

advancing learning outcomes programme

Rethinking ELT in the age of digital fast food
Atomic Habits for Critical Media Literacy

GLOBAL TEACHERS' FESTIVAL 2026
9th - 20th February

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Think about your learners' relationship with media

doomscrolling → emotional exhaustion

brain rot → passive consumption, no reflection

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Try to picture your learners' media diet. What kind of digital content feels like this?

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Think about your learners' digital diet. What kind of digital content feels like this?

Digital Snacks: bite-sized, high-dopamine, low-effort media content (TikToks, reels, "You won't believe" headlines) served by algorithms

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Type it in the chat like a ratio. Are you 90/10? 50/50 or ...?

If you had to break your last 24 hours into a percentage, how much of it was fast food vs. nutritious digital meals?

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Digital vitamin C is about...

What's your 'vitamin C' against fake news and misinformation?

Critical media literacy

VITAMIN

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Agenda

Understanding critical media literacy (CML)

A new approach: atomic habits for CML

A starter toolkit for your class

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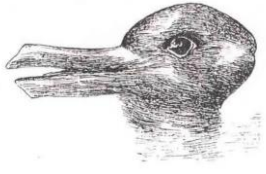
1. Understanding critical media literacy



1. Understanding critical media literacy

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What can you see?



Images source: Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experiences, (n.d.). Illusions Index, University of Glasgow. <https://www.illusionsindex.org/>

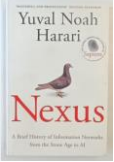


Critical Media Literacy: a tool to *unsee* informational illusions, to verify, look from different angles

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Homo algorithmicus

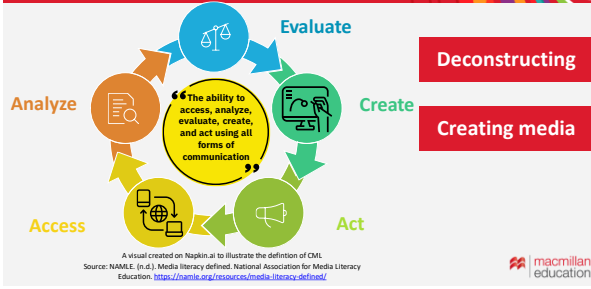


What do you think is this visual about?

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What is critical media literacy?



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We are English teachers...why should we teach CML?

“Critical media literacy is important because media’s ubiquitous presence has become the **digital wallpaper of life**, and students need to learn how to use media responsibly for learning, communicating, and participating in democratic societies.”
(Robertson & Scheidler-Benns, 2016)



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Myths about critical media literacy

CML often seen as a sophisticated framework, difficult to apply in the class

Critical Literacy is Not a Topic. It's a Habit.

The Reframe

- ✗ Heretic Lessons (Once a year)
- ✓ Micro-Routines (3 minutes per day)

... about what to think, but provides the tools to help learners **HOW to think**

... an add-on, a time-consuming topic

Critical media literacy is NOT ...

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2. A new approach: atomic habits for critical media literacy

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We don't need a new unit. We need new micro-routines.

What is an atomic habit?

- ✗ Teach fake news once a year.
- ✓ Question media for 3 minutes every lesson.

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The anatomy of a habit loop

CUE: Fake News, Curiosity, Anger, Fear, Outrage

CRAVING: Emotional reaction

RESPONSE: Click without thinking

DOPAMINE: Scale from Low to High

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A habit loop adapted for CML

What reminds learners to think critically?

What should learners start craving when they consume media?

CUE: Trending headline/ ad/ viral video

CRAVING: Dopamine Hit

RESPONSE: Pause and question

REWARD: Dopamine Hit

Who created this? For what purpose? Who benefits? What is left out? How does it make me feel?

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The Paradigm Shift: From Behavior to Identity

Outcome-based habits: "I want to be good at critical thinking"

Identity-based habits: "I am a critical thinker, a fake news detective, the type of person who ..."

Habits stick when they match identity. Shift from outcome to identity-based goals. (Clear, 2012)

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3. A critical media literacy toolkit for your class

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Using SIFT, a quick tool for lateral reading



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Press the Pause button before you share

The Daily Ritual: P.A.U.S.E.
The 'Think Before Share' Routine (2 Minutes)

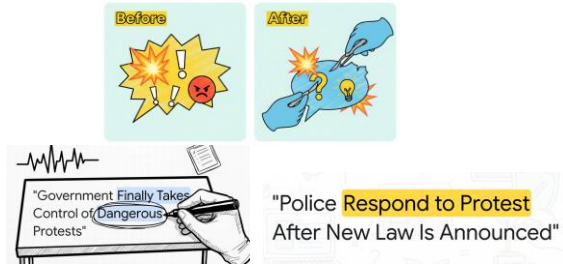
- P** – Publisher (Who is this?)
- A** – Agenda (What do they want?)
- U** – Upset (Is this triggering strong emotion?)
- S** – Source (Check the evidence)
- E** – Evidence (Can I find this elsewhere?)

The stat: more than **70%** of people share news without reading past the headline
The headline = the frame

Sundar, S. S., Snyder, E. C., Liao, M., Yin, J., Wang, J., & Chik, G. (2023). Sharing without clicking on news in social media. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 9(1), 156-168.

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Headline surgery



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Do emotionally-loaded words hijack our feelings?

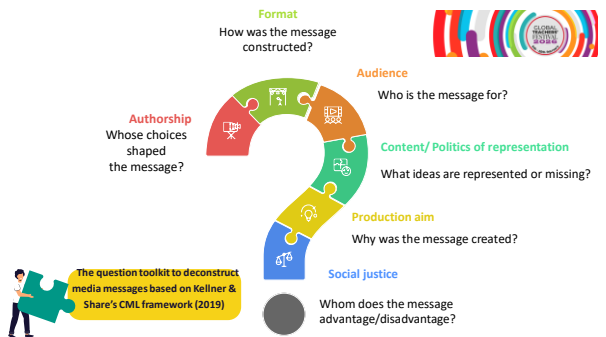
Micro-Routine 2: Adjective Hunt

Learn when doing a micro-routine about how words can hijack our feelings. Consider the connotations of **TERRIFYING**, **SHOCKING**, **OUTRAGE**, and **DESTROYED**. These words are often used to grab attention and elicit a strong emotional response. They can also be used to manipulate our feelings and actions. Consider the connotations of these words and how they might affect our feelings and actions. Would headlines using these words keep us up at night or make us feel safe?

The task: scan a text and circle the fear words or outrage triggers

The operation: strip away the *junk food* ingredients (sensational verbs and emotional adjectives)

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Task: In your team, use the CML toolkit to deconstruct stereotypes in this media message



Case 1. Philadelphia cheese ad

Guiding Questions:	Team Responses:
Who are all the people/people who made choices that helped create this text?	
How was this text delivered or accessed? For example, what do you notice about the words, images, and colors in the advertisement and how they contribute possibly influence you?	
How could this text be understood differently?	
What values, points of view, and ideas are represented or missing from this text or influenced by this message?	
Why was this text created and/or shared?	
When does this text advantage or disadvantage?	

CML toolkit, Kelner & Share, 2019



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Creating infomercials to address fake news



TikTok Launches Anti-Disinformation PSA Campaign to Warn Users About Spreading Fake Info



“In an increasingly digital world, it's imperative that social media platforms partner with the media literacy education community and adopt a more active role in educating their users on how to engage with and understand the content they encounter as part of their safety measures.”
- Michelle Ciulla Lipkin, Executive Director, NAMEL



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Creating infomercials to address fake news



TikTok's "Be Informed" series stars TikTok creators to educate users about media literacy

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"Be Informed" series, TikTok partnered with the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMEL). NAMEL is a network of educators, scholars, researchers, practitioners, media makers, and thought leaders in the field of media literacy.



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One-minute counter-ad to challenge stereotypes



Are you tired of seeing all these stereotypes?

1. Problem

2. Solution

you can buy these glasses for the price of ~~\$\$\$~~—empathy and kindness

3. Call to action

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One-minute counter-ad to challenge stereotypes



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The 3-Habit Starter Pack

<p>Monday</p> <p>Headline Surgery</p> <p>Do one Headline Surgery on a news story.</p>	<p>Wednesday</p> <p>Emotional Adjective Hunt</p> <p>Do one Emotional Adjective Hunt on a social post.</p>	<p>Friday</p> <p>SIFT one viral video</p> <p>SIFT one viral video before sharing.</p>
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The Atomic Recipe

- Recognize the Diet:** Acknowledge the 'Fast Food' nature of digital feeds.
- Shift the Method:** Replace 'Heroic Lessons' with 'Micro-Habits.'
- Question the Ingredients:** Use the Menu (SIFT, Surgery, Adjectives Hunt).
- Cook Your Own:** Create counter-media to reclaim your voice.

Start small. Start now.

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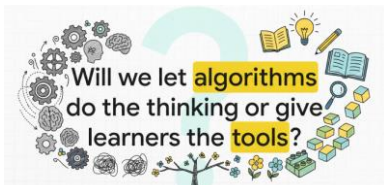
Tools & Resources to develop CML

News and media literacy resources

<p>1 hour</p> <p>The world in 2026</p> <p>09 January 2025</p>	<p>1 hour</p> <p>2025 news review</p> <p>09 December 2025</p>	<p>1 hour</p> <p>Doomscrolling and brain rot</p> <p>05 December 2025</p>	<p>1 hour</p> <p>News reporting: which news can you trust?</p> <p>28 November 2025</p>
<p>1 hour</p> <p>Social media and the news</p>	<p>1 hour</p> <p>News you trust</p>	<p>Resource</p> <p>Leadership for Change 2025</p>	<p>1 hour</p> <p>Positive news: why good news matters</p>

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Thank you!

ANY QUESTIONS?

dr. Armanda Stroia

MEMBER OF THE TEAM WHO TEACH TO Inspire

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- ✔ Start small. Pick one idea to incorporate CML in your next lesson!
- ✔ Identity matters! Encourage learners to embrace the identity of a "critical media thinker" or "fake news detective"!
- ✔ Empower your students. Encourage them to question and create, not just consume!

I don't have time to add critical media literacy to my lessons!



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Critical Media Literacy Framework

Conceptual Understandings	Questions
1. Social Constructivism All information is constructed by individuals and/or groups of people who make choices within social contexts.	WHO are all the possible people who made choices that helped create this text?
2. Language / Semiotics Each message has its own language with specific grammar and semantics.	HOW was this text constructed and delivered/accessed?
3. Audience / Positionality Individuals and groups understand media messages similarly and/or differently depending on multiple contextual factors.	HOW could this text be understood differently?
4. Politics of Representation Media messages and the medium through which they travel always have a bias and support and/or challenge dominant hierarchies of power, privilege, and pleasure.	WHAT values, points of view, and ideologies are represented or missing from this text or influenced by the medium?
5. Production / Institutions All media texts have a purpose (often commercial or governmental) that is shaped by the creators and/or systems within which they operate.	WHY was this text created and/or shared?
6. Social & Environmental Justice Media culture is a terrain of struggle that perpetuates or challenges positive and/or negative ideas about people, groups, and biases. It is never neutral.	WHOM does this text advantage and/or disadvantage?

Source: Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*. Brill | Sense.



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A critical media literacy menu



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How many media messages did you consume before breakfast?



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