

Teachingmedialiteracy.com. A Web-Linked Guide to Resources and Activities by Richard Beach. New York, London: Teachers College Press, 2007, x+134pp.

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First in the Teachers College Language and Literacy series, Beach's *Teachingmedialiteracy.com* offers teachers a comprehensive instructional manual to put into practice media literacy teaching in schools. Much of the material presented in the book comes from a graduate-level course entitled "Teaching Film, Television, and Media Studies", taught by Professor Beach at the University of Minnesota for the past 30 years. An essential component of the book is its accompanying website, which includes numerous continually updated links to informative sites referred to according to a triple numbering system. The volume surveys various theoretical and methodological frameworks related to media literacy instruction, in addition to a range of critical approaches for analyzing media texts, representations, and genres. It discusses several methods for helping students appreciate and critique the use of media production technique, in addition to methods for supporting students in the analysis of their own uses of media. The book offers numerous ways for understanding the larger economic and institutional forces that shape the media. In addition, the author presents teachers' descriptions of their own media literacy instruction in the form of classroom activities. Throughout the volume Beach aims to promote the integration of media into the literacy curriculum rather than teaching media as a separate component. By developing this alternative framework, which recognizes the centrality of media/digital literacies in students' lives, the author encourages the identification and promotion of these literacies through classroom activities in order to foster students' critical analysis of the media.

After an introductory section, the book is organized in ten chapters, each of which addresses a specific topic on media literacy. In the introduction, Beach presents the book website, points out the basic goals of media literacy instruction and highlights the advantages of using the Web as a teaching tool. Chapter 1, "Goals for Media Literacy Instruction", discusses a set of reasons that justify the value of studying media in schools. In chapter 2, "Digital Media Tools", the author addresses four important literacies that students develop by using digital media. The chapter also includes a brief description of several digital tools (blogs, vlogs, wikis, videogames, and webquests), as well as how to set them up in class. Beach illustrates varied ways in which teachers can use these digital tools to further develop media literacies in the context of the classroom. Chapter 3, "Film Techniques" presents four approaches to analyzing film as a way for teachers to help students develop a

critical appreciation for this kind of media. In addition, the author offers instructional suggestions about how to approach critical analysis of film in class. In Chapter 4, “Critical Approaches to Media Texts”, Beach surveys eight different lenses through which students can critically approach the analysis of media texts (semiotic analysis, poststructuralist analysis, narrative analysis, and critical discourse analysis, among others). In addition to offering an ample number of bibliographical references to consult, the author describes diverse ways in which teachers can use these lenses in class to help students challenge the ideological and political assumptions operating in media texts, and in that way, help them examine their own beliefs and attitudes about themselves and the world. Chapter 5, “Media Representations” discusses how media represents social groups and categories. The author provides teachers with multiple suggestions about ways in which students can critically analyze media representations to understand how media construct versions of reality and to recognize that such constructions influence their lives and identities. In chapter 6, “Media Ethnography Studies”, Beach proposes some key ideas to guide students in conducting their own small-scale media ethnographies. The author posits that by engaging students in understanding how audiences construct meanings through shared social participation with media texts, they will better understand the meaning of those texts. Chapter 7, “Genres”, highlights four different approaches to tackling media genre study: formalist/structuralist, audience-based, critical/ideological, and historical. The chapter includes an overview of different genre types in film and television (action/adventure, western, gangster/crime, comedy, etc.), as well as instructional suggestions to examine the prototypical features of comics, graphic novels, and popular music. Chapter 8, “Advertising”, focuses on diverse approaches through which students can examine advertising (semiotic analysis, techniques of persuasion, critical discourse analysis), as well as diverse aspects/elements involved in advertising (paralanguage, idealized gender images, alcohol and tobacco, etc.). Beach discusses several forms of advertising and encourages teachers to have students critically examine advertisements and produce their own advertisement parodies. Chapter 9, “News and Documentaries”, deals with news analysis and how students can critically examine the news. Beach points out different approaches that instructors can use when teaching analysis of news, as well as relevant issues regarding news coverage (e.g., impact of media conglomeration ownership on the editorial perspectives of news, freedom of press, accuracy and balance of news reports, etc.). Throughout the chapter, Beach presents a wide range of suggestions for how to approach the mentioned issues in class and how to produce classroom newspapers, television news broadcasts, and documentaries. In the concluding chapter, “Integrating Film and Other Media into the Curriculum”, the author advocates for the need of an alternative language arts curriculum organized around helping students acquire interpretive strategies to respond to and produce media and literary/expository texts. In order to develop this type of curriculum, the author proposes a set of teaching strategies to help learners interpret and construct texts. Beach encourages teachers to work around the similarities and differences between

media and literary/expository texts, as well as theater and film. The chapter also points out factors around which instructional activities can be organized and other considerations to take into account when preparing teaching material. Finally, the author offers some assessment formats to evaluate the students' work, and brief outlines of three media curricula that are available online.

Along with its primary goal of aiding school instructors in teaching media literacy, the volume offers substantial material on methods to develop media literacy instruction, as well as extensive documentation on a wide range of topics in media literacy, certainly much more than what teachers could review in class with students. Moreover, the book website, which includes countless continually updated links for teachers to consult about media literacy instruction and related issues, identifies this volume as a valuable resource to put into practice the teaching of media literacy in schools.

Despite the above-mentioned positive aspects of the book, many of the classroom activities suggested by Beach seem to require teachers to be reasonably trained in technical/technological knowledge in order to perform these activities. It seems that instructors would also need a fairly deep understanding of media literacies and related issues. Unfortunately, these conditions do not seem to be currently met by the majority of the school teachers in the U.S. Furthermore, some of the instructional suggestions presented in the volume (e.g.: create documentaries or television news broadcasts) require schools to have particular software and equipment that do not seem available in most of the schools of the country. Consequently, the volume fails to acknowledge particular educational conditions that need to be fulfilled to actually implement the ideas developed in the book. Finally, as a note to the design of the volume, it would have been illustrative to have visual representations of webpages and program interfaces so that readers could better grasp some instructional suggestions.

Overall, the accomplishment of *Teachingmedialiteracy.com* is that it is a very thorough survey of the theoretical and methodological approaches teachers can use to incorporate media literacy instruction in schools. The links to a periodically updated website also offer the audience a number of valuable resources. Readers interested in familiarizing themselves with an innovative educational curriculum and in implementing it in the classroom now have an excellent tool for doing so.