interference of others
- The right not to be touched without your prior agreement
- The right not to be followed, stared at or otherwise harassed by others
- The right not to have photos or videos taken of you without your agreement
- The right not to have corporations tracking your purchases
- The right not to have corporations that run digital media services (e.g. social networking sites, cell phone companies) save or read the material that you text or post
- The right not to have your parents or the police read material that you text to other people

Courts often have to define privacy for the purpose of making decisions about the law. For example, the Supreme Court of Canada has said that privacy can be important to protect our bodies, our homes, and information about us, and that whether it is reasonable for us to expect privacy in any given situation depends upon a number of factors. According to the Court, these include the nature of the place or location (e.g. home vs on a street), how much the information reveals about intimate details of our lives, and whether we were in control over (e.g. owned) the place someone came into or the information they got access to.

### Equality

Equality has sometimes been defined as treating everyone the same. For example, if an employer were to have a “no-women” or “no-LGTBQ+” hiring policy, it would not be treating women or members of the LGTBQ+ community the same as men or as straight people. Policies that exclude people on the basis of their gender, sexual identity or gender identity (among other grounds like disability, race, indigeneity, etc.) undermine those people's equality.

However, treating everyone *equally* isn't always enough to respect and achieve equality: for example, if the door to a movie theatre is not wide enough for a wheelchair then people with physical challenges that require them to use wheelchairs don't have an equal chance to go to the theatre. When we recognize that different people have different needs and life circumstances, we can see that sometimes achieving equality will mean treating people differently in order to ensure they have equal opportunities in life.



## Fighting Back With Art

There are many ways that people have used art to respond to social issues. One way of making your voice heard is to create art in public spaces, where a lot of people can see it.

Here are two examples of public art that were created to address the issues of harassment and technology-facilitated violence.



### Stop Telling Women to Smile by Tatyana Fazlalizadeh

<http://stoptellingwomentosmile.com/About>

This art project started in Brooklyn, USA in 2012 and has since spread to places such as Paris, France and Mexico City, Mexico. "This project takes women's voices, and faces, and puts them in the street - creating a bold presence for women in an environment where they are so often made to feel uncomfortable and unsafe."



### #KindComments (collective project)

<https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2017/06/01/instagram-kicks-off-kind-comments-campaign-with-murals-in-cleveland-one-of-five-global-cities-chosen>

Instagram teamed up with local artists and youth communities to create different #KindComments Murals to combat online harassment and homophobia. These take an approach focused on creating positive and welcoming public spaces.

**Questions**

Answer the questions below in point-form or full sentences. Be prepared to discuss your answers in class.

1. What are the purposes of the two art projects?
2. How are the two art projects similar? How are they different?
3. Which of the projects do you think is likely to be most effective? Why?
4. Are there certain topics that you think would be more or less suited for public art? Why?
5. Is public art an effective means of community engagement? Why or why not?



## Imagination Primers

### Resisting Surveillance with Theatre: Surveillance Camera Players

In 1996, the Surveillance Camera Players were founded in New York City. A group of activists and friends came together to oppose the growing use of video surveillance in public spaces. Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, the New York Police Department began installing surveillance cameras in an attempt to combat organized crime. At first, the cameras were placed at major landmarks, namely around City Hall and in Times Square. However, in the 1990s a new “zero tolerance” approach to street crime made the use of surveillance cameras more widespread throughout the city. Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks New York City saw a second significant increase in the use of surveillance technologies and soon after the city was flooded with new fibre-optic and wireless digital cameras.

The Surveillance Camera Players are adamantly opposed to the use of surveillance cameras in public spaces because they believe these forms of surveillance violate an individual’s right to privacy. The group has sought to challenge the government’s increased use of surveillance technologies in the name of fighting crime and safety.

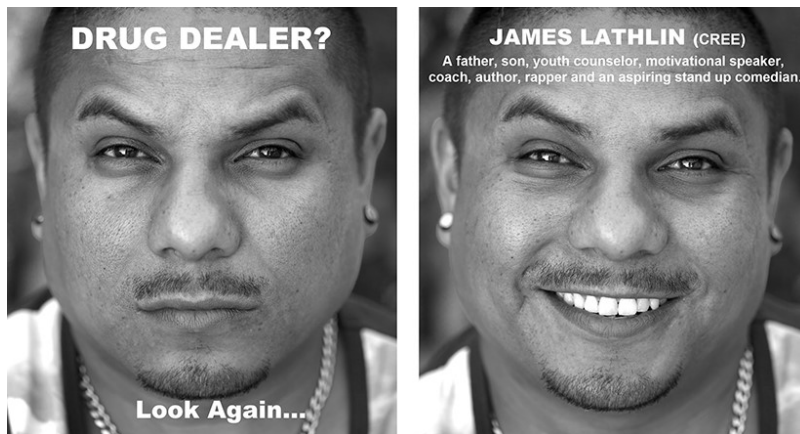
To oppose these technologies and surveillance strategies, the Surveillance Camera Players perform several different plays that they have adapted and shortened in front of the surveillance cameras. The group has adapted several famous works including Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven*, and Wilhelm Reich’s *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. The Surveillance Camera Players’ most well-known performance was their adaptation of George Orwell’s *1984*. The performances reposition the individuals from citizens under surveillance to active performers. The Surveillance Camera Players use their political and activist theatre to bring attention to what they believe are the dangers of increasing public surveillance.





## Resisting Racism With Art<sup>1</sup>

KC Adams is a visual artist in Winnipeg who wanted to fight back against negative representations of Indigenous people. She had well-known Indigenous people from Winnipeg pose for two photos. For the first, she mentioned a racist comment against Indigenous people and photographed the person's reaction. For the second, she mentioned a happy incident or idea and then photographed the person's reaction to that. She showed each person their photos and asked them to label the first photo based on how they felt the community often reacted to them. She added the label on the first photo and then on the second photo labelled the person's name and what they actually do. Her art appeared on billboards, in storefronts and in bus shelters and can also be seen online. Below is one example of her photos:



1 Macdonald, Nancy. "Winnipeg's new art project stares down racism in the face". *Maclean's*, March 8, 2015. <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/winnipegs-new-art-project-stares-down-racism-in-the-face/>

