

Critical Television Viewing

You suspect that your junior high students spend hours per week watching television. You are concerned that they are not particularly critical in their viewing.

Goal

To motivate critical viewing skills through an analysis of familiar television genres.

How to Reach It

In preparing for the activity, you might remind students that by the time they finish high school, most of them will have spent more time in front of a television set than in classrooms. Remind them, too, that they will have witnessed thousands of violent acts and tens of thousands of commercials. With such exposure, students are wise to be critical viewers, especially of the values portrayed.

Remind students that a genre is a subdivision of a topic. For instance, stories, poems, non-fiction, and drama are genres of literature. Prominent television genres include soap operas, talk shows, situation comedies, science fiction, dramas, game shows, cartoons, crime melodramas, and advertisements. Every student or group will work with one genre.

Ask individuals or groups to analyze specific television genres suitable to their ages. They might use “Analysis of a Television Genre,” the first page of which is shown on page 105. Photocopiable versions of both analysis pages appear as appendixes.

You will probably need to explain or review the term *jolt*. A jolt is an attention-grabbing moment of excitement generated by loud noise, rapid cuts (a sudden shift from one scene to another), a violent act, a quick movement, or a shocking image. Television critics have pointed out that without jolts, programmers would fail to command the attention of the audience. You may choose to model analysis by choosing one or two genres for whole-class work before you assign the genres for analysis by individuals or small groups.

Useful Reference

For de-constructing a variety of media, see *Media Literacy*, published by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Analysis of a Television Genre

Genre _____

Program Title _____

SUBJECT(S)	IMAGE/CHARACTERS PORTRAYED	REAL-LIFE CONNECTION	EXPLANATION OF PORTRAYAL
The television program is about	The dominant pictures are	The television program is connected to real life in that	The television program features its dominant images and characters so that the audience
	The feelings associated with the dominant pictures are	The television program is not connected to real life in that	

Analysis of a Television Genre (continued)

Genre _____

Program Title _____

JOLTS PER SEGMENT	VALUES SUGGESTED
In a segment of the program, the following jolts were employed:	The television program suggested that to be worthwhile, one should