

Dear **Middle School Social Studies** Teachers,

For over two decades, [Project Look Sharp](#), a mission-driven not-for-profit **media literacy** organization at Ithaca College, has been collaborating with educators to provide free, inquiry-based, standards-aligned **media analysis lessons** that integrate core subject area content and skills with [habits of critical questioning](#).

Below you will find an overview of our lessons for **middle school social studies** followed by an introduction to the purpose and pedagogy of [our approach](#), ending with information about our free professional development resources for [Constructivist Media Decoding](#).

## **THE LESSONS:**

We currently have [206 lessons](#) for incorporating [question-based media analysis](#) into the teaching of **social studies at the middle school level**. For instance, the 7 lessons in our middle school kit, [Economics in U.S. History](#), have students analyze engaging media documents to learn core content about U.S. history, explore key economic concepts, and practice habits of critical thinking.

Below are just some our **newest lessons** for teaching **lessons** for teaching [U.S. history](#) and [global studies](#) in middle school. Click on any title below to get a brief description and to download all the teaching materials.

New **U.S. History**/Media Literacy Lessons for Middle School:

[First Contact: Who's Telling the Story?](#)

[Thanksgiving: Who's Telling the Story?](#)

[The Roots of Democracy in the United States: Iroquois or Athens?](#)

[Mapping the Border: Who Decides?](#)

[Decoding the Twenty: Andrew Jackson and Harriet Tubman](#)

[Media Representations of Working Class Men: Different Eras, Different Understandings](#)

[Sexual Harassment: Time's Changing Coverage](#)

[Covering Black Lives Matter: Front Page Constructions](#)

[Storming the Capitol: Front Page Constructions](#)

[Who's in Power in Congress: How Do You Know?](#)

New **Global Studies**/Media Literacy Lessons for Middle School:

**Vaccine Nationalism and Global Equity: Who Gets the Shots When?**

**Representations of Asian People in the Media**

**Mapping Ancient Civilizations: Who's Included and Who's Not?**

**National Geographic's Africa**

**Incan Religion – What Sources Should I Use?**

**Ancient Nubia & Ancient Egypt: What's the Story?**

**Fighting Back Against Religious Intolerance**

**Slavery in the 21st Century: What Can We Do?**

**Climate Disaster: Young People Act**

**Educating Girls**

**Greta Meets Malala: How Different Media Forms Present the News**

## **CONSTRUCTIVIST MEDIA DECODING:**

Our [constructivist approach](#) is particularly effective for leading civil and reflective document-based analysis about **potentially polarizing issues**. Our lessons and methodology help students learn to habitually ask key questions; assess truth, credibility, and accuracy in media messages; and become **metacognitive** about their own thinking.

We believe that the critical analysis of all media messages - from books to blogs, paintings to *Pinterest* - must become habitual for all our students. Students need **continual practice** in asking [critical thinking questions](#) such as:

- *Who produced this and for what purpose?*
- *Is the source and information credible?*
- *What are the biases in this message?*
- *How does my own identity influence how I see this?*

For this kind of self-reflective critical analysis to become ingrained, we need to have students practice this questioning, in age-appropriate ways, from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and in diverse subject areas. And we need effective and **efficient methodologies and free materials**

to support the integration of media analysis into the core curriculum – helping us to teach what we already teach in ways that **engage more students** more effectively.

Project Look Sharp has published over [500 media analysis lessons](#) on our website and over [70 professional development resources](#) for this purpose. All of our lessons – including the lesson plans, media materials, and student handouts – are grant-funded so we can make them available **FREE for educators** through the [Project Look Sharp](#) website. All educators need to do is set up an [account](#).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES:**

Project Look Sharp also has short, annotated [video demonstrations](#) of in-person and online classroom media decoding for different levels and subjects.

Our extensive [free PD materials](#) about **curriculum driven media decoding** include:

- [Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages](#) and other handouts and posters
- [Articles and webinars](#) about Constructivist Media Decoding
- A [DIY Guide](#) for creating your own lessons

Please consider signing up for a [free account](#) to fully view our lessons and get added to our [email list](#) so that you will get periodic notices about new lessons and resources. And please pass on the word about [Project Look Sharp](#). Together we can build a more civil, reflective and just society for all.

### **Project Look Sharp**

Ithaca College

Email: [looksharp@ithaca.edu](mailto:looksharp@ithaca.edu)

Web: <https://www.projectlooksharp.org/>