A logo for a tv show

Description automatically generated

Library Extension Project

Same Message/Different Meaning

Created by: Sue Ellen Christian, Western Michigan University

Activity: Passive

Target audience: Ages 10 and older

Objectives: To communicate the media literacy concept that, “Different people understand the same message differently.”

Poster Text: Media messages are all around us. When thinking about what a media message is, think broadly! Media messages are created for a mass audience and can be billboards, books, movies, TV shows, music, podcasts, news stories and more.

We have all seen a movie or read a book and had a very different reaction than our friend or family member. Why is that? Because people make sense of the world by drawing on their unique backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge and worldviews. In turn, this filter of life experience and personal outlook influences each person’s understanding of messages.

In this activity, we can look at the same message, such as the United States flag, and have a different understanding of what it means to us and to the nation. Use the response cards to share your unique understanding of this symbol.

Note to staff: Review all response cards prior to posting publicly to remove those with offensive or foul language. However, as much as possible, allow different perspectives to be showcased in the responses.

## Suggested runtime: A static display up for two months, perhaps anchored to Flag Day (June 14) or Independence Day (July 4).

## Materials and preparation: Colored construction paper (to make a replica of the American flag) or an actual American flag, response cards (see printables) or Post-It Notes, markers, thumb tacks to post completed cards, poster board to post text below, instant camera for photographing contributors (optional).

## Unique Space or Personnel Needs: Large wall space for display, preferably 5’ by 7’.

## Adaptation: Create a one-hour tween/teen program around this activity. Instead of a general invitation to all library users, create the display using youth response cards after the youth create their painted, colored, drawn or cut-and-pasted versions of the U.S. flag. Post the created flags with the response cards on the wall instead of one large flag. Change the last line of the poster text to: *Read the many ways that local youth interpret the meaning of the U.S. flag.*

## Resources: Center for Media Literacy’s “[Key Concepts and Questions”](https://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/14A_CCKQposter.pdf)

## Printables: *What does the American flag mean to you?* response card. Three cards to a page; cut in thirds for participants’ input. (See below.)

A yellow and brown logo

Description automatically generated A logo for a museum

Description automatically generated A blue and black logo

Description automatically generated

A collage of flags

Description automatically generated