A logo for a tv show

Description automatically generated

Library Extension Project

# Activity: Construct a Message

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Description:

Create a message that considers audience, purpose and design. This program is designed to show participants how messages are constructed and spread through memes.

Target audience:

Tweens and teens.

Objectives:

Construct a message using the meme format. Participants will leave having knowledge of free resources available to create memes and how to use those resources. Participants will leave with an understanding of how memes create shared meaning and communicate messages to others. They will also learn how quickly information – both useful and harmful – can spread on social media using this format.

Suggested text:

A meme is an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations. (Oxford Dictionary)

Memes are effective because they help create shared meaning through metaphor (a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract.)

Can you share a meme you’ve recently seen in your social media feed? Have you shared a meme recently? If so, what was it about and why did you think it worthy of sharing? Memes are highly shareable! This can connect people quickly around a central idea or concept. Memes’ virality can also be a problem when they further harmful or hateful ideas veiled by humor.

Always think carefully before you share a meme to consider the many ways that people different than you might understand the message. Without understanding the circumstances around the setting of an event, idea or statement (context), audiences can take a very different meaning from a meme than what the author/creator intended.

Program details:

As a warm-up or introduction to message creation, visit <https://www.wondermedialibrary.com/construct-a-message/#/> and as a group, design a t-shirt. This is a good opportunity to discuss the many factors that go in to message creation, including intended audience, message purpose and design elements.

Then, offer participants access to various images via a meme generator application that the library chooses (Canva, Adobe, Imgflip, etc.) and create a meme that conveys a specific message. This can be in the form of a “challenge” and see what participants come up with. For instance, the presenter could challenge the participants to come up with a meme that conveys the message “We love libraries.” The participants would use the meme generator application to create a meme that conveys that message. Then, the host library can share out the memes and see how effective the participants were in conveying the message by tracking likes, shares, reposts.

Have participants share their memes and answer one or all of these questions in relation to their message (from the Key Questions Creating Tipsheet):

1. What do I want people to do, think or feel as a result of my message?
2. Who might my message harm? Who might it benefit?
3. How and why might different people interpret this differently?
4. Is the information in this message accurate? How do I know that and and how will the audience know that?

Materials needed: Computers, wi-fi access, paper, pencils, pens, colored pencils to design memes, “Key Questions Creating Tipsheet” (see Printables).

Suggested runtime: 30-45 minutes

Youth adaptation or extension activity: For those who want to do this program but may not have many computers/tech, this can be adapted into an art program. The challenge is the same, but instead of using a meme generator, they can use pictures printed by staff, or create an original drawing.

Adaptation for adults: This is an opportunity for adults to better understand this tool of language that teens and young adults use often. Look at <https://later.com/blog/trending-memes/> (and other sites that do the same) for trending memes of the month to get a sense of how current events and humor are layered to make a successful message. Have participants create a meme of their choice so they fully experience the many decisions that go into content creation. Use the “Key Questions Creating Tipsheet” as a guide for discussion about intent, context, interpretation and values uplifted or excluded by the message.

Unique Space or Personnel Needs: If space allows, a computer lab or a program room with computers. The adaptation could be in a program room or a Makerspace. Library staff will need to be versed in the chosen meme generator application so they can assist the participants.

Resources:

<https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>

<https://www.canva.com/create/memes/>

<https://www.adobe.com/express/create/meme>

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Meme>

Printables: Key Questions Creating Tipsheet at: <https://projectlooksharp.org/Resources%202/Project%20Look%20Sharp%20Key%20Questions%20Creating.pdf>

  